

Self-neglect and Hoarding strategy: **Practitioner Guide**

This practitioner guide accompanies the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board multi-agency strategy and guidance for working with people with self-neglect and / or hoarding behaviours

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1. Introduction

This practitioner guide accompanies the full Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) Multi-agency Self-neglect and Hoarding Strategy.

It supports a multi-agency approach which focuses on early intervention and prevention, working together to achieve safe and habitable homes, making use of the **Help Hubs** in each district as a forum for collaborative casework by practitioners.

It is intended as a **toolkit for anyone** working with adults who may show signs of self-neglect and / or hoarding behaviours. We have used the word 'practitioner' because it is for people who work to support those adults. This might include staff from:

- Social care
- Health (across all sectors)
- Housing providers
- Local council
- Environmental health
- Fire and rescue
- Police
- Volunteers and community groups
- Organisations who support people to maintain their home environment

It includes examples of the Clutter Image Rating Tool for quick reference, assessment and self-assessment tools, as well as some 'top tips' to help build trust right from the start.

For more detailed guidance, including definitions, related legislation, information sharing please refer to the full Strategy document here: [Self-neglect and hoarding | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

2. A multi-agency approach

The NSAB strategy and guidance is clear that supporting adults with self-neglect and /or hoarding behaviours must be a multi-agency priority.

There will usually be a 'lead agency' – this could be the organisation of the worker who has had initial contact or had the most involvement with the adult; a case worker who has a good relationship with the person, or it could be the agency with statutory responsibility to lead (e.g. adult social care where safeguarding duties under s42 Care Act apply).

Being the lead does not automatically mean that all responsibility for that adult and their needs sits within that agency but does mean they should co-ordinate the multi-agency support.

There are expectations that:

- The agency holding the case will have actively explored opportunities to work with the individual and other partners prior to bringing the case to the Help Hub; however, this should not prevent the case being brought at an early stage
- The agency holding the case will take responsibility for initiating multi-agency partnership working, within the framework of the full strategy, using the Help Hub
- The adult will be asked for their consent before bringing the case for multi-agency discussion – where this is refused, concerns may still be discussed in Help Hub using anonymised detail, or data shared due to the high risk nature of the concerns (see NSAB guidance on information sharing in this section [Practice guidance | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board](#))
- All partner agencies will actively engage when asked by the lead agency

The aim is to prevent serious injury or even death of adults who appear to be self-neglecting and / or hoarding by:

- Following the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) in all interventions, even where safeguarding adults duties do not apply
- Empowering adults as far as possible to understand the consequences of their actions on themselves and others
- Making proportionate responses to the identified level of risk to self and / or others
- Having a shared understanding of the issue across all partners and their staff, enabling multi-agency working to be proactive and effective
- All partners upholding their duties of care.

It is also essential to consider the needs of any children either living in or visiting the environment – this is reflected in the tools below, and also further guidance relating to children is in the full self-neglect and hoarding strategy (section 10 Safeguarding Children).

3. Self-neglect and safeguarding adults

In the Care Act 2014 guidance, self-neglect was added as a new category of abuse in section 42 which sets out duties for safeguarding adults. Like other categories, not all adults who self-neglect or exhibit hoarding behaviours will have needs for care and support under the legislation or meet the criteria for a safeguarding adults enquiry.

The criteria for a formal safeguarding adults enquiry is that:

- the adult had needs for care and support (defined in the Act), or an appearance of need
- the adult is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse / neglect; **and**

- because of the impact of that care and support need, they are unable to protect themselves from the abuse / neglect

However, the principles of safeguarding can still be applied, where people work together with the adult, forming a 'team around the person', to prevent harm and support well-being.

Chronic self-neglect and/or hoarding is likely to have developed over many years, and it may be considered a safeguarding concern at the point:

- where the person with care and support needs can no longer control their behaviour, so they cannot protect themselves
- where there is a defined high risk of harm to the individual
- where the physical / environmental risk to others is significant.

4. What does Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) mean?

The MSP programme started in 2010, and then became embedded in the principles of the Care Act 2014. Care Act guidance requires adult safeguarding practice to:

- Be person led
- Be outcome focused
- Enhance choice and control
- Improve quality of life, wellbeing and safety
- Aim towards resolution or recovery

MSP puts people more in control of their own safeguarding and generates a more person-centred set of outcomes. The key focus is to develop a real understanding of what the person wishes to achieve, recording their desired outcomes and seeing how well these have been met.

It gives workers permission to spend time with people, asking them what they want by way of outcomes at the beginning and throughout the safeguarding process.

Although it is likely that only the highest risk self-neglect cases will need a safeguarding adults enquiry, the principles of person-centred practice and MSP can and should be applied in single and multi-agency approaches.

Understanding what is important to the person is likely to be the key to meaningful change. This may be quite different to risks identified by workers.

The adult	Worker
I'm worried about my cat not being able to get out of the house	I'm worried that you might get trapped in your house
I'm worried you'll take all my things away	I'm worried you will be evicted and lose your house
I'm worried that you will take all my animals from me	I'm worried about the hygiene of your home and that you will get ill

Outcomes that people may wish to achieve in relation to self-neglect and hoarding might include:

- To be involved in what happens
- For people involved in their case to do what they say they will
- To be able to use more of their home
- To feel safer in their home
- To feel more confident
- To be able to look after their pets better
- To be able to see their friends and family more

The person's desired outcome may not always be achievable (for example if their environment is impacting on others or agencies have a duty to take legal action). In these circumstances, the person's view should still be recorded, but practitioners need to talk to them about why their desired outcome may not be achievable.

Where there is high enough risk that the safeguarding adults process is being progressed, **independent advocacy** must be considered in certain circumstances. This is usually when working with adults who lack capacity or have substantial difficulty being involved in the s42 enquiry, who do not have an 'appropriate individual' to support them. An independent advocate will then support them to be able to express their views.

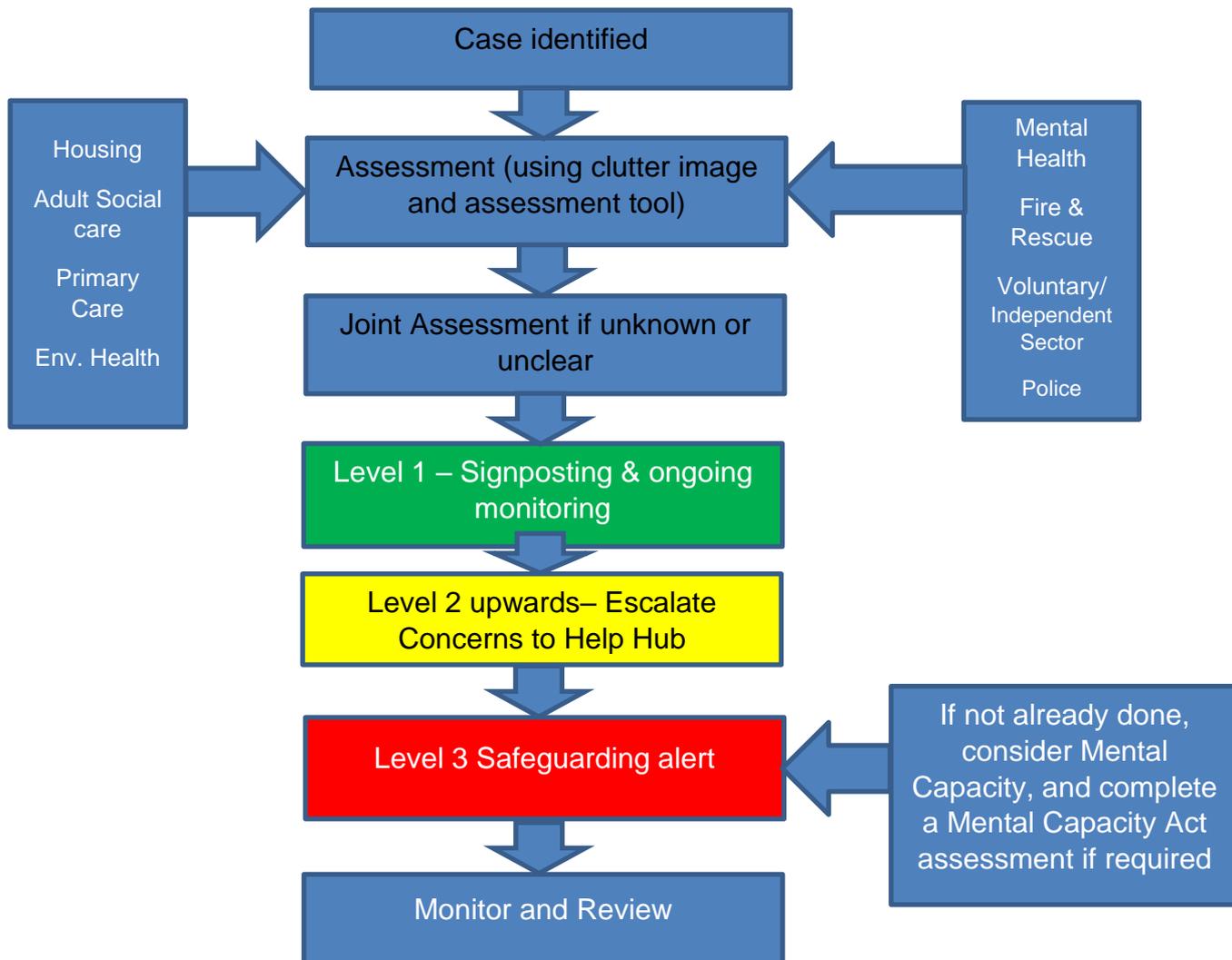
5. Practical tips to build trust

When visiting neglected or cluttered homes, here are some things to think about to help establish and build positive relationships with adults:

- **Be prepared** before a visit, think about what the home you are visiting may be like, smells, dirt, clutter and animals. Wear appropriate clothing that can be removed afterwards (a lightweight coat, that can be easily washed), spare shoes, hand wipes, mask (you can spray perfume / aftershave onto)
- From the first moment you enter, every interaction is important, and **YOUR** reactions and responses matter
- A compliment on entry, on anything; or a question to show interest and start a general conversation – making a connection, however small
- Small comments, looks, expressions and body language can be noticed by those you are visiting and make them feel that they are being judged or cause them offence – this can make a massive difference to how they feel and building a rapport
- Show empathy, remember most people will already feel anxious and embarrassed about their environment – they may not have had a choice in your intervention
- Be aware that their responses may also be trauma led (what they have experienced to date, instinctive rather than reasoned in the first instance)
- Remember contact is about social interaction - if they offer a cup of tea etc, try and say yes, if you don't drink what they offer perhaps ask for a glass of water instead
- Sit down wherever possible, it helps when having a conversation to be on the same level – standing can make it obvious that you feel it's too cluttered or dirty; if need be, find reasons to sit on a hard surface or a cushion (e.g. 'my back's been sore, I need to sit on this to be comfortable')
- Try not to make any judgement obvious, whatever you are feeling or thinking
- The first visit in particular should be about understanding where they are and how they got there, listening to their life experiences, before moving towards support and any possible change
- Ask them what they would like to achieve/ gain from your intervention
- If there are pets – it may be that the welfare of the pet is more important to the person than themselves - ask about the pet, show an interest

6. Clutter Image Rating Tool (CIRT) Flowchart

The flowchart below sets out the process for use of the Clutter Image Rating Tool. If in doubt, please ask your team leader / manager for assistance.



Use the clutter image rating to assess what level the adult's hoarding problem is at:

Images 1- 3 Level 1

Images 4- 6 Level 2

Images 7- 9 Level 3

Then refer to the **Clutter Assessment Guidelines** (in the main Strategy) which sets out the appropriate action you should take. Record all actions undertaken in the agency's recording system, detailing conversations with other professionals, actions taken and action yet to be taken.

7. Clutter Image Rating Scale – Bedroom

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in the room



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

8. Clutter Image Rating Scale – Lounge

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in the room



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

9. Clutter Image Rating Scale – Kitchen

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in the room



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

10. Assessment Tool for Practitioners

The assessment tool below will be completed by a practitioner of the agency holding the case to decide whether this case needs to be brought to the Help Hub, or if this can be managed 'in-house' with the support of partners.

Date of home assessment							
Person's Name							
Date of birth							
Address							
Contact details							
Type of dwelling							
Owner occupier	Leaseholder	Tenant - Name and address of landlord					
Household Members		Name	Relationship	Date of birth			
Pets - indicate what pets and any concerns							
Agencies currently involved - with contact details							
Non agency support currently in place							
Person's attitude towards the concern							
Please indicate if present at the property							
Structural damage to property		Insect or rodent infestation		Large number of animals		Clutter outside	
Rotten food		Animal waste in house		Concerns over the cleanliness of the property		Visible human faeces	
Concern of self-neglect		Concerned for children at the property		Concerned for other adults at the property		Unusable rooms - specify which:	

Using the Clutter Image Scale please score each of the room below					
Bedroom 1		Bedroom 4		Separate toilet	
Bedroom 2		Kitchen		Lounge	
Bedroom 3		Bathroom		Dining Room	
Please provide a description of the hoarding problem;(presence of human or animal waste, rodents or insects, rotting food, are utilities operational, structural damage, problems with blocked exits, are there combustibles, is there a fire risk?)					
Please refer to the multi-agency hoarding Strategy and Guidance Document tool in the full Strategy (pages . Based on the information provided above, what level is your case graded?					
Level 1 Green		Level 2 Orange		Level 3 RED- Take case to local Early Help or similar Hub	
Name of practitioner undertaking assessment					
Name of organisations					
Contact details					
Next actions to be taken					
List of agencies referred to (with dates and contact names)					

11. Assessment Tool Guidelines

1. Property structure services and garden area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the access to all entrances and exits for the property. (Note impact on any communal entrances & exits). Include access to roof space. • Can the occupant(s) escape from all rooms in the event of a fire or other emergency? • Is there a clear plan of what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency and does everyone in the home know it? • Does the property have a working smoke alarm? • Carry out a quick visual assessment of the condition of the services within the property e.g. plumbing, electrics, gas, air conditioning, heating; this will help inform your next course of action. • Are the services connected? • Assess the garden: size, access, and condition.
2. Household Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the current functionality of the rooms and the safety for their proposed use. e.g. can the kitchen be safely used for cooking, can the occupier(s) properly use the bathroom/ WC or does the level of clutter within the room prevent their normal use. • Select the appropriate rating on the clutter scale. • Estimate the % of floor space covered by clutter • Estimate the height of the clutter in each room
3. Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the level of sanitation in the property. • Are the floors clean and are readily cleansed? • Are the work surfaces clean? • Are you aware of any odours in the property? • Is there rotting food? • Does the adult use candles, portable electric or gas heaters? • Can you see a higher than expected number of flies and other insects? • Are household members struggling with personal care? • Is there random or chaotic writing on the walls on the property? • Are there unreasonable amounts of medication collected? (Prescribed or over the counter?) • Is there evidence of illegal drug use? • Is the adult aware of any fire risk associated to the clutter in the property? • Is there faecal matter, urine or other body fluids visible within the property?
4. Safeguarding Children & Family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do any rooms rate 7 or above on the clutter rating scale? • Does the household contain young people or children? • If Level 3 - Refer to CADS if children or young people present within 24 hours
5. Animals and Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any pets at the property? • Are the pets well cared for; are you concerned about their health? • Is there evidence of any infestation? e.g. bed bugs, cockroaches, fleas, rats, mice, etc. • Are animals being hoarded at the property? If so, are they healthy and being well looked after? • Are outside areas seen by the resident as a wildlife area? • Does the resident leave food out in the garden to feed foxes etc.
6. Personal health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following your assessment do you recommend the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at future visits? Please detail. • Following your assessment do you recommend the resident is visited in pairs or with the Police? Please detail. • Is there any evidence of other types of abuse e.g. financial abuse or scams, cuckooing, domestic abuse?

12. Questions which could be used during an assessment

Here are examples of questions to ask where you think there is a risk of self-neglect and / or hoarding. These will help with assessment and provide the information needed to alert other agencies. Many adults who struggle to maintain safe and habitable homes will be embarrassed about their surroundings so adapt the questions as required to suit the situation.

- How do you get in and out of your property, do you feel safe living here?
- Have you ever had an accident, slipped, tripped up or fallen? How did it happen?
- If yes, how have you made your home safer to prevent this (above) from happening again?
- How do you move safely around your home (where the floor is uneven or covered, or there are exposed wires, damp, rot, or other hazards)?
- Has a fire ever started by accident?
- How do you get hot water, lighting, heating in here? Do these services work properly? Have they ever been tested?
- Do you ever use candles or an open flame for heat and light, or cook with camping gas?
- How do you manage to keep yourself warm, especially in winter?
- When did you last go out in your garden? Do you feel safe to go out there?
- Are you worried about other people getting into your garden to try and break-in? Has this ever happened?
- Are you worried about mice, rats or foxes, or other pests? Do you leave food out for them?
- Have you ever seen mice or rats in your home? Have they eaten any of your food, or got upstairs and are nesting anywhere?
- Can you prepare food, cook, and wash up in your kitchen?
- Do you use your fridge? May I have look in it? How do you keep things cold in the hot weather?
- How do you keep yourself clean? Can I see your bathroom? Are you able to use your bathroom and use the toilet ok? Can you wash, bath or shower?
- Can you show me where you sleep and let me see your upstairs rooms? Are the stairs safe to walk up? (if there are any)
- What do you do with your dirty washing?
- Where do you sleep? Are you able to change your bedding regularly? When did you last change it?
- How do you keep yourself warm at night? Have you got extra coverings to put on your bed if you are cold?
- Are there any broken windows in your home? Any repairs that need to be done?
- Because of the number of possessions you have, do you find it difficult to use some of your rooms, if so which ones?
- Do you struggle with discarding things or to what extent do you have difficulty discarding (or recycling, selling, giving away) ordinary things that other people would get rid of?

13. Self-assessment tool

This is similar to the assessment in section 10 but could be used with the individual to involve them more directly.

Date of home assessment			
Person's Name			
Date of birth			
Address			
Contact details			
Type of dwelling			
Owner occupier	Leaseholder	Tenant - Name and address of landlord	
Household Members	Name	Relationship	Date of birth
Feelings (0 = not at all 10 = very much)			
How safe do you feel in your home?			
Do you ever feel upset when you think about throwing away things you feel might still have a use?			
Do you often want an item even if you already something that does the same thing?			
Do you ever want an item even if you do not have enough space to keep that item?			
Do you often feel a need to save an item because it might have a use?			
Thoughts (0 = not at all 10 = very much)			
Do you have lots of ideas when thinking about the use of items?			
Do you think you focus on the non-essential detail of items?			

Are you worried about mice/rats/pests?	
Behaviours (0 = not at all 10 = very much)	
Do you have difficulty getting rid of possessions regardless of value?	
Do you have difficulty organising all of your possessions?	
Do you often rely on visual cues to remember things?	
Do you have problems deciding what to do with an item?	
How much does clutter interfere with your ability to do each of the following activities (0 = not at all 10 = very much)	
Prepare food	
Use your fridge	
Eat at a table	
Move round your home easily	
Exit your home quickly	
Use the toilet	
Use the shower/ bath	
Use kitchen appliances	
Sleep in your bed	
Sit on your sofa/ chair	
Clean the house	
Find important things	
Your circumstances	
Do you experience mental ill health?	
Do you experience physical ill health?	
Are you able to pay for services to clean/ clear your homes?	
Have you ever had an accident/ slipped /tripped or fallen in your home?	
Do you ever use a candle/ naked flame in the home?	
Has a fire ever started by accident?	
How do you get hot water, heating and lighting in your home?	
Do your utilities work properly?	
Are they due to be tested?	
Are there items/ obstructions which make it difficult to exit	

your home quickly? (overgrown garden/ items outside)	
Do you believe there is a problem with your home?	
If yes, what do you think would help you?	
Name of practitioner undertaking assessment	
Name of organisations	
Contact details	
Next actions to be taken	
List of agencies referred to with dates and contact names	

14. Guide to a person's insight

Use this guide as a baseline to describe the person's attitude towards their hoarding. It may help to provide additional information in your referrals and reports to enable a tailored approach that is most relevant to the person you are working with.

Good or fair insight:

The person recognises that their beliefs and behaviours (relating to difficulty discarding items, clutter, or excessive acquisition) are problematic. The person recognises these behaviours in themselves.

Poor insight

The person is mostly convinced that their beliefs and behaviours (relating to difficulty discarding items, clutter or excessive acquisition) are not problematic despite evidence to the contrary. The person might recognise a storage problem but has little self-recognition or acceptance of their own hoarding behaviour.

Absent (delusional) insight

The person is convinced that their beliefs and behaviours (relating to difficulty discarding items, clutter or excessive acquisition) are not problematic despite evidence to the contrary. The person is completely accepting of their living environment despite it being a hoard and possibly a risk to health.

Detached with assigned blame

The person has been away from their property for an extended period. The person has formed a detachment from the hoarded property and is now convinced a 3rd party is to blame for the condition of the property. For example, a burglary has taken place, squatters or other household members.