



Housing Services Hoarding and Clutter Policy

Document Control

Document details

Name	Hoarding and Clutter Policy
Version number	V0.1
Status	Final
Authors	Joe Jenkinson
Lead Officer	Katri Wilson
Approved by	Patrick Odling-Smee
Scheduled review date	Two years from the proposed date of implementation

Supersedes	2016 Safeguarding Adults board's self-neglect and hoarding policy
Target audience	All members of the housing directorate
Related to	2016 Safeguarding Adults board's self-neglect and hoarding policy

Version history

Version	Change	Date	Dissemination
v.1		02/02/2021	SMT

Approval history

Version	Change	Date	Approving body
v.1		04/02/2021	SMT

Equality analysis record

Date	Completed by	Review date

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
1.1 - Purpose of this Policy	4
1.2 - Aims of this Policy	4
1.3 - Scope of this Policy	4
1.4 - Delegated authority to make minor changes to this policy	4
1.5 - Timescales for this policy.....	4
1.6 - Legal context of this policy	4
1.7 - Equal opportunities statement	4
1.8 - Data Protection statement	5
2. Background	6
2.1 - Defining Hoarding	6
2.2 - Causes of Hoarding	6
2.3 - Risk of Hoarding	7
3. Process	9
3.1 - Steps in responding to Hoarding	9
3.2 - Assessing Risk	10
3.3 - Essential Actions	11
3.4 - Agreeing a plan	12
3.5 - Review	13
4. Dissemination and communication of this policy	16
5. Implementation of this policy	17
6. Monitoring and review of this policy	18
7. Useful Links	19
8. Appendix	20
A - Clutter Image Rating.....	20
B - Hoarding Assessment Form.....	22

1. Introduction

1.1 - Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure the housing directorate will follow to ensure that tenants who hoard are identified and are supported to manage their homes. It should be read alongside the 2016 safeguarding Adults boards' self-neglect and hoarding policy.

1.2 - Aims of this Policy

It is the aim/s of this policy to prevent serious harm or even the death of individuals who hoard alongside working to prevent the degradation of council properties.

1.3 - Scope of this Policy

The policy covers the role of the housing directorate to manage hoarding behaviours of tenants within council properties or properties that are leased by the council. It does not cover any other safeguarding concern nor forms of self-neglect other than hoarding.

1.4 - Delegated authority to make minor changes to this policy

To ensure that this policy is operated fairly and legally throughout, the Assistant Director of Supported Housing, in consultation with the Director of Housing, will be able to approve minor amendments; i.e. amendments that do not significantly change this policy or associated procedures.

1.5 - Timescales for this policy

This policy will commence in February 2021 and will be subject to review every two years.

However, it may be revised beforehand to accommodate legislative and/or regulatory changes that may occur during the interim.

1.6 - Legal context of this policy

The policy takes into account the following legal and regulatory requirements including:

- Housing Act 1996
- Any other applicable Acts or regulations?
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018

1.7 - Equal opportunities statement

The Council will seek to ensure that this policy is, at all times, implemented in a manner that is fair to all sections of the local community.

All applicants for housing or re-housing will be invited to indicate if they wish to make use of the Council's translation and interpretation services, or if they require additional services to enable them to access and understand the policy to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way.

They also will be invited to provide details of ethnic origin, sexuality, disability and other equalities information. Provision of this information is not obligatory or a requirement for acceptance of an application.

However, such information will help monitor the number and types of protected characteristics requiring hostel support, and will help ensure that service improvement evolves in line with any changing local needs.

Equalities records will be kept and monitored to ensure hostel accommodations are offered and allocated fairly. This policy will be regularly reviewed ensure it is not operated in any way that could discriminate or disadvantage against any particular group of people.

All information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect at all times.

1.8 - Data Protection statement

Havering Council takes personal privacy matters very seriously and will never share the individual's personal data without their prior knowledge, unless required to do so by law.

For full details about how the Council protects personal data, please visit [Havering Council Data Protection policy](#).

2. Background

2.1 - Defining Hoarding

Hoarding is a mental health condition and form of self-neglect; it has been defined as being the collection and retention of items in sufficient quantities to prevent the use of rooms for their intended purposes.

Between 2-5% of the population are thought to hoard although there is no apparent correlation between age, race, education, or socio-economic status and hoarding behaviour. However, in Havering those who hoard in council properties are significantly older than the average population. This is a common trend as those who are younger often have their hoarding behaviour controlled by those they live with such as parents or a partner, thus preventing that behaviour coming to the attention of council services.

There are three behaviours associated with hoarding:

Difficulty discarding item- Hoarders often find throwing away items to be highly distressful. This is due to a belief that items has value. Everyone will have these connections to some items but hoarders feel them intensely towards a much wider variety of items, often items that have little or no monetary value.

Acquiring- Many hoarders will acquire items at a rate that is not a problem and may even be a rate of acquisition far lower than the average person. In these cases, it is the difficulty discarding that results in a large build-up of items not the acquiring of them. However, some hoarders also acquire large numbers of items at fast pace. In these instances, the acquisition behaviours need to also be managed to ensure that as items are removed they are not rapidly replaced.

Disorganisation- Hoarders will often have valuable items mixed with low value item or rubbish in ways that make it hard to sort through or use these items. There are a wide variety of cause for hoarding behaviour and one common trait is a self-belief that their memory is poor. This can lead to hoarders storing items where they will see them instead of in cupboards or other storage areas. Hoarders can also have difficulty with executive decision making which can result in both difficult disposing of items and in the categorisation and sorting of those items.

2.2 - Causes of Hoarding

There is no known single cause of hoarding and there will be a wide variety of factors explaining why any given person hoards. A number of theories have been proposed:

- Traumatic experiences
- Genetics
- Learned behaviour

- Poor memory or the belief that they have a poor memory
- Poor executive decision making

Alongside these possible cause a small number of those who hoard have been diagnosed with OCD. OCD can also result in hoarding however, this hoarding has different characteristics. OCD hoarding is a compulsive behaviour and so those with this condition are able to recognise that the accumulation of items is irrational, they are also more likely to collect a small variety of specific items. Non-OCD hoarding on the other hand results individuals hoarding a wide variety of items and those with this condition often believe their behaviour is rational as they see these items as having value.

Any one or more of the above reasons could explain why a given person hoards and this list is not exhaustive. While there isn't a single known underlying cause for hoarding behaviour it is in most instances clear that those who hoard items do so because they perceive them as having value. There are three ways items can have value:

- Instrumental: The item is useful such a keeping DIY tools.
- Sentimental: The item has a special meaning for instance keeping an old photo album.
- Intrinsic: the item is seen as beautiful in its own right for instance; a painting might be kept just to look at.

Those who hoard will see items having a much greater value then non- hoarders would judge them to have and as such those who hoard find the disposal of items distressful. This distress prevents those who hoard disposing of items and this in turn results in the accumulation of items that prevents rooms being used for their intended purpose.

2.3 - Risk of Hoarding

Hoarding is a serious safeguarding concern that affects those who suffer from it in a variety of ways:

- The volume of items causes distress
- Embarrassment or shame about the state of the property can result in increased social isolation
- Inability to use bathroom, kitchen, and bedrooms can lead to poor hygiene and long term health issues
- Vermin can be attracted to the property especially where food or human waste are hoarded, this can result in disease and distress for the resident
- The volume of items can pose immediate risks to the residents health such as trip hazards or being trapped under items
- The volume of items increase the risk of fire especially where flammable items like newspapers are hoarded

- The volume of items can make it difficult for the resident to escape in the event of a fire and difficult for the fire brigade responders to enter and traverse the property
- Clutter can prevent gas and electrical safety checks meaning that failures with these systems may go unnoticed
- Clutter can prevent maintenance and repairs to boilers resulting in a cold property and inability to clean in hot water

Hoarding also has a serious impact on those who live near or with hoarders:

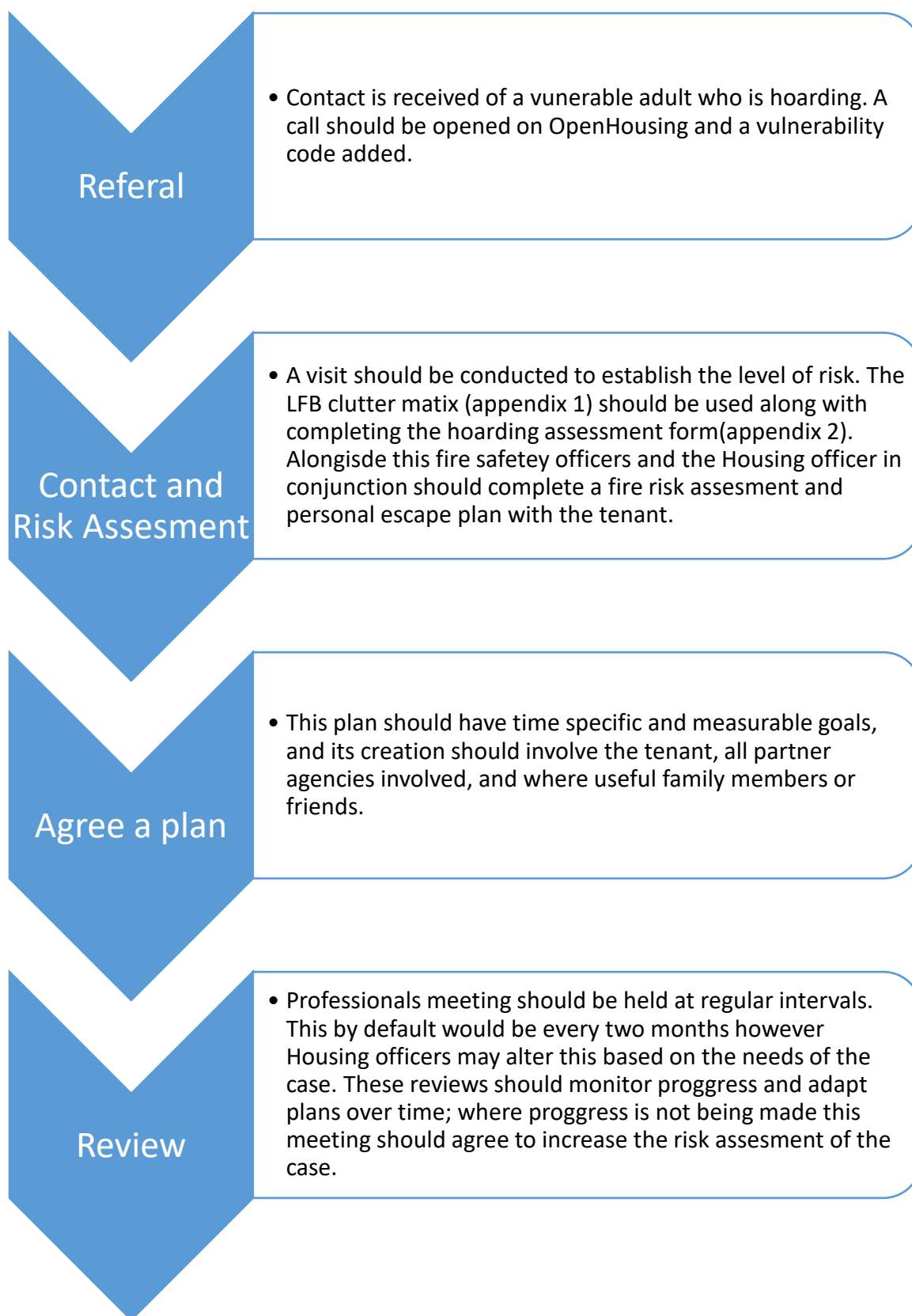
- Those staying at the property will face the same risks as the hoarder to their mental and physical health. This is a serious concern where children or vulnerable adults are staying with the hoarder
- The increased risk of fire at the hoarder's property also poses a risk to neighbours especially in high-rise towers or blocks of flats.
- Items stored in gardens and drive ways are eyesores, can smell, and attract vermin
- Hoarders often reduce contact with family and friends which can where those individuals are vulnerable reduce their support networks and their own social isolation

Hoarding behaviour has serious implication for the management of housing stock and ensuring high quality safe properties:

- Gas and electric safety checks may not be completed resulting in fines for the authority
- Repairs may not be possible due to an inability to access parts of the property
- Fire can destroy the property and result a need for serious works
- Installation of tools to reduce the risk of fire carry costs for the authority
- Legal cost associated with managing the hoarders tenancy
- Void works include additional costs due to need to remove large volume of goods
- Inability to use rooms for their intended purpose can result in damage to the property
- Disrepair of the property resulting in legal action

3. Process

3.1 - Steps in responding to Hoarding



3.2 - Assessing Risk

The housing officer must score the risk of the property as well as scoring the clutter. Risk should be ranked both on likelihood and severity of the outcome. The two below tables indicate how scores should be awarded.

Table 1: Likelihood scores

Score	Level	Description
1	Rare	Would only occur in exceptional circumstances
2	Unlikely	Not expected to occur
3	Possible	Could occur
4	Likely	There is a high chance it will occur and may occur frequently
5	Almost Certain	There is a high chance it will occur and it may occur persistently

Table 2: Severity Score

Score	Descriptor
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Usage of rooms mostly unaffected -Fire risk is not elevated -Able to meet health, hygiene, and comfort needs -little if any impact on how they live their life
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Usage of rooms is possible although there is some clutter on the floor or preventing the usage of sides and surfaces -Clear escape routes and safe access to the property -Some loss of support network due to embarrassment at property
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Impaired usage of most or all rooms -elevated risk of fire due to some flammable materials such as paper -Able to meet to basic needs through adaptations to their behaviour -Risk of tripping -Escape routes are clear but access to some rooms is limited -Poor comfort effecting mental health and well being -limited access to utilities
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All room usage is impaired -High risk of fire -Limited movement through property, escape route is partially obstructed allowing slow escape -Poor hygiene
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Risk of death, serious harm, or entrapment through avalanche risk -Imminent fire risk -Limited movement through and out of property, preventing escape or safe access to property -Unusable utilities -Severe infestation -malnutrition -Very poor hygiene, detrimental to long term health

	-Inability to meet basic needs impacting on mental health and wellbeing
--	---

The below table indicates the risk level based on the adding of likelihood to severity score:

		Severity				
		One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Likelihood	One	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Two	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Three	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
	Four	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
	Five	Low	Low	High	High	High

3.3 - Essential Actions

Based on the level of risks a variety of actions should be considered as part of ensuring an appropriate response. Higher risk cases should result in the actions in that column and all preceding columns. High risk cases then should trigger all sections of the table while low risks would only trigger the left hand column.

Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss concerns with the individual and where appropriate their family or career -Assessment of needs to be completed by Housing officer and support offered to ensure Tenancy is maintained -Identity any risks to children or vulnerable adults who live with the tenant and take action if required -Signpost to GPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Housing officer and Fire Risk assessor to complete a Personal Escape plan and fire risk assessment. -Consider assistive technologies that may support such as additional smoke alarms or telecare -Adult Social Care referral -Signpost to GP and encourage engagement. Offer Hoarding UK Icebreaker -Signpost to Hoarding support resources such as Hoarding UK and Mind -Share information with LFB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MASH referral for mental health and adult social care involvement -Legal and enforcement measures should only be considered for high-risk cases. Although this should be treated as a last resort.

	-Referred to the vulnerable person panel	
--	--	--

3.4 - Agreeing a plan

Hoarding is a form of self-neglect and as such encouraging motivation in the tenant is both essential and a major challenge.

Self-Neglect Policy & Practice: Building an Evidence Base for Adult Social Care suggests a series of actions for working with those who self-neglect, these actions will be applicable to working with those who hoard.

Theme	Example	Hoarding Context
Building rapport	Taking the time to get to know the person. Refusing to be shocked.	Not judging the tenant based on the volume or type of items that they have.
Moving from rapport to relationship	Avoiding Knee jerk responses. Talking through the interest, history, and stories.	Avoid instantly discussing throwing or removing items.
Finding the right tone	Being honest while not being judgmental, separating person from behaviour	When discussing items a focus should be placed on the specific risk, that item causes. Rather than a discussion of the items perceived worth.
Going at the individuals pace	Moving slowly, not forcing things; continued involvement over time	Removing items is likely to cause the tenant distress and so will take time
Agreeing a plan	Making clear what is going to happen, a weekly visit might be the initial plan	Focus on measurable outcomes and building clearing work into the tenants routine.
Finding something that motivates the individual	Linking to interests	Motivation for hoarders is often linked to how they want the property to be. Thinking forward to what it would be like cleared or backwards to how it use to be.
Starting with practicalities	Providing small practical help at the onset can help build trust	This could be support with something not directly related to the hoarding
Bartering	Linking practical support to another element of the agreement	This can be used to tie into motivation. For instance offering a one off deep clean or garden

		work if they clear part of the property
Focusing on what can be agreed	Finding something that can be the basis for the initial agreement, that can be built on later	To begin with targets may focus on time based goals such as do five minutes of clearing a day instead of on outcomes goals like clear this space over two weeks.
Keeping company	Being available and taking time to build up trust	
Straight talking	Being honest about potential consequences	
Finding the right person	Working with someone who is well placed to get engagement	
External leavers	Recognising and working with the possibility of enforcement action	

The reduction of clutter in a property will be a long term piece of work and it is very likely that progress will not be linear. Maintaining motivation is important as is building the clearing work into the tenants' day-to-day routine.

Plans should have targets that are measurable, time limited, and focus on a specific part of the property. Initially time based goals should be used, such as over the next two weeks the tenant will spend 10 minutes a day sorting items in the bathroom. Over time this could move to outcome based goals such as over the next month the tenant will clear the bathroom enough to let them shower.

These plans should be created with the tenant with goals being based on their desired outcome where possible. When choosing where to start with clearing work there is a priority that should be considered and generally followed.

1. Safety – Focus on clearing those areas where items pose a risk to the person's immediate safety. Ex: Escape routes, stovetops, and stairs.
2. Hygiene – Focus on clearing those areas needed to maintain the person's health. Ex: Shower or bath, sinks, bed, Space for cooking and preparing food
3. Comfort – Focus on those areas the tenant says would improve their wellbeing by clearing.

All stages should include the tenants' voice, even where they lack motivation efforts should be made to agree goals with them.

3.5 - Review

As the tenants conditions change it will be necessary to adapt plans and recomplete risk assessments. The review stage ensures consideration is given to the best way of working and ensuring that interventions are purposeful, carried out by the best person, and are having the intended impact.

The review should consist of a professionals meeting with all agencies involved for most cases this will be a minimum of the Housing Officer and Social worker. Progress should be assessed not just in regards to decluttering but also changes to the tenant's willingness to engage and their motivation.

A review should be conducted by default once every two months and be arranged by the key worker. The key worker may use their discretion to deviate from this two-month standard if they have good reason to, for instance high-risk cases may require more intensive monitoring.

The outcome of the review should be one of four options.

1. The current agreed plan is judged to be primarily sufficient. Key worker remains the same and only minor adjustments if any are made to the agreed plan. This outcome would be reached if the tenant has made improvements in their motivation, engagement, or in reduction of clutter. The tenant may not be fully meeting the support plan but is making positive improvements. The risks have no changed in a large way and are being managed.
2. The agreed plan has not delivered progress and the tenant's motivation and willingness to engage are low. The plan should be revisited and altered, with both essential actions (section 3.3) and the policy and practice themes (section 3.4) being reconsidered. This outcome is reached when attendees agree that there are other options open to them to try such as referring to additional services, or engaging with family. This outcome is likely early on in a case as it takes time for rapport and a relationship to be built with the tenant.
3. The agreed plan has not delivered progress and the tenants motivation and willingness to engage are low. All reasonable actions have been taken to support the tenant. This should either trigger a raising of the risk level from medium to high. Low risk cases should not have their risk level raised via this mechanism. Those cases, which are already high risk, should be considered for enforcement action. This decision requires the review group to not only agree this is the only available course of action but also will require the approval of a Resident Services Manager. Enforcement action should in the first instance be treated as a possible way to motivate the tenant. Letters should where possible be hand delivered and involve a discussion with the tenant so they are both clear on the process and are aware that this can still be avoided if they change their behaviour. This decision should only be made for high risk cases where professionals are confident that no alternative routes to encourage engagement or motivation are available to them.
4. The agreed plan has completed its goals and the risk to the tenant has been reduced such that the hoarding behaviour is no longer a concern. This should prompt a reduction in involvement. However, those who hoard often return to this behaviour and so a hoarding vulnerability indicator should remain with the person. They should for one additional year receive a three monthly welfare check to ensure they have not readopt hoarding behaviours. The use of a previous hoarder vulnerability indicator should be used so that it is clear to those who visit the property that the person may relapse into hoarding

behaviour. This should be used to make sure that gas and repair teams that attend the property are aware of the potential of relapsing into this behaviour and should be dutiful in reporting any concerns about volume of items in that property.

4. Dissemination and communication of this policy

Housing Services will consult with all affected stakeholders, directly or indirectly, to ensure this policy fulfils its purpose to be clear and transparent.

This policy will be made available internally and externally in hard copy and electronic versions, as well as various formats – such as easy read, multi-lingual, braille and audio - upon request.

5. Implementation of this policy

This policy will take effect from February 2021.

Responsibility for the successful implementation of this policy will be with Havering Council's Assistant Directors.

6. Monitoring and review of this policy

In the interests of continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains relevant, up-to-date and fit-for-purpose for the Council and the residents of Havering.

For any advice or assistance concerning this policy, please email the relevant operational team at team email address.

7. Useful Links

Hoarding UK Ice breaker for GPs - <https://hoardingdisordersuk.org/research-and-resources/ice-breaker-form/>

Mind Hoarding - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/hoarding/about-hoarding/>

8. Appendix

A - Clutter Image Rating

Kitchen



1



2



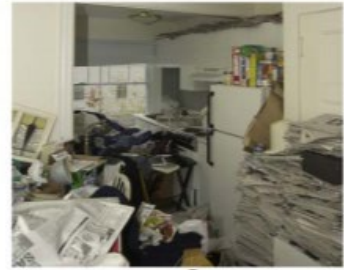
3



4



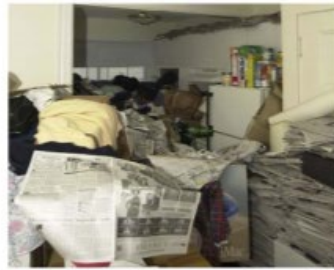
5



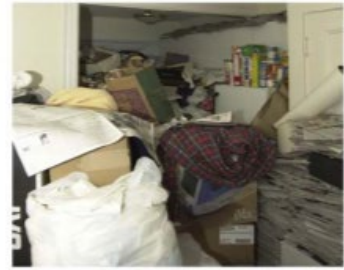
6



7



8



9

Bedroom



1



2



3



4



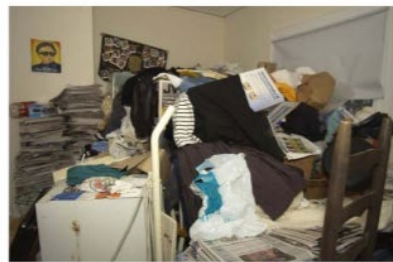
5



6



7



8



9

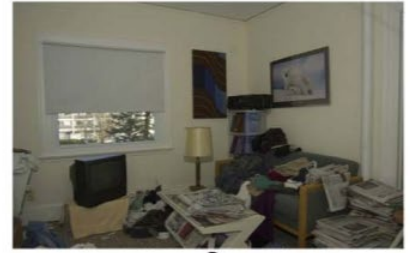
Living Room



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

B - Hoarding Assessment Form

Adults Name	
-------------	--

Adults Date of Birth			
Date of Assessment			
Address			
Contact Details			
Household Members	Name	Date of Birth	Relationship
Agencies Involved			
Support they are receiving from non-agencies			
Adult's attitude towards Hoarding			
Pets at the property			

Please Indicate if the Below is Present at the Property

Structural damage to the property		Rotten food	
Insect or rodent infestation		Concern over adults cleanliness	
Visible human faeces		Visible animal waste	
Concerns for other adults at the property		Concerns for children at the property	

Provide a Clutter Score for Each Room in the Property

Room	Score

Please Indicate the Risk Level of the Property		
Low	Medium	High
Please list the risks and their likelihood score		