

Working with people who self-neglect

These key messages have been adapted by Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board and should be considered by practitioners across all agencies in the county when working with adults who self-neglect.

1. Relationships	Relationship building is crucial. Take time to get to know the person, their interests and history, and show concern. Be considerate and thoughtful in reactions to self-neglect.
2. Professional Curiosity	Try to find out why the person is self-neglecting. This may be due to trauma, grief, mental health difficulties or other experiences. Don't just look at the current picture; try to piece together the person's life story and personal experiences and find out what is important to them.
3. Communication	Be honest whilst non-judgemental. Express concerns about self-neglect while separating the person from the behaviour. Communicate clearly and regularly with the person, using their preferred method of communication.
3. Risk	Undertake a thorough risk assessment and explain your concerns clearly and openly to the person who is self-neglecting.
4. Support	Look at the person's family and community networks and consider how these might support the person. Ask the person what additional support they think they may need.
5. Partnership	Be clear about your role and responsibilities and those of others. Consider how you can work with other agencies involved to ensure a joined up approach. Share the risk and ensure that everyone understands that persistence and commitment require time.
6. Decision Making	Consider mental capacity in relation to the decisions which need to be made – is the person able to understand information, retain it, weigh it and communicate their decision? Consider the person's 'executive functioning' – they may appear to understand but can they see the decision through in action?
7. Patience	Be patient and work at their pace. Be prepared for long term involvement – self-neglect situations are rarely resolved quickly.
8. Understanding	The term 'self-neglect' can be perceived as a very stigmatising and emotive term – be careful how you use it. Don't dismiss self-neglect as a 'lifestyle choice' or take an initial rejection of support as final. Work on shared goals, not goals based on how you think they should live.

NSAB give thanks to Lambeth Safeguarding Adults Board for their permission to adapt their guidance.