

GUIDE TO

# SELF-NEGLECT

**The vision of the Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board is that all adults in Surrey live a life free from fear, abuse and neglect.**

## WHAT IS SELF-NEGLECT?

**Self-neglect means a person is not looking after themselves properly.**

Anyone can be affected by self-neglect, but people with care and support needs – such as mental illness, learning or physical disabilities, or dementia – may be less able to understand the impact of their decision to self-neglect than others.

## WHY WOULD SOMEONE NEGLECT THEMSELVES?

Typically, self-neglect happens when a person is:

- » Physically or mentally unable to care for themselves, or get the help they need
- » Unwilling to look after themselves, or refusing offers of help
- » Lacking a support network, or not engaging with available support
- » Unable to make reasonable decisions about their own self-care

## SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF SELF-NEGLECT

When a person is unaware of the consequences of their self-neglecting behaviour and not able to keep themselves safe from harm, it is important that this is reported.

**There are three main signs to be aware of:**

### 1. Ignoring their own physical care

This typically means neglecting personal hygiene, ignoring health issues or not eating and drinking properly. Warning signs include:

- » Dirty clothes, skin, hair or nails
- » Not taking medication
- » Skipping medical appointments
- » Looking hungry
- » Weight loss
- » General lack of interest in themselves

### 2. Not taking care of their home environment

This may mean the home becomes dirty, unpleasant or may even be unsafe. Warning signs include:

- » Very dirty rooms
- » Rubbish piling up in the house instead of being put out for collection
- » Hoarding and refusing to throw things away
- » General disrepair and lack of maintenance
- » No heating or hot water
- » Mice or other infestations

### 3. Refusing services that could help them deal with these issues

This involves not accepting offers of help or refusing to engage with support that's available.

## GETTING HELP

If you're worried that a person may be neglecting themselves or is at risk of harm, contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

- » Call on **0300 470 9100**
- » Text on **07527 182861**
- » Email [ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk)
- » Out of hours, call **01483 517898**

When you contact MASH, rest assured that we'll take your concerns seriously. We'll reach out to the person in question to discuss their wishes and work with them to find a way forward.

**In an emergency**, or if you believe someone is in immediate danger, always dial 999 for the police.