

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

Hoarding



1. What is Hoarding?

Hoarding disorder (HD) is characterised by persistent difficulty discarding items regardless of value, urges to save items and distress associated with discarding and the accumulation of possessions which can compromise the use of the home. Hence, HD is marked by three major behavioural characteristics:

- Difficulty in letting go of material possessions
- Excessive or impulsive/compulsive acquisition of items
- Disorganisation and the inability to prevent clutter

2. Why people may exhibit hoarding behaviours

People may exhibit hoarding behaviours maybe mention some of the possible 'pathways' to hoarding i.e.

- Harm avoidance (e.g. in relation to being wasteful, environmentally unfriendly)
- Fear of deprivation (perhaps because of previous experience of material deprivation / poverty / homelessness)
- Attachment issues (which are often linked to previous experiences of 'loss')
- Positive reinforcers (i.e. the idea that acquiring can be soothing / a comfort blanket in times of anxiety or stress)
- Hoarding could also be a sign of an underlying condition, such as OCD, other types of anxiety, depression and dementia.

3. Signs of hoarding

Someone who has a hoarding disorder may:

- Keep or collect excessive items that may have little or no monetary value, such as junk mail and carrier bags
- Keep items they intend to reuse or repair
- Find it hard to categorise or organise items
- Have difficulty making decisions
- Struggle to manage everyday tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and paying bills
- Become extremely attached to items, refusing to let anyone touch or borrow them
- Have poor relationships with family or friends-which may be as a result of the hoarding

4. Why it is important to understanding Hoarding

It can take over a person's life. It can be very difficult for a person to get around their house. It can cause their work performance, personal hygiene, and relationships to suffer.

The person hoarding is often reluctant or unable to have visitors which can cause isolation and loneliness.

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

- make cleaning very difficult, which may contribute to;
- unhygienic conditions, damp rodent or insect infestations
- be a fire risk and block exits in the event of a fire
- cause trips and falls

Potentially, Using the **MARAM process** could help prevent risk to the adult.

7. Further Information & support:

- Knowsley Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, (MASH) - 0151 443 2600 / MARF [Multi Agency Referral Form](#) ([knowsley.gov.uk](https://www.knowsley.gov.uk))
- [Knowsley's Self-Neglect / Hoarding Toolkit](#)
- The Act Statutory Guidance [Care Act 2014](#) ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))
- Hoarders help Hoarders: [Hoarders Helping Hoarders | Support Group](#)
- [Knowsley's Multi-Agency Risk Management Process \(MARAM\)](#)

6. Cont. How can we show support to hoarders?

- Aim for some small/quick wins for the person when they are ready to address issues within their home
- Avoid further stigmatising people by using terms, don't assume a person who hoards is also self-neglecting
- Remember proportionality is important
- Please bear in mind people's practical abilities – do not negotiate unrealistic goals / targets, because you are effectively setting people up to fail.
- If you want to provide effective support, in the first instance you need to see the person and NOT the 'hoard'. In other words, start off by personalising, not stigmatising.

5. How can we show support to hoarders?

- Start with compassionate curiosity – understanding and kindness are a good start and powerful levers
- Relationship building is crucial and will happen quickly if you are patient and work at the person's pace
- Ask about the person's wants, worries, expectations
- Work on shared goals and aspirations, not on aims dictated by how YOU think people should live
- Persistence is vital – not all steps will be forward steps
- Do not ask 'what's wrong with you?' – ask 'what happened to you?' Try to understand a person's world view