

**"Don't judge me by the chapter you have walked in on. I have a past and a future and not defined by my current situation".**

Quote from Experts by Experience.



## Learning from Reviews – Self-Neglect

All Safeguarding Adult Review reports and learning leaflets can be found via this link [Safeguarding Adult Reviews \(SAR's\) - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#) or by using the QR code.

**UPDATED June 2024:** Developed by Jackie Barstow, Learning & Development Lead, SSP in consultation with Faith Margle, Safeguarding Partnership Lead for Adults.



**1. Why Does it Matter?** Reasons for self-neglect can be complex and may impact on a person's health, wellbeing or living conditions and there can also be a negative impact on others. Without early intervention, existing health problems may worsen. Neglect of personal hygiene may mean that the person suffers social difficulties and isolation, or physical/mental health breakdown. Dilapidated property or excess rubbish can become infested and can be a fire risk, which is a risk to the adult, family, neighbours and others.

**Local Safeguarding Adult Reviews** ([Terry, Kieran, Brenda, Alison, Brian, Andrew, Robert and Wendy](#)) identified learning for professionals around providing support and assessing risk and capacity for people who may be self-neglecting.

**2. What is the Legal Framework?** The following legislation may helpul: **Care Act 2014** - statutory guidance which places duties on the Local Authority (LA) regarding assessment, enquiry and advocacy. **Human Rights Act**, Articles 2, 3, 8. **Mental Health Act 2007**. **Mental Capacity Act 2005**. **Public Health Act 1984**. **Housing Act 1988**.

**3. What is Self-Neglect?** Care Act (2014) definition: '... covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding'. Such as, **Lack of self-care**: e.g. neglect of personal hygiene, nutrition, hydration, health, thereby endangering safety/well-being. **Lack of care of one's environment**: e.g. squalor and hoarding, **Refusal of services** that would lessen the risk of harm. Further useful information: Social Care Institute for Excellence - [self-neglect](#). Also [what is self-neglect](#)

**4. What are some of the Indicators?** *Not an exhaustive list*. Living in very unclean circumstances and/or hoarding. Poor nutrition and diet. Failing to provide care for him/herself, to maintain social contact &/or manage finances. Declining to accept support and/or attend appointments and missed appointments.

**Why do adults neglect themselves?** Sometimes self-neglect results from physical or cognitive difficulties but at times the reasons for it are not clear. Research suggests that it may also be the result of loss, fear of losing control, pride in self-sufficiency, a sense of connectedness to the places and things in the person's surroundings or a mistrust of professionals / people in authority, personality traits, traumatic histories and life changing events. This may make them feel safe and also often comes with feelings of shame.



## 7. What are my Responsibilities?

### Be Professionally Curious and Trauma Informed!

Try and find out what the adult wants **but also to assess risk and report concerns** on the same day you become aware/informed of concerns. Refer to the [Threshold E-guidance & Adult Safeguarding Referral form](#).

**Think family.** Share concerns with other agencies involved.

Refer to **SSP Policies, Procedures & Guidance:** e.g. [Multi agency meeting guidance working with adults - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#). Be aware of the [SSP resolution of multi-agency professional differences](#).

**6. When is self-neglect a safeguarding issue?** Consider a safeguarding referral when the person who self-neglects has care needs and experiences, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect (including self-neglect). (this link is policy?)

**Consult the** [Multi-agency policy and guidance on responding to self-neglect - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#) and the [SBC Threshold document](#). For each case consider if other processes are more suited to what the person needs and wants.

**Think family – is anyone else at risk because of the self-neglect?**

**5. What needs to be considered?** Balancing autonomy and protection is important (duty of care vs MCA).

**Assessing mental capacity is crucial.**

Even if the person has the capacity to make a specific decision you should also consider whether ‘[coercion or control](#)’ impacts on the individuals decision-making, for example in domestic abuse cases. [See SAR Honor](#) and [SAR Summer](#).

An adult has the right to make their own choices about their life but they also have a right to be protected where life and well-being are at risk. Support and protection can in the long-term improve an adult’s autonomy, so no professional should stop support on the basis that the adult has made a ‘life style choice’ which threatens their health and well-being. For those adults who lack capacity to make the relevant decisions, professionals can make decisions in their best interests.

**Professionals can find working with people who self-neglect very challenging.** Key to effective interventions is building relationships to effectively engage with people without causing distress and reserving use of legal powers to where they are proportionate and essential. Safeguarding processes may be required when working with people that self-neglect, but much of the work is long-term work, which happens under other frameworks.

This 3 minute [animation video](#) from Lambeth Safeguarding Adults Board highlights the challenges faced.



# SSP Multi-agency Policy and Guidance on Responding to Self-Neglect



Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Multi-Agency Policy and Guidance on Responding to Self-Neglect

Revised by:	Swindon Safeguarding Partnership
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Author:	Swindon Safeguarding Partnership



Welfare and Safety Plan

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Top Tips on using this tool from experts with experience:



Welfare and Safety Plan Practitioner Guidance

Guidance on using the Welfare and Safety Plan tool:

Familiarise yourself with the revised multi agency guidance updated June 2024 - [Multi-agency policy and guidance on responding to self-neglect - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

This includes the following:

- [Quick guide to self-neglect procedures - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Welfare and Safety plan and Practitioner Guidance

- [Appendix 1A - Welfare and Safety Plan - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Appendix 1B - Welfare and Safety Plan Practitioner Guidance - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

# Additional Resources

## Below are some SSP Practice Briefs:

- [Coercive control - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Domestic abuse within families - learning from reviews - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [SSP practice brief - Working with resistance or disguised compliance - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Resource pack - Professional Curiosity - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Trauma-informed practice learning from reviews - Practice brief - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

**Workshop Recording Professional Curiosity.** SSP held a Spotlight on Child Neglect (March 2024), one of the workshops delivered related to 'Professional Curiosity' and the content will be relevant to all professionals.

- Access the recording via this link [SSP Spotlight Child Neglect Professional Curiosity Workshop March 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#) (duration 24 minutes)
- Presentation slides : [Workshop presentation - Professional Curiosity - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- Access all of recordings/presentations please visit this webpage [Video archive - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

## Useful SSP webpages

- [Safeguarding Adult Reviews \(SAR's\) - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Adults policies and guidance - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#) specifically [Multi-agency policy and guidance on responding to self-neglect - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [For professionals Information - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Self neglect - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

# Other Resources

- [Self-neglect at a glance – SCIE](#)
- [Self-neglect policy and practice: Key research messages - SCIE](#)
- [Briefing for practitioners: Second National Analysis of Safeguarding Adult Reviews | Local Government Association](#)
- [Working with people who self-neglect: Practice Tool \(2020\) | Research in Practice](#)
- [Learning resources & events on self-neglect | Research in Practice](#)