

Multi-Agency Hoarding Framework

Guidance for Practitioners in the Bradford District

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1. Introduction

This document sets out a framework for collaborative multi-agency working within Bradford District using a 'person centred solution' based model. The protocol offers clear guidance to staff working with people who hoard.

2. Who Does This Framework Apply To?

This framework applies to all agencies and professionals within Bradford District area who are working with or supporting people who may hoard and those who have signed up to the Protocol.

There is an expectation that everyone in partnership with the protocol engages fully to achieve the best outcome for the individual, while meeting the requirements and duties of their agency or Board.

This framework is supported by the Bradford Safeguarding Adults Board

3. Aims of This Protocol

- Create a safer and healthier environment for the individual and others affected by the hoarding behaviour, e.g. family, neighbours.
- Develop a multi-agency pathway which will maximise the use of existing service's and resources and which may reduce the need for compulsory solutions.
- Ensure that when solutions are required, there is a process for planning solutions tailored to meet the needs of the individual and utilising a person centred approach. Possible solutions could include clearance of the hoard, professional support and monitoring, property repairs and permanent or temporary re-housing.
- Develop creative ways of engaging individuals in the process.
- To establish best practice and improve knowledge of legislation that relates to hoarding behaviour through the Hoarding Panel.
- Ensure effective Partnership working and information sharing.

4.1 Definition of Hoarding¹

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

Hoarding is considered 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 quality of life of the person or their family – for example, they become upset if someone tries to clear the clutter and their relationship suffers

Hoarding disorders are challenging to treat because many people who hoard frequently do not see it as a problem, or have little awareness of how it's affecting their life or the lives of others.

Many do realise they have a problem but are reluctant to seek help because they feel extremely ashamed, humiliated or guilty about it.

It's really important to encourage a person who is hoarding to seek help, as their difficulties discarding objects can not only cause loneliness and mental health problems but also pose a health and safety risk.

If not tackled, it's a problem that will probably never go away.

Hoarding is now considered a standalone mental health disorder and is included in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) 2013

The reasons why someone begins hoarding are not fully understood.

It can be a symptom of another condition. For example, someone with mobility problems may be physically unable to clear the huge amounts of clutter they have acquired, and people with learning disabilities or people developing dementia may be unable to categorise and dispose of items.

Mental health problems associated with hoarding include:

- **Severe depression**
- **Psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia**
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)**

¹ NHS England. (2018). Hoarding Disorder. [online] Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hoarding-disorder/> [Accessed Date 20/03/2019].

In some cases, hoarding is a condition in itself and often associated with self-neglect. These people are more likely to:

- **live alone**
- **be unmarried**
- **has had a deprived childhood, with either a lack of material objects or a poor relationship with other members of their family**
- **have a family history of hoarding**
- **have grown up in a cluttered home and never learned to prioritise and sort items**

Many people who hoard have strongly held beliefs related to acquiring and discarding things, such as: "I may need this someday" or "If I buy this, it will make me happy". Others may be struggling to cope with a stressful life event, such as the death of a loved one.

Attempts to discard things often bring up very strong emotions that can feel overwhelming, so the person hoarding often tends to put off or avoid making decisions about what can be thrown out.

Collecting or Hoarding?

Many people collect items such as books or stamps, and this is not considered a problem. The difference between a "hoard" and a "collection" is how these items are organised.

4.3 Signs of a hoarding disorder

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**
- **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**

Hoarding can start as early as the teenage years and gets more noticeable with age. For many, hoarding becomes more problematic in older age, but the problem is usually well established by this time. Some people with a hoarding disorder will hoard a range of items, while others may just hoard certain types of objects.

Items that are often hoarded include:

- **newspapers and magazines**
- **books**
- **clothes**
- **leaflets and letters, including junk mail**
- **bills and receipts**
- **containers, including plastic bags and cardboard boxes**
- **household supplies**

Some people also hoard animals (dead or alive) which they may not be able to look after properly.

In many cases, the symptoms will be quite obvious, in terms of clutter, excessive items in the property or even spilling onto gardens or public areas, non-engagement, referrals from other agencies, for example environmental health, fire services and/or local authority housing management or housing associations.

4.4 Why hoarding disorders are a problem

A hoarding disorder can be a problem for several reasons. It can take over the person's life, making it very difficult for them to get around their house. It can cause their work performance, personal hygiene and relationships to suffer.

The person hoarding is usually reluctant or unable to have visitors or even allow tradesmen in to carry out essential repairs, which can cause isolation and loneliness.

The clutter can pose a health risk to the person and anyone who lives in or visits their house. For example, it can:

- **make cleaning very difficult, leading to unhygienic conditions and encouraging rodent or insect infestations**
- **be a fire risk and block exits in the event of a fire**
- **cause trips and falls**
- **fall over or collapse on people, if kept in large piles**

The hoarding could also be a sign of an underlying condition, such as OCD, other types of anxiety, depression and dementia.

Refusal by hoarders to engage with professionals or other intervention poses a challenge to progress. Good professional practice would explore all remaining avenues for the individual to engage. This is because being met with a “shut door” is in the nature of the disorder or hoarding behaviour. It is worth remembering that non-engagement is not exclusive to those suffering from hoarding disorder. It should be treated within the same practical, professional and legal framework as someone who suffers from any other condition or disorder (for example, Alzheimer’s disease, schizophrenia etc).

Blitz Cleans: one of the most popular responses to hoarding is to perform a “blitz clean” – the clearing out all or most of the offending items. Blitz cleans often feature repeatedly in the individual’s case notes or history. Whilst there may sometimes be a need for a blitz clean to deal with environmental health or fire safety concerns it more often only serves the person or agency that is concerned or complaining about the hoarding rather than offering a long-term solution for the hoarding sufferer. Blitz cleans are likely to significantly distress the hoarder and is a costly action to take. It does not address the cause of the hoarding behaviour and may exacerbate their symptoms. Without a longer-term solution such as hoarding specific CBT and/or other professional intervention the individual could well resume their hoarding activities.

5. 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 of Practice 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.

6. Information Sharing

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, we all have the responsibility to ensure that Personal information is processed lawfully and fairly.

7. Bradford District Hoarding Panel

This Protocol establishes the Bradford District Hoarding Panel as a forum for professionals and agencies dealing with hoarding cases within Bradford District to discuss and jointly find ways to resolve those cases.

The Panel's role is to:

- review the circumstances of cases and the actions taken so far
- challenge and advise on the options available
- help the relevant organisations to coordinate and complete their actions
- remove barriers to cooperation
- signpost to agencies or organisations that could contribute

The Panel is available to all organisations and agencies within Bradford District that are signatories to this protocol.

The Panel will normally only accept cases for discussion in the following circumstances:

Where the hoarding is graded at 5 or above on the hoarding clutter image rating scale (Appendix B) and:

The presenting organisation has attempted to follow the guidance in this protocol has been unable to resolve the situation, or

The presenting organisation has been unable to gain the cooperation of other organisations to take action, or

The presenting organisation has good reason to believe that there is severe hoarding (5 or greater on the hoarding clutter scale) but has been unable to gain access to the property or engage with the person involved despite persistent attempts and needs the assistance of other agencies.

The Panel may recommend a course of action to progress a particular case or problem. It has no decision-making powers to direct organisations or Council departments to take or desist from a course action, but it acts as this protocol's mechanism to manage and progress hoarding cases and maintain good practice standards. Organisations who wish to depart from recommendations of the Panel should be able to provide written reasons to the Panel and for their own records.

The Panel has no financial budget and is not able to provide or direct resources either from within the Council or from other organisations.

The Panel members are named representatives from the Council and other organisations. The following services will normally be represented at all Panel meetings:

- Adult Social Care
- Mental Health Service
- Registered Social Landlord (if applicable)
- West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Housing Standards Team

The following services are expected to attend when requested by the Panel coordinator:

- Children's Services
- West Yorkshire police
- Health services
- RSPCA (where animals are, may be or have been involved)
- Any other relevant or involved service, individual or organisation

BMDC Housing Standards Team will coordinate Panel meetings including:

- receiving requests for cases to be considered
- deciding which cases are considered (with feedback to the requesting organisation)
- requesting attendance from referring organisations
- requesting information for the Panel from organisations
- arranging meetings of the Panel
- keep a note of proceedings of the Panel

The Panel will nominate a case lead for each case it considers. The case lead will normally be the representative of the organisation that requested the Panel hearing unless it is more effective or appropriate to nominate another agreed case lead.

The case lead will take responsibility for putting the recommendations of the Panel into effect and ensuring the cooperation of the other services. The case lead may refer the case back to the Panel for further discussion if the circumstances of the case have substantially changed, an impasse has been reached or they have been unable to secure the cooperation of other services. The case lead will update the panel on all completed actions at the following meeting.

The Panel will meet every six weeks or less often depending on its case load or any intervening urgent matters requiring an earlier meeting.

8. Referrals to the Hoarding Panel

Organisations should email requests for discussion by the Hoarding Panel to the Housing Standards Team using the following email address;

CHPEnquiries@bradford.gov.uk

Requests must be accompanied by:

- a completed Hoarding Assessment tool (see Appendix B);
- Photographs of the property/clutter where available;
- Supporting evidence including referral to West Yorkshire Fire Service, consideration of vulnerability, contacts with next of kin, involvement of other support services, safeguarding, tenancy conditions enforcement, antisocial behaviour enforcement, clearing and cleaning work undertaken;
- any other relevant information held by the organisation;

Contact details for all other organisations and individuals who are or have been involved in the case.

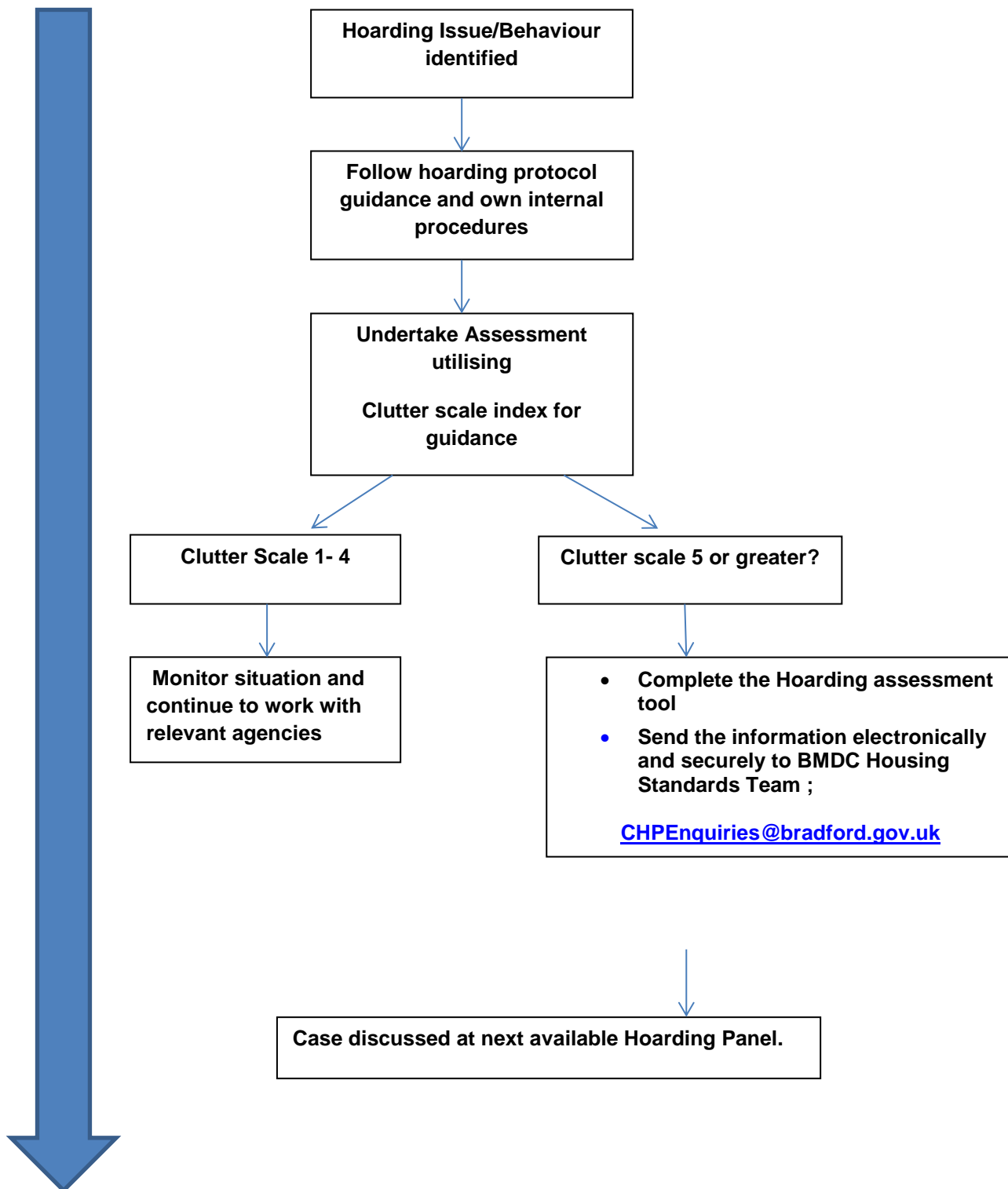
All information must be sent electronically and securely in accordance with this Protocol's information sharing agreement.

Referral to the Hoarding Panel does not mean that immediate procedures to minimise risks to individuals are delayed – referrals to the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service must be made in cases where hoarding is rated at 5 or above on the Clutter Rating Image Scale (Appendix A) or where it is under 5 but there are flammable, hazardous, electrical or other unusual risk items.

Where you are concerned about the potential safety of or risk posed by hoarding related behaviours to a child, you must make a referral to Children's Social Services in case child protection measures need to be implemented. You should notify Children's Services whether or not you have also made a referral to the Hoarding Panel. You should also notify the Hoarding Panel if you have made a referral to Children's Services as it may well be that the Panel will want a representative from Children's Services to attend any relevant meeting.

Where there is evidence of self-neglect and hoarding related behaviours a referral must be made via the self-neglect protocols in case self-neglect measures need to be implemented. Organisations should also notify the Hoarding Panel if self-neglect measures have been taken. Bradford safeguarding Adults social care may request a representative from the Hoarding Panel to attend any relevant meeting.

9. Hoarding Panel referrals



10. Guidelines for Handling Hoarding cases

Firstly establish whether the person does appear to be displaying hoarding related behaviours or suffering from hoarding disorder and that they are not just exercising their right to collect items or express different lifestyles and habits. Some things to look for:

- Are rooms in their property (bathroom, toilet, bedroom and kitchen) not used or unusable for the purposes to which they have been designed, because of an excess of clutter?
- Can appliances and furniture (cooker, fridge, settee, chairs etc.) be used?
- Are they unable to freely open their front or back door?
- Are all plug sockets and pipes hidden from view or trapped in by possessions?
- Are rooms packed with items to such an extent that it could pose a fire, health or safety hazard?
- Is their mobility around the property or otherwise limited by the amount of items?
- Do the items pose any environmental or other health and safety related obstacle/issue?

Assess the level of the hoarding by using the CIRS (clutter image rating scale) for each room. See Appendix A.

If the hoarding is graded at 5 or above on the hoarding clutter image rating scale then complete the hoarding assessment tool. See Appendix B.

11. Resident is vulnerable

Take advice from Social Services or other agencies as appropriate. In cases where the tenant is elderly or vulnerable in some way, Social Services or some other agency needs to be involved in trying to remedy the initial problem and, if possible, prevent its reoccurrence.

Particular note needs to be made if there are or appear to be children involved in the property, with the hoarding related behaviours and where the potential hoarding poses or may pose a risk to a child – in such cases, immediately refer to Children's Social Care. It is more likely that any protection or assistance provided or considered for the child will be performed under the Children Act 1989 and relevant Child Protection Measures / Guidance.

12. Consent

Be mindful of the need for obtaining the individual's consent where appropriate. Exceptions to this are when in the public interest where other people are affected or circumstances where a local authority or agency exercises their statutory duties or powers. In some cases members of the resident's family or friends may also be able to provide help or support – often family members or concerned third parties will approach services for assistance to work with an individual. If individuals lack capacity to make decisions please refer to Section 6 – Mental capacity.

Any capacity assessment carried out in relation to hoarding behaviour must be time and decision specific, and relate to a specific intervention or action. If the person is assessed as not having capacity to make decisions in relation to their self-neglect, then any decisions should be made following the best interests process, which includes taking into account the person's views and taking the least restrictive action. Due to the complexity of such cases, there must be a Best Interests Meeting and appropriately recorded in formal minutes. Additionally, consideration should be given as to whether an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) should be instructed. Fluctuating capacity should be considered and evidenced.

In particularly challenging and complex cases, it may be necessary to seek legal advice in order to refer to the Court of Protection (CoP) to make the best interests decision.

13. Information gathering

At the beginning of the process, gather as much information as possible. Remember confidentiality when speaking to neighbours/friends/family. Individuals should not disclose any unnecessary information or information about the lifestyle of the hoarder.

14. Tenancy conditions

Consider whether the problem can be resolved purely by taking steps to ensure that the resident complies with their conditions of tenancy or lease or whether the resident needs some assistance to try to deal with the hoarding behaviours in issue (for example because they are elderly or appear to be vulnerable.)

15. Arranging for the removal of hoarded material

In cases where the resident is not vulnerable and the only reason for mass accumulation of items is because the resident concerned has not made proper arrangements to dispose of large amounts of material or an accumulation of bulky items, you should aim to come to an agreement with the resident concerned to dispose of the items and prevent a repeat of the activity.

Consider staggered time frames for clearance; i.e. over a period of 6 or 12 months, agreeing a small area to be cleared each month and re-visiting to ensure compliance.

In all cases you should carry out a health and safety risk assessment of the property and consider employing specialist contractors where appropriate.

16. Referring to the Hoarding Panel

In cases where the hoarding is severe (5 or above on the clutter scale, see Appendix A), and the individual will not come to an agreement to deal with the hoarding and all reasonable measures have failed then consider a referral to the Hoarding Panel.

The hoarding panel will agree a strategy to try to address the hoarding problem and to give advice to the referrer to reduce the reoccurrence of the problem.

17. Legislation

BMDC's Housing Standards Team

The Housing Standards Team 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. With the use of case studies and surveys this institute reviews the incidence and diversity of cases coming to the attention of environmental health authorities with the aim of identifying better ways to resolve issues.

Public Health Act 1936

Section 79: Power to require removal of noxious matter by occupier of premises

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. The LA also has the power to prosecute.

Section 84: Cleansing or destruction of filthy or verminous articles

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

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 (SNs)

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. The recipient has 21 days to appeal.

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.

For further guidance and information please refer to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers Professional Practice Note: [Hoarding and How to approach it](#)

18. 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. Please refer to the following link for guidance:

<http://bradfordscb.org.uk/>

19. Safeguarding Adults – When to raise a safeguarding concern

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.

The revised Statutory Guidance (March 2016) contains additional advice concerning when self-neglect which includes hoarding should be reported as a safeguarding concern and dealt with as a section 42 enquiry – suggesting that it:

“May not prompt a section 42 enquiry. An assessment should be made on a case by case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's

ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.”

An "adult at risk" may also be living with the hoarder in the property. There may be a safeguarding concern about that adult if they are at risk of harm due to the living circumstances. If in doubt, discuss the issue your manager or contact the local authority to get advice or raise a Safeguarding Concern

This framework accepts the guidance as supplied by the Joint Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures for raising a concern and referring in order to safeguard an 'Adult at Risk'.

Please refer to the following link to make a referral or for further guidance;

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/adult-social-care/care-and-support-from-us/new-to-adult-social-care/>

20. The Care Act 2014

The Care Act, 2014 provides 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 encompasses hoarding under self-neglect. Supporting people who self-neglect does not always fall under safeguarding and section 42. It is also part of promoting well-being individuals well-being under section 1 of the Act.

However, where an adult at risk has been identified as having been subject to serious self-neglect which could result in significant harm and where there is evidence of self-neglect and hoarding related behaviours a referral should be made via the Bradford Access service in case self-neglect measures need to be implemented.

Organisations should also notify the Hoarding Panel if a referral about self-neglect has been submitted. There may be a request for a representative from the Hoarding Panel to attend any relevant meeting.

Appendix A: Clutter Image Rating Tool Guidance

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – BEDROOM

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



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Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – LOUNGE

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



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Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – KITCHEN

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



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| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Low Risk CIR SCALE 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 CIR SCALE 4-6</p> | <p>Blocking of Doors, some windows, possibly major exit</p> <p>Light infestation of pests (e.g. bed bugs, lice, fleas, rats)</p> <p>Clutter obstructing functions of key living space, stairs, entrances, hallways etc.</p> <p>Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions (e.g. food preparation surfaces heavily soiled, lots of dirty dishes, obvious odours which irritate etc.)</p> <p>Evidence of burns to the carpet , clothing etc.</p> |
| <p>High Risk CIR SCALE 7-9</p> | <p>Whole rooms inaccessible, exits blocked, windows not able to be opened</p> <p>Utilities cut off (e.g. no heating, gas capped)</p> <p>Heavy infestation of pests (rats seen, heard, reported by neighbours, cockroaches fleas etc.)</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 etc.</p> |

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 may 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? Have a wash, bath, shower etc.?

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?

Level One Indicators

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Level 1 Clutter image rating 1 - 3</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>1. Property structure, services & garden area</p> | <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 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to visit and install if criteria met. • All services functional and maintained in good working order. • Garden is accessible, tidy and maintained |
| <p>2. Household Functions</p> | <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 Clutter Rating Scale. • 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 Housing Standards Team. |
| <p>3. Health and Safety</p> | <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. |
| <p>4. Safeguard of Children & Family members</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No concerns for household members. |
| <p>5. Animals and Pests</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any pets at the property are well cared for. • No pests or infestations at the property. |

Level One: Multi-Agency Actions

| Level 1 | Actions |
|--|---|
| Identifying Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss concerns with the Individual. • Raise a request to West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service for a Safe and Well visit and to provide fire safety advice. • Refer to Adult Services Access point for guidance. • Refer to GP if appropriate. |
| Housing Standards Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action. |
| Social Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to GP if appropriate. • Refer to Adult Services Access Point for 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"> • 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"> • West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service- Carry out a Safe and Well visit if it fulfils Service criteria and share with statutory agencies. • West Yorkshire Police and Ambulance Service- <p>Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies & feedback provided to referring agency on completion of home visits.</p> |
| 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 Two Indicators

| Level 2 Clutter Image Rating 4 – 6 | Household environment requires professional assistance to resolve the clutter and the maintenance issues in the property. |
|--|--|
| 1. Property structure, services & 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 is 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 clutter scale. • Inconsistent levels of housekeeping throughout 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 clutter scale 4 -7. Consider a Safeguarding Assessment. • Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to GWTC 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

| <p>Level 2</p> | <p>Actions In addition to actions listed below these cases need to be monitored regularly in the future due to RISK OF ESCALATION or REOCURRENCE</p> |
|--|---|
| <p>Referring Agency</p> <p>A referral to the Hoarding panel must be made in cases where hoarding is rated at 5 or above on the Clutter Rating Image Scale</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to landlord if resident is a tenant. • Refer to Housing Standards Team if resident is a owner occupier. • Raise a request to the Fire and Rescue Service to provide a Safe and Well visit with a consideration for monitored smoke alarms/ assistive technology. • Provide details of garden services. • Refer to Adult Services Access Point for 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. |
| <p>Housing Standards Team</p> | <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 Public Health Act 1936, 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. |
| <p>Social Landlord</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>Practitioners</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an assessment of the property practitioners assessment tool |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and a sustainable resolution. |
| Emergency Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Carry out a Safe and Well visit, share risk information with Statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. <p>West Yorkshire Police and Ambulance Service Ensure information is shared with statutory agencies & feedback is provided to referring agency on completion of home visits via the referral form.</p> |
| 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 Three Indicators

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|---|--|
| <p>Level 3 Clutter image rating 7 - 9</p> | <p>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 significant risk to the 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.</p> |
| <p>1. Property structure, services & 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 clutter image scale. 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 e.g. broken glass or plates. • Property is not maintained within terms of lease or tenancy agreement where applicable. • Property is at risk of notice being served by Housing Standards Team. |
| <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 e.g. 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 electricians. • Inappropriate use of electrical extension cords or evidence of unqualified work to the electricians. • Concern for declining mental health. |
| 4. Safeguard of Children & Family members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to Adult Services Access 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, etc.). • 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 |
|---|--|
| <p>Referring Agency</p> <p>A referral to the Hoarding panel must be made in cases where hoarding is rated at 5 or above on the Clutter Rating Image Scale.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service within 24 hours to provide a Safe and Well visit. • Refer to Housing Standards Team using the referral form. |
| <p>Housing Standards Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an inspection. • At time of inspection, EHO decides on appropriate course of action. • Consider serving notices under Public Health Act 1936, 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. |
| <p>Landlord</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit resident to inspect the property & assess support needs. • Attend multi agency hoarding meeting. • Enforce tenancy conditions relating to residents responsibilities. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Practitioners</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to “Hoarding Guidance Questions for practitioners”. • Complete Hoarding referral form • Ensure information sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and a sustainable resolution. • West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service- Carry out a Safe and Well visit. • Check, share risk information with Statutory agencies and consider assistive technology. • West Yorkshire Police and Ambulance Service- 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. |
| <p>Animal Welfare</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit property to undertake a wellbeing check on animals at the property. • Remove animals to a safe environment. • Educate client regarding animal welfare if appropriate. • Take legal action for animal cruelty if appropriate. • Provide advice / assistance with re-homing animals. |
| <p>Safeguarding Adults and Children</p> | <p>Properties with adults presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point.</p> |

Appendix B: Bradford District Hoarding Panel Assessment Tool

| Bradford District Hoarding Panel Assessment Tool | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Date of assessment | |
| Assessed by | |
| Organisation and Department | |
| Contact Details: | |
| Client | |
| Name | Date of Birth |
| Consent Obtained <input type="checkbox"/> Not obtained <input type="checkbox"/> | Reason if consent not obtained |
| Address Inc. Postcode | Telephone |
| Other Residents : | |
| Dependent Children please provide ages and if they live in property: | |
| Other agencies providing support (please provide names and contact details so they can be invited to panel). | |

| Property Details | |
|---|----------|
| Occupation Status Owner/ Tenant | Landlord |
| Property type House/ flat / bedsit. Property type: Terrace/ Back to Back/ Detached No of storeys; | |

| Hoarding Behaviours |
|--|
| Brief description of your involvement with the individual and the background and situation/ circumstances surrounding the individual.. |
| What is the client's attitude to the hoarding? Do they see the hoarding as a problem? |
| Will she/he allow access? |
| Has the client been assessed for capacity? |

Clutter index rating scale (1 to 9)

Kitchen

Lounge

Bedrooms

| Living Conditions | | | | |
|---|------------|---------------|-------------|----------|
| | Low (1-3) | Medium (4-6) | High (7-9) | Comments |
| Structural damage to the house | | | | |
| Rotten food in the house | | | | |
| Insect or rodent infestation in the house | | | | |
| Animals in the house | | | | |
| Clutter outside of the house | | | | |
| Cleanliness of the house | | | | |
| Other(e.g human faeces) | | | | |

| Fixtures and appliances. Please indicate whether the following are in working order: | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|---------------|--------------|-----|----|---------------|
| | Yes | No | Actions Taken | | Yes | No | Actions Taken |
| Oven | | | | Toilet | | | |
| Kitchen Sink | | | | Bath/ Shower | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | Hot water? | | | |
| Electric supply | | | | Gas supply | | | |
| Boiler/Heating | | | | water supply | | | |

| Safety | | | |
|---|-----|-----|------|
| | Low | Med | High |
| Does any part of the house pose a fire hazard? (e.g unsafe electrical cords, flammable object next to heat sources) | | | |
| How difficult would it be for emergency people to move equipment through the home? | | | |
| Are the exits from the home blocked? | | | |
| Are stairwells unsafe? | | | |
| Is there any danger of falling due to the clutter? | | | |

Completed forms to be emailed securely to :

CHPEnquiries@bradford.gov.uk

Appendix C: Websites for further reading

Cloud's End CIC www.cloudsend.org.uk

Resources to help hoarders and housing associations dealing with hoarding

Help for Hoarders www.helpforhoarders.co.uk

Information support and advice for hoarders and their families. Including and an online support forum,

OCD UK www.ocduk.org/hoarding

Information and support about Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, which includes hoarding

Hoarding UK www.hoardinguk.org

Information and support for hoarders and agencies, including local support groups

The Association of Professional De-Clutterers and Organisers (UK)

www.apdo-uk.co.uk

Provide support, networking and promotion for members of the Professional Organizing & Decluttering industry, and information and services for their clients

Support Services

Mind: www.mind.org.uk

Appendix D: Information Sharing Protocol

Bradford District Hoarding Panel will need to share data and this data will be managed and controlled

by the following inter-agency information sharing protocol.

[Inter-agency Information Sharing Protocol](#)