

Learning Together From Safeguarding Adult Reviews

- What you need to know about self-neglect
- How to raise concerns about adults who may be self-neglecting
- How to manage complex cases and multi-agency responses

Adult A: In October 2017 the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) published the findings of a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR), following the death of a 64 year old man (Adult A), who was living in a care home in East Sussex.

Adult A was subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) as he was deemed to lack mental capacity to decide where to live. There were concerns of self-neglect as he often refused care and treatment. You can read the full report and a detailed learning briefing of the SAR on the [SAB website](#)

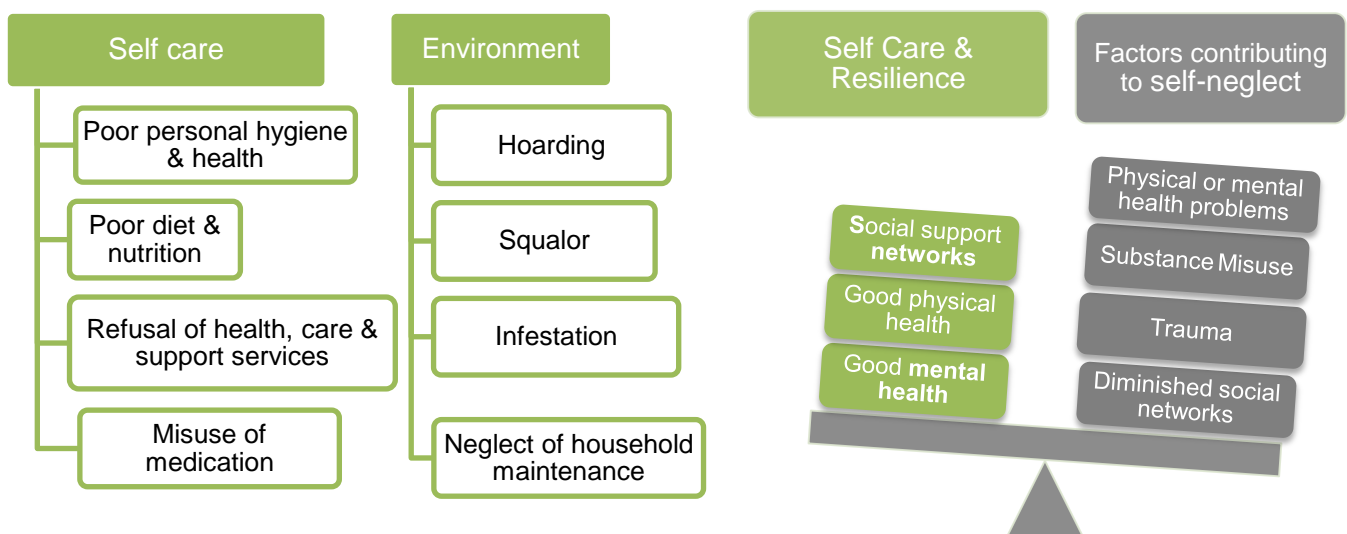
Sharing learning is a key priority of the East Sussex SAB. One of the key recommendations of this SAR was that the SAB should:

- Produce briefings to promote and refresh safeguarding literacy in the context of the Care Act 2014. This is with particular reference to the referral pathways and thresholds for section 42 safeguarding enquiries as well as the use of complex case procedures and multi-agency meetings in challenging cases.
- Raise staff awareness of, and confidence in, understanding factors contributing to self-neglect.

This short briefing is designed for all staff working with adults with care and support needs.

Self-neglect: What are the signs and causes?

Self-neglect is “**the inability (intentional or non-intentional) to maintain a socially and culturally accepted standard of self-care with the potential for serious consequences to the health and well-being of the individual and potentially to their community**”.



Self-neglect covers a wide range of situations and behaviours. It can be linked to numerous contributing factors including physical health problems, mental health problems, substance misuse, psychological and social factors, diminished social networks, personality traits, traumatic histories and life changing events.

What can I do if I am concerned about an adult who may be self-neglecting?

If you become aware that a person might be self-neglecting and appropriate steps are not taken to respond, there is a risk of the situation worsening which may result in serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of the person who is self-neglecting.

If there are immediate serious risks, contact emergency services on 999.

Always report the situation quickly. Discuss the concerns with a manager within your own organisation, and contact the appropriate Adult Social Care department to report a safeguarding concern:

	East Sussex County Council
	Call Health and Social Care Connect on 0345 60 80 191 Email: HSCC@eastsussex.qcsx.gov.uk
	West Sussex County Council
	Call Adults' Care Point on 01243 642 121 Email: adults.carepoint@westsussex.qcsx.gov.uk
	Brighton and Hove City Council
	Call the Access Point on 01273 295 555 Email: accesspoint@brighton-hove.qcsx.gov.uk

When is self-neglect a safeguarding issue?

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance outlines that ordinarily an enquiry under section 42 may not be appropriate where people are self-neglecting. A decision on whether a response is required under the Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this without external support. Decisions are made on a case by case basis and if the adult is engaging with an assessment and accepting social care support, which is sufficient to address their needs, a safeguarding enquiry may not be required. However in all cases we have a responsibility to consider the guidance on supporting individuals who are self-neglecting.

Under the Care Act 2014 a section 42 enquiry is required when the person who is self-neglecting:

- 1 • Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- 2 • Is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- 3 • As a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Effective Interventions and Managing Complex Cases

The [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#) include guidance to support professionals in responding to concerns relating to individuals who are self-neglecting, including joint working protocols between statutory services and other partner agencies, including housing providers, health colleagues and the independent social care sector.

Partnership working and multi-agency meetings

Given the complex and challenging nature of self-neglect, responses by a range of organisations are likely to be more effective than a single agency response, and a coordinated approach is therefore essential. Multi-agency meetings are often the best way to ensure effective information sharing and communication, and a shared responsibility for assessing risks and agreeing an action plan.

Wherever possible the individual should be fully involved and attend meetings. However, it is acknowledged that in many situations where there are concerns about the adult's lack of engagement with formal services, ability to involve individuals may be limited. Practitioners should ensure that the adult is provided with accessible information and access to advocacy support where appropriate, and that the pace and location of any meetings are guided by the adult's needs and circumstances.

Working with people who self-neglect

[Social Care Institute for Excellence guidance](#) (Braye, March 2015) for professionals working with people who self-neglect recommends:

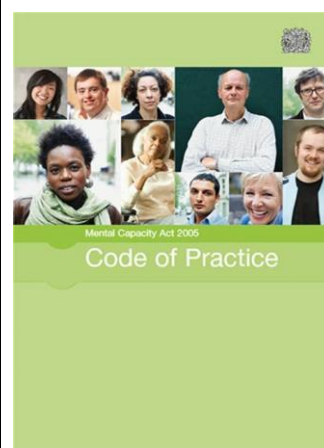
- Building a relationship of trust with the person over a period of time and at the person's own pace
- Finding the whole person and understanding their life history
- Taking account of the person's mental capacity to make self-care decisions
- Being open and honest about risks and options
- Working across the safeguarding partnership in a structured approach
- Developing creative and flexible interventions

Mental capacity considerations

Robust mental capacity assessments are critical in determining the approach to be taken by professionals, either to support the decision-making of a capacitated adult or to intervene to protect the best interests of a person who lacks capacity.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides a clear framework to support the assessment of capacity in relation to specific decisions. The capacity assessment can be a challenging piece of work, even more so in cases where the person's capacity presents a complex picture, where the risks are high and where significant decisions are being considered.

Responding to the rights of an individual who has fluctuating capacity is a complex process.



Mental capacity involves not only considering the person's ability to weigh up information and understand consequences of decisions and actions, but also the person's ability to implement those actions.

You can read more about mental capacity in the [Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice](#).

Where can I learn more?

- The [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#)
- The [Self-neglect Guidance](#) can be found in the Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures
- The [East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board](#) website provides advice and guidance about what to do if you are concerned about an adult at risk including case studies
- [SCIE](#) (Social Care Institute for Excellence) is a good source of information and research in relation to self-neglect and safeguarding generally.
- [The East Sussex Learning Portal](#) offers a range of learning opportunities to East Sussex County Council employees and those from partner agencies and other local organisations.
- The Learning Portal contains links to learning materials and e-learning and the option to book on to training courses relating to safeguarding including the Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-agency training on self-neglect.
- Practitioners are encouraged to explore and discuss the learning points in this briefing in team meetings and supervision.