



Self-neglect

This leaflet explains what Self-neglect is and what you can do about it if you are worried that you or someone you know is neglecting their own health and well-being.

We have also published other leaflets about adult safeguarding.

What is Self-neglect

There is no one definition of self-neglect but the term is used to cover a wide range of behaviour of a person neglecting their own health, personal hygiene or their surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

The type of behaviour that are considered to be self-neglecting include;

- Lack of self-care and not attending to personal hygiene, nutrition and hydration, or health needs, to an extent that it may endanger their safety or wellbeing or that of their community
- Lack of care of environment, and living in situations that could lead to domestic squalor or elevated levels of risk in the domestic environment (for example, health or fire risks caused by hoarding)
- Refusal of assistance that might help resolve these issues. This might include, for example, refusal of care services in either their home or a care environment or of health assessments or interventions, even if previously agreed, which could potentially improve self-care or care of one's environment

There are different reasons why people self-neglect.

Some people have insight into their behaviour, while others do not. It can occur as a result of mental ill-health, personality disorders, substance abuse, dementia, advancing age, social isolation, and cognitive impairment or through

personal choice. It can be triggered by trauma and significant life events.

Self-neglect is an issue that affects people from all backgrounds.

A decision on whether an adult safeguarding response is appropriate will depend on the person's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

Possible signs and symptoms of Self-neglect include:

- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Untreated or improperly attended medical conditions and poor personal hygiene
- Hazardous or unsafe living conditions or arrangements (for example, improper wiring, no indoor plumbing, no heat, no running water)
- Unsanitary or unclean living quarters (for example, animal / insect infestation, no functioning toilet, faecal / urine smell)

- Inappropriate and/or inadequate clothing
- Lack of the necessary medical aids (for example, glasses, hearing aids, dentures, walking aids)
- Grossly inadequate housing or homelessness
- Hoarding large numbers of pets
- Portraying eccentric behaviour / lifestyles

Poor environments and personal hygiene may be a matter of personal or lifestyle choice, or other issues such as insufficient income. When a person has capacity, it is important to work with them and to understand their wishes and feelings. If the person lacks capacity to make relevant decisions best interest decision making may be necessary whilst still taking into account the person's wishes as far as these can be ascertained.

Who to contact if you are worried about abuse or neglect:

Somerset County Council's Adult Social Care service has the lead for adult safeguarding for all adults with care and support needs in Somerset, and works closely with other organisations including the police and NHS. If a crime has been committed you should always contact the police.

Adult Social Care:

- **Telephone: 0300 123 22 24** (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday and Sunday closed.)
- **Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk**

The phone number for Adults and Mental Health out of hours is **0300 123 23 27**

Police:

101 or in an emergency 999

Further information:

Please use the following link to view other leaflets on our website: bit.ly/SSABLeaflets

