Information NOW
Information for people in Newcastle Upon Tyne

When collecting clutter or hoarding can become a problem

We all collect a lot of things throughout our lives. Often these things can have great sentimental value and it can be difficult to part with them. Most of the time our possessions do not pose any problems however having a large number of possessions can start to become a problem if it makes it difficult to

- clean your house
- heat your home
- maintain or repair your house
- move around your house
- or if your belonging pose a fire risk

What is hoarding?

Hoarding is where someone collects large amounts of items and is unable to throw any of them away. As their collection of possessions grows in size, it begins to encroach upon their living space and affects their quality of life. For example they may be collecting newspapers, cds, clothes, crockery, electrical items, animals (in some rarer cases) and more.

If hoarding is left untreated the habit can become worse until it becomes extremely chaotic and unmanageable. The definition of chronic hoarding is when rooms in the home become 'unsuitable for their intended purpose' or too cluttered to live in. It is a type of self neglect, or not taking care of yourself. This is now classed as a type of **adult abuse.**

Speak to Community Health and Social Care Direct if you are worried about the safety or wellbeing of an adult in Newcastle.

Help for Hoarders has a range of self help materials for hoarders and their family

and friends, including a 'Clutter Image Rating' which you can use to help realise if your view of your home is realistic or if it has become too cluttered to live in. They also offer useful tips on where to begin tidying up the clutter and how to tackle small areas at a time.

Compulsive hoarding (also known as Hoarding Disorder) is recognised as a medical condition. Mental health support and counselling can be useful to help someone on their journey to recovery. Speak to your GP or read on for more details about local support and counselling.

What are the risks of hoarding?

There are a number of risks which are associated with hoarding or large amounts of clutter in the home including;

- slips, trips and falls
- illness caused by bacteria, damp or mould
- increased risk of fire and fire will spread much quicker in a cluttered home
- making it difficult to escape your home in a fire situation
- blocked exits and entries may prevent your escape and could delay your rescue in a fire situation
- illness caused by rats or vermin
- poor health caused by inadequate heating
- mental health problems - hoarding is often associated with depression or anxiety problems
- isolation - often people who are hoarding avoid contact with others as they feel guilty or ashamed of their home
- poor quality of life - living in a small cramped space with little outside contact.

The Association for Professional Declutterers and Organisers (APDO) has a list of accredited companies that can help you with decluttering your home.

How can I help someone who is hoarding?

Hoarding is often triggered by a life changing event such as bereavement, retirement or a traumatic experience. The person may then wish to 'hang on to things' to help them to stay in control of their life or to fill the gap. It can be difficult to help someone suffering from compulsive hoarding as the person may not realise that their habits could cause a problem to themselves or pose a risk to others.

If you are worried about someone you know or care for you may wish to talk to them first and see if they would like some help with cleaning or clearing their home. A sensitive approach is essential to helping someone come to terms with the hoarding habit. The items which they have collected may not appear valuable to anyone else, but it could cause great distress to the person if these items were simply thrown away.

They may need some support from their **GP** or a counsellor to help them before any clean ups can take place. Your GP can refer you to a **mental health** service if this would be helpful for you.

Hoarding Disorders UK has a **series of images** for to help identify the stages of hoarding.

Mental health support

ReCoCo: The Recovery College run peer support groups and free educational and creative courses, for anyone who would find them helpful in their recovery from mental illness, substance misuse, trauma or distress.

Newcastle Talking Therapies is a free and confidential service talking therapies service. They offer advice, information and support. Talking therapies can help people with problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, anger, fears, bereavement and relationship difficulties. You can request a referral from your doctor or contact them directly to make an appointment.

Read more about local mental health support on InformationNOW

Practical help and support

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service can offer free fire safety advice, fit smoke alarms for free and help people to plan their emergency escape route in case of a fire.

Your Local Services at Newcastle City Council can arrange a separate rubbish collection for you if you are removing large items or amounts of material from your home. There may be a charge for this service. Or you may wish to find a private skip hire company.

Public Safety and Regulation ? Newcastle City Council can help If you are having problems with your privately rented home or your neighbour's property is affecting yours. You can contact them confidentially if you are worried about someone else's property. For example, this may be because you are worried about poor living conditions, a large amount of clutter in or around their home, pests, noise nuisance, unsafe electrics or fire risks. After an assessment they can take action to make sure the house is safe and to protect the resident and/or their neighbours. They can also make referrals to other services such as **Community Health & Social Care Direct (formerly Adult Social Care Direct)** if the person needs extra support. They can issue an enforcement notice on the landlord or the home owner if they are unable to carry out the work themselves.

As with rented property the team can carry out the work if it is not completed within a set time. The cost of this work will then be charged back to the landlord or home owner. If the person doesn't have the means to pay, payment plans are available or the money may be recovered at a later date.

House Clearance Services - There are some private companies that you can pay to carry out a house clearance. The price of this service will depend on the level of work required. It is always best to check a companies references and request a number of quotes before you decide to use a company.

Checked and Vetted is a free online and telephone information service where you can search for verified tradespeople who have had their work histories, company details and job reports checked and vetted. To help you to make an informed choice about which Tradesperson to use. They also offer customer reviews to help you choose a tradesperson for your job. You can search for 'house clearance' services in your area on their website.

Charities - You can donate unwanted items of furniture and white goods to charity. They can collect your donations. Read more in our '**Practicalities of moving home' article.**

Mother Clutter is a company that helps people who hoard to declutter their homes. Services can be arranged to suit your needs. Helping you to decide what you would like to rehome, recycle or keep. There is a cost for this service. You can contact

Mother Clutter to find out how much it might cost and the level of support you need.

Research into hoarding behaviours

The Hoarding Research Group (HRG) at Northumbria University research the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to hoarding behaviours. Their research can help organisations understand how to recognise and respond better to people who hoard. Anyone interested in hoarding behaviours, personally or professionally can contact them to get involved. Visit their website or social media for more information on current research projects and their findings.

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Useful Organisations

Adult Social Care at Newcastle City Council

Email: scd@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care

Telephone: 0191 278 8377

Address: CHSCD Newcastle City Council, NE4 9LU

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS)

Email: enquiries@twfire.gov.uk

Website: www.twfire.gov.uk

Telephone: 0191 444 1500

Address: Nissan Way, SR5 3QY

Newcastle City Council

Website: www.newcastle.gov.uk

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Civic Centre, NE1 8QH

Your Local Services at Newcastle City Council

Website: www.newcastle.gov.uk/envirocall

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Help for Hoarders

Website: http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Public Safety and Regulation - Newcastle City Council

Email: psr@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/environment-and-waste/environmental-health-and-pest-control

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Newcastle City Council, NE1 8QH

Betel UK

Email: hexham.betel@gmail.com

Website: http://www.betel.uk/

Telephone: 0191 272 0957

Address: Charity Furniture Shop, NE4 8BE

ReCoCo: The Recovery College Collective

Email: info@recoverycoco.com

Website: http://www.recoverycoco.com/

Telephone: 0191 261 0948

Address: 1 Carliol Square, NE1 6UF.

Association of Professional Declutterers & Organisers (APDO)

Website: https://www.apdo.co.uk

Telephone: 0191 261 0948

Address: Fourwinds House, CH4 9LF

Hoarding Disorders UK

Email: info@hoardingdisordersuk.org

Website: https://hoardingdisordersuk.org/

Telephone: 0330 133 2310

Qwell

Website: http://www.qwell.io/

Telephone: 0330 133 2310

Checked and Vetted

Email: enquiries@checkedandvetted.com

Website: www.checkedandvetted.com

Telephone: 0191 651 1165

Address: 4th Floor Dobson House, NE3 3PF

Hoarding Research Group at Northumbria University

Email: nick.neave@northumbria.ac.uk

Website: www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/academic-departments/psychology/research/health-and-wellbeing/hoarding-research/

Telephone: 0191 651 1165

Mother Clutter

Email: motherclutteruk@gmail.com

Website: www.facebook.com/MotherclutterUK

Telephone: 07976589595

Address: 4 Keyes Gardens, NE2 3QX

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