



Multi-agency Hoarding Framework 2026

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1. Introduction

This document sets out a framework for collaborative multi-agency working across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight using a 'person centred solution' based model to support those demonstrating hoarding behaviours.

In August 2018 The World Health Organisation categorised for the first time, Hoarding as a standalone medical disorder. It is hoped that this will raise awareness and support professionals to address the issues this behaviour may present.

Recognising risk of abuse and neglect is an essential component of safeguarding duties, but so too is ensuring an effective response that manages that risk in a manner that respects an adult's personal dignity, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and the control they wish to exert over their own lives. Failure to do so can alienate the adult at risk and unwittingly increase the risk of harm if the adult then withdraws from necessary support.

When an adult with needs for care and support appears to be self-neglecting and displaying hoarding behaviours, refusing care and support despite persistent welfare concerns or whose self-neglecting behaviours pose a risk to others, it can be difficult for practitioners or concerned carers, friends/family members to understand how various legal powers and duties should be applied to find an appropriate solution.

The purpose of this framework is to support providers, practitioners, and other professionals to identify when to raise concerns regarding poor self-care or lack of care for living conditions, identify agencies who can provide support and set out what they may expect by way of a response and encourage and support defensible decision making in accordance with our duty of care. This framework should be read in conjunction with your own company Policies and Procedures as well as the Hampshire and Isle of Wight 4LSAB Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy:

[4LSAB Adult Safeguarding Policy Process and Guidance July 2023](#)

2. The aims of the framework are to:

Create a safer and healthier environment for the individual and others affected by the hoarding behaviour, e.g. the person, neighbours, family etc.

Deal with incidents of hoarding in a consistent evidence-based approach, with a structured multi-agency pathway which will maximise the use of existing services and resources and which may reduce the need for enforcement action.

Ensure that when interventions are required, that there is a clear process tailored to the individual, using a holistic approach. The intervention should include a combination of therapeutic and enforcement tools to reach the required outcome. This needs to include monitoring after resolution to prevent re-occurrence.

Ensure the individual with hoarding behaviour is fully engaged and consulted in the process and included in decisions, with concerns raised directly with them at the earliest opportunity. Include family and peer support to achieve this where possible as well as considering where an advocate should be commissioned.

Establish best practice and share case studies that relate to hoarding behaviour through the hoarding forum to improve knowledge, successful interventions and changes in legislation.

The networking of staff to work in partnership in order to support where possible a successful outcome for all involved.

To have the expressed commitment for those signed up to the framework to support and work with other agencies on specific cases where requests are made.

The prevention of consequential outcomes for the person, the landlord, health, housing and social care services are potentially:

- Improved fire safety for person, neighbours and fire services
- Prevention of tenancy enforcement action
- Prevention of financial and material consequences
- Prevention of homelessness
- Improved health, reduction in hospital admissions and prevention of loss of life
- Improved mental health and sense of wellbeing
- Improved social interaction with friends and family, reduction of isolation
- Increased capacity to provide a suitable home for children
- Prevention of vermin infestations and associated health problems
- Prevention of targeting of the person with ASB or other criminal offences.
- Improved property conditions and maintaining standards of stock property
- Improved safety for professionals
- Improved service due to multi-agency information sharing
- Early intervention for associated medical risks

3. Information Sharing Guidance

The four Local Safeguarding Adults Boards covering Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton (4LSAB) have developed Information Sharing Guidance, to support safeguarding partner organisations in understanding their roles and responsibilities when cooperating to share information for safeguarding purposes. This guidance aligns with the statutory requirements of the Care Act 2014, and reflects the strengthened protections on personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

[4LSAB Information Sharing Guidance June 2024](#)

This guidance applies to sharing information about adults at risk. For guidance on information sharing about children, see the [HIPS Safeguarding Procedures Manual section on Information Sharing](#).

The 4LSABs recognise that partner agencies may already have existing information sharing agreements and/or protocols in place to support effective inter-agency communication, partnership working, and decision-making. This guidance is intended to complement, not replace, those arrangements.

All staff and volunteers must follow their organisation's information sharing policies, which should reflect the key principles outlined in the [Information Commissioner's Office Data Sharing Code of Practice](#), including:

- Clearly identify the purpose of sharing the data
- Be specific about what data is being shared
- Consider the benefits and risks of sharing versus not sharing
- Ensure compliance with data protection principles
- Confirm that data sharing is fair and transparent
- Establish a lawful basis for sharing before proceeding
- Enable individuals to exercise their data rights easily
- Share data in emergencies only when necessary and proportionate, and plan ahead where possible
- Document all decisions related to data sharing to demonstrate compliance with data protection law

4. Definition of hoarding

'Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material to the point that living space is not able to be used for its intended purpose.'

The World Health Organisation say hoarding is characterised by an 'accumulation of possessions due to excessive acquisition of – or difficulty discarding – possessions, regardless of their actual value.'

Hoarding disorder is a persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with possessions. A person with a hoarding disorder may experience distress at the thought of getting rid of the items or simply be unable, either physically or through other health related factors, to get rid of items despite an acknowledgment that changes need to be made. They will have an excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual financial value.

Hoarding is considered a standalone mental health disorder and is included in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) 2013. However, hoarding can also be a symptom of other medical disorders; it is not a lifestyle choice. In any event, hoarding must always be treated as a sign of vulnerability and considered in this light.

Hoarding does not favour a particular gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, educational / occupational history or tenure type.

Anything can be hoarded, including animals, in many different areas including the property, garden or communal areas. In certain circumstances additional storage may have been acquired such as rented garages, storage units, friends' sheds etc.

5. Types of hoarding

There are typically three types of hoarding:

Compulsive / Generalist hoarding: Clinical compulsive hoarding - This is the most common. This could consist of one type of object or collection of a mixture of objects, such as old clothes, newspapers, food, containers, human waste or papers. This will often manifest from an emotional attachment to inanimate items creating conflict in disposal.

Bibliomania: Books and written information – such as newspapers, magazines and articles, and to include DVDs and videos, and Data Hoarding. It could present with the storage of data collection equipment such as computers, electronic storage devices or paper. A need to store copies of emails, and other information in an electronic format.

Animal hoarding: Often accompanied with the inability to provide minimal standards of care. The hoarder is unable to recognise that the animals are at risk because they feel they are saving them. The homes of animal hoarders are often eventually destroyed by the accumulation of animal faeces and infestation by pests.

In addition, the following maybe useful in considering the type of hoarding taking place:

- **Instrumental saving pattern** – ‘What if I or someone else needs it’
- **Sentimental saving** – ‘It means so much’
- **Aesthetic saving** – ‘I love it’

General Characteristics of Hoarding

Fear and anxiety: compulsive hoarding may have started as a learnt behaviour or following a significant event such as bereavement. The person who is hoarding can experience comfort in buying or saving things which may relieve the anxiety and fear they feel. Any attempt to discard the hoarded items can induce feelings varying from mild anxiety to a panic attack with sweats and palpitations.

Long-term behaviour pattern: possibly developed over many years where comfort is attained by buying, and a value attributed to the item through the process of purchasing, then experiencing anxiety at the idea of merely throwing away such item.

Excessive attachment to possessions: people who hoard may hold an inappropriate emotional attachment to items.

Indecisiveness: people who hoard may struggle with the decision to discard items that are no longer necessary, including rubbish. This can cause a distraction from the real issue by deflecting and raising other concerns eg pest control.

Unrelenting standards: people who hoard will often find faults with others, require others to perform to excellence while struggling to organise themselves and complete daily living tasks.

Socially isolated: people who hoard will typically alienate family and friends and may be embarrassed to have visitors. They may refuse home visits from professionals and not engage well with any agency due to feelings of shame.

Large number of pets: people who hoard may have a large number of animals that can be a source of complaints by neighbours due to insanitary conditions that the large number of animals creates.

Churning: hoarding behaviour can involve moving items from one part of the property to another, without ever discarding them.

Self-care: a person who hoards may appear unkempt and dishevelled, due to lack of bathroom or washing facilities in their home. However, some people who hoard will use public facilities in order to maintain their personal hygiene and appearance.

A person who hoards may see nothing wrong with their behaviour and have little insight on the impact it has on them and others.

Please refer to the clutter image rating Appendix B. Developed by Isle of Wight Adults Services Team. There are other clutter image ratings including the widely used one developed by The International OCD Foundation and was originally a study by Frost RO, Steketee G, Tolin DF, Renaud S. Development and validation of the Clutter Image Rating. Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioural Assessment 2008; 32: 401-417

Hoarding behaviour can give rise to significant environmental, public health and community safety risks, which may extend beyond the individual household. Practitioners should consider not only the direct impact on the person, but also the wider environment, including neighbouring properties, shared spaces, emergency responders, animals and the local community.

These risks may include (but are not limited to):

- Accumulation of waste, refuse or biological hazards
- Vermin, insects and infestation
- Contamination from human or animal waste
- Fire spread to adjacent properties
- Unsafe outdoor spaces, gardens or land
- Structural deterioration affecting neighbouring dwellings
- Obstruction of drainage, fire exits or access routes
- Environmental nuisance impacting neighbours' health and wellbeing
- Unsafe working conditions

Where such risks are identified, Environmental Health services should be involved early, alongside safeguarding, housing and fire partners where appropriate, to ensure timely and proportionate intervention.

6. Legislation relevant to hoarding behaviours

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 introduced self-neglect as an indicator of abuse and neglect and the supporting Statutory Guidance identifies that self-neglect “covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding”. In practise, this means that when an adult at risk has care and support needs, their case may require a safeguarding enquiry.

The following six key principles underpin all adult safeguarding work:

1. **Empowerment:** people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent
2. **Prevention:** it is better to take action before harm occurs
3. **Proportionality:** the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
4. **Protection:** support and representation for those in greatest need
5. **Partnership:** local solutions through services working with their communities – communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse
6. **Accountability:** accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice

Partner agencies therefore have a responsibility to recognise and act upon the risk factors associated with hoarding and self-neglect. Early intervention is the most effective means to manage cases where hoarding behaviour is suspected or there are concerns regarding a vulnerable person’s disengagement despite persistent welfare concerns. Experience has demonstrated that delaying intervention regarding a person’s circumstances has become severe, is more costly, both in terms of the person’s wellbeing and public resources.

It should be noted that self–neglect/hoarding may not always prompt a section 42 enquiry.

You should consider raising a safeguarding concern to the local authority if you have reasonable cause to suspect that an adult (under section 42 (1) of the Care Act):

- a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and
- b) is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect

The local authority will consider the concern to see if it meets the above criteria, as well as whether: c) as a result of those care and support needs the individual is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

When assessing whether each case meets the criteria for a Safeguarding referral, please refer to [4LSAB Safeguarding Concerns Guidance](#). it should be understood that it is not necessary to obtain consent to share information or conduct enquiries

where there is a significant risk of harm or where the behaviours pose a risk of harm to others.

Mental Capacity 2005

When working with people with hoarding behaviour it is important to remember that capacity is assumed unless it has been formally assessed otherwise by a person qualified to make that decision. 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 the person's 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.

The core principles of the MCA 2005 clearly identify that professionals should always start from an assumption of capacity. Doubts about a person's capacity may arise because of their behaviour, circumstances or concerns raised by a third party. Mental ill health does not in itself mean that a person has issues with capacity.

When a person's hoarding behaviour poses a serious risk to their health and safety, professional intervention may be required. With the exception of statutory requirements, the intervention or action proposed must be a proportional response.

Capacity can fluctuate and when someone's capacity is being assessed, there is a test which in brief is as follows:

- Does the person have an impairment of the mind or brain or is there some sort of disturbance affecting the way their mind or brain works (whether the impairment or disturbance is temporary or permanent)?
- If so, does the impairment or disturbance mean that the person is unable to make the decision in question at the time it needs to be made?

Consequently, a person can have mental capacity to carry out certain acts or make certain decisions but lack capacity for others.

Executive Capacity

Executive Capacity refers to a person's ability to translate decisions into actions; this disconnect between verbal reasoning and practical behaviour is key in assessing mental capacity. The Code of Practice (para 4.21) notes: 'For someone to have

capacity, they must have the ability to weigh up information and use it to arrive at a decision.' A person may understand the risks of hoarding but be unable to act accordingly to reduce the risk to themselves and their environment.

For more information, see the [4LSAB One Minute Guide to the Mental Capacity Act](#)

Advocacy

Section 67 of the Care Act imposes a duty on the local authority to arrange an independent advocate to facilitate an individual's involvement in their assessment, care planning, review and any safeguarding enquiry or SAR, where they have 'substantial difficulty' participating.

'Substantial difficulty' is defined by the 4 stage test of decision making under Section 3 of the Mental Capacity Act. The duty to appoint an independent advocate does not apply if the local authority is satisfied that:

- an appropriate person (who is not professionally engaged in the care or treatment for that individual) is available and willing to support the adult.
- The person consents to that person acting or, if they lack capacity, it is considered in their best interests for that person to act.

However, if the person is believed to lack capacity to agree to support or execute agreed actions because of impairment to the mind or brain, then the Local Authority has a duty to appoint an independent advocate under Section 35 of the Mental Capacity Act.

The advocate or appropriate person must take an active role, assisting the adult to understand their rights and challenge decisions they believe are inconsistent with local authority's duties to promote wellbeing. Where the person lacks capacity on the specific decision then the advocate or appropriate person advises the local authority to identify the person's 'best interest' under Section 44 Mental Capacity Act.

For more information, please refer to the [4LSAB One Minute Guide to Advocacy for Adults](#)

Public Health Act 1936 and Environmental Protection Act 1990

12.2 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.

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.

12.3 For further guidance and information please refer to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers Professional Practice Note: Hoarding and How to Approach it:

<https://www.cieh.org/media/1248/hoarding-and-how-to-approach-it-guidance-for-environmental-health-officers-and-others.pdf>

7. Fire safety

Hoarding can be a significant fire risk, and occupants residing in homes containing hoarding can be at a greater risk of death or serious injury should a fire occur in their property. Hoarding can cause a fire to spread quicker than expected; can block or hinder escape routes; and can prevent doors being closed to slow down the spread of flames and smoke.

A fire in a property containing hoarding is at greater risk of structural collapse, and gaining entry and searching a property containing hoarding can be significantly compromised and more dangerous for responding Firefighters. There are also increased risks of a fire spreading to adjacent properties when a fire occurs in a hoarded property.

HIWFRS are committed to reducing the risk of death or serious injury to anyone living, working or visiting our communities. As a Service they undertake Home Fire Safety (Safe and Well) visits to individuals who are at an increased risk or have an increased vulnerability to fire – this will include individuals who are residing in a hoarded property. This visit is intended to provide advice and guidance to identified risks and where necessary provide equipment to enable the occupier to be alerted to a fire any agency can send a referral to HIWFRS for a Home Fire Safety (Safe and Well) visit A referral can be made by following the below link:

[Home Fire Safety visit referral - Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, Official website of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Where hoarding is identified at level 4 or above in accordance with Appendix B - Clutter Rating Index practitioners should make a referral to HIWFRS. During a Home Fire Safety visit HIWFRS will fully assess the extent of the hoarding and associated fire risks. Based on these findings HIWFRS may implement additional safety measures as installation of smoke alarms in all rooms affected by hoarding. If the hoarding is significant, at level 7 or above HIWFRS will log risk information to notify fire control and any responding crews should an incident occur at the property.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service are required to be compliant with the Fire Services Act, 2004, Regulation 7.2d to make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in their area. A multi-agency approach to sharing Information about properties containing hoarding enables compliance with the Act and also strengthens the Fire Services operational risk assessment and response when dealing with incidents and fires where hoarding is present.

8. Safeguarding children and adults

Safeguarding Children and Adults: Hoarding and the Family Approach

Hoarding can have a profound impact on the entire family. It is essential that all family members are considered when addressing hoarding-related concerns.

The Family Approach Guidance has been commissioned and jointly developed by the four Safeguarding Children Partnerships (HIPS) and four Safeguarding Adult Boards (4LSABs) in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. This provides a framework for understanding and responding to these situations holistically. Please refer to the following webpage for further support and information:

[Adopting a Family Approach - Hampshire SCP](#)

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding children involves:

- Protecting them from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of their health or development.
- Ensuring they grow up in safe and nurturing environments.

Living in a hoarding environment can significantly affect a child's development. In some cases, it may lead to neglect, which constitutes a safeguarding concern.

Key Considerations:

- The child's needs must always come first.
- Any actions taken must reflect the priority of the child's welfare.
- If children are living in a hoarding-affected property, a Safeguarding Children referral must be raised.
- There may be ongoing concerns of child neglect, which should be assessed through appropriate referral pathways.

Raising a Concern About a Child

- In an emergency, or if you suspect that you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999.
- To report a concern in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, or Southampton, please refer to the Contacts page, which provides all relevant details:
[Contacts - Hampshire SCP](#)

Safeguarding Adults

Safeguarding Adults means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It involves individuals and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experiences of abuse or neglect. At the same time, it ensures the adult's wellbeing is promoted, including where appropriate

consideration of their views, wishes, feelings, and beliefs when deciding on any action.

This approach recognises that adults may have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear, or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Responding to Concerns

When safeguarding concerns arise, refer to your organisation's Safeguarding Policy. The 4LSAB Safeguarding Concerns Guidance is a multi-agency framework is to support decision-making and the raising of adult safeguarding concerns, with the aim of positively impacting outcomes for individuals who have care and support needs and are at risk of, or experiencing, abuse or neglect.

This framework is intended for use by professionals across all sectors, statutory, private, voluntary, and faith-based within Southampton, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, and Portsmouth. It should be used when making a decision to raise an adult safeguarding concern to the Local Authority.

[4LSAB Safeguarding Concerns](#)

Once referrals are received, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that decision-making is consistent and compliant with safeguarding procedures. Consider using the MARM Framework for unmanageable high risk in relation to concerns that do not meet the 3 statutory criteria Section 42 (1) Care Act 2014.

[Quick Guide to Multi-Agency Risk Management \(MARM\)](#)

The MARM framework is a 4 Local Safeguarding Adult Board (4LSAB) approach that brings together professionals from health, social care, the police, housing and other agencies/organisations. This also includes the adult, family members and friends who have a legitimate relationship with the adult. This framework will be useful to professionals working with Adults who are experiencing a high level of risk from events and circumstances that result in risk of harm to them, applicable across Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight.

Self-Neglect and Hoarding

In cases involving hoarding or self-neglect, assess the adult's ability to protect themselves by managing their own behaviour. A safeguarding response may be required if the adult is no longer able to do this without external support. Each case should be assessed individually.

An 'adult at risk' may also be impacted by another person's hoarding behaviour if it places them at risk of harm. If unsure, seek advice from a manager or contact the local safeguarding team.

The 4LSAB Guidance on Responding to Self-Neglect applies to adults who are self-neglecting.

[4LSAB Guidance on Responding to Self-Neglect \(June 2024\)](#)

If the adult also has caring responsibilities for a child, child safeguarding procedures should be considered. Practitioners should always take a whole-family approach. Further information is available in the 4LSAB Family Approach Toolkit.

[Adopting a Family Approach - Hampshire SCP](#)

Working with self-neglect can be personally and professionally challenging. Practitioners should remember that it is not their individual responsibility to hold risk, this is the responsibility of agencies, who must support staff appropriately.

Raising a Concern

In an emergency, or if you suspect that you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999.

If you believe an adult with care and support needs is at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect (including self-neglect), contact:

- Southampton Telephone: 023 8083 3003 Online referral available [here](#)
- Hampshire Telephone: 0300 555 1386 (0300 555 1373 for Out of Hours) Online referral available [here](#)
- Isle of Wight Telephone: 01983 823340 (01983 821105 for Out of Hours) Online referral available [here](#) Email: safeguardingconcerns@iow.gov.uk
- Portsmouth Telephone: 02392 680810 (0300 555 1373 for Out of Hours) Email: adultsafeguarding@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Referrals can be made for further signposting, assessment of needs, or to raise a safeguarding concern.

If the concern meets the statutory criteria for Section 42 duties under the Care Act 2014, it will be referred to the appropriate community team for further coordination. This includes establishing the individual's views and wishes, in line with the legal obligation of Making Safeguarding Personal.

9. Multi-agency response

It is recognised that hoarding is a complex condition and that a variety of agencies may come into contact with the same person.

It is also recognised that individuals that have recognised hoarding behaviours may receive support from agencies in line with their qualifying criteria.

Any professional working with individuals who may have, or appear to have, hoarding behaviours should ensure they complete an assessment of the situation and use the Clutter Image Rating (Appendix B) to decide what steps to take.

If a S42 referral is deemed not to be appropriate, it could be helpful to call a multi-agency risk management (MARM) meeting. This will enable all concerned, including the person themselves, to assess and plan to manage the risks identified. Full details of the MARM process can be found in the [4LSAB Multi-Agency Risk Management Framework](#)

Example:

Where someone has a high volume of items within a room and this impacts on their ability to exit safely. Where there is an increased risk to fire crews entering or exiting the property or where additional heat sources are identified.

Often the response can be to advise the relevant agencies involved to co-ordinate the Multi-agency risk management framework. This framework is designed to support cases relating to adults where there is a high level of risk but the circumstances may sit outside of the statutory adult safeguarding framework but for which a multi-agency approach would be beneficial. This should be read in conjunction with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight 4LSAB Multi-agency safeguarding policy and guidance:

[4LSAB Adult Safeguarding Policy Process and Guidance July 2023](#)

Evidence of animal hoarding at any level should be reported to the RSPCA as well as other relevant agencies.

10. The hoarding journey – what to consider

Firstly, consider your own organisations procedures and guidance when addressing hoarding behaviour, these should have more detail about specifics relating to your role.

Completing a risk assessment can support this process, here is an example:

[SPACE Risk Assessment Tool - Hoarding Disorders UK](#)

This does not replace your own organisations risk assessment where one is in place.

Professional Curiosity and Hoarding

When assessing the situation, it's important to remain 'Professionally Curious' this means not taking everything at face value but considering other factors. It includes the skills of looking, listening, asking direct questions, having challenging conversations, being prepared to build a full picture. This approach is key to understanding risks of abuse or neglect that maybe additional to the obvious hoarding within the property. Going prepared into these situations will always help when building clarity of a situation and support keeping the individual or family at the centre of the decisions made.

Professional Curiosity Resource Tips to support with adopting a professionally curious approach can be found here:

[Professional Curiosity Resource Tips](#)

Trauma-Informed Practice and Hoarding

Evidence indicates that hoarding behaviours are frequently associated with experiences of trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, bereavement, domestic abuse, loss, neglect and other significant life events. Trauma can shape how individuals experience safety, control and attachment, and hoarding may function as a coping strategy to manage distress, anxiety or feelings of loss. As such, responses must adopt a trauma-informed approach, recognising that behaviours which appear resistant or uncooperative may reflect fear, shame or previous negative experiences of statutory intervention or professional involvement. Practitioners should prioritise building trust, consistency and emotional safety; work at the individual's pace where risks allow; and avoid sudden, enforced or solely compliance-driven actions wherever possible. Multi agency planning should balance risk management with the principles of empowerment, proportionality and Making Safeguarding Personal, ensuring that interventions do not inadvertently re-traumatise the individual or escalate disengagement. A coordinated, compassionate and psychologically informed response across agencies is essential to achieving sustainable change and improved outcomes.

Recognising someone with a hoarding disorder means you need to determine if a person has good, fair or poor insight. Consider also if they have absent (delusional) insight or detached insight with assigned blame (i.e. it's someone else's fault).

Things to consider:

- Hoarding assessment
- Fire risk and environmental impact – Home Fire Safety Visit
- Safeguarding referral into the Local Authority
- Personal risks and care needs assessment (Care and Support needs)
- Self-neglect safeguarding
- Mental Capacity
- Advocacy
- Multi-agency response (MARM)
- Action plan
- Funding and resources
- Enforcement options – Environmental Health
- Monitoring
- Contact with GP, Social Prescribers
- RSPCA
- Additional and Associated risks e.g. inappropriate medication storage

Hints and Tips - supporting someone in decluttering/cleaning:

- Never touch their possessions without permission.
- Set regular times, consistency is key.
- Don't be afraid to think outside of the box, maybe meet away from the property at first to build trust.
- Never remove their possessions without permission unless this has been agreed in writing.
- Don't clear and de-clutter for them and never without their agreement. Work jointly with customer if appropriate.
- Don't expect a quick change – it takes a long time to change the environment and behaviours that cause hoarding.
- Ensure tasks are reasonable and achievable for the customer, this could be as small as clearing one square foot to start with.
- Focus on escape routes first.
- Set actions jointly with the customer.
- Encourage and empower customers to actively declutter and clean when appropriate.
- Celebrate their successes however small – recognise, acknowledge and praise positive change.
- Consider support to get rid of possessions – skip hire, friends and family, Professional agencies.

What to do:

- Gather as much information as is reasonable to support your understanding of the case.
- Don't judge the person focus on the situation.
- Rational arguments may not help such as challenging the person to find a specific object.
- Use Motivational Interview tools such as 'rolling with resistance' allowing the person to express how they feel.
- Try to empathise and see the situation through the person's eyes.
- Be congruent, honest about your position and part to play in what may now happen and the goals you need to achieve, time scales and consequences.
- Find out if there are people to help, such as friends/family.
- Know what help is available – go with the knowledge of who can support the situation.
- Once a property has been cleared, it can revert back to becoming cluttered again, have a plan in place to revisit.

Top tips for conversation starters:

It can be daunting to start a conversation when the adult and or their home appears chaotic. As a professional it's important to go prepared, below are some conversation starters that may help. It's important you feel comfortable too and knowing what you can offer in terms of support, referrals and time can help this. Likewise, if you're going to need to take any sort of enforcement action, be clear what this is, what it will mean for the person and what will happen next. Debrief if you need to.

Ask the adult to tell you a story about them or their past, maybe something that still worries them or something they're proud of.	Take note of the objects around them such as photographs, jewellery, engage in conversations about specific items.	Find out what the adult wants help with, this may not be related to their self-neglect.
Ask about the adults past, and how this may trigger their behaviour in the present.	Have an open and honest conversation and ensure their response has been acknowledged.	Ask about the adults' networks, including friends and family. Ongoing support is key.
Set milestones keeping them small and timely. Ask for example what do you feel you can achieve in the coming week?	Ensure you display empathy. Acknowledge the fear many people feel when facing change.	Identify the strengths in the adult that you might highlight and have some ideas about how they might draw on these.
Ask 'what are your current concerns?'	Where you can, go at the person's own pace. Remember this maybe long entrenched behaviour so recognise this in your conversations.	Ensure you're in a location where the adult feels comfortable to talk, which may not always be at home initially.
Be professionally curious.		
Be clear about what can happen next.	Ask them what they'd like to accomplish in the future, understand the adults wishes.	Ask them what we can work on together to achieve what you want from your life.
Be aware of your body language and facial expressions.	Encourage a deeper conversation, for example, 'what are the things working well in your life?'	Ask them 'What helps you when things get difficult?'

11. Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of legal powers

Appendix B: Clutter image rating

Appendix A. Glossary of legal powers

Legal interventions should be used incrementally, recorded carefully, and only after supportive and voluntary options have been exhausted, unless there is an immediate risk of serious harm.

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Environmental Health</p>	<p>Section 83 (aa) Public Health Act 1936</p> <p>Filthy /Unwholesome premises which are prejudicial to health or verminous.</p> <p>Service of Notice requiring clearance/cleansing/pest control treatment. No appeal.</p> <p>Council has powers to enter premises by warrant if reasonable access not given after giving notice. This will be to assess the conditions or carry out works in default. Possible prosecution and Council can recover expenses for works in default.</p>	<p>Where hoarded materials result in filthy, unwholesome or vermin infested premises. This is often where there is a lack of engagement or co-operation of occupier.</p> <p>There must be likelihood of adverse health effect to occupant or rodents or insects present. There may also be complaints from neighbours which must be investigated by the Council.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Environmental Health</p>	<p>Section 79/80 Environmental Protection Act 1990</p> <p>Statutory Nuisances Service of Abatement Notice requiring action to remove nuisance and/or prevent a recurrence.</p> <p>Appeal against notice possible.</p> <p>Warrant powers similar to above.</p> <p>Possible prosecution and Council can recover expenses for works in default.</p> <p>Injunctive proceedings may be taken.</p>	<p>Council has a legal duty to investigate complaints of statutory nuisance and must take action if nuisance proven.</p> <p>The premises must be in such a state that they are prejudicial to healthy or a nuisance to neighbours. This may be from condition of the premises, accumulations, deposits or even animals kept in unsanitary conditions.</p> <p>Intervention often prompted by complaints from neighbours.</p> <p>For exceptional situations where widespread nuisance to neighbours continues after intervention and usually after service of notice.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Environmental Health</p>	<p>Housing Act 2004 – The Housing Health & Safety Rating System</p> <p>Housing hazards such as Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Vermin, Excess Cold, Fire.</p> <p>Service of Improvement or Awareness Notice usually on owner of premises requiring removal of hazards. Council can charge for costs incurred serving notices. Appeal provisions. Possible prosecution and Council can recover expenses for works in default.</p> <p>In extreme circumstance, a house presenting as a ‘Category 1’ hazard may be liable to be demolished.</p>	<p>Relates to possible health and safety affects on occupier. Hoarding can lead to fire hazards from accumulated materials.</p> <p>Due to hoarding, there may be a lack of repair/maintenance of property leading to other health effects on occupier such as lack of heating (excess cold) or washing/sanitary facilities.</p>
<p>Environmental Health</p>	<p>Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 (section 4)</p> <p>Service of Notice to keep land free from rats or mice</p> <p>No warrant powers</p> <p>Possible prosecution and Council can recover expenses for works in default</p>	<p>Powers usually used for accumulations of rubbish or items attracting/ harbouring rodents on private land.</p> <p>Whereas the Public Health Act power tends to be used for internal clearance, the Pests Act power tends to be used for clearing 10 Hoarding and how to approach it gardens; arguably, the presence of relevant pests must be shown first.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
Environmental Health	<p>Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978</p> <p>Allows a local authority, after giving notice, to remove anything abandoned on land in the open air and to recover their costs</p>	Collectively known as “amenity powers” – anything affecting the enjoyment/loss of the amenity.
Environmental Health	<p>Section 92a Environmental Protection Act 1990</p> <p>Where land which is open to the air is defaced by litter or refuse so as to be detrimental to the amenity of the locality, the local authority may serve a ‘Litter Clearing Notice’ on the occupier.</p>	
Environmental Health	<p>Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990</p> <p>Provides a power to require the owner or occupier of land which is adversely affecting the amenity of an area to return it to an appropriate condition.</p>	

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Police</p>	<p>Power of Entry (S17 of Police and Criminal Evidence Act)</p> <p>A power to enter premises relating to police officers for specified purposes including to effect an arrest. This is a power related to searching for people. It is not a power to search for evidence. This power is exercised by a constable providing there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person is being sought on the premises. One element of that power is gaining entry to save life and limb/preventing serious damage to property:</p> <p>This does not require the element of belief; entry is based on the circumstances.</p> <p>The officer must have reasonable grounds to suspect a person is on the premises, and that entry and search is necessary to save life or limb or to protect property from serious damage.</p> <p>This must be more than a fear for welfare or concern for someone. Save life or limb implies that a serious threat exists to someone, such that they may be seriously injured or dead</p>	<p>Concerns that someone inside the premises was ill or injured and the Police would need to gain entry to save life and limb.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Fire and Rescue</p>	<p>Enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005</p> <p>The Fire Service can attend and carry out a Safe and Well visit, working with the occupier to reduce the risk in their home and establish means for raising the alarm in case of fire, and establishing safe escape routes for the occupier(s).</p> <p>Under exceptional circumstances and only where the hoarding causes a risk to other occupiers will the Fire and Rescue Service consider a prohibition or restriction under Article 31 of the Fire Safety Order. An example would be a ground floor dwelling within a block of flats.</p>	<p>Any hoarder in need of fire safety advice for their dwelling or place of residence would be entitled to a Safe and Well visit.</p> <p>Only when all other, directly applicable legislation has been exhausted, would the Fire and Rescue Service consider an Article 31 Notice.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Animal Welfare agencies such as RSPCA/Local authority e.g. Environmental Health/DEFRA</p>	<p>Animal Welfare Act 2006</p> <p>Section 10 of the Act allows for the issues of Improvement Notices requiring owners to take steps to improve animal welfare.</p> <p>Section 18 of the Act allows Inspectors to enter a premises and seize animals in distress.</p> <p>As amended by the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021, offenders can face up to 5 years in prison, receive an unlimited fine and a ban on owning animals.</p>	<p>Cases of Animal mistreatment/neglect.</p> <p>The Act makes it not only against the law to be cruel to an animal, but that a person must ensure that the welfare needs of the animals are met including the provision of a suitable environment</p> <p>See also: Animal Welfare Act RSPCA - RSPCA - rspca.org.uk</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Mental Health Act 1983 Section 135(1)</p> <p>Provides for a police officer to enter a private premises, if need be by force, to search for and, if though fit, remove a person to a place of safety if certain grounds are met. The police officer must be accompanied by an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and a doctor.</p> <p>In general practice an AMHP would apply for the 135(1) warrant at the appropriate Magistrates Court.</p> <p>Section 135(1) permits removal to a place of safety for up to 24 hours with a view to the making of an application under the provisions of the Mental Health Act or other arrangements for the persons care or treatment.</p> <p>NB. Place of Safety is usually the mental health unit, but can be the Emergency Department of a general hospital, or anywhere willing to act as such.</p>	<p>Evidence must be laid before a magistrate by an AMHP that there is reasonable cause to believe that a person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is suffering from mental disorder, and is being • Ill-treated, or • Neglected, or • Being kept other than under proper control, or • If living alone is unable to care for self <p>And that the action is a proportionate response to the risks involved.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Section 4 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Admission for assessment in cases of emergency.</p> <p>In any case of ‘urgent necessity’.</p> <p>The criteria for detention mirror Section 2 (below) but Section 4 may be used in cases of emergency where it has not been possible to secure an assessment by a second doctor.</p> <p>This section expires after 72 hours unless a second medical recommendation is received within this time period, which would convert the Section 4 into a Section 2.</p>	<p>In any case of ‘urgent necessity’ an application may be made by an AMHP or Nearest Relative and founded on one medical recommendation made by, if practicable, a doctor with previous knowledge of the person or a Section 12 approved doctor.</p>
<p>Mental health Services</p>	<p>Section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983.</p> <p>Admission to hospital for assessment. Application can be made by an AMHP or Nearest Relative based on 2 medical recommendations in the prescribed form by 2 independent doctors.</p> <p>The person may be detained for a period of up to 28 days.</p>	<p>The following grounds must be met:</p> <p>The person is suffering from a mental disorder of a nature or degree which warrants the detention of that person in hospital for assessment (or assessment followed by treatment).</p> <p>That the person ought to be detained in the interests of his/her own health or safety or with the view to the protection of others.</p>

AGENCY/SERVICES	LEGAL POWER AND ACTION	CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING INTERVENTION
<p>Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Section 3 of the Mental Health Act 1983</p> <p>Admission to hospital for treatment. Application can be made by an AMHP or Nearest Relative and is based on 2 medical recommendations in the prescribed form by 2 independent doctors.</p> <p>The person may be detained initially for a period of up to 6 months for the purposes of treatment.</p>	<p>The following grounds must be met:</p> <p>That the person is suffering from a mental disorder of a nature or degree which makes it appropriate for the adult to receive medical treatment in a hospital.</p> <p>That it is necessary for the health or safety of the person or for the protection of others that the adult should receive this treatment and it cannot be provided unless the person is detained under this section.</p>
<p>Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Section 17a of the amended Mental Health Act (Community Treatment Order)</p> <p>Allows patients detained in hospital for treatment (under Section 3 or equivalent) to be discharged into the community under specific conditions, while remaining liable to be recalled to hospital if necessary.</p>	<p>That appropriate treatment is available for him/her.</p> <p>A CTO can only be made if the responsible clinician and an approved mental health professional agree that the patient meets strict criteria: the individual must have a mental disorder requiring treatment, it must be necessary for their health or safety (or for the protection of others), and appropriate treatment must be available in the community.</p>

Housing Enforcement for Landlords – the Housing Act 1988 (amended by the Housing Act 1996)

Grounds for seeking possession, which may relate to Hoarding Conditions

The Housing Act 1988 (amended by the Housing Act 1996)

**Ground 12
Breach of Tenancy**

Any obligation of the tenancy (other than one related to the payment of rent) has been broken or not performed. It is, of course for the Court to decide in each case whether possession should be granted (and, if so, whether the possession order should be suspended).

Hoarding can be a breach on Ground 12.

This is a discretionary ground, a judge must consider all the circumstances of the case before concluding whether it's reasonable to grant possession.

**Ground 13
Deterioration of premises**

The condition of the dwelling-house or any of the common parts has deteriorated owing to acts of waste by, or the neglect or default of, the tenant or any person residing in the dwelling-house and, in the case of an act of waste by, or the neglect or default of, a person lodging with the tenant or a sub-tenant of his, the tenant has not taken such steps as he ought reasonably to have taken for the removal of the lodger or sub-tenant.

This is a discretionary ground, a judge must consider all the circumstances of the case before concluding whether it's reasonable to grant possession

Landlord Related Housing Support for Hoarding

Social landlords must consider Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8, which protects the right to respect for private and family life, home, and correspondence, meaning any enforcement action must be necessary and proportionate.

Before seeking possession - particularly under discretionary grounds - the court will weigh whether eviction is a reasonable and proportionate response to the risks posed by hoarding, balancing health and safety concerns against the tenant's rights. Landlords should demonstrate compliance with internal policies, evidence of risk (e.g., fire hazards, structural damage), and attempts at lesser remedies such as support plans, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, and injunctions.

They must also consider Equality Act 2010 duties, making reasonable adjustments where hoarding is linked to disability, and engage a multi-agency approach involving social care and safeguarding teams. Documenting all interventions and proportionality assessments is essential to show that possession is a last resort and a legitimate means of achieving a lawful aim.

Landlord	Injunctions	<p>Injunctions can be an effective remedy for hoarding cases, as they compel the tenant to take specific actions or allow landlord access to address risks. Courts will only grant an injunction where the tenant has the capacity to understand and comply, and applications must be supported by strong evidence such as inspection reports, photographs, and records of engagement.</p> <p>Breaching an injunction is treated as contempt of court, which can lead to fines or imprisonment, though it rarely authorizes forced entry to clear the property. Importantly, injunctions can include positive sanctions—such as offering practical support (skip hire, cleaning services) or pausing possession proceedings if the tenant meets agreed milestones—to encourage compliance rather than relying solely on punitive measures. While not a guaranteed solution, injunctions demonstrate that the landlord has pursued proportionate, supportive steps before seeking possession, strengthening the case if risks persist.</p>
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Landlord	Possession proceedings	<p>Such proceedings can be complicated by defence arguments relating to capacity and The Equality Act 2010 so these matters must have been dealt with prior to issue. The case will be decided on the question of reasonableness and it is essential that a landlord's policies and procedures have been complied with so as to demonstrate that a possession order is necessary and a proportionate response to the hoarding behaviours displayed and is a measure of the last resort/no lesser remedy is likely to resolve the issue.</p> <p>** The threshold will be crossed in only a small number of cases and the question is whether the making of a possession order is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. As such, to show this, evidence of the risk to the residents/neighbours health, safety and wellbeing will be paramount.</p>
Environmental Health (Local Authority Power Only)	Local Authority statutory powers	<p>Enforcement using the Local Authority's statutory powers under the Public Health Act 1936 and Environment Protection Act 1990 which are concerned with health and amenity. Potentially the court can grant a power to force access to the property.</p>

<p>Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Court of Protection for tenants who lack mental capacity</p>	<p>In cases where the tenant is found to lack capacity, the Court of Protection could (not always – sometimes this would take too long to process) be used instead of possession proceedings.</p> <p>The Court of Protection has extensive decision-making powers on behalf of vulnerable individuals which includes personal welfare matters. There is case law to demonstrate that this can be a very effective with the potential for an order to be effective for a unlimited amount of time i.e. a tenant is decanted every 6 months to allow the landlord to remove hoarded goods and clean a property so as to deal with fire hazards, smells, pests etc.</p> <p>The test that the Court of Protection applies is whether a proposed decision or course of action is in the person's 'best interests' in all the circumstances. The Court of Protection will expect evidence from most parties involved in the care and wellbeing of the resident to support the application and give evidence of the same.</p>
<p>Social Care (Local Authority Power Only)</p>	<p>Safeguarding and Self Neglect</p>	<p>Safeguarding Enquiry Care Needs Assessment Multi-Agency Proportionate Response</p>

Appendix B. Clutter image rating

The Clutter image rating tool can support practitioners to assess an individual's case. This version was developed by Isle of Wight Adult services.

Level 1 (numbers 1 – 3) household environment is considered standard and no specialised assistance is needed. If the resident would like assistance at this stage or feels they are declining towards a higher clutter scale, appropriate referrals maybe considered.

Level 2 (numbers 4 - 6) Household environment requires professional assistance to resolve the clutter and any maintenance issues that may have occurred. This support may need to continue with follow up appointments to ensure escalation hasn't taken place. Referrals to agencies or services maybe required at this stage depending on the nature of the hoarding behaviour.

Level 3 (numbers 7 – 9) 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 safeguarding alert due to the significant risk to health of the householders, surrounding properties and residents. Residents are often unaware of the implication of their hoarding behaviour and the risks it possesses.

[Clutter Image Ratings - Hoarding Disorders UK](#)

Here are some other fire risks to be aware of when considering the clutter rating:

