

Hoarding Frequently Asked Questions

National Hoarding Awareness Week from 17 May to 25 May 2021

What is Hoarding?



Hoarding is the persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with personal possessions, even those of apparently useless or limited value, due to strong urges to save items, distress, and/or indecision associated with discarding.

Hoarding is a very misunderstood and complex issue. It affects 2.5–6% of the UK including people across all socio-economic, age and ethnic groups. It not only has an effect on the individual but radiates through the family and community. It is usually believed to affect older people, however, research shows that the issue can start as early as 13 years old, however treatment is often not sought until around 50 years old.

Why does Hoarding occur?

There is still little research into Hoarding Disorder and the reasons why someone begins hoarding are not fully understood. The most common cause appears to be reaction to trauma, and usually a trauma involving loss. It can be a symptom of another condition. In some cases, hoarding is a condition in itself and often associated with self-neglect.

What are the main traits?

Common traits include:

- Excessive acquiring from shopping, collecting, or from skips etc.
- Collecting and storing these items in the home, garage, sheds, others homes or paid storage.
- Inability or unwillingness to dispose of any of the items, even those that appear to have no value.
- Stored and collected items taking over the functional living space, making those rooms unusable.
- Poor awareness of the issue, denial that it is a problem.
- Debilitating shame preventing individuals from inviting others into their homes.

Why are Hoarding Disorders a problem?

A hoarding disorder can be a problem for several reasons. Risks can be harmful to the individual and those around them. It can lead to an increased risk of house fires, self care and infestation issues, trips and falls, social isolation, access challenges for emergency services, child protection issues and tenancy agreement breaches leading to evictions. The hoarding could also be a sign of an underlying condition, such as OCD and other types of anxiety, depression and stress, which can then lead to increased hoarding.

Who can help with Hoarding?

You should try to persuade someone to see a GP if you think they have a hoarding disorder. This can be difficult as someone who hoards might not think they need help. Try to be sensitive about the issue and emphasise your concerns for their health and well-being. Reassure them that nobody is going to go into their home and throw everything out. A GP will consider what can be done and what support is available to empower them to begin the process of decluttering. A GP may be able to refer to a community mental health team. It is generally not a good idea to get extra storage space or to clear the rubbish away. This will not solve the problem and the clutter often quickly builds up again.



How are Hoarding Disorders treated?

It is not easy to treat hoarding disorders, even when the person is prepared to seek help, but it can be overcome. The main treatment is cognitive behavioural therapy. The therapist will help the person to understand what makes it difficult to throw things away and the reasons why the clutter has built up.

What is Hoarding Awareness Week?

Hoarding Awareness Week is an initiative started by the Chief Fire Officers Association in collaboration with Heather Matuozzo of Clouds End CIC and Cherry Rudge of Rainbow Red in 2014. It was launched at the Houses of Parliament. It gives us the chance to make the Hoarding Disorder more well known and understood within our communities.



Where can I get more information?

[Help for Hoarders](#) provide useful tips for self help and tips for family and friends.

[Hoarding UK](#) is a charity solely focused on supporting people impacted by hoarding behaviour.

[Mind](#) offer more information about Hoarding and Mental Health and how to access support and treatment.

[Hoarding Disorders UK](#) provide support and advice to those affected by hoarding disorder and [Clutter Image Ratings](#) that have been taken from a study and are widely used to assess the condition of a hoarded home and the hoarder's level of insight.

[Clutter Gone](#) provide help and advice around the issues of hoarding and clutter.

Website: www.oldhamsafeguarding.org

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