

Self-Neglect and Hoarding Presentation to Adult Scrutiny Committee

February 2025

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**Darlington
Safeguarding
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults



**Overview of Adult Self
Neglect reported into
Darlington Safeguarding
Partnership
2020-2024**



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Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Adult Safeguarding means' ***protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect*** .

It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, whilst at the same time supporting people to make their own choices and have control over their lives.

The following slides provide an overview of the work undertaken by Darlington Safeguarding Partnership to support multi-agency partners:

- help identify self-neglect and hoarding
- support those working with adults to reduce the risks wherever possible

What is Self-Neglect?

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North East region of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) developed a 'What to do about self-neglect' animation to raise public awareness of self-neglect:

[Youtube Video](#)

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Definition of Self Neglect

There is no standard definition of self-neglect, the Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance provides the following definition:

Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour: neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Self-neglect is a general term used to describe how an adult may put their health, safety and/or well-being at risk.

Definition of Self Neglect

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) describes self-neglect as:

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings
- Inability to avoid harm as a result of self-neglect
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

**Local Picture:
Safeguarding Adult
Review (SAR) referrals
and data relating to Self-
Neglect**

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Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)

A key function for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) is to undertake Safeguarding Adult Reviews as outlined in S44 of the Care Act 2014.

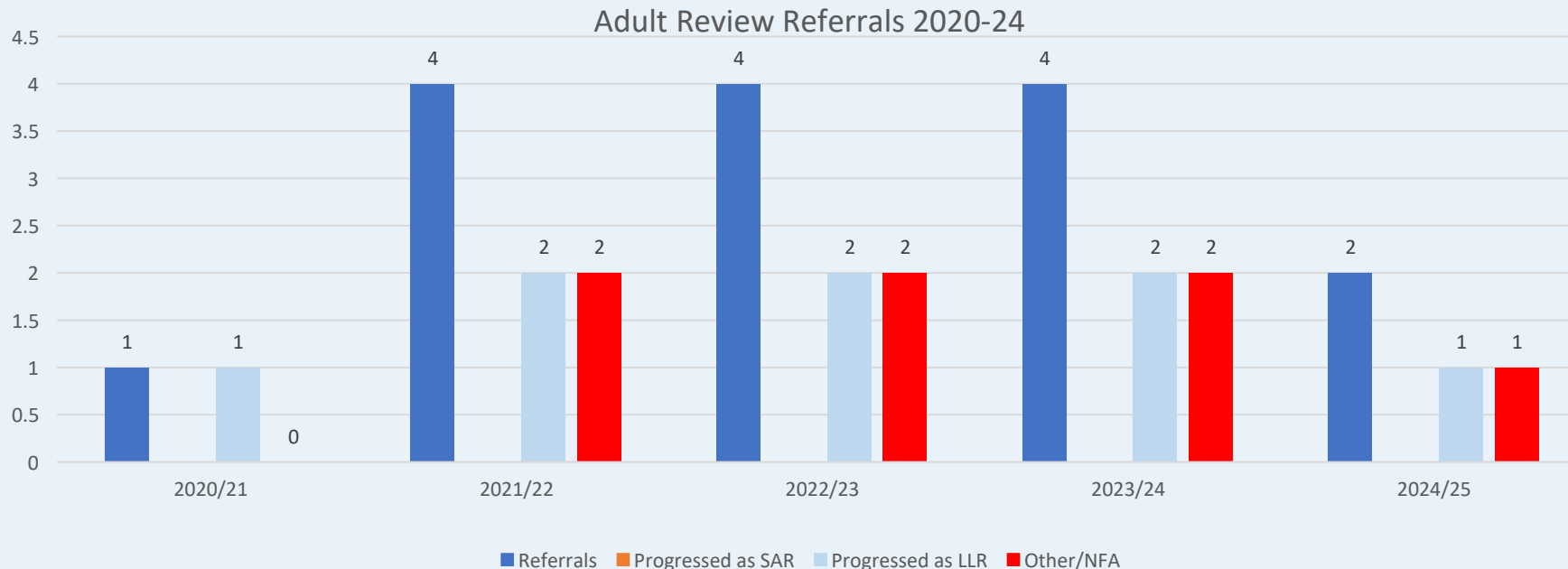
Safeguarding Adult Reviews (or Learning Lesson Reviews) promote effective learning and improvement action to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring again.

They provide invaluable insight into the way multi-agency organisations are working together to prevent and reduce abuse and neglect of adults and help to understand the practice issues and areas for improvement.

The next slides provide an overview of those review referrals into DSP along with Self-Neglect Data as reported through the annual Safeguarding Adult Collection return submitted by DBC and comparison with all England data.



Number of Adult Review referrals into DSP 2020 to Dec 2024



From the 15 referrals received:

- there were no statutory Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)
- 7 Learning Lesson Reviews (LLR) (46.6%)
- remaining 8 - 1 is yet to commence and 7 (53.4%) were reviewed and deemed NFA (i.e. only single agency review required or no further learning to explore).
- Of the 7 LLRs completed, 5 featured self-neglect (71%), 1 published – [Philip & Loraine](#)

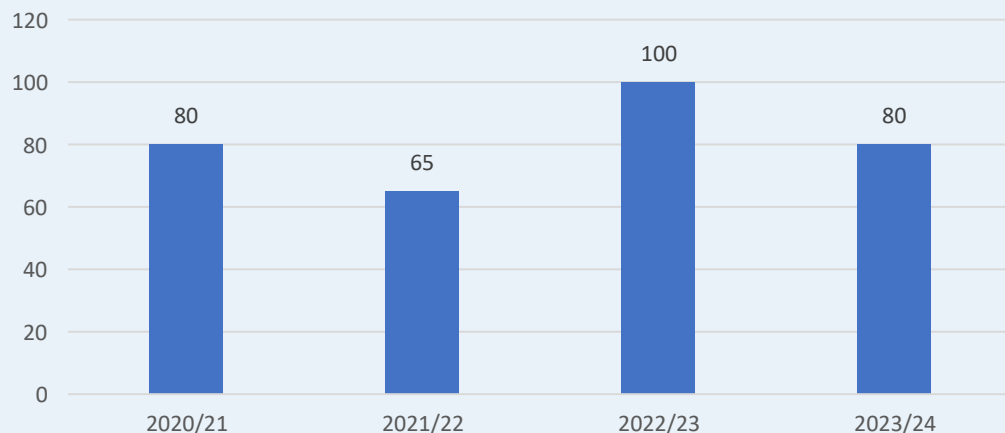
Nationally Analysis of SAR’s (2019-2023) has identified a marked increase in the number of SAR’s undertaken for self-neglect (from 45% to 60%)



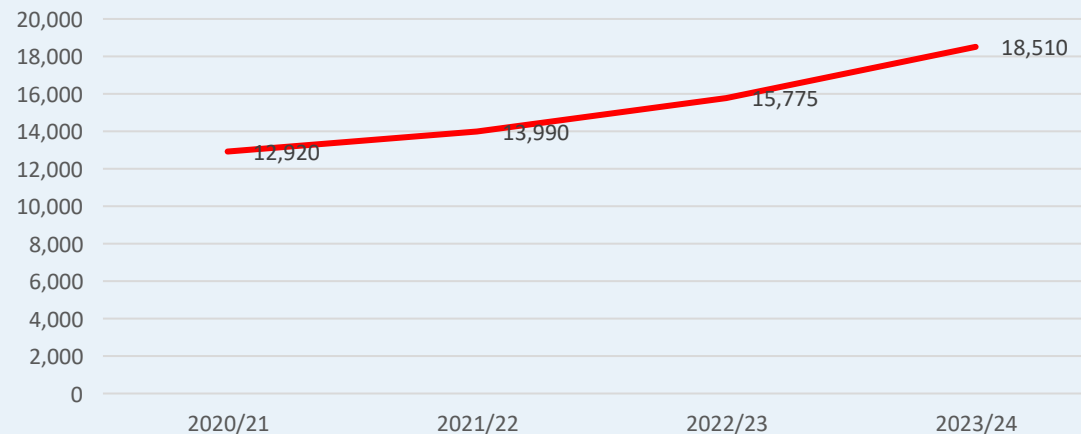
Safeguarding Adult Data 2020-2024 (SAC return)

Darlington and All England

S42 enquiries concluded where self-neglect identified as category of risk - **Darlington**



S42 enquiries concluded where self-neglect identified as category of risk - **All England**



This data (submitted by DBC for the annual Safeguarding Adult Collection return) highlights the number of S42 enquiries (S42 – an investigation into whether an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect) which concluded and self-neglect was identified as category of risk – **Darlington** showing a steady increase, only a downward trend reported in 2023/24.

This is a picture reflected both regionally and nationally - National data evidenced in the graph showing **All England** data – showing upward trend.

**Nature of concerns, trends
and themes identified
through reviews where self-
neglect was a feature**

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There were a number of areas of good practice identified:

- Some evidence agencies had worked together effectively with attempts to reduce the risk
- Good communication with concerns being raised and consistently shared with ASC
- Evidence services did go above and beyond what they were funded/signed up to do – i.e. carers, housing & GP
- Positive ASC practice of building relationship with adult first before having those difficult conversations around lifestyle and living conditions
- Fire Service engagement with adult to help them understand the benefits of making a change would be a greater benefit to something they didn't want to happen
- Family members involved and kept informed throughout

Key learning points identified through those 7 reviews

Self-Neglect and Hoarding Learning points:

- Recognition of self-neglect and hoarding is a complex and challenging area and is not always easily identified
- Self-neglect should not be viewed as a lifestyle choice
- Lack of understanding of Hoarding Disorder – now recognised as medical condition
- Mental health and the adult's reluctance/non-compliance with services over a period of time
- The importance of taking into account the history/trauma of the individual
- Consideration of fire safety and smoking risk when hoarding evident

Key learning points identified through those reviews

Multi-Agency Practice Learning points:

- Lack of collaborative working and coordination between agencies with practitioners often working in 'silos' - missed opportunities
- Good communication and information sharing is key when self-neglect is evident
- Importance of professional challenge and curiosity for individuals who consistently resist to engage
- Importance of multi-agency decision making in best interests of the adult
- Practice issues relating to multi-disciplinary meetings and ensuring held at earliest opportunity
- Importance of building relationships and gaining trust and keeping that dialogue open
- Need to consider flexible or creative approaches of working and engage the adult
- Cases should not be closed for those individuals who do not engage or fail to respond without discussing with senior managers within the organisation
- Often a presumption of capacity and no evidence of capacity assessments

What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning to help practitioners working across all partner agencies to identify self-neglect and reduce the risks wherever possible?

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What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

Identified Opportunities for Multi-Agency learning:

- **Self-Neglect and Hoarding Conference (July 2024)** focus on multi-agency practice issues and challenges of working with individuals who self-neglect and are resistant to engage
- **Provision of training and resources** – Now offer Adult Self Neglect & Mental Capacity Act Awareness e-learning, information sharing podcast and professional challenge video
- **7 Minute Briefings** –
- [DSP Learning Lessons Review Briefing on Self-Neglect](#)
- [DSP Self-Neglect and Hoarding Resources briefing for Practitioners](#)
- [Contributed to regionally published briefings on key issues around aspects of self-neglect](#)

What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

Development of guidance, resources and tools to support practitioners, which includes:

- Revision to its Multi-Agency Practice Guidance in respect of self-neglect and hoarding to include: key characteristics, challenges and risks of self-neglect, hoarding guidance including the living environment assessment (clutter rating scale)
- Provision of multi-agency self-neglect process and pathway to aid practitioners
- Provision of risk assessment tool to support practitioners as an aide to decision making
- Establish Risk Enablement Forum to discuss and manage those complex cases



What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

Implemented Multi-Agency Quality Assurance processes for live cases

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Quality Assurance & Performance Management Group (QAPM) has responsibility for scrutinising and evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements through multi-agency performance data and quality assurance activity.

The QAPM will collectively discuss a number of live cases on a quarterly basis which correlate with the learning from reviews to validate and check whether practice has changed and that the change is embedded and provide assurance to Statutory Safeguarding Partners.

DSP offers a wide range of multi-agency policy, procedure, guidance and resources relating to self-neglect and hoarding available on the DSP website – www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk

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- Managing Allegations

Welcome to Darlington Safeguarding Partnership website. We hope you will find it a useful resource, for keeping children, young people and adults with needs for care and support safe.

Organisation directory
The Partnership has developed an organisation directory of key safeguarding contacts within organisations across Darlington. View the [organisation directory](#) [pdf document].

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Learning Lessons Review Briefing

Self-Neglect

What is Self-Neglect?

Self-neglect is defined as covering a wide range of behaviours. A person may not be keeping themselves clean, neglecting to care for their own health or their surroundings, may refuse care or treatment for health and care needs, or could be hoarding various types of possessions to the point of being a risk. Self-neglect is a continuum of behaviours ranging from moderate to severe. It may be unintentional, such as not eating due to memory issues. Where self-neglect gets out of control, including an inability to avoid or control self-harm, it can lead to a high risk of death or serious harm to the adult involved and to others' health and safety. There is no standard definition of self-neglect, but the Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance provides the following definition: *"Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding"*.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) provides additional guidance on self-neglect
[Self-Neglect at a glance](#)

Understanding Self-Neglect

Self-neglect is often defined across three domains:

- neglect of self and lack of self-care
- neglect of the environment
- refusal to accept help and support

What are the signs to look out for?

Neglect of self may include:

- poor personal hygiene/ dirty or inappropriate clothing/poor hair care
- poor diet leading to malnutrition or dehydration
- medical or health needs disregarded (for example refusing medication or treatment)/refusing to allow access to health/and or social care staff in relation to personal hygiene and care
- alcohol or substance misuse

Neglect of Environment may include:

- unsanitary or dirty conditions which could result in serious harm to the individual or others
- hoarding
- situations which create a fire risk (for example hoarding)
- poor maintenance of property
- keeping lots of animals which are neglected
- vermin
- lack of heating
- no running water or sanitation
- poor management of finances (leading to utilities being out off)

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Self-Neglect and Hoarding New Multi-Agency Resources for Practitioners June 2024 Briefing Paper

Self-Neglect and Hoarding feature in a significant number of national, regional and local Safeguarding Adult Reviews, highlighting the fact that self-neglect is a complex area for intervention as issues of capacity, lifestyle and choice are often involved which requires the judgement of individual practitioners about what is an acceptable way of living and the degree of risk some choices pose to the individual and wider community.

Following a number of Safeguarding Adult Lessons Learned Reviews, Darlington Safeguarding Partnership has revised its Multi-Agency Practice Guidance on Self-Neglect and Hoarding to incorporate the learning which has been identified and includes examples of positive, flexible and creative approaches to support practitioners in engaging with people who are self-neglecting to help understand the barriers for those who consistently refuse support.

The partnership has also established a number of additional resources to support and enhance multi-agency working practice including the development of a multi-agency Risk Enablement Forum to manage those high risk and complex cases.

- Self-Neglect and Hoarding Multi-Agency Procedure and Practice Guidance:** The revised guidance includes mental capacity and self-neglect, guidance on the key characteristics of self-neglect and hoarding, a clutter scale tool, the issue of consent and choice, Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP), key legislation, approaches to service refusal and risk assessment.
- Self-Neglect Pathway Flowchart:** Outlines the process to be followed in referring concerns about self-neglect to Adult Social Care.
- Self-Neglect Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Tool:** the tool supports practitioners in assessing risk in seven separate categories and identifying the level of risk and may be used to support a referral to Adult Social Care.
- Risk Enablement Forum Flowchart and Referral Form and Manager checklist:** the partnership has also established a multi-agency Risk Enablement Forum to manage those high risk and complex cases where individuals with capacity are reluctant to engage with services and there is a risk to them or to others as a consequence of the self-neglect or hoarding.
- The referral flowchart** explains the process and the circumstances in which a referral to the forum can be made.
- The referral form and manager checklist** is a proforma which should be submitted via the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit (DSP@darlington.gov.uk) if a practitioner and manager are of the opinion that a complex and high risk individual meets the criteria.

The practice guidance and supporting tools and documents can all be found on the [Darlington Safeguarding Partnership website](#)

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Any Questions?



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