

Definition of Hoarding

Sometimes, but not always, there are strong links between self-neglect and hoarding. Hoarding disorder was previously considered a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) but is now considered a standalone mental disorder and is included in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) 2013. Hoarding can also be a symptom of other medical disorders.

Hoarding Disorder is distinct from the act of collecting and is also different from people whose property is generally cluttered or messy. It is not simply a lifestyle choice. The main difference between a hoarder and a collector is that hoarders have strong emotional attachments to their objects which are well in excess of their real value. A person with a hoarding disorder experiences distress at the thought of getting rid of the items. Excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value, occurs. Hoarding does not favour a particular gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational/occupational history or tenure type.

Compulsive hoarding is often considered a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) because between 18% and 42% of people with OCD experience some compulsion to hoard. However, compulsive hoarding can also affect people who do not have OCD.

Introduction

This document sets out a framework for collaborative multi-agency working using a 'person-centred solution' based model. It offers clear guidance to staff working with people who hoard. This guidance should be considered in conjunction with the information contained within the Self-Neglect Toolkit which covers mental capacity and possible legal interventions amongst other things.

There is an expectation that agencies engage fully with the guidance to achieve the best outcome for the individual, while meeting the requirements and duties of their agency or Board.

The Care Act 2014

Self-neglect is a category of abuse under the Care Act 2024. This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. In practice, this means that when an adult at risk has care and support needs, their case may require a safeguarding enquiry.

However, as per the Self-Neglect guidance (to which this hoarding framework is attached) the initial intervention from Adult Social Care would be to offer an individual an assessment of their care and support needs; this may avoid the need to enter formal Safeguarding procedures.

Guidance for practitioners

Most people with a hoarding problem will be embarrassed about their surroundings so a trauma informed response is required. The below checklist highlights things to consider when there are concerns around hoarding:

Hoarding commendation checklist (include word version to download)

Presentation	Present Yes/No	Comments
Appearance-unkempt, dirty, malnourished, clothing damaged		
Mobility issues		
Health conditions		
Medication risks (emollient creams are flammable)		
Mouldy/out of date food present		
Are there unopened letters- unpaid bills		
Smoke alarms fitted/working		
Biohazards		
Pests/vermin		
Is the boiler working		
Are there any leaks?		
Structural damage e.g. loose fitting wooden single glaze windows		
Damp & mould		
Overloading of plug sockets		
Old/unsafe electrics		
Facilities-does the toilet flush, can they use the bath/shower		
Trip hazards		
Is the individual the homeowner?		

Use of Clutter image guidance to aid escalation of concerns

This guidance provides the following Clutter Image Ratings to identify the level of any possible hoarding, followed by guidance for practitioners, then courses of action for involved agencies to take dependent on the level of identified hoarding.

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – BEDROOM

Please select the CIR which closely relates to the amount of clutter



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – LOUNGE

Please select the CIR which closely relates to the amount of clutter



1



2



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6



7



8



9

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – KITCHEN

Please select the CIR which closely relates to the amount of clutter



1

2

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9

Level One Actions

Level 1 Clutter image rating 1 - 3

Household environment is considered standard. No specialised assistance is needed. If the resident would like some assistance with general housework or feels they are declining towards a higher clutter scale, appropriate referrals can be made subject to age and circumstances.

Level 1	Actions – SEEK CONSENT BEFORE MAKING ANY REFERRALS
Referring Agency	• Discuss concerns with the Individual. • Raise a request to local Fire & Rescue Service (&SFRS) for a Safe & Well Check and to provide fire safety advice. • Refer to Adult Social Care for a Section 9 care needs assessment. • Refer to GP if appropriate.
Environmental Health	• No action.
Social Landlords	• Provide details on debt advice if appropriate to circumstances. • Refer to GP if appropriate. • Refer to Adult Social Care for a Section 9 care needs assessment if appropriate. • Provide details of support streams open to the resident via charities and self-help groups. • Ensure residents are maintaining all tenancy conditions. • Refer for tenancy support if appropriate. • Ensure that all utilities are maintained and serviceable.
Emergency Services	• Local Fire Service - Carry out a Safe & Well Check if it fulfils Service criteria and share with statutory agencies with consent. • South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) - Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies (request consent) & feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits.
Animal Welfare	• No action unless advice requested.
Safeguarding of Adults and Children	• If there are adults or children presenting care and support needs living at the property they should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point by contacting Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224.

Level Two Actions

Level 2 Clutter Image Rating 4 – 6

Household environment requires **professional** assistance to resolve the clutter and the maintenance issues in the property.

Level 2	Actions – SEEK CONSENT BEFORE MAKING REFERRALS In addition to actions listed below these cases need to be monitored regularly in the future due to RISK OF ESCALATION or REOCURRENCE
Referring Agency	• Refer to landlord if resident is a tenant. • Refer to Environmental Health if resident is a freeholder. • Raise a request to the local Fire Service to provide a Safe & Well Check with a consideration for monitored smoke alarms/ assistive technology. • Provide details of garden services. • Refer to Adult Social Care for a Section 9 care needs assessment. • Referral to GP. • Referral to debt advice if appropriate. • Refer to animal welfare if there are animals at the property. • Ensure information sharing with all necessary statutory agencies.
Environmental Health	• Carry out an inspection of the property utilising the referral form. • At the time of inspection, Environmental Health Officer decides on appropriate course of action. • Consider serving notices under Environmental Protection Act 1990, Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 or Housing Act 2004. • Consider Works in Default if notices not complied by occupier.
Social Landlord	• Visit resident to inspect the property & assess support needs. • Refer internally to assist in the restoration of services to the property where appropriate. • Ensure residents are maintaining all tenancy conditions. • Enforce tenancy conditions relating to residents' responsibilities. • Ensure information sharing with all necessary statutory agencies.
Emergency Services	• Local Fire Service - Carry out a Safe & Well Check, share risk information with Statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. • South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust - Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies (with consent) & feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits via the referral form.
Animal Welfare	• Visit property to undertake a wellbeing check on animals at the property. • Educate the person regarding animal welfare if appropriate. • Provide advice / assistance with re-homing animals.
Safeguarding Adults and Children	• If there are adults or children presenting care and support needs at the living at the property they should be referred by contacting Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224.

Level Three Actions

Level 3 Clutter image rating 7 - 9

Household environment will require intervention with a collaborative multi-agency approach with the involvement from a wide range of professionals. This level of hoarding constitutes a Safeguarding concern due to the significant risk to health of the householders, surrounding properties and residents. Residents are often unaware of the implication of their hoarding actions and oblivious to the risk it poses.

Level 3	Actions
Referring Agency	• Raise Safeguarding concern with Somerset Direct within 24 hours by telephoning Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224 – or sooner if you feel there are risks that could materialize imminently • Raise a request to local Fire Service within 24 hours (or sooner if appropriate) to flag up the level of risk, and to consider a Safe & Well Check. • Refer to Environmental Health via the referral form.
Environmental Health	• Carry out an inspection. • At time of inspection, Environmental Health Officer decides on appropriate course of action. • Consider serving notices under Environmental Protection Act 1990, Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 or Housing Act 2004. • Consider Works in Default if notices not complied by occupier.
Landlord	• Visit resident to inspect the property & assess support needs. • Attend multi agency hoarding meeting. • Enforce tenancy conditions relating to residents' responsibilities.
Emergency Services	• Local Fire Service- Carry out a Safe & Well Check, share risk information with statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. • South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) - Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies & feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits via the referral form. • Attend hoarding multi agency meetings on request. • Ensure information sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and a sustainable resolution. • Provide feedback to referring agency on completion of home visits.
Animal Welfare	• Visit property to undertake a wellbeing check on animals at the property. • Remove animals to a safe environment. • Educate the person regarding animal welfare if appropriate. • Take legal action for animal cruelty if appropriate. • Provide advice / assistance with re-homing animals.

General Points to Consider

- Always seek the consent of the individual before making a referral or sharing information – refer to the [Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board](#) and own organisational information sharing protocols.
- If consent is not given but you feel there is a significant risk of harm to either the

individual themselves or others (for instance children living in hoarded properties, where there are fire risks for both the individual or to neighbours in terraced properties, or where there is a risk of harm to fire-fighters should they need to enter a property with significant hoarding or structural defects etc.), consult your line manager at that time for further advice.

- Additionally, seek advice from the [Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#) – remember, **you can discuss your concerns in general terms to establish whether the risks justify you sharing information without consent.**
- If you have any safeguarding concerns follow the safeguarding pathways document – attach link