Hoarding Tendencies and Safeguarding

What is Hoarding Disorder?

Hoarding Disorder is an officially recognised condition in the DSM-V (5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

Hoarding is described as the accumulation of a large number of possessions that clutters the living or working environment of an individual to the point whereby it impedes daily life.

Hoarding behaviour is characterised as a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them. A person with Hoarding Disorder experiences distress at the thought of parting with the items. Excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value, occurs.

Hoarding Disorder is now a standalone mental disorder and considered to be a form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Hoarding Disorder is often a symptom of other mental health disorders.

Those individuals with Hoarding Disorder have strong emotional attachments to the objects they hoard and it is not simply a question of lifestyle choices.

Anything can be hoarded, including clothes, newspapers, food, animals, paper, containers and even data.
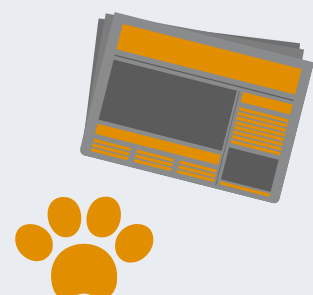
Safeguarding

Children

In cases where a person under the age of 18 is identified as being at possible risk, a safeguarding referral should be made immediately. *https://lrsb.org.uk/childreport*

It is important to consider the child or young person's lived experience and to give regard to the voice of the child.

Living within a hoarding household alone may have a significant impact upon a child's wellbeing and development. Hoarding may also be symptomatic of related risk factors which affect parenting capacity and/or are indicators of abuse.

Adults

In circumstances where an individual's hoarding behaviour puts their independence or wellbeing at risk and/or will affect the person's ability to protect themselves from harm, an adults' safeguarding referral should be considered. *https://lrsb.org.uk/adultreport*

Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM)

The Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM) process is used where safeguarding thresholds are met, but where the concerns relate to high risk self-neglect.

This guidance seeks to provide frontline professionals with a multi-agency framework to facilitate effective working with adults who are at risk due to self-neglect, where that risk may lead to significant harm or death if nothing in that person's situation changes.

The VARM guidance is used when the adult does not engage with services or engagement is not reducing the level of risk and the person remains at risk of significant harm or death. It is essential to note that as well as self-neglecting, the adult must be considered to have a potential need for care and support even if those needs are not being currently met by any agency.

Visit: *https://www.llradultsafeguarding.co.uk/varm/*

Fire and Rescue Service

The Fire and Rescue Service should be alerted to all premises where an increased risk of fire, or an increased risk of the severity and potential outcomes of a fire are identified.

The Fire and Rescue Service will then place a marker on their systems to alert crews attending any fires at that premises.

The Fire and Rescue Service are also able to carry out a risk reduction exercise of fitting/replacing smoke detection and providing home fire safety advice for households where there is a higher risk of fire.

This is unless the premise is council owned, or rented privately, where the landlord has the responsibility.