

7

PERSONAL SAFETY

Keeping People who Hoard Safe

Hoarding can start as early as the teenage years and can escalate with age.

Excessive hoarding can be damaging and distressing to individuals, their families, and sometimes neighbours around them, but in many cases the problem may be hidden. Hoarding must be handled sensitively and reducing the risk rather than trying to remove it may be a more realistic goal. It may be easy to suggest a huge clear out, but getting rid of belongings may be as distressing to the person as trying to live with the clutter. Long term work, building a relationship and trying to improve the person's life rather than change it can bring positive outcomes.

Hoarding can severely increase fire risk but there are steps that can be taken to improve safety in the home.

Explain the risks, obtain the consent and refer for a [Safe & Well visit](#) from the Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service. Use a clutter scale found in the [Self Neglect Policy \(PDF 1.02MB\)](#)

Tips for people who hoard

When working with someone who hoards, encourage them to:

- Keep escape routes clear of slip, trips, or fall hazards
- Avoid hoarding around areas with ignition sources e.g. fires, cooker etc.
- Avoid smoking or lighting flames around ignitable materials
- Avoid placing heaters too close to any other materials
- Try to keep objects at safe height, to prevent items falling and causing injury
- Aim to keep all spaces hygienic even if cluttered, especially in the kitchen and bathroom
- Contact hoarding support services if and when support is required, or if hoarding is causing a high risk to safety
- Speak to the GP – help is available
- Contact Environmental Health, their landlord, pest control or building manager if vermin is present in the property



Miscellaneous

7

- Ensure environment is safe for children and pets
- If a fire occurs, leave the premises immediately and call 999

Resources

6

HSAB Practice Guidance

- [Self Neglect Policy \(PDF 1.02MB\)](#)
- [ADASS Self neglect and Hoarding \(PDF 346KB\)](#)

5

Video – advice for people who hoard (Credit: London Fire Brigade)

<https://youtu.be/NKudA9qAYYU>

4

Documentary - highlighting the impact of hoarding on people and their families

[Britain's Biggest Hoarders E3 | Mental Health Documentary | Absolute Documentaries - YouTube](#)

3

Help and Support

- Hoarding UK – www.hoardinguk.org
- Care 4 Freedom - www.care4freedom.org
- NHS - [Hoarding disorder - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- HertsHelp - www.hertshelp.net

2

References

- [About Hoarding | HoardingUK](#)
- [Hoarding disorder - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

1

