## Self-Neglect

Managing the balance between protecting adults at risk of self-neglect against their right to self-determination is a serious challenge for services. Working with people who are difficult to engage with can be exceptionally time consuming and stressful to all concerned. However, failure to engage with people who are not looking after themselves, (whether they have mental capacity or not) may have serious implications for, and a profoundly detrimental effect on, an individual's health and well-being. It can also impact on the individual's family and the local community.

Often the cases that give rise to the most concern are those where an individual refuses help and services and is seen to be at grave risk as a result.

If an agency is satisfied that the individual has the mental capacity to make an informed choice on the issues raised, then that person has the right to make their own choices, even if these are considered to be unwise. But, in cases of significant vulnerability there should be on-going engagement with the individual applying the principles outlined in this policy.

Serious self-neglect is a complex issue which usually encompass a complex interplay between mental, physical, social and environmental factors. It frequently covers inter-related issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness, street working, mental health issues, criminality, anti-social behaviour, inability to access benefits and / or other health related issues.

**The Care Act**, which came into force on 1 April 2015, sets out the Local Authority's responsibility for protecting adults with care and support needs from abuse or neglect in primary legislation. For the first time, this makes direct reference to self-neglect. The Act provides particular focus on well-being in relation to an individual (Section 1) and requires that organisations should always promote the adult's well-being in their safeguarding arrangements. This includes establishing with the individual what 'safe' means to them and how this can be best achieved. Well-being in the Act is described as:

1. Personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect)
2. Physical and mental health and well-being
3. Protection from abuse and neglect Control by the individual over day-to-day life (including over care and support, or support provided to the individual and the way in which it is provided)
4. Participation in work, education, training or recreation
5. Social and economic well-being
6. Suitability of living accommodation
7. The individual's contribution to society

The principles of promoting a person's wellbeing are also supported by Making Safeguarding Personal (2014), and subsequent toolkit Making Safeguarding Personal: A Toolkit for Response (2015), which seeks to ensure that where possible, the individual is involved in their own safeguarding and that it is 'person-led', 'out-come' focused but not process driven.

[Self Neglect | Salford Safeguarding Adults Board](https://safeguardingadults.salford.gov.uk/professionals/self-neglect/)

Types of self-neglect

* Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
* Neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings
* Inability to avoid self-harm
* Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
* Inability or unwillingness to manage one’s personal affairs

Indicators of self-neglect

* Very poor personal hygiene
* Unkempt appearance
* Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter
* Malnutrition and/or dehydration
* Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions
* Neglecting household maintenance
* Hoarding
* Collecting many animals in inappropriate conditions
* Non-compliance with health or care services
* Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury

<https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse#self-neglect>