



Development Session

SELF NEGLECT

Defining self-neglect

Covers a wide range of behaviour including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

- ▶ Care and Support Statutory Guidance highlighted self-neglect as a specific category of abuse.
- ▶ Lack of self-care
- ▶ Lack of care of one's environment
- ▶ Refusal of services

Link to other abuse types – e.g. neglect, domestic abuse, financial...

The term “self-neglect” can be stigmatising. Practitioners should be careful about how and when it is used.



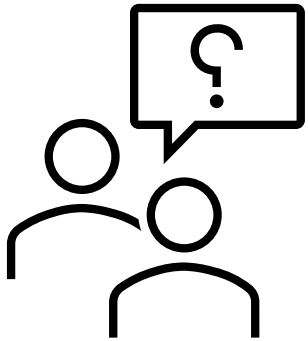
Self-neglect or neglect

	Self-Neglect	Neglect
Actor	An individual on themselves	A person (paid, voluntary, family) responsible for providing care or treatment to someone who is dependent on them.
Behaviour	Failing to care for one's own hygiene, health, nutrition, or surroundings.	A caregiver failing to provide basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, or medical care for a dependent.
Underlying issues	Can stem from mental or physical illness, injury, trauma, substance abuse, or be a conscious choice.	Lack of training or knowledge, lack of resources, reluctant carer, carer stress.

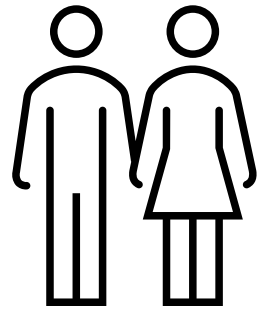
We need to pay close attention to the role informal carers play.

- Clear understanding of the level of support they are providing and how often.
- Identified on professional records as a person's informal carer.
- Consideration of carer needs
- Contingency arrangements in case of a breakdown in carer support
- Offer of a carers assessment
- All agencies play a role in identifying informal carers and signposting them to the support available.

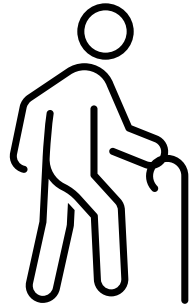
Local picture



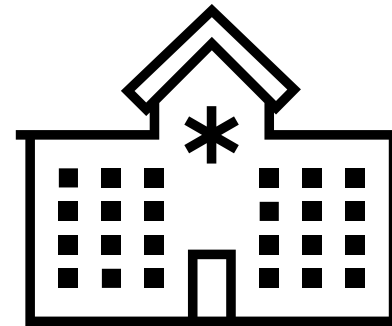
Self-neglect accounted for **19% of all S42 enquiries** in 2024-25



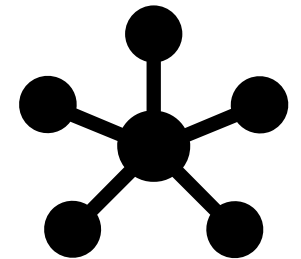
56% of self-neglect S42 enquiries were about **male adults at risk**.



The most common **primary support reason** was **physical support (35%)**.



NUTH (18%) were the **most common referrer** of self-neglect concerns, followed by **Police and Housing Providers (14%)**



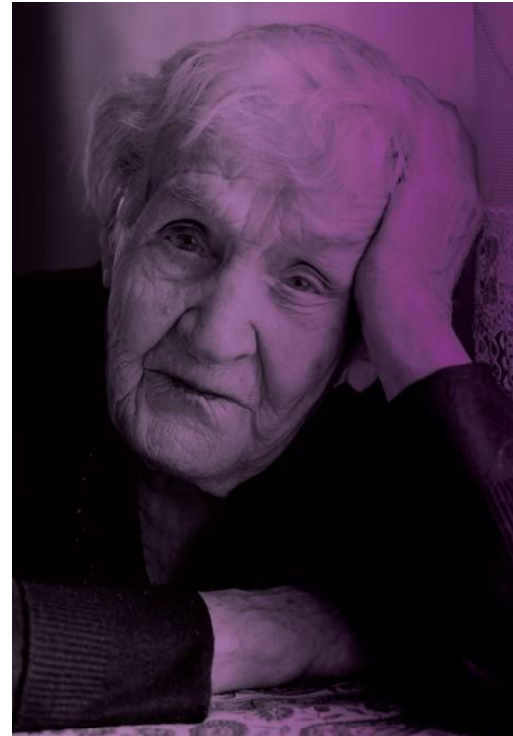
Self-neglect sometimes co-occurred with concerns about **neglect, emotional** and **financial** abuse

The link between poverty and self-neglect

- ▶ Is “self-neglect” as a result of financial difficulty?
- ▶ Impact of not having enough money to pay for food, bills, accommodation, transport, fuel, digital access may present in a similar way to self-neglect.
- ▶ Safeguarding Newcastle Against Poverty (SNAP)
 - Initiative between Newcastle City Council and partners to address the links between poverty and safeguarding risks
 - Framework and training for staff and volunteers to identify and support people facing financial hardship who may be vulnerable
 - Aims to prevent crisis, including those involving abuse/neglect, homelessness and financial exclusion.

Self-Neglect Policy

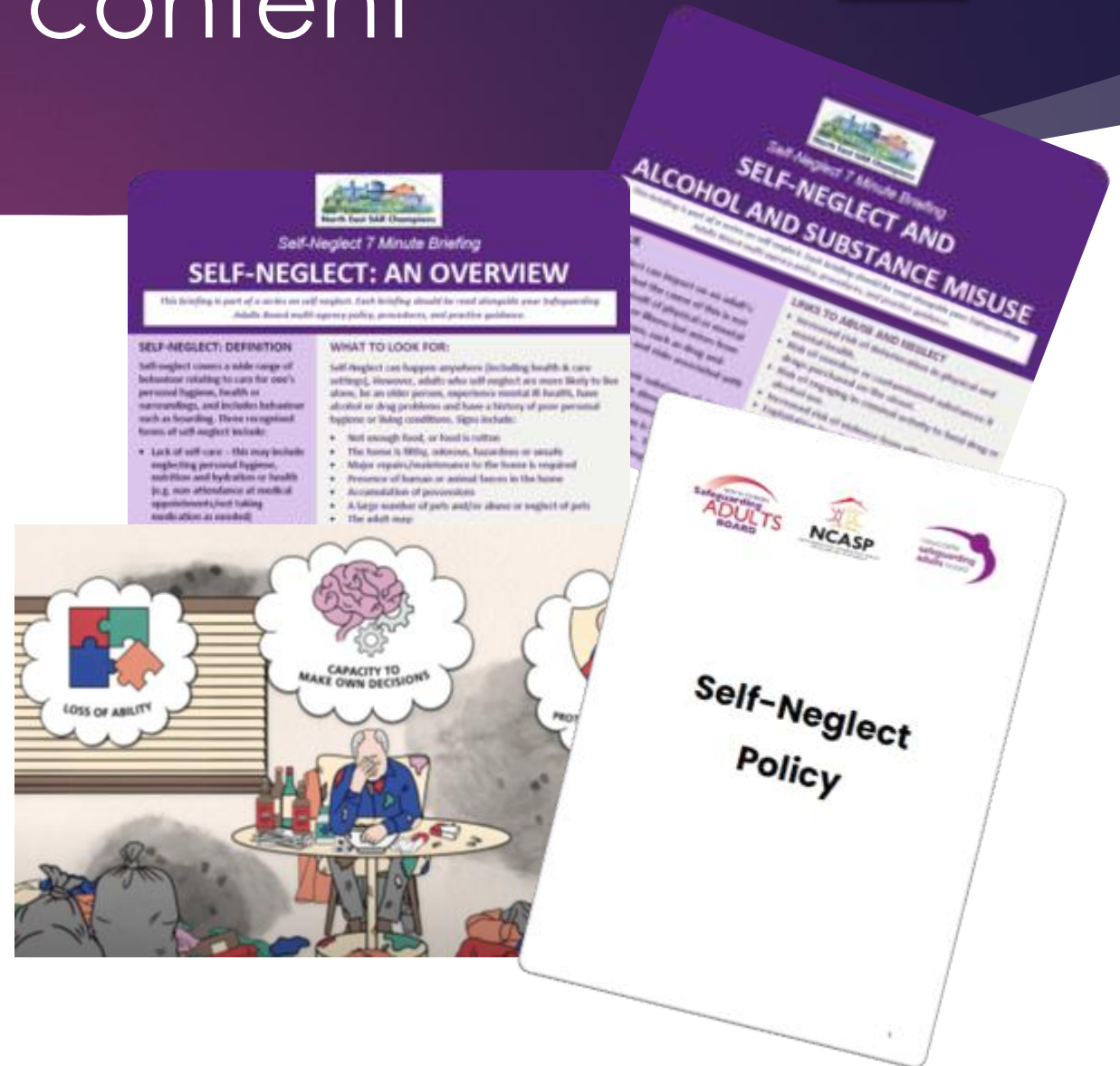
- ▶ Reviewed and relaunched November 2024
- ▶ Review recommended in SARs across North of Tyne
- ▶ Lack of awareness of policy a key issue highlighted.



"I'm worried about my sister, **she can't wash herself or make meals** but she won't let me help. Her home is very **cluttered** and she is spending all day and night in a chair."

Overview of policy content

- ▶ The Care Act (2014)
- ▶ Definitions of self-neglect
- ▶ Understanding self-neglect
- ▶ What needs to be considered by professionals when working with self-neglect cases?
- ▶ Levels of risk/harm and suggested responses
- ▶ Ending involvement
- ▶ Appendices
 1. Legal options
 2. Hoarding
 3. Nutrition and self-neglect
 4. Poverty and self-neglect
 5. Useful contacts



Hoarding Assessment & Clutter tool

- ▶ Can be used by any practitioner from any agency
- ▶ Risk identification – e.g. blocked exits, structural damage, rodents
- ▶ Clutter Image Rating – takes away individual judgement.
- ▶ Evidence onward referrals – safeguarding, fire, housing, RSPCA, environmental health



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Proportionate responses

“It should be noted that self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry. An assessment should be made on a case-by-case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult’s ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.” Care and Support Statutory Guidance

- ▶ Balancing people’s right to choose (refuse) with duty of care and desire to improve health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Holding/sharing risk with the person and services
- ▶ Evidencing consideration of MCA



Mental capacity

- ▶ Key to professional decision-making
- ▶ Time and decision-specific – who is the decision-maker?
- ▶ Presumptions of capacity should be revisited in self-neglect cases - “repeated unwise decisions”
- ▶ Executive functioning – can the person carry out the decision?
- ▶ Fluctuating capacity – longitudinal assessments
- ▶ When a person does not engage with a capacity assessment

[39 Essex Chambers Mental Capacity Resources](#)

[Assessment and recording of capacity guidance note](#)

If a person is assessed as having mental capacity this does not negate the need for action under safeguarding adults' procedures, particularly where the risk of harm is deemed to be serious or critical.

What do Safeguarding Adult Reviews say about self-neglect

The importance of:

- ▶ Early information sharing and robust risk assessment
- ▶ Face-to-face contact
- ▶ Effective collaboration between agencies
- ▶ Legal literacy
- ▶ A whole family approach
- ▶ Effective escalation
- ▶ Being professionally curious
- ▶ Trauma informed approaches
- ▶ Engagement
- ▶ Mental Capacity Assessments
- ▶ Challenge, reflection
- ▶ Robust guidance
- ▶ Being tenacious
- ▶ Fire risks

Multi-Agency Audit – health needs and self-neglect (Sep 2025)

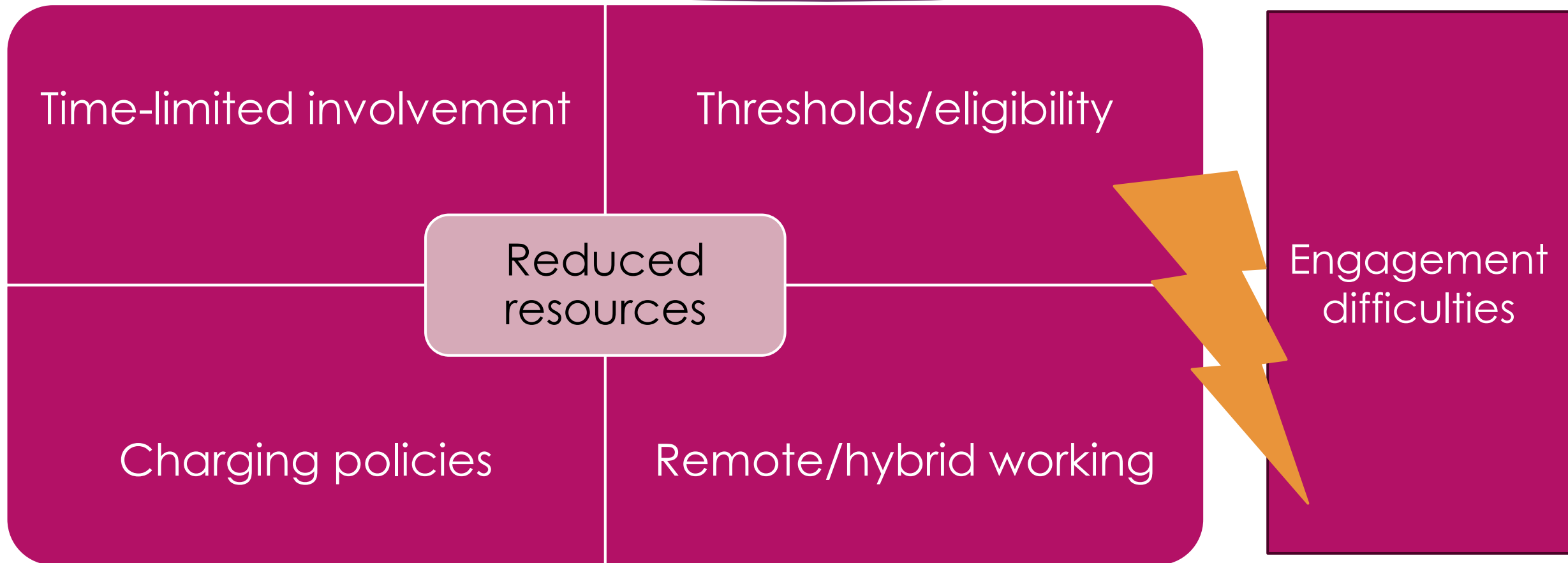
Identification and support for informal carers

Documentation of mental capacity assessments

Pro-active information sharing, particularly with health leads and GPs

Engaging private care providers in safeguarding adult processes.

System-wide factors



Some questions to consider

- ▶ Are you confident that there is an awareness and understanding of the self-neglect policy within your organisation?
- ▶ How do you support staff involved in supporting people who self-neglect?
- ▶ Are there opportunities for staff to work flexibly, over a longer period of time to facilitate working at people's own pace?
- ▶ Are there places and spaces where concerns and decision-making about self-neglect can be discussed (not limited to safeguarding adult procedures)?
- ▶ How legally literate are you/colleagues in relation to responding to self-neglect?

Further information/resources

- ▶ [Self-Neglect Policy \(Newcastle Version\)](#)
- ▶ [Self-Neglect 7-Min Briefings](#)
- ▶ [Self-Neglect Animation](#)
- ▶ [Self-Neglect & Hoarding Thematic Workshop \(training\)](#)
- ▶ [Self-Neglect Thematic Review Nov 2022 \(Newcastle\)](#)
- ▶ [Thematic Safeguarding Adult Review Self-Neglect Nov 2025 \(Cumbria\)](#)
- ▶ [Thematic Safeguarding Adult Review Self-Neglect Sep 2025 \(Northumberland\)](#)



www.newcastlesafeguarding.org.uk