



## *Self-Neglect 1 Minute Briefing*

# SELF-NEGLECT AND HOARDING

## WHAT IS HOARDING?

Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material to the point that living space cannot be used for its intended purpose.

Individuals may hoard the following items:

- Clothes and shoes
- Newspapers
- Books
- Junk mail
- Rubbish
- Food
- Containers (Plastic bags and cardboard boxes)
- Magazine
- Electronic data and emails
- Digital devices
- Furniture
- Animals

## HOARDING

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 a lifestyle choice and can be caused by traumatic life experiences.

The main difference between a hoarder and a collector is that hoarders have strong emotional attachments to their objects which are higher than the real value.

When assessing risks relating to Hoarding, Practitioners must consider risks to the individual and wider risks to others.

## 4 DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING HOARDING DISORDER:

- Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their monetary value.
- An adult with a hoarding disorder may experience distress at the thought of getting rid of items or simply be unable, either physically or through other health factors, to get rid of items despite an acknowledgement that changes may be made.
- The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- Hoarding is recognised as a mental disorder in its own right.

## MENTAL CAPACITY

An adult who hoards may see nothing wrong in their behaviour and have little or limited insight on the impact it has on them and others. Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews in cases of self-neglect often focuses upon the lack of the practical application of the Mental Capacity Act. Practitioners should ensure that the risks around a particular decision are clearly and honestly explained to allow the person to make an informed choice. This might involve telling someone that they are putting their life at risk. A Mental Capacity Assessment may need to be undertaken by practitioners. Learning from cases has also highlighted the need to consider whether a person has “executive capacity” – a person’s ability to carry out a decision they have made.



## KEY LEARNING



### HOW TO RECOGNISE HOARDING

- Evidence of fear and anxiety which may have started as a learnt behaviour or a significant event such as bereavement and lead from mild anxiety to a panic attack.
- Long term behaviour pattern
- Excessive attachment to possessions
- Indecisiveness
- Unrelenting standards
- Socially isolated – should also consider if they are refusing home visits and insisting on office-based appointments
- Large number of pets
- Extreme clutter
- Self-care – they may appear unkempt and disheveled.
- Poor insight

### A MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

Self-neglect cases often require a multi-agency response, whether this may be under safeguarding adults’ procedures or as part of multi- disciplinary working more generally. There needs to be a clear understanding of the person’s needs as a whole. A group of core professionals established to closely monitor risks and agree plans to manage risks, often works well. When someone is neglecting their home environment there are many organisations that are likely to be crucial to understanding and managing risks, for example: GP’s, Mental Health Services, Housing, Fire & Rescue Service, Police, RSPCA / Animal Welfare etc.

### KNOW WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT / ESCALATE

Where concerns persist and/or risks increase, there might be a need to seek additional advice and support.

This might be from a safeguarding lead, legal services, senior managers and/or safeguarding / MCA specialists.

### VALUE INFORMAL CARERS

Informal carers can greatly reduce risks associated with hoarding.

However, they need to be visible to professionals and appropriately supported.

# ? QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER ?

- As people may see clutter differently, Hoarding Disorders UK have published a [Clutter Image Tool](#) to support professional judgement. This will also help identify any deterioration of self-neglect.
- To support the Clutter Image Tool assessment, guidelines have been produced to support good practice in managing the balance between protecting adults from self-neglect and their right to self-determination.
- Do you understand the causes of the person's hoarding and their experiences?
- Have you communicated and shared information with professionals in other agencies? Have you considered the 4LSAB safeguarding adults' policy and procedures?
- Are you clear about any informal carer arrangements? Have informal carers been offered support in their caring role?
- Have you assessed the person's mental capacity in relation to hoarding and the subsequent risks? Has this been done recently, and been formally recorded?
- Have there been full and frank conversations with the person about the risks of hoarding and have these been recorded?

## LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

- [Hoarding UK](#) – 020 3239 1600; [info@hoardinguk.org](mailto:info@hoardinguk.org)
- [RSPCA](#) – 0300 1234999
- [MIND](#) – 0300 123 3393
- [Ann Craft Trust Advice & Information](#) – 0115 951 5400
- [Social Care Institute for Excellence](#)
- RiPFA- [Working with people who hoard | Research in Practice](#)

### Local Self-Neglect Guidance

- [4LSAB Multi-agency Hoarding Guidance](#)
- 4LSAB Guidance on responding to self-neglect and persistent welfare concerns
- [4LSAB Self-Neglect Learning Briefing](#)
- [One Minute Guide to Self-Neglect](#)

With thanks to Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board and

