



Homeless Health Conference, Brighton, Oct 2025

Understanding and Tackling

Hoarding

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Aim

Give delegates the understanding of how hoarding develops, and how to support clients. It includes the close relationship between hoarding and self-neglect, and the effect of trauma/s on how the individual may act

Includes:

- ☐ Hoarding or Extreme Clutter?
- ☐ Assessing fire risk
- ☐ Relevant legislation
- ☐ Step by step process to deal with hoarded property
- ☐ RMS Dehoarding Service

How many 'F's in the following sentence?

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS...

FINISHED **F**ILES ARE THE RESULT **O**F YEARS **O**F SCIENTI**F**IC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE **O**F YEARS...

Clutter Image rating

(see handout)

Clutter Image Rating: Living Room

Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



1



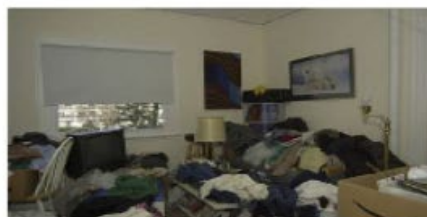
2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



Recent case

Equality Act 2010

definition of disability



- physical or **mental** impairment, and
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

DUTY (FAILURE) TO MAKE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

(This and failure to demonstrate meeting Public Sector Equality Duty – tripping housing providers up in court)

Common diagnoses of mental health disorders, learning difficulties, developmental conditions and autistic spectrum disorders

- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- ☐ Hoarding disorder
- ☐ Phobias
- ☐ Psychosis
- ☐ Bipolar disorder
- ☐ Schizophrenia
- ☐ Eating disorders
- ☐ Dementia

Neurodiversity

- ☐ ADD/ADHD
- ☐ Dyscalculia
- ☐ Dyslexia
- ☐ Dyspraxia *Developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD)*
- ☐ Tourette's Syndrome
- ☐ Autism / Autistic Spectrum
- ☐ Asperger's Syndrome
- ☐ *Personality disorders*

What is Hoarding Disorder?

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.

- ☐ In May 2013 Hoarding Disorder was officially recognised in the DSM-V (the fifth edition of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).
- ☐ Version 11 (2018) of the International Classification of Diseases recognises Hoarding Disorder – World Health Organisation

The five diagnostic criteria used to identify a case of hoarding disorder

1. Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their monetary value
2. This difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and distress associated with discarding them
3. The difficulty discarding possessions results in the accumulation of possessions that congest and clutter active living areas
4. The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning
5. The hoarding is not attributable to another medical condition or mental disorder

Hoarding can also result from other problems

- ❑ **Physical illness** – can lead to tiredness and disorganisation.
- ❑ **Dementia** – memory problems can interfere with someone's ability to organise themselves and their belongings.
- ❑ **Depression** – can make you lose interest in your normal activities, make it hard to concentrate and make it hard to make decisions.
- ❑ **Alcohol and drug misuse** – can affect your ability to look after yourself.
- ❑ **Schizophrenia** – unusual beliefs and a lack of organisation can lead to hoarding.
- ❑ **Bipolar disorder** – can make you shop too much (highs), and will interfere with your organisation (lows).
- ❑ **Learning disability or acquired brain injury** – can lead to problems with thinking and memory.

Hoarding can also result from other problems (cont'd)

- ❑ **Autism and related disorders** – collecting things can be a source of comfort. (clear communication / step by step actions / bite-sized interventions)
- ❑ **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** – you don't feel attached to your hoarded items, but you do fear what will happen if you throw them away, or fear of contamination results in inability to tackle post or throw rotten food away. About 1 in 20 people with OCD have a problem with hoarding. (NB Other research 20-30%)
(Royal College of Psychiatrists)
- ❑ **Attention deficit (and hyperactive) disorder** – trouble staying focused on one task, flit from one area of interest to another
- ❑ **PTSD or Victim of Crime** – creates barrier or buffer against further disaster
- ❑ **Struggling to cope with a stressful life event**, such as bereavement or redundancy
- ❑ **Excessive guilt about waste**

Risk factors – Increased risk of...

Fire

- ❑ Accumulation of combustible materials such as newspapers, clothing and rubbish (stats; 1 in 4 and 90%/40%)

Structural Damage

- ❑ Structural damage threatens the occupants, public safety personnel and adjacent buildings

Disease, Injury and Infestation

- ❑ Storage of hoarded items makes cleaning nearly impossible, which can lead to unsanitary living conditions and increases the risk of disease

Avalanche

Why someone hoards

- ❑ Difficult to discard things
- ❑ Problems with order, organisation and decision-making
- ❑ Acquire more things than they throw away
- ❑ “I may need this some day”
- ❑ “If I throw this away, I won’t be able to cope with the feelings of loss”
- ❑ “Homeless” hoarding – *portable nest, no stuff = not safe*
- ❑ “If I buy this, it will make me happy”
- ❑ Sentimental
- ❑ The objects appear beautiful or useful
- ❑ Stockpiling – “just in case”
- ❑ *Tsundoku* (‘reading pile’) – buys books but doesn’t read them
- ❑ *Bibliomania* – OCD related when collecting or hoarding of books to detriment socially or health

Other factors contributing to hoarding can include...

- ☐ Abuse (psychological, sexual, physical)
- ☐ Childhood issues (strict, unloving, only child, oppression)
- ☐ Chronic disorganisation (buy replacements for something they cannot find)
- ☐ Chronic overwhelm (prohibits them from dealing with day to day challenges)

GDPR allows for sharing of information, even without consent

Article 6 - at least one of these must apply:

- (a) Consent: the individual has given clear consent for you to process their personal data for a specific purpose.
- (b) Contract: the processing is necessary for a contract you have with the individual, or because they have asked you to take specific steps before entering into a contract.
- (c) Legal obligation: the processing is necessary for you to comply with the law (not including contractual obligations).
- (d) Vital interests: the processing is necessary to protect someone's life .
- (e) Public task: the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law.
- (f) Legitimate interests: the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests or the legitimate interests of a third party, unless there is a good reason to protect the individual's personal data which overrides those legitimate interests. (This cannot apply if you are a public authority processing data to perform your official tasks.)

Seven golden rules to sharing information (HM Government)

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act and Human Rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Share with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.

Seven golden rules to sharing information

(HM Government)

5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely** and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. **Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.**

The legal bits!



Environmental Health

- ❑ Section 83 Public Health Act 1936
- ❑ Section 79/80 Environmental Protection Act 1990
- ❑ Housing Act 2004 – Housing Hazards such as Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Vermin, Excess Cold, Fire

- ❑ Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 (S4)
- ❑ Various “amenity” powers

Police

- ❑ Power of Entry (S17 Police and Criminal Evidence Act)

Legal bits (cont'd)

Fire & Rescue

- ☐ Enforcement of Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- ☐ Safe & Well Visit
- ☐ In exceptional circumstances
Prohibition or Restriction under Article 31 of the Order

Animal Welfare (RSPCA, LA (EH), DEFRA

- ☐ Animal Welfare Act 2006 Offences (Improvement Notice)

Legal Bits (cont'd)

LA / Adult Social Care

- ☐ S.46 Care Act 2014
- ☐ S. 135(1) Mental health Act 1983
- ☐ S.2 MHA 1983 (assessment)
- ☐ S.3 MHA 1983 (treatment)
- ☐ S.4 MHA 1983 (assessment – urgent)
- ☐ Community Treatment Order (S.17A amended MHA)
- ☐ MCA 2005
- ☐ Court of Protection
- ☐ Safeguarding & Self Neglect

Legal bits (cont'd)

Housing Act 1998 (amended 1996)

- ☐ Ground 12 – B of T
- ☐ Ground 13 –
Deterioration of
Premises
- ☐ Ground 14 – Nuisance
- ☐ ***Acceptable Behaviour
Contracts***
- ☐ ***Injunctions***

Proportionality –
Akerman-Livingston v
Aster Communities Ltd
(2015) (Supreme Ct)

Birmingham CC v
Stephenson (2016) (Ct
of Appeal)

Our dehoarding process

- ☐ Referral
- ☐ Initial visit
- ☐ Quote
- ☐ Visits commence
- ☐ Progress Reports
- ☐ Progress meeting (*half-way*)
- ☐ Ongoing support / monitoring



Dehoarding Champions

Our
Dehoarding
Practitioners

- ☐ Empathy and understanding
 - ☐ Work in pairs
 - ☐ Hands-on service
 - ☐ Tipper / van if or when required
 - ☐ Typical case 3 hours per week for 3 months
 - ☐ 85% success rate (in achieving goal)
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Any questions?



Dehoarding Champions

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