

## Hoarding

Hoarding can be described as collecting and being unable to discard excessive quantities of goods or objects. It is a recognised mental illness and has a protected characteristic under the Mental Health Act. Many people collect objects, but in some cases the problem can be so severe that it can become a health & safety concern for the resident or others.

You may have to liaise with Environmental Health where the hoarding is causing or is caused by people who are not our tenants, i.e. leaseholders, in privately rented or owner occupied housing.

Hoarding may apply to the properties themselves, private gardens or the communal areas of flats. A different approach will be required for each location. There is not a typical hoarding situation but the following should be followed in most cases:

- If the hoarding is at such an extent that the structure of the building is unsafe.
- There is an imminent risk to life due to materials hoarded.
- There is an imminent risk to others.

1. A hoarding issue can be brought to our attention through many different variants such as:
  - Tenancy visits
  - Repair visit/Gas service
  - Complaint from neighbours
  - External agency contact
  - Fire Service initiatives
2. See also the clutter rating <http://clutter-image-ratings.pdf>
3. Check the tenancy file (on CAPITA) to see if there are any previous reports of hoarding tendencies if we are not already aware of any being raised, and to see if there are any agencies involved with the tenant.
4. Where the tenant is already engaging with a support service, make contact with and work alongside this existing arrangement.
5. Where the tenant is not currently engaged, but appears willing to accept assistance, try to arrange floating support to work with them for a limited period. Floating support maybe offered even if other support measures are in place.
6. Where support is offered and refused, it is important to note this on CAPITA as this may be crucial evidence later if legal action is required.
7. Arrange a joint meeting of agencies if this hasn't already been done.
8. Adding a warning marker to speak to the HO on CAPITA is a good way of keeping track of people who have a tendency to hoard if they should move property. It also advises people visiting the property that there is a recognised person with hoarding tendencies as this can often impact on repairs.

9. HO to set up a joint agency meeting with agencies which may be relevant to the case such as Adult Services, Environmental Health, Fire Service, Mental Health, to ensure the case is dealt with by the correct person(s) and to ensure that the individual receives the support they need.

### Clearance

1. Where the tenant is willing to engage, it may be possible to help them to plan and manage their own clearance or engage with an organisation that can assist them.
2. To aid with clearance, you may need the assistance a specialist team. Each case will be assessed individually as to whether a referral is required.
3. There may be some cases where ECC will pay for the clearance of the property. In order for this to occur, the following criteria must be met:
  - The property causes a serious risk to life.
  - The individual does not have the capacity to make decisions or understand the decisions they need to make.
  - The individual does not have the capability to clear the items due to disability or impairment.
  - Apparent and assessed lack of financial resources.
4. If the property is causing a serious risk to life and the tenant has the capacity and capability then the cost for clearance will be recharged to them. This will have to be reviewed on a case by case basis in conjunction with the HOTL.

Note: Enforced removal of items is often considered to be a short-term solution as in some cases tenants whose properties are cleared go on to collect further items and the whole process needs to be repeated. This continuation of the hoarding could be a symptom of an untreated mental health condition.

For advice look at:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/index.shtml>

<http://www.ocdaction.org.uk/>

<http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/>

For Animal Hoarding –see [HPM animals.docx](#)

### Leaseholders (or their tenants) who are hoarders

Similar rules apply to leaseholders as tenants. If the leaseholder (or their tenant) is found to be hoarding then liaise with colleagues in Environmental Health. A joint operation with them might be the most appropriate way forward to deal with such issues.