



## Self-Neglect 1 Minute Briefing

# SELF-NEGLECT AND HOMELESSNESS

*This briefing is part of a series on self-neglect. Each briefing should be read alongside your Safeguarding Adults Board multi-agency policy, procedures, and practice guidance.*

## WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

Though homelessness is traditionally associated with rough sleeping, it is now accepted to be broader than that. The term covers a variety of living situations notable by the absence of safety, security and stability, including:

- People residing in temporary accommodation: night or winter shelters, hostels, B&Bs, refuges
- 'Statutory homeless': people who local authorities have a legal duty to secure a home for
- People sleeping rough: sleeping in the open air, or in places not designed for human occupancy
- Hidden homeless: staying with friends/ family/acquaintances, 'sofa surfing' or 'squatting'

## HOMELESSNESS AND SELF-NEGLECT – CAUSE AND EFFECT

Adults who are homeless have a range of housing and support needs and are often vulnerable or contribute to the vulnerability of others. Effective homelessness prevention strategies are a plan of action across all sectors which includes addressing health and care needs.

According to a thematic review of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) there are multiple routes into homelessness, including relationship breakdown, poverty, unemployment, no recourse to public funds, domestic abuse, cuckooing and/or an inability to sustain placements due to anti-social behaviour and/or aggression and exploitation by others. These routes into homelessness are often accompanied by a lived experience that includes adverse childhood experiences, loss and trauma, mental ill health, physical ill-health and/or disability, suicidal ideation, substance use and self-neglect (Homeless Link 2021).

Self-Neglect can manifest itself in a multitude of ways and is often accelerated by the absence of safety, security and stability. It can be both the cause and/or the effect of homelessness.

## RESPONSE

- Duty To Refer – The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 'Duty to Refer' means that partner agencies must consider the housing circumstances of any person who has engaged with them. If any housing issues are identified, partner agencies, with the consent of the person, must make a referral to the local authority homelessness/housing options team.
- Consider raising a statutory Safeguarding Adults Concern - When there is evidence that a homeless adult with care and support needs is at risk of abuse or neglect, a safeguarding concern must be raised in line with multi-agency safeguarding adults' procedures. Even if the harm is believed to be caused by self-neglect, and the adult is assumed to have mental capacity to make the decisions resulting in self-neglect, safeguarding adults' policies and procedures should still be applied (See Eva SAR, Sunderland 2018).
- Multi-Agency Working - If the statutory Safeguarding duty is not met, then consider initiating collaborative working for example the [Multi Agency Risk Management Framework MARM](#).



# KEY LEARNING



## A MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

A multi-agency response may be required to ensure that:

- information is shared, enabling a shared understanding of risk and needs.
- a jointly owned plan is developed
- assessments are coordinated (integrated where possible) and timely.
- organisations are challenged to try different approaches.

## USE OF LANGUAGE

To see someone as choosing this lifestyle is not only inaccurate but is likely to hinder the provision of care and use of appropriate legal frameworks.

## POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Practitioners must have a positive and non-judgemental attitude towards working with homeless adults, with the belief that they can make a difference. This requires a non-discriminatory response, relationship-building skills, empathy and creativity.

Professional curiosity is needed to explore whether a person is unwilling and / or unable to address their circumstances. Lack of engagement or non-engagement does not mean practitioners give up.

## PERSON-CENTRED

Ask the adult 'What do YOU want'

Wherever possible, actions and decisions should involve the adult - taking into account wishes, feelings, views, experiences, needs and desired outcomes in accordance with Making Safeguarding Personal.

Engagement should be persistent and consistent rather than reactive and episodic.

An assertive outreach approach is more likely to be effective in generating prolonged engagement with a homeless adult.





# QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER



- Have you asked, ‘What do you want?’ to the homeless adult and had a full and frank conversation?
- Are you aware of the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) Duty to Refer? Do you know the referral pathway within your own locality?
- Are all the necessary partners involved in a collaborative approach? Are you aware of the services that provide support in your location?
- What legal frameworks can you use to encourage partners to become engaged in supporting a homeless adult who is self-neglecting?
- Have you analysed the barriers to engagement for instance: lack of a clock, watch or mobile phone, levels of literacy, language, mobility/ability to access transport, lack of address for correspondence, not registered with GP etc.
- When faced with service refusal or lack of engagement, have you recognised that this may be due to past experience, trauma, loss or fear? This will require a different approach which guided by a comprehensive shared risk assessment, and the exploration of options within the statutory frameworks that allows the adult to make their own choices.
- Does the person have a support network in place i.e., family, friends, keyworker or carers, who could be involved in assessments and help to understand the adult’s personal history and current circumstances?
- Thorough Mental Capacity Assessments will take time and require multi-agency discussion and professional challenge. Executive capacity should be included explicitly in assessments, linked to the person’s ability to use and weigh up information.

## REMEMBER

It is a myth that there is nothing that can be done for a homeless adult who is self-neglecting and does not want to engage.

## LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

### Homelessness Support

- [Southampton City Council Homeless Advice](#)
- [LGA – Adult safeguarding and homelessness – Experience-informed practice](#)
- [LGA – Adult safeguarding and homelessness – A briefing on positive practice](#)
- [Homeless Link](#)
- [UK Government Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)
- [Crisis](#)

### Local Self-Neglect Guidance

- [4LSAB Guidance on responding to self-neglect and persistent welfare concerns.](#)
- [4LSAB Self-Neglect Learning Briefing](#)
- [One Minute Guide to Self-Neglect](#)



With thanks to Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board and

