

What is Hoarding?

Hoarding is having so many things that you cannot manage the clutter where you live, and find it difficult or impossible to throw things away. It can also be diagnosed as a mental health problem.

Why do people hoard?

- Keeping items 'just in case', even if they've not been used for years or never at all
- Important information or memories could be forgotten if items are discarded
- Throwing things away will harm other people or the environment
- To avoid being wasteful
- Items make people happy and safe
- All items are viewed as unique and special

The main difference between collecting and hoarding is how people organise their items and how much it affects their life. Significant hoarding for an adult with care and support needs is considered self neglect and this needs reporting to the adults safeguarding team.

What are the effects of hoarding?

- Unable to find needed items, such as letters and bills
- Difficulty answering the door and welcoming visitors
- Difficulty with cleanliness
- Unable to access food, drink and cooking appliances
- Unable to use areas of space in the home
- Inability to leave quickly and safely in an emergency
- Feeling ashamed, lonely and isolated

When working with someone who hoards, seek to...

- Develop a rapport
- Help them engage in the community
- Understand the feelings they have about themselves, their home and why they hoard
- Use a strengths-based approach to work out how they can manage the risk
- Consider trauma-informed approaches and motivation
- Create cognitive dissonance between the person and their behaviours
- Use a multi-agency response

Other Types of Hoarding:

- **Digital Hoarding:** When people make and keep a large number of digital files, such as photos/videos, documents, emails and messages.
- **Animal Hoarding:** When too many animals are kept that cannot be properly cared for so that it causes harm.

Health problems that could lead to hoarding:

- Brain injuries
- Dementia
- Depression
- OCD
- Schizophrenia
- Personality disorder
- Alcohol or drug addiction
- Prader-Willi syndrome

How to reduce the risk of fire:

Hoarding can increase the risk of fire and a quick exit in the event of one...

- Ensure smoke alarms are on every floor and tested regularly
- Keep cooking areas clear
- Do not place items on heaters, lamps or other electrical equipment
- Do not store cylinders in the home
- Do not leave cigarettes unattended and place ashtrays on flat surfaces
- Place candles/tea lights in heat resistant holders
- Plan and practice how to escape in the event of a fire
- Ensure items are stored on stable surfaces at stable heights