

# Key messages for working with people who self-neglect

All agencies have a role to play in supporting people who self-neglect. This document will help you and your agency to play your part.



## Relationships

Relationship building is crucial. Try to really get to know the person and 'get alongside' them; show interest and concern. Communicate clearly and regularly with the person.



## Curiosity

Try to find out why the person is self-neglecting – this may be connected with trauma, grief, mental health episodes or other experiences. Don't just look at the current picture; try to piece together the person's life story and find out what is important to them.



## Risk

Undertake a thorough risk assessment and explain your concerns openly to the person who is self-neglecting.



## Support

Look at the person's family network and any community networks and think about how these might help support the person.



## Partnership

Be clear about your role and responsibilities and those of others. Think about how to link up with other agencies involved to ensure a joined up approach. Share the risk and ensure that everyone understands that persistence and commitment require time.



## 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 / communicate their decision? Also consider the person's **'executive functioning'** – they may appear to understand but can they / will they see the decision through in action?



## Patience

Be patient and work at their pace. Be prepared for long-term involvement – self-neglect situations are rarely resolved quickly.



## 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