



AVON
FIRE & RESCUE

Working with Hoarders

A multi-agency approach



Relocate Reduce Remove



PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

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What is hoarding?

“A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner. The items can be of little or no monetary value and usually result in unmanageable amounts of clutter”

NHS 2017

It's considered to be a significant problem if:

- **The amount of clutter interferes with everyday living** – for example, the person is unable to use their kitchen or bathroom and cannot access rooms.
- **The clutter is causing significant distress or negatively affecting the person's quality of life or their family's** – for example, they become upset if someone tries to clear the clutter and their relationships with others suffer.

Source: NHS Choices 2017

What's the difference between a 'hoarder' and a 'collector'?

The main difference between a hoarder and a collector is that people who hoard have strong emotional attachments to their objects which are well in excess of their real value. Someone who has a hoarding disorder may typically:

- Keep or collect items that may have little or no monetary value, such as junk mail and carrier bags, or items they intend to reuse or repair (see below)
- Find it hard to categorise or organise items
- have difficulties making decisions
- Struggle to manage everyday tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and paying bills
- become extremely attached to items, refusing to let anyone touch or borrow them
- Have poor relationships with family or friends

Where and what gets hoarded?

Anything can be hoarded in many different areas including the property, garden or communal areas. Items include, but not limited to:

- Clothes
- Newspapers, magazine or books
- Bills, receipts or letters
- Food and/or containers
- Collectables such as toys, DVDs or CDs
- Animals

Types of hoarding

There are typically three types of hoarding:

- **Inanimate objects:** This is the most common. This could consist of one type of object or collection of a mixture of objects, such as old clothes, newspapers, food, containers or papers.
- **Animal hoarding:** This is on the increase and often accompanied with the inability to provide minimal standards of care. The hoarder is unable to recognise that the animals are at risk because they feel they are saving them. The homes of animal hoarders are often eventually destroyed by the accumulation of animal faeces and infestation by insects.
- **Data hoarding:** This is a relatively new phenomenon. It could present with the storage of data collection equipment such as computers, electronic storage devices or paper. A need to store copies of emails, and other information in an electronic format.

General characteristics of hoarding

- **Fear and anxiety:** compulsive hoarding may have started as a learnt behaviour or following a significant event such as bereavement. The person who is hoarding believes buying or saving things will relieve the anxiety and fear they feel. The hoarding effectively becomes their comfort blanket.

Any attempt to discard the hoarded items can induce feelings varying from mild anxiety to a full panic attack with sweats and palpitations.

- **Long term behaviour pattern:** possibly developed over many years or decades of 'buy and drop'. Collecting and saving with an inability to throw away items without experiencing fear and anxiety.
- **Excessive attachment to possessions:** people who hoard may hold an inappropriate emotional attachment to items.
- **Indecisiveness:** people who hoard may struggle with the decision to discard items that are no longer necessary, including rubbish.
- **Unrelenting standards:** people who hoard will often find faults with others; requiring others to perform to excellence while struggling to organise themselves and complete daily living tasks.
- **Socially isolated:** people who hoard will typically alienate family and friends and may be embarrassed to have visitors. They may refuse home visits from professionals, in favour of office based appointments.

- **Large number of pets:** people who hoard may have a large number of animals that can be a source of complaints by neighbours. They may be a self-confessed 'rescuer of strays'.
- **Mentally competent:** people who hoard are typically able to make decisions that are not related to hoarding.
- **Extreme clutter:** hoarding behaviour may be in a few or all rooms and prevent them from being used for their intended purpose.
- **Churning:** hoarding behaviour can involve moving items from one part of the property to another, without ever discarding them.
- **Self-care:** a person who hoards may appear unkempt and dishevelled, due to lack of bathroom or washing facilities in their home. However, some people who hoard will use public facilities in order to maintain their personal hygiene and appearance.
- **Poor insight:** a person who hoards will typically see nothing wrong with their behaviours and the impact it has on them and others.

Key facts

- It is estimated that between 2% and 5% of the population hoard. This equates to at least 1.2 million households across the UK.
- It is estimated that only 5% of hoarders come to the attention of statutory agencies.
- Hoarding cases can cost up anywhere from £1,000 to £60,000.
- 20-30% of OCD sufferers are hoarders (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health).
- People who hoard can often stop landlords from meeting their statutory duties, for example, gas safety checks and other certification required for registered Social Landlords.

Assessment tool guidance

Guidance for practitioners

Listed below are examples of questions you may wish to ask where you are concerned about someone's safety in their own home, where you suspect a risk of self-neglect and/or hoarding.

Most clients with a hoarding problem will be embarrassed about their surroundings so try to ascertain information whilst being as sensitive as possible.

- How do you get in and out of your property?
- Do you feel safe living here?
- Have you ever had an accident, slipped, tripped up or fallen? How did it happen?
- How do you move safely around your home? (Where floor is uneven or covered or there are exposed wires, damp, rot or other hazards)
- Has a fire ever started by accident? Is the property at risk from fire?
- Is there hot water, lighting and heating in the property? Do these services work properly?
- Do you have any problems keeping your home warm?
- When did you last go out in the garden? Do you feel safe to go outside?
- Are you able to use the bathroom and toilet ok? For example to have a wash, bath, shower?
- Where do you sleep?
- Are there any obvious major repairs that need carrying out at the property?
- Are you happy for us to share your information with other professionals who may be able to help you?

Clutter Image Rating Scale (CIRS)

The purpose of this tool is to gauge the impact of hoarding on the person with the hoarding behavior.

Level 1

 Bedroom 1	 2	 3
 Living room 1	 2	 3
 Kitchen 1	 2	 3

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.

Actions level one (Green)

1. Property structure, services and garden area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All entrances and exits, stairways, roof space and windows accessible. • Smoke alarms fitted and functional or referrals made to Avon Fire & Rescue Service to carry out a Home Fire Safety Visit. • All services functional and maintained in good working order. • Garden is accessible, tidy and maintained
2. Household functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No excessive clutter, all rooms can be safely used for their intended purpose. • All rooms are rated 0-3 on the CiRS. • No additional unused household appliances appear in unusual locations around the property. • Property is maintained within terms of any lease or tenancy agreements where appropriate. • Property is not at risk of action by Environmental Health.
3. Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property is clean with no odours, (pet or other). • No rotting food. • No concerning use of candles. • No concern over flies. • Residents managing personal care. • No writing on the walls. • Quantities of medication are within appropriate limits, in date and stored appropriately.
4. Safeguard of children and family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No concerns for household members.
5. Animals and pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any pets at the property are well cared for. • No pests or infestations at the property.
6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No PPE required. • No visit in pairs required.

Level one: Multi-agency actions

Level 1	Actions
Referring agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss concerns with the individual. • Raise a request to Avon Fire & Rescue for a Home Fire Safety Visit Level 1/2 and to provide fire safety advice. • Refer to Social Care for a care and support assessment. • Refer to GP if appropriate.
Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action.
Social Landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide details on debt advice if appropriate to circumstances. • Refer to GP if appropriate. • Refer to Social Care for a care and support 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.
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Hoarding Assessment Form. • Make appropriate referrals for support to other agencies. • Refer to Social Landlord if the client is their tenant or leaseholder.
Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avon Fire & Rescue Service - Carry out a Home Fire Safety Visit Level 1/2 and to provide fire safety advice and share risk information with statutory agencies. • Avon and Somerset Police and South Western Ambulance Service - Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies and feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits.
Animal welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action unless advice requested.
Safeguarding of adults and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point.



Level 2



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Level 2 clutter image rating 4-6

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

Level two (Amber)

1. Property structure, services and garden area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only major exit is blocked. ● Concern that services are not well maintained. ● Smoke alarms are not installed or not functioning. ● Garden is not accessible due to clutter or not maintained ● Evidence of indoor items stored outside. ● Evidence of light structural damage including damp. ● Interior doors missing or blocked open.
2. Household functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clutter is causing congestion in the living spaces and is impacting on the use of the rooms for their intended purpose. ● Clutter is causing congestion between the rooms and entrances. ● Room(s) score between 4-5 on the CIRS. ● Inconsistent levels of housekeeping in the property. ● Some household appliances are not functioning properly and there may be additional units in unusual places. ● Property is not maintained within terms of lease or tenancy agreement where applicable. ● Evidence of outdoor items being stored inside.
3. Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kitchen and bathroom are difficult to utilise and access. ● Offensive odour in the property. ● Resident is not maintaining safe cooking environment. ● Some concern with the quantity of medication, or its storage or expiry dates. ● Has good fire safety awareness with little or no risk of ignition. ● Resident trying to manage personal care but struggling. ● No risk to the structure of the property.
4.Safeguard of children & family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoarding on CIRS 4 -7. Consider a Safeguarding Assessment. ● Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point. ● Please note all additional concerns for householders.
6. Personal protective equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Latex Gloves, boots or needle stick safe shoes, face mask, hand sanitizer, insect repellent. ● Is PPE required?

Level two: Multi-agency actions

Level 2	In addition to actions listed below, cases need to be monitored regularly in the future due to risk of escalation or reoccurrence
Referring agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to landlord if resident is a tenant. • Refer to Environmental Health if resident is a freeholder. • Raise a request to Avon Fire & Rescue Service to provide a Home Fire Safety Visit Level 2/3 and share risk information with statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. • Provide details of garden services. • Refer to Social Care for a care and support assessment. • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit resident to inspect the property and 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.
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an assessment of the property utilising the referral form. • Ensure information sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and a sustainable resolution.

Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avon Fire & Rescue Service - Carry out a Home fire Safety Visit, share risk information with statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. Carry out joint visit if required. ● Avon and Somerset Police and South Western Ambulance Service - Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies and feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits via the referral form.
Animal welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit property to undertake a wellbeing check on animals at the property. ● Educate client regarding animal welfare if appropriate. ● Provide advice / assistance with re-homing animals.
Safeguarding adults and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point.



Level 3



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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 alert 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 three (Red)

<p>1. Property structure, services and garden area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited access to the property due to extreme clutter. ● Extreme clutter may be seen at windows. ● Extreme clutter may be seen outside the property. ● Garden not accessible and extensively overgrown. ● Services not connected or not functioning properly. ● Smoke alarms not fitted or not functioning. ● Property lacks ventilation due to clutter ● Evidence of structural damage or outstanding repairs including damp. ● Interior doors missing or blocked open. ● Evidence of indoor items stored outside.
<p>2. Household functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clutter is obstructing the living spaces and is preventing the use of the rooms for their intended purpose. ● Room(s) scores 7 - 9 on the CIRS. Rooms are not used for intended purposes or very limited. ● Beds inaccessible or unusable due to clutter or infestation. ● Entrances, hallways and stairs blocked or difficult to pass. ● Toilets, sinks not functioning or not in use. ● Resident at risk due to living environment. ● Household appliances are not functioning or inaccessible. ● Resident has no safe cooking environment. ● Resident is using candles. ● Evidence of outdoor clutter being stored indoors. ● No evidence of housekeeping being undertaken. ● Broken household items not discarded, for example broken glass or plates. ● Property is not maintained within terms of lease or tenancy agreement ● Property is at risk of notice being served by Environmental Health.
<p>3. Health and safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human urine and excrement may be present. ● Excessive odour in the property may also be evident from the outside. ● Rotting food may be present. ● Evidence may be seen of unclean, unused and or buried plates & dishes. ● Broken household items not discarded for example broken glass or plates. ● Inappropriate quantities or storage of medication. ● Pungent odour can be smelt inside the property and possibly from outside.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern with the integrity of the electrics. • Inappropriate use of electrical extension cords or evidence of unqualified work to the electrics. • Concern for declining mental health.
4. Safeguard of children and family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point. • Please note all additional concerns for householders.
5. Animals and pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals at the property at risk due the level of clutter in the property. • Resident may not able to control the animals at the property. • Animals' living area is not maintained and smells. • Animals appear to be under nourished or over fed. • Hoarding of animals at the property. • Heavy insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, and so on). • Visible rodent infestation.
6. Personal protective equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latex Gloves, boots or needle stick safe shoes, face mask, hand sanitizer, insect repellent. • Visit in pairs required.

Level three: Multi-agency actions

Actions	Level 3
Referring agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise Safeguarding Alert within 24 hours if there are care and support needs. • If the individual does not meet the safeguarding thresholds for a referral, consider contacting Social Care regarding possible care and support needs assessment. • Raise a request to Avon Fire & Rescue Service within 24 hours to provide a Home Fire Safety Visit Level 2/3. • Refer to Environmental Health via the referral form.

Powers and Acts

Mental capacity

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 provides a statutory framework for people who lack the capacity to make decisions by themselves. The Act has five statutory principles and these are legal requirements of the Act:

1. A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity.
2. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps have been taken without success.
3. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he/she makes an unwise decision.
4. An act done, or decision made, under this act for, or on behalf of, a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made in his or her best interests.
5. Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

When a person's hoarding behaviour poses a serious risk to their health and safety, professional intervention will be required. With the exception of statutory requirements, the intervention or action proposed must be with the individual's consent. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (The right to respect for private and family life) - is engaged.

Interference with a person's life must be lawful, necessary and pursue a legitimate aim. In extreme cases, taking statutory principle 3 (above) into account, the very nature of the environment may lead the professional to question whether the customer has capacity to consent to the proposed action or intervention and trigger a capacity assessment.

All interventions must be undertaken in accordance with the 5 statutory principles and using the 'two stage' test of capacity (see MCA Code 4.11 – 4.25).

The MCA Code of Practice states that one of the reasons why people may question a person's capacity to make a specific decision is that "the person's behaviour or circumstances cause doubt as to whether they have capacity to make a decision" (MCA Code of Practice, 4.35). Extreme hoarding behaviour may therefore in the specific circumstances of the case, prompt an assessment of capacity.

Information sharing

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, we all have the responsibility to ensure that personal information is processed lawfully and fairly. All members of the public have a right to view any information held about them. Practitioners should consider this when they are recording information about that person.

Environmental powers

Environmental Health has certain powers which can be used in hoarding cases. Some are mentioned below. There is also a link to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health which notes the growing list of statutory powers available to address hoarding and by means of a case study and the results of a survey, reviews the incidence and diversity of cases coming to the attention of environmental health authorities in the hope that, eventually, that may lead to better ways to resolve them.

Public Health Act 1936:

Section 79: Power to require removal of noxious matter by occupier of premises (dealt with by private housing team)

The Local Authority (LA) will always try and work with a householder to identify a solution to a hoarded property, however in cases where the resident is not willing to co-operate the LA can serve notice on the owner or occupier to “remove accumulations of noxious matter”. Noxious not defined, but usually is “harmful, unwholesome”. No appeal available. If not complied with in 24 hours, The LA can do works in default and recover expenses.

Section 83: Cleansing of filthy or verminous premises

Where any premises, tent, van, shed, ship or boat is either;

- a) filthy or unwholesome so as to be prejudicial to health; or
- b) verminous (relating to rats, mice other pests including insects, their eggs and larvae)

LA serves notice requiring clearance of materials and objects that are filthy, cleansing of surfaces, carpets etc. within 24 hours or more. If not complied with, Environmental Health can carry out works in default and charge. No appeal against notice but an appeal can be made against the cost and reasonableness of the works on the notice.

Section 84: Cleansing or destruction of filthy or verminous articles (dealt with Private Housing Team)

Any article that is so filthy as to need cleansing or destruction to prevent injury to persons in the premises, or is verminous, the LA can serve notice and remove, cleanse, purify, disinfect or destroy any such article at their expense.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

Section 4: Power of LA to require action to prevent or treat Rats and Mice (Dealt with Environmental Protection Team)

Notice may be served on owner or occupier of land/ premises where rats and/ or mice are or may be present due to the conditions at the time. The notice may be served on the owner or occupier and provide a reasonable period of time to carry out reasonable works to treat for rats and/or mice, remove materials that may feed or harbour them and carry out structural works.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Section 80: Dealing with Statutory Nuisances (Dealt with Environmental Protection Team)

Statutory Nuisances (SNs) are defined in section 79 of the Act and include any act or omission at premises that prevents the normal activities and use of another premises, including the following:

- Section 79 (1) (a) any premises in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance
- (c) fumes or gases emitted from [private dwellings] premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance
- (e) any accumulation or deposit which is prejudicial to health or a nuisance
- (f) any animal kept in such a place or manner as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance

The LA serves an Abatement Notice made under section 80 to abate the nuisance if it exists at the time or to prevent its occurrence or recurrence.

Community Protection Notice: Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

The notice can deal with a wider range of environmental and ‘place-based’ behaviours, against a wider range of perpetrators. It can include requirements to ensure problems are rectified and that steps are taken to prevent the behaviour occurring again. North Somerset Council can carry out works in default on behalf of a perpetrator, if they fail to do so.

Building Control and Planning Enforcement

Building Act 1984

Section 76: Defective Premises

If it appears to a local authority that—

- (a) any premises are in such a state (in this section referred to as a “defective state”) as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance, and
- (b) unreasonable delay in remedying the defective state would be occasioned by following the procedure prescribed by [section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990],

the local authority may serve on the person on whom it would have been appropriate to serve an abatement notice under the said section 93 (if the local authority had proceeded under that section) a notice stating that the local authority intend to remedy the defective state and specifying the defects that they intend to remedy.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215: Power to require proper maintenance of land

(1) If it appears to the local planning authority that the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a notice under this section.

- (2) The notice shall require such steps for remedying the condition of the land as may be specified in the notice to be taken within such period as may be so specified.
- (3) Subject to the following provisions of this Chapter, the notice shall take effect at the end of such period as may be specified in the notice.
- (4) That period shall not be less than 28 days after the service of the notice.

Please Note: It is very unlikely Planning Enforcement could use this legislation to tackle hoarding which is taking place inside a property as it is unlikely that it would be injurious to the amenity of the wider area (unless it was spilling out of the windows and doors). However, S215 can be used when it comes to the untidy condition of areas outside of a property.

For further guidance and information please refer to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers Professional Practice Note: Hoarding and How to Approach it

http://www.cieh.org/uploadedfiles/core/policy/publications_and_information_services/policy_publications/publications/hoarding_ppn_may09.pdf

Housing

Housing Act 2004

Section 11 Improvement Notice

Improvement notices relating to category 1 hazards: duty of authority to serve notice

- (a) the local housing authority are satisfied that a category 1 hazard exists on any residential premises, and
- (b) no management order is in force in relation to the premises under Chapter 1 or 2 of Part 4.

Serving an improvement notice under this section in respect of the hazard is a course of action available to the authority in relation to the hazard for the purposes of section 5 (category 1 hazards: general duty to take enforcement action).

The Council can serve an improvement notice under this section requiring the person on whom it is served to take such remedial action in respect of the hazard concerned.

Section 20 Prohibition Orders

Prohibition orders relating to category 1 hazards: duty of authority to make order

- (a) the local housing authority are satisfied that a category 1 hazard exists on any residential premises, and
- (b) no management order is in force in relation to the premises under Chapter 1 or 2 of Part 4.

Making a prohibition order under this section in respect of the hazard is a course of action available to the authority in relation to the hazard for the purposes of section 5 (category 1 hazards: general duty to take enforcement action).

The Council can serve a prohibition order under this section prohibiting the use of any premises as is or are specified in the order relating to the hazard concerned.

Section 28 Hazard Awareness

Hazard awareness notices relating to category 1 hazards: duty of authority to serve notice

(a) the local housing authority are satisfied that a category 1 hazard exists on any residential premises, and

(b) no management order is in force in relation to the premises under Chapter 1 or 2 of Part 4.

Serving a hazard awareness notice under this section in respect of the hazard is a course of action available to the authority in relation to the hazard for the purposes of section 5 (category 1 hazards: general duty to take enforcement action).

The Council can advise the owner/occupier of the existence of this Category 1 hazard whilst not requiring them to carry out any works, they can advise that it considers the works specified in an attached schedule of works, and attached to the Hazard Awareness Notice to be practical and appropriate remedial action to be taken in relation to the hazard.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act, 2014 builds on recent reviews and reforms, replacing numerous previous laws, to provide a coherent approach to adult social care in England. Local authorities (and their partners in health, housing, welfare and employment services) must now take steps to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support for all local people.

The Care Act introduced three new indicators of abuse and neglect to Adult Safeguarding. The most relevant to this framework is self-neglect. The guidance states; 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 practise, this means that when an adult at risk has care and support needs, their case may require a safeguarding enquiry.

However, 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.

Fire safety

Hoarding increases the risk of a fire occurring and makes it more difficult for people living within the property to evacuate safely. Fire can also spread to neighbouring properties if the level of hoarding is severe or if flammable items such as gas containers are being stored. It also poses a high risk to fire fighters when attending the scene.

The sharing of information is extremely important for operational firefighter crew safety.

Avon Fire & Rescue Service is required by the Fire Services Act, 2004, Regulation 7.2d to make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in their area.

The multi-agency approach to sharing information about hoarding enables compliance with the Act and also strengthens the operational risk assessment when dealing with Incidents and fires where hoarding is present.

Safeguarding children

Safeguarding children refers to protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of their health or development and ensuring that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Growing up in a hoarding property can put a child at risk by affecting their development and, in some cases, leading to the neglect of a child, which is a safeguarding issue.

The needs of the child at risk must come first and any actions we take must reflect this. Where children live in the property, a Safeguarding Children alert should always be raised.

Safeguarding adults

Safeguarding adults 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, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.

This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Clutter rating and risk factors

<p>Low Risk 1-3</p>	<p>All doors, stairways and windows accessible</p> <p>No evidence of pests</p> <p>Clutter obstructs some functions of key living area – Looks untidy</p> <p>Safe maintained sanitation conditions</p>
<p>Medium Risk 4-6</p>	<p>Blocking of doors, some windows, possibly major exit</p> <p>Light infestation of pests (for example bed bugs, lice, fleas, rats)</p> <p>Clutter obstructing functions of key living space, stairs, entrances, hallways and so on</p> <p>Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions (for example food preparation surfaces heavily soiled, lots of dirty dishes, obvious odours which irritate and so on</p> <p>Evidence of burns to the carpet , clothing and so on.</p>
<p>High Risk 7-9</p>	<p>Whole rooms accessible, exits blocked, windows not able to be opened</p> <p>Utilities cut off (for example no heating, gas capped)</p> <p>Heavy infestation of pests (rats seen, heard, reported by neighbours, cockroaches fleas and so on)</p> <p>Key living spaces not available for use, person living in one room</p> <p>Evidence of urine/excrement in room, rotting food, very insanitary conditions</p> <p>Evidence of previous fire or burns in the carpet, clothing and so on</p>

Fire risks factors

- Previous fires
- Burns on carpets, furniture or clothes
- Evidence of unsafe candle use
- Poor quality/damaged wiring
- History of falls
- Dementia
- Evidence of mobility difficulties
- Hoarding disorder
- Decision making difficulties
- Carelessness with smoking and smoking materials
- Careless with cooking practices
- Alcohol/drug use
- Home oxygen user.
- Sensory impairment (hard of hearing/deaf)?
- Unsafe use of electrical equipment – overloaded sockets/extension leads
- Unsafe uses of portable heaters i.e. too close to combustible materials

Welfare factors

- No heating and/or lighting
- No food
- Vermin infestation
- Neglect of property
- Broken windows
- Hoarding

Fire safety advice for hoarders

Compulsive hoarding is a debilitating psychological condition that is only just beginning to be recognised. A very basic description of a compulsive hoarder is someone unable to dispose of excess or unused things to the point where their belongings are clogging their living space.

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm and test it weekly. You can contact Avon Fire & Rescue Service for advice.

If you do store large amounts of possessions in and around your home, you can help keep yourself safe from fire by these small simply steps.

- Whether you use a traditional oven and hob, or other methods of cooking like a portable stove, makes it a priority to keep the cooking area clear.
- Do not place items on, or close to heaters, lamps, or other electrical equipment.
- Do not store gas cylinders in your home as they are a serious hazard during a fire. If you have a medical need for gas cylinders, you require oxygen for example; they should be kept upright and outdoors where possible.
- Do not store cylinders in basements, under stairs or in cupboards with electric meters/equipment.
- If you smoke, use a proper ashtray that won't burn and put it on a flat, stable surface so that it can't fall over easily. Do not leave your lit cigarettes unattended.
- Avoid using candles or tea lights, if you must use them place them in heat resistant holders that hold the candle or tea light firmly. Ensure the holder is placed on a flat, stable, heat resistant surface. Keep the candles or tea lights away from anything that can catch fire, and never leave them unattended.
- Plan and practise how to escape from your home if there was a fire. Choose an escape route and keep it clear of possessions - in the event of a fire this will help you to escape quickly or allow firefighters to reach you if you are unable to escape.
- Ensure possessions are stored on stable surfaces and do not stack items to a height that they become unstable - they could fall over blocking your escape.

- Newspapers and mail stored in bulk are highly combustible and will cause a fire to spread rapidly. Sort mail and newspapers on the day you receive them and recycle them on a regular basis.
- In the event of a fire, do not attempt to put it out yourself - leave your home straight away and call the fire and rescue service once you are safely outside. Do not stop on your way out to collect possessions and do not go back inside once you have escaped.

Advice for hoarding sufferers

1. Acknowledge and identify the problem. According to experts, "chronic hoarding" is identified as when rooms in a home become "unusable for their intended purpose". Use the CIRS to assess whether your view of your home is realistic.

2. Tell people about your problem and ask for help. This could be difficult if you feel ashamed, or afraid that you will be forced to give up treasured possessions. There are people and organisations that can give you the practical, psychological and emotional support you will require, and you might be surprised by how understanding they are.

3. Identify an area in your home to clear. This could be a box, a cupboard, your car, or even a whole room. Small, achievable goals will help you to recognise the progress you are making.

4. Work on that one area consistently - at least once every day for a minimum of 15 minutes. Gradually increase the frequency and the time. Getting started is the hardest part, but once you start, you might find you can carry on for longer. Follow through each day until that area is finished.

5. Make a decision about whether or not to keep an item within 10-20 seconds. Looking at, touching and thinking about an item is likely to increase your attachment to it, and result in keeping possessions that you could otherwise have let go of.

6. Moving things around to different areas within your home is termed "churning" and doesn't help to reduce the number of possessions in your home. It is better to let them go, to a new location.

7. Remember, there is no need to keep things for other people or for "when" the house is clear. By doing this you are just avoiding the anxiety you feel when discarding, and making excuses not to let things go. It is not your responsibility to provide for everyone else, and they may not even want the item that you are keeping for them.

8. Create a timetable, and commit to it. Schedule your clearing sessions for regular times each week / day and if you have particular goals, for example, to invite friends over once the living room is cleared, set a date for it, and stick to it. Make sure you are not interrupted during your clearing sessions.

9. Recognise what you have achieved – take "before and after" photographs which will give you a real sense of pride as you progress, and reward yourself with something you enjoy, but that does not contribute to your hoarding. Don't use a shopping spree as a reward! Enforce the rule that you get the reward only after you have finished the task.

10. Take personal responsibility for your progress rather than wanting others to do it for you – whilst support will be important, you must be the driving force behind the project.

11. Set rules in advance for your helpers, such as: the final decision about all objects is yours. Give them guidelines to help them work more effectively, for example all newspapers that are over a week old can be recycled, but all letters and photos must be kept. Set rules for yourself too, such as: 'I will keep no more than 500 books', or 'I will let go of 50% of everything in my home'.

12. Remember that the bad feelings you experience when letting items go only last for a short while. You can test this theory by letting go of something that in the past you would have kept, and recording how upset you are at the time (on a scale of 1-10) then after an hour, a day, a week and so on. You will probably find that although it is difficult initially, the feelings subside very quickly.

13. You can be free from the responsibility for finding homes for every item you possess. Sometimes you just have to let them go, without knowing their fate. By taking responsibility you are finding reasons to keep them. Set these items free, and set yourself free in the process.

14. Ask for support from friends to take things away immediately which reduces the risk to keep things. Throw things out in the main bin or when the dustmen arrive. Remove items from the home immediately, to avoid changing your mind, or forgetting which items you have already sorted through.

15. Be conscious and aware of situations when you might be tempted to acquire more items, such as in a particular shop, or if the price is reduced, or someone else has discarded an item, and be prepared to resist temptation. You need to limit what is coming into the home.

Relocate Reduce Remove

Relocate items of clutter/hoarding away from heat and ignition sources. Relocate items to maintain a means of escape in the event of a fire, also to enable the closing of doors leading to your means of escape.

Reduce the amount of clutter/hoarding items to maintain a degree of safety, whilst maintaining a means of escape in the event of a fire.

Remove only remove items with the owner's permission or court order obtained by other partnership agencies enforcing their specific legislation.

Signposting



CARE&REPAIR

<http://www.wecr.org.uk/making-space>

Hoarding disorders

[07950 364 798](tel:07950364798)

jo@hoardingdisordersuk.org

Help for Hoarders

<http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/>

Mind-Bristol

http://bristolmind.org.uk/support_type/hoarding/

Hoarding increases the risk of a fire occurring and makes it more difficult for people living within the property to evacuate safely. Fire can also spread to neighbouring properties if the level of hoarding is severe or if flammable items such as gas containers are being stored. It also poses a high risk to fire fighters when attending the scene.

The sharing of information is extremely important for operational firefighter crew safety

Avon Fire and Rescue Service is required by the Fire Services Act, 2004, Regulation 7.2d to make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in their area.

The multi-agency approach to sharing Information about Hoarding enables compliance with the Act and also strengthens the operational risk assessment when dealing with Incidents and fires where hoarding is present.

Fire risk factors:

- Previous fires.
- Burns on carpets, furniture or clothes.
- Evidence of unsafe candle use.
- Poor quality/damaged wiring.
- History of falls.
- Dementia.
- Evidence of mobility difficulties.
- Hoarding disorder.

- Decision making difficulties.
- Carelessness with smoking and smoking materials.
- Careless with cooking practices.
- Alcohol/drug use.
- Home oxygen user.
- Sensory impairment (hard of hearing/deaf)
- Unsafe use of electrical equipment – overloaded sockets/extension leads, unsafe use of portable heaters i.e. too close to combustible materials.

■ Avon Fire & Rescue Service
Headquarters
Temple Back
Bristol
BS1 6EU
Telephone 01179 262061
www.avonfire.gov.uk
<http://www.avonfire.gov.uk/our-services/home-fire-safety-visits>

■ All organisations and agencies already working with Avon Fire & Rescue Service please book Home Fire Safety Visits via the referral mechanisms in place.
Organisations or agencies wishing to work with Avon Fire & Rescue service, or any issues related to referring please contact the vulnerable adults referral advocate on
0117 926 2061

Clutter Image Rating Scale



■ Working with hoarding and self neglect

Relocate Reduce Remove



The clutter image rating scale



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.

Avon Fire & Rescue Service

To carry out a Level 1 Home fire safety visit. Share risk information.

Level 2 clutter image rating 4-6

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

Avon Fire & Rescue Service

To carry out a level 1/2 Home fire safety visit with bespoke advice based on the risks present, consider further assistive technology. Share risk information.

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 alert 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.

Avon Fire & Rescue Service

To carry out a Level 2/3 Home fire safety visit in a joint agency approach, consider assistive technology. Share risk information.

Relocate Reduce Remove

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



Relocate Reduce Remove

Vulnerable Adults Department
Risk Reduction

Avon Fire & Rescue Service

Tel: 0117 926 2061

www.avonfire.gov.uk