



An example of a cluttered home due to hoarding

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## Government should provide more support for people who hoard, say experts

Experts from across the UK have called on the government to do more to address the growing problem of hoarding.

Approximately four million people in the UK are affected by hoarding, either by being an individual who hoards items, being a member of their family or by working in a profession where they are called on to support people with hoarding behaviours.

To mark the start of [Hoarding Awareness Week](#) (12-16 May) the [UK Hoarding Partnership](#), which is led by Northumbria University, has written to the UK government and other relevant national organisations asking them to increase funding for mental health services and to do more to raise awareness of hoarding behaviours and their consequences. They hope this will reduce stigma around the condition and encourage people who hoard to ask for support.

They have also asked the government to develop national guidelines to help professionals working with people who hoard, due to the impacts that hoarding behaviours can have on public health and safety, mental health and support services and legal implications for housing providers.

[Professor Nick Neave](#) is Director of the [Hoarding Research Group](#) at Northumbria University and chair of the UK Hoarding Partnership, which was formed last year due to a growing demand from organisations and councils to share best practice when dealing with people who hoard.

A range of national and regional charities and organisations are members of the UK Hoarding Partnership, which also includes many councils and fire and rescue services.

Professor Neave explained: “Hoarding is often misunderstood, or dismissed as mere clutter, laziness or a lifestyle choice, but it is a complex mental health condition that goes far beyond an inability to organise or let go of possessions. It is deeply rooted in emotional distress, mental health struggles and, in many cases, underlying trauma, often stemming from adverse childhood experiences.

“Hoarding can result in unsafe living conditions, social isolation and a diminished ability to manage day-to-day responsibilities such as cooking and washing, which can become impossible. However, people who hoard often struggle to find adequate support and services, meaning they are frequently overlooked by social care systems, health services, housing authorities and mental health professionals.”

He called for the government to prioritise the issue of hoarding in its policies to reduce costs to the NHS and local authorities and to ensure that individuals suffering from hoarding disorder receive the support and care they need.

“In the absence of a coordinated national strategy, current support services are often disjointed, which leads to significant inefficiencies and ineffective expenditures,” he said.

“Because of this, and due to the complexity of individual cases, hoarding often falls between the cracks, with those affected continuing without adequate help.”

Kayley Hyman, Director of Holistic Hoarding, agreed, saying: “We are seeing rapidly growing numbers of people in need of support with hoarding across the UK and we hope that national guidelines will result in hoarding support being considered an essential and accessible element of equitable mental health provision.”

Jo Cooke, Director of Hoarding Disorders UK, a not-for-profit community interest company, said: “Never has there been a more important time to raise awareness of the urgent need to address the increasingly complex issue of hoarding. It has reached a crisis point and there is much need to provide clear national guidelines to assist with this complex, ever growing mental health issue.”

The [Hoarding Research Group](#) at Northumbria University works to develop a better understanding of hoarding behaviours and the subsequent impact on the individual and society. Members of the group focus on a range of issues relating to hoarding behaviours, including self-neglect, safeguarding, mental capacity and neuropsychological aspects; animal hoarding; legal implications and multi-agency approaches; and the social, industrial and cybersecurity implications of [digital hoarding](#) behaviours.

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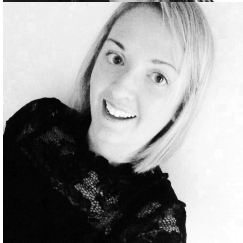


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