

## Hoarding Briefing

It is estimated that 2% – 5% of the population hoard-  
Potentially over 1.2 million people in the UK alone\*

### Definitions

Hoarding and collecting are not the same, the difference between a "hoard" and a "collection" is how these items are organised (NHS Choices, 2015). Hoarding could involve inanimate objects, animals or data.

**Hoarding** - In a hoarding situation items may be disorganised, taking up a lot of room and be inaccessible. For example, someone who hoards may keep large stacks of newspapers but they are unable to read any of them, due to clutter.

**Collecting** - Many people collect items such as books or stamps. Collections are usually well-ordered and the items are easily accessible. For example, someone who collects newspaper reviews may cut out the reviews they want and organise them in a catalogue or scrapbook (NHS Choices, 2015)

**Hoarding as part of self-neglect** - This covers a wide range of behaviour: neglecting to care for their surroundings, personal hygiene or health and includes behaviour such as **hoarding** (West Midlands Editorial Group, 2016).

The Care Act (2014) identified self-neglect (including hoarding) as something that may constitute abuse or neglect. Self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry; an assessment should be made on a case by case basis (Department of Health and Social Care, 2016). 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 and having care and support needs (Department of Health and Social Care, 2016).

### Why might people hoard items? Hoarding behaviour can be triggered by:

- A bereavement
- Stressful life events
- Fear and anxiety or a condition such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Mobility issues
- An inability to sort or categorise

### What Items do people hoard?

Some people with a hoarding disorder hoard a range of items, whilst others may just hoard certain items. Commonly hoarded items include newspapers and magazines, books, clothes, junk mail, bills and receipts, plastic bags and containers, animals and pets (Shropshire Council, 2018).

### Clutter in the house may increase the risk of:

- Health issues
- Unhygienic conditions
- Infestations
- Trips and falls
- Injury or death from falling or collapsed items or fire
- Damage to property due to fire

### How hoarding might affect People:

- It may be part of self-neglecting behaviour.
- Adults who hoard may have an underlying illness or health condition which may be connected to the hoarding behaviour. This can make it difficult to recognise the issue and for them to get help.
- It can take over the person's life, making it very difficult for them to get around their house.
- Parts of the house may be unusable, limiting the adult's ability to cook.

- The adult may be unable to heat the house sufficiently due to the heating being covered by clutter.
- It may cause conflict with family, friends or neighbours who are concerned or frustrated with the situation (International OCD Foundation, 2009).
- It can cause their work performance, personal hygiene and relationships to suffer.
- It can impact on their openness to visitors or people to carry out building works or repair.
- It may increase loneliness and isolation.

The hoarding behaviour could also be a sign of an underlying condition, such as OCD, other types of anxiety, depression and potentially more serious conditions, such as dementia.

### **Working with adults who hoard:**

Self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry. Partnership working is essential to support adults with hoarding issues. 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 and them having care and support needs (Department of Health and Social Care, 2016).

**Reporting Adult Safeguarding Concerns:** First Point of Contact 0345 678 9044 see local guidance [click here](#)

### **Resources, Websites and Guidance:**

#### **Websites:**

Clouds End CIC [click here](#)  
 Help for Hoarders [click here](#)  
 Hoarding UK [click here](#)  
 OCD-UK [click here](#)  
 Shropshire Council [click here](#)

#### **Resources:**

Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board - Keith's story: a personal and touching film about hoarding [click here](#)  
 Birmingham City Council: Research into Hoarding Final Report [click here](#)  
 Clutter Image Rating Tool [click here](#)  
 Gloucestershire Safeguarding Board - Am I your job (film and session plan) [click here](#)

#### **Guidance:**

Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board (2016) Guidance on responding to self-neglect [click here](#)

### **Document References:**

Department of Health and Social Care (2016) *Care and support statutory guidance*. London: Department of Health and Social Care. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#safeguarding-1>

International OCD Foundation (2009) *Hoarding*. Boston: International OCD Foundation <https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Hoarding-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Mataix-Cols, D. Hoarding Disorder, what it is and what it isn't. Help for Hoarders. <http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/what-is-hoarding/>

NHS Choices (2015) *Hoarding disorder*. London: NHS Choices.

Shropshire Council (2018) *Hoarding*. Shrewsbury: Shropshire Council. <https://shropshire.gov.uk/environmental-health/community-and-local-environment/advice-and-guidance/hoarding/>

West Midlands Editorial Group (2016) *KASISB West Midlands Guidance on responding to self-neglect*. West Midlands: West Midlands Editorial Group. <http://www.keepingadultssafeinshropshire.org.uk/media/1012/kasisb-guidance-self-neglect.pdf>