

## 1 Definition

Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour relating to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings, and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Three recognised forms of self-neglect include:

- Lack of self-care - this may include neglecting personal hygiene, nutrition and hydration or health (e.g. non-attendance at medical appointments)
- Lack of care of one's environment - this may result in unpleasant or dirty home conditions, and increased risk of fire due to hoarding
- Refusal of services that could alleviate these issues

## 2 What to look for

Adults who self-neglect are more likely to live alone, be an older person, experience mental-ill health, have alcohol or drug problems and have a history of poor personal hygiene or living conditions. Signs include:

- Not enough food, or food is rotten
- The home is filthy, odorous, hazardous or unsafe
- Major repairs/maintenance to the home required
- Presence of human or animal faeces
- Accumulation of possessions
- A large number of pets, and/or abuse or neglect of pets

The adult may:

- Have dirty hair, nails and skin
- Smell of urine and/or faeces
- Have skin rashes or pressure ulcers
- Have a poor diet and/or hydration
- Show increased confusion, disorientation or dementia
- Have deteriorating health
- Be isolated

## 4

**Hoarding** is distinct to the act of collecting and is different from people whose property is generally cluttered or messy. There are three types:

- **Inanimate objects** - most common, could consist of one type of object or a collection of a mixture of objects
- **Animal hoarding** - obsessive collecting of animals, often with an inability to provide minimal standards of care
- **Data hoarding** - new phenomenon of hoarding. Could present with the storage of data collection equipment, a need to store copies of emails and other information in electronic format



## 7

### Raising a Safeguarding Concern

Responding to self-neglect depends upon the level of risk/harm posed to the person and/or others, and whether the person is able to protect themselves and determine their own action.

Workers and volunteers should refer to the SSAB's [threshold guidance](#) tool to determine whether a safeguarding concern should be raised.

## 6

### Intervention

In most cases early intervention and preventative actions can result in positive outcomes. Consideration should be given to:

- Positively engaging the person from the beginning of your involvement
- Obtaining informed consent
- Carry out a mental capacity assessment where appropriate
- Use descriptive 'plain English' when recording information
- Don't close a case because the person simply refuses an assessment

## 5

### Mental Capacity

One of the first considerations should be whether the person has mental capacity to understand the risks associated with the actions/lack of actions. Any action proposed must be with the person's consent, where they have mental capacity, unless there is a risk to others (such as a fire risk due to hoarding, or public health concerns).