

Understanding the facts of Hoarding Briefing note

“Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material to the point that it impedes day to day functioning.”

Frost and Gross, 1993

Hoarding behaviour can manifest in three ways:

- **Acquisition** – compulsive buying and/or the accumulation of free items such as newspapers, junk mail and items left at the side of the road. This can be motivated by the belief that having an item will bring comfort and make the person happy or that they are ‘rescuing’ items so that they are not wasted or lost. It can also provide a sense of security (especially where the person has been a victim of crime).
- **Saving** – there are three reasons for saving: ‘*sentimental*’ which can be motivated by grief and refers to the emotional attachment a person feels toward an object i.e. it may become linked to a happy memory or someone they love and miss; ‘*instrumental*’ which can often stem from a history of having experienced deprivation, or of having had possessions forcibly taken from them in the past and so items are saved ‘just in case I need them’ or to guard against ‘being without’ again in the future; ‘*intrinsic*’ or ‘*aesthetic*’ where items are saved because they are seen as too beautiful to be discarded.
- **Disorganisation** – items of value are mixed in with rubbish and items of no apparent value. People who hoard often have difficulty with information processing, categorisation, sequencing tasks and decision making. They may also believe that they have a poor memory which leads to items being stored where they are visible instead of put away in cupboards i.e. ‘if I put them away, I won’t be able to see them and if I can’t see them I won’t remember I have them and they will be lost to me’.

How the hoarder may feel when attempting to discard hoarded items:

- It can be too distressing and/or leave the person feeling vulnerable and insecure.
- It can be difficult with decision making and not being able to break a task down into smaller steps which could mean that the process of clearing hoarded items is overwhelming for the person and so avoided.
- It is common for people who hoard not to recognise the severity of the problem and ignore, or not see, the clutter in their home.
- Conversely, the person who hoards may be acutely aware of the issue and feel embarrassed, leading them to feel defensive and/or deny that there is a problem.

All of this can prevent a person from discarding hoarded items.

For further information, please contact the Partnership Team via partnerships@telford.gov.uk