

Hoarding Toolkit

This toolkit accompanies the
SAEB Self-Neglect and Hoarding Strategy and Pathway

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1. Introduction

This hoarding toolkit is designed for use across all agencies who work with adults where there are concerns about hoarding across the Bi-Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. It should be read in conjunction with the overarching Self-Neglect and Hoarding Strategy and Pathway. It contains a range of practical resources to support professionals who are working with adults who experience hoarding behaviours. It includes suggested approaches, questions and tools to promote a multi-agency approach which is strengths-based and enables positive change, keeping the adult's rights and wishes at the centre of all interventions.

2. Tips for effective engagement

- Be respectful of the person's choices, their home, and their belongings.
- Understand the significance of their self-neglecting/hoarding behaviour and talk to them about the reasons for this and their life experiences.
- Practice positive regard to build a rapport; mirror their language and use empathy to see things from their point of view.
- Ask about and listen to the person's reasons for mistrust, disengagement, refusal and their choices.
- Ensure that the person has the necessary information in a format they can understand.
- Focus on harm reduction and not symptom reduction. The focus should be on safety, and risk management.
- Work patiently over time at the pace of the adult but know when to be clear and honest about potential consequences.
- Check that the person understands options and consequences of their choices.
- Keep in mind the person's (potentially fluctuating) mental capacity to make decisions about their safety and wellbeing.
- Engage and co-ordinate with other professionals, friends, neighbours, and family to support, advise and provide practical assistance.
- Support and encourage the person to attend meetings where possible.
- Be flexible and creative in your approach, considering if there are alternative options or approaches that may be more successful.
- Use legal powers as a last resort and only with a clear understanding of the relevant legislation and associated policies and procedures.

3. The do's and don'ts when working with someone who is hoarding

	DO		DON'T
✓	Build a trusting relationship Build a rapport with the person before discussing the hoarding issues. Remember the hoarding is a symptom of a deeper issue.	✗	Try to address hoarding through a quick fix ... such as an enforced deep clean. It will severely impact on the person, in most cases causing extreme anxiety and trauma.

✓	Put yourself in their shoes How would you want others to talk to you to help you to manage your anger, frustration, resentment, embarrassment or shame?	✗	Rush to discuss de-cluttering This is long-term work dependent on a trusting relationship to help foster lasting change.
✓	Match the person's language Listen for the individual's manner of referring to their possessions – such as 'my things', 'my collections' and mirror this – your things / your collections.	✗	Use judgemental language People are generally not receptive to negative comments about their home or their character e.g. 'what a mess!' or 'who can live like this?!' Imagine how you would feel being spoken to like this if you already felt scared, ashamed and embarrassed.
✓	Use encouraging language Use language which reduces defensiveness and increases motivation to solve the problem – such as 'It's great you have a pathway from your front door to your living room'.	✗	Use words that devalue or negatively judge possessions People who hoard are often aware that others do not view their possessions and homes as they do. Be aware of your language and avoid referring to 'rubbish' or 'clutter' or 'junk'.
✓	Highlight strengths All people have strengths and positive aspects of themselves and their behaviours. Your ability to notice these strengths helps build a good relationship and paves the way for working together.	✗	Let your non-verbal expression say what you are thinking People are likely to notice non-verbal responses and body language which conveys negative judgement, such as frowning or grimacing.
✓	Offer the opportunity to discuss the 'why' behind the hoarding behaviour Not everyone is able to address issues from their past trauma but for some this can be helpful. Therapeutic support should be offered, such as bereavement counselling if appropriate.	✗	Try to persuade or argue with the person Efforts to persuade individuals to make a change in their homes or behaviour often has the opposite effect. The person may well in response feel a stronger desire to keep the items.
✓	Help to make a plan The person must set the goals, ideally with small targets at first to help build confidence and to take time to effect change at the person's pace.	✗	Touch the person's belongings without explicit permission People often have strong feelings and beliefs about their possessions and find it upsetting for another person to touch their things.

✓	Understand that this is a gradual process for people This is long-term work with no quick fixes or short cuts. In most cases people are 'discovered' or reported by others in relation to their hoarding rather than them seeking support to what is often a private issue they have sought to hide from the public.	✗	Don't threaten or put fixed timescales in place This puts people under pressure. Remember that the person's coping mechanism is to hoard, and more pressure usually leads to an increase in hoarding.
✓	Listen to understand Listen to what the individual tells you, but don't solely rely on verbal communication. Non-verbal communication may tell you more about how the individual is feeling. Always keep the lines of communication open.	✗	Carrying out large scale de-cluttering and deep cleans is generally not recommended. A gradual, carefully planned approach is required, with supportive interventions via small steps.

4. Questions to support assessment

This section contains some practical questions to support conversations with adults where you are concerned that they are at risk from their hoarding. The questions will support completion of a risk assessment and to help establish what the person sees as the primary issue and as such help inform what may be the best starting point for support.

Where possible ask the person to complete the following questions:

- I feel _____ when my possessions are discarded without my consent.
- When I'm away from my possessions I feel _____.
- When I'm near my possessions I feel _____.
- I feel _____ when my family and friends talk about my hoarding/collecting etc.
- I wish I could _____ in the future.
- When people comment on the 'clutter' I feel _____.
- If strangers see my hoarding/collecting etc I feel _____.

These additional questions should be considered with professional judgement and used alongside the Clutter Image Rating (CIR) tool to inform a comprehensive risk assessment. They can also support completion of mental capacity assessments.

- 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 have you made your home safer to prevent this (above) from happening again?
- Can you move safely around your home (for example where the floor is uneven or covered, or there are exposed wires, damp, rot, or other hazards)?
- Do you use any walking aids? Have you experienced any falls? How recent?
- Has a fire ever started by accident? Is the property at risk from fire? Would you be willing to have a Home Fire Safety Visit from the fire brigade?

- Do you have a working smoke alarm? Do you have any ailments or conditions that may prevent you from hearing or responding – for example being able to vacate your property safely?
- How do you get hot water, lighting, heating in here? Do these services work properly? Have they ever been tested?
- Do you ever use candles or an open flame to heat and light here or cook with camping gas? If yes, consider a referral to London Fire Brigade (LFB) for a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV).
- How do you manage to keep yourself warm? Especially in winter?
- When did you last go out in your garden? Do you feel safe to go out there?
- Are you worried about other people getting into your garden to try and break-in? Has this ever happened?
- Are you worried about mice, rats or foxes, or other pests? Do you leave food out for them?
- Have you ever seen mice or rats in your home? Have they eaten any of your food? Or got upstairs and be nesting anywhere?
- Can you prepare food, cook, and wash up in your kitchen?
- Do you use your fridge? Can I have look in it? How do you keep things cold in the hot weather?
- How do you keep yourself clean? Can I see your bathroom? Are you able to use your bathroom and use the toilet? Have a wash, bath? Shower?
- Do you have any pressure ulcers or open wounds? What do you need to do to care for your ulcer(s)/wounds(s)?
- Can you show me where you sleep and let me see your upstairs rooms? Are the stairs safe to walk up? (If there are any)
- What do you do with your dirty washing?
- Where do you sleep? Are you able to change your bed linen regularly? When did you last change them?
- How do you keep yourself warm at night? Have you got extra coverings to put on your bed if you are cold?
- Are there any broken windows in your home? Any repairs that need to be done?
- Because of the number of possessions you have, do you find it difficult to use some of your rooms? If so which ones?
- Are there any major repairs that need carrying out at the property?
- Do you struggle with discarding things or to what extent do you have difficulty discarding (or recycling, selling, giving away) ordinary things that other people would get rid of?
- Would you like you some support to manage your current situation?
- Are you happy for us to share your information with other professionals who may be able to help you? (Ask person to sign consent form and liaise with other agencies as appropriate).

Be careful how you record your engagement with the person who is experiencing hoarding behaviour. The language used in your recording can make a big difference. Terms like 'failed to attend' and 'difficult to engage with' places the emphasis solely on the adult and does not acknowledge the complexity of hoarding behaviour and the reasons behind this. Recording of this nature can also negatively affect the ways in which other professionals then approach the case.

5. Self-neglect and hoarding risk assessment template

The following is a suggested template that can be used as a screening tool to be completed by the person who is concerned about the risk of self-neglect and/or hoarding and can support in determining the level of risk.

Lead practitioner completing risk assessment:

Name			
Role			
Organisation			
Contact details			
Line manager		Contact details	

Adult's details:

Name		Date of birth	
Address		Contact details – telephone number / email	
Property type e.g studio flat / flat / 2 bedroomed house		Property tenure e.g owner occupier / private rent / social or council housing. Provide details of landlord if relevant	
Details of any others living in the household, including dependents			

Has consent been obtained?	
Yes	No
If has not been possible to obtain consent, please provide rationale (e.g. The person lacks mental capacity in relation to their self-neglect, they are at significant risk or there is risk to others)	

Professionals / agencies involved:

Name	Role and Team	Contact details	Summary of current involvement

Details of the adult's health / care and support needs, including any formal diagnoses in relation to cognitive impairment and/or mental health as well as physical health	
Summary of current risks relating to self-neglect, their impact and relevant background history	
Adult's view of the risk (understanding of potential risk involved, mental capacity considerations, adult's preferences)	
Is a mental capacity assessment required in relation to understanding of identified risks?	
Yes	No
Protective factors and benefits of taking the identified risk (adult choice, improved confidence, promote independence etc)	

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The matrix below supports assessment of the likelihood and severity of risk, generating an overall score which indicates whether the level of risk of risk is low, moderate, high or critical. Select one overall score based on the assessment of the severity of the self-neglect against the likelihood.

	Severity of self-neglect				
Likelihood of self-neglect		Low Risk: Adult is accepting support with issues related to self-neglect	Moderate Risk: Adult is not recognising or accepting all support required to address issues related to self-neglect	High Risk: Adult is not recognising or accepting support required to address issues related to self-neglect and is of considerable concern e.g. impacting on person's health and wellbeing to a significant level and/or risk to others	Severe/Critical Risk: Intervention has made no or minimal impact. Adult is at imminent and significant risk of harm which is potentially life-threatening
	Almost Certain	4	8	12	16
	Likely	3	6	9	12
	Possibly	2	4	6	8
	Unlikely	1	2	3	4

Risk management plan (include contingency / escalation measures):

Recommended action to reduce / manage risks	Person responsible	Timescales

Record of completion:

Date of assessment	
Date for plan to be reviewed	

Confirmation of risk management plan being shared with relevant agencies:

Agency	Date plan shared

6. Clutter Image Rating (CIR) tool

The CIR tool and accompanying guidance in this section should be used to identify the level of hoarding behaviour that is taking place along with appropriate actions for relevant professionals and agencies involved.

The CIR tool should be used by selecting the photograph and corresponding RAG¹ rating that most accurately represents the relevant room(s).

¹ RAG or Red-Amber-Green ratings are a colour-coded system used to assess, in this instance, the levels of risk associated with the person's hoarding behaviour, with green indicating low risk, amber moderate risk and red high risk.

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – BEDROOM

Please select the image which closely relates to the bedroom.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9




Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – LOUNGE




Please select the image which closely relates to the lounge.




		
1	2	3
		
4	5	6
		
7	8	9

Clutter Image Rating (CIR) – KITCHEN

Please select the image which closely relates to the kitchen.

		
1	2	3

		
4	5	6

		
7	8	9

This accompanying guidance should be used alongside the CIR tool.

Low Risk Clutter Rating 1 - 3		
Assessment of Property	Assessment of individual's circumstances	Actions to be taken as appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All entrances, stairways, roof space and windows accessible • All services good working order • Garden is accessible/maintained • All rooms can be safely used for their intended purpose • No additional unused household appliances • Property is not at risk of action from Environmental Health • Property is clean with no odours • No rotting food • No concerning use of candles • No concern over pests/infestation • Any pets are well cared for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person is managing their self-care appropriately • Person is accepting support services • Health care is being addressed • Person has access to social and community activities • Person is able to contribute to daily living activities • Access to support services may be limited but there are no other factors of concern • Attendance at appointments, such as in relation to health care, are sporadic but there is evidence of no or limited impact on health and wellbeing and the person has the mental capacity to make these decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Adult Social Care (ASC) for a care and support assessment if care needs identified • Refer to London Fire Brigade (LFB) for a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) • Refer any health concerns to GP • Refer to Housing/Registered Provider for tenancy support • Signpost to specialist services, such as for debt advice, day services, charitable and voluntary sector organisations

Moderate Risk Clutter Rating 4 -6		
Assessment of Property	Assessment of individual's circumstances	Actions to be taken as appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one major exit is blocked • One of the services is not fully functional/maintained • Garden is not accessible due to clutter or is not maintained • Evidence of light structural damage including damp • Interior doors are missing or blocked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person is trying to manage personal care but struggling • Person has difficulty to engage with necessary services, they have capacity and there is limited or no evidence of their health and wellbeing being adversely affected • Health care is poor and there is a deterioration in health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to ASC for a care and support assessment if care needs identified • Raise a safeguarding concern with ASC to instigate the Self-Neglect and Hoarding (SNAH) pathway • Refer to LFB for a HFSV • Refer any health concerns to GP

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutter is causing congestion in the living spaces and impacting on the use of rooms for intended purpose • Some household appliances are not functioning properly or additional units in unusual places • Kitchen/bathroom not kept clean • Offensive odour in the property • Person is not maintaining safe cooking environment • Some concern about quantity of medication or storage or expiry dates • No rotting food • Pets not well cared for • Light insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing is affected on a daily basis • Person is isolated from family and friends • Care is prevented or refused • Person does not engage with social or community activities and this is having an impact on their health and wellbeing • Person does not manage daily living activities • Hygiene is poor and may be causing skin problems • Aids and adaptations declined or not used • Concerns raised by services involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Housing/Registered Provider for tenancy support • Signpost to specialist services, such as for debt advice, day services, charitable and voluntary sector organisations • Refer to animal welfare, such as RSPCA • Refer to Environmental Health for infestation advice • Ensure information sharing with all relevant agencies involved and convene multi-agency meetings to share risk management
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High Risk Clutter Rating 7 -9		
Assessment of Property	Assessment of individual's circumstances	Actions to be taken as appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access due to extreme clutter outside the property • Garden not accessible and extensively overgrown • Services not connected/not functioning properly • Property lacks ventilation • Evidence of serious structural damage • Entrances, hallways and stairs are blocked or difficult to pass • Clutter is obstructing living spaces/preventing use of rooms for their intended purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is unable to engage with necessary services and their health and wellbeing is being adversely affected and where there is evidence of agencies trying to work with the person and have failed • Health care is poor and there is significant deterioration in health • Wellbeing significantly affected on a daily basis • Person does not engage with social or community activities and this is having 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise a safeguarding concern with ASC • Refer to LFB for a HFSV and consider the need for a joint visit with LFB • Escalate case to senior managers • Consider seeking legal advice • <i>Plus, all actions outlined above for moderate and low risk cases</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beds inaccessible/unusable • Toilets and sinks unusable • Household appliances not functioning/inaccessible • No safe cooking equipment • Significant fire risks • Human urine/excrement may be present • Animals at the property at risk • Heavy infestation from insects/mice/rats etc • Property is at risk of notice being served by Housing or Environmental Health • Other residents at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a significant impact on health and wellbeing • Person does not manage daily living activities despite a plan being in place to support the person • Hygiene is poor and causing skin problems despite efforts to work with the person to improve this • Aids and adaptations refused despite efforts to engage the person • Person is completely isolated from family and friends • Care is prevented or refused despite efforts to work with the person on this 	
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7. Hoarding assessment template

The hoarding assessment template is an additional resource that can be used alongside the CIR Tool to support risk assessment and a holistic approach to assessing needs.

Lead practitioner completing assessment:

Name			
Role			
Organisation			
Contact details			
Line manager		Contact details	

Adult's details:

Name		Date of birth	
Address		Contact details – telephone number / email	

Property type e.g. studio flat / flat / 2 bedroomed house		Property tenure e.g. owner occupier / private rent / social or council housing. Provide details of landlord if relevant	
Details of any others living in the household, including dependents			

Details of the adult's health / care and support needs, including any formal diagnoses in relation to cognitive impairment and/or mental health as well as physical health
Summary of current risks relating to hoarding behaviour, their impact and relevant background history

Has consent been obtained to undertake this assessment?	
Yes	No
<p>If has not been possible to obtain consent, please provide rationale (e.g. The person lacks mental capacity in relation to their self-neglect, they are at significant risk or there is risk to others)</p> <p><i>Proceed to complete assessment with the knowledge you have and based on your professional judgement</i></p>	

Condition of Home Environment / Areas of Congestion – tick all that apply:

Not disposing of household rubbish		Collecting particular items	
Newspapers / books / magazines		Excessive amount of clothes	
Junk mail		Keeping general household items	
Animals		Faeces/ urine	
Blocked entrances / exits		Garden	

Property Checks:

Room	Clutter Image Rating (1-9)	Can the room be used for its purpose		Are there any health and safety concerns?		Comments – see guidance questions in section 4
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Access from front door						
Hallway						
Lounge						
Kitchen						
Dining Room						

Access from back door						
Stairs						
Landing						
Bathroom						
Bedroom 1						
Bedroom 2						
Bedroom 3						
Separate WC						
Garden						
Any other space – please specify						

Hoarding assessment, including consideration of risk factors:

Do you have any concerns for fire risks? (Consider flammable materials, working smoke alarms, electrical wiring, evidence of previous fires, smoking risks etc)	
Do you or anyone in your home smoke?	

Do any occupants have known alcohol or substance misuse issues?	
Are you worried about any infestation issues – such as rats, mice, flies, maggots, bed bugs etc?	
Are the utilities for gas and electric connected?	
How do you manage to keep warm (especially in winter months)?	
Can heating and hot water be utilised?	
Has there been an annual gas safety check? (Provide details of inspection date)	
Has an electrical periodic inspection been completed? (Provide details of inspection date)	
Is the mains water connected?	
Does the toilet flush and is it accessible?	
Are you worried about any urgent repairs issues? (Drainage, leaks, electrical etc)	
Are items stacked in such a way that they cause a risk? (i.e. fall on a person, fall onto heated surfaces, block doors)	

What type of fire / heating is in the living room? (Gas / electric / solid fuel)	
Do you use portable heaters? (Consider use of extension leads or gas cannisters)	
Do you use candles?	
Can you prepare a meal and hot drinks? Is your cooker / microwave in working order? Can you wash up in your kitchen?	
Do you use your fridge? Are items out of date?	
Do you need to store medications in the fridge?	
Where do you sleep? Is the bed / chair available to use?	
Are the stairs accessible?	
If your bedroom is upstairs, can you access it?	
Is there a place to sit during the day?	
Are you able to complete washing and dressing? Is the bathroom accessible and does it need any adaptations?	
How do you manage the laundry, including washing and drying items?	
Can carers or support services gain access?	

(e.g. can they wash their hands, or sit with the person)	
Do you go out into the garden? Is it accessible?	
Is the garden affected – being used for storage?	
Is the issue spilling over into communal areas?	
Has there been any complaints from neighbours?	
Could neighbouring properties be affected in any way?	
How do you get in and out of your property?	
Do you feel safe living here?	
Do you worry about anyone breaking into your home? Has this ever happened to you?	
Are any of your floors uneven? Do you struggle to mobilise around the home in any places, any steps etc?	
Have you ever had an accident or fall in the home or garden? How did it happen?	

Professionals / Agencies / Informal Support Involved:

Have you ever had a social care assessment from Adult Social Care? What was the outcome?	
Are you working with any other support services, such as home care support,	

District Nurses, Housing, Mental Health support etc?	
Is there anyone else who supports you, such as family, friends, centres of worship, social groups?	

8. Hoarding provider services

The list below are providers for use by Bi-Borough services to access support for individuals who are hoarding. These services are not part of an approved provider agreement and not had a health check but exist as independent companies who can support with specialist services.

- [Clearway Services](#)
- [Rentokil Specialist Cleaning](#)
- [24 Seven Group](#)
- [Cloudsend](#)
- [Jarsen Limited](#)

9. Useful hoarding resources

- [NHS Hoarding Conditions](#)
- [Hoarding support](#)
- [Hoarding UK](#)
- [Children of Hoarders](#)
- [Hoarding Disorders UK](#)
- [Understanding Hoarding Toolkit - Groundswell](#)
- [MIND – Treatment for Hoarding Disorder](#)
- [Mandi: My Hoarding Journey – Mary Frances Trust](#)
- [Keith's Story: a personal account of hoarding – Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board](#)
- [National Hoarding Awareness Week](#) – on their resources page you can download the Hoarding Ice Breaker Form, which is helpful for people to read and take along to their own GP, to help them 'break the ice' about talking about hoarding disorder. This section also contains a GP Awareness leaflet.