

Hoarding

What is hoarding:

Hoarding is characterised by a compulsive acquisition of items, alongside a strong emotional attachment to the item. This can become problematic when usual living spaces are taken over or rendered unusable - affecting the person's wellbeing/welfare. Kitchens, bathrooms for example, or sleeping areas may become so full of items that the rooms' purpose is compromised. Combustible items may pose a fire risk to the occupants or others.

*Pet hoarding poses a risk to the occupants and animals.

Why it matters:

- Falls and injuries may occur.
- Fire risks from blocked exits and access routes, or from poor maintenance or poorly maintained wiring may occur
- Structural damage may occur
- Infectious diseases from rodents, vermin or poorly managed pets may impact on person, others.
- Respiratory problems may also emerge. (Poor air quality, mould etc)

Core Principles:

- Harm reduction is the key aim (not making homes sterile or perfect)
- Client centred interventions, to reduce risks, and increase safety should be optimised
- Person is key to making informed decisions, with professionals offering guidance and supports, and increasing the person's control
- Goals should be negotiated and managed through small achievable steps.
- See



Chronic disorganisation (CD):

CD is not hoarding, as it is not motivated by an emotional attachment or drive to collect items. The result of the disorganisation may be a resulting hoard – however the person is likely to accept help with sifting and sorting items.

CD is often linked to ADHD, dementia or ADD, and people may need systems, or support in organising themselves and their affairs.

Effective multiagency working:

Hoarding can be both complex and challenging. Research has indicated that short term fixes, and onward referral mechanisms are ineffective and that solutions lie in longer term relationship-based practice. In complex cases the ongoing commitment of multiagency partners forming a team around the adult can yield positive results. The carefully considered inclusion of family and friends can also have positive effect.

Need to know:

Enforcement action is an option of last resort. Blitz cleaning may cause severe distress and destabilise trust.

Effective interventions will take time and effort and going the extra mile.

Taking a trauma informed approach is essential (see 7MB on Trauma Informed Practice).

Key characteristics of hoarding:

- Compulsive accumulation of items
- Strong desire to acquire and keep items
- A strong emotional attachment to collected items, with a difficulty to discard, or let others see/touch/remove items
- Impact on daily life, e.g. restricted use of rooms, or utilities