



7 minute briefing

1. WHAT IS HOARDING?

Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material - to the point that living space is not able to be used for its intended purpose. The NHS summarises the problem well: "A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner. The items can be of little or no monetary value and usually result in unmanageable amounts of clutter."

Hoarding can also be a symptom of other medical disorders; it is not a lifestyle choice.

People who hoard can often feel very isolated and reluctant to talk to people about their home environment. Although people have the right to privacy and to decide how they live; it may be that there are risks and environmental health issues around hoarded properties and people living there need help to cope.

2. Where can I find resources around this?

Enfield Safeguarding has developed Framework around this and a website with some resources around Hoarding which you can find [here](#).

This website will be refreshed regularly so please do check back now and then!

[Hoarding UK](#) can also be a valuable source of support.

7. USE PERSON-CENTRED & TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE.

It is vital to work with adults in a respectful and person-centred way.

Work at the adult's pace and ask what matters to them, what possessions mean and what change feels manageable.

Promote safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

Avoid sudden clear-outs: without support they may cause distress, damage engagement and increase future hoarding.

Plan small, sustainable risk reduction.

6. The Importance of a multi-disciplinary approach and the Enfield Hoarding Panel.

No single agency can manage hoarding risk alone. Where proportionate, it is vital to share relevant information and consider a joint approach. Enfield has [guidance on multi-agency risk management meetings here](#).

The Enfield Hoarding Panel is run through Adult Social Care (in partnership with the London Fire Brigade) and offers monthly multi-agency advice and action planning for complex cases. You can find information about how to refer for discussion on the website.

5. MENTAL CAPACITY

It is important that we consider an adult's mental capacity (specifically around managing their home environment) when risks around hoarding are identified. However, we should not assume that they don't have capacity just because of what their home looks like.

It is also important to consider executive mental capacity – their ability to follow through and act on decisions.

3. CLUTTER IMAGE RATING

The word 'cluttered' means different things to different people; so it can help to use the Clutter Image Rating (CIR) to describe each affected room consistently, choosing the image that most closely reflects what you observe.

Record the room, score and specific risks; the CIR informs, but does not replace professional judgement. [View the CIR pictures](#).

In general a lower CIR might indicate that someone needs a referral for support. But a higher one (6+) would indicate that a safeguarding adults response is needed.

3. FIRE RISK

A national fire service report states that one third of fire fatalities involve people who hoard. Clutter can fuel rapid fire spread and block escape routes.

Request a free London Fire Brigade Home Fire Safety Visit using the [Home Fire Safety Checker](#). Call 999 if there is immediate danger.

The Enfield SAB Hoarding Framework – Autumn 2026.