



Isle of Man

***Fire* and Rescue Service**

**HOARDING
AWARENESS**

What is Compulsive Hoarding?

Compulsive Hoarding is a disorder characterised by difficulty discarding items that appear to most people to have little or no value. This leads to accumulation of clutter such that living and working spaces cannot be used for their intended purposes.

The clutter can result in serious threats to health and safety of the sufferer and those who live nearby.

Not all hoarding is compulsive, hoarding and saving behaviours can be seen in people with various neuropsychiatric disorders.

What causes the urge to Hoard?

There are many factors that could be responsible:

- It may be hereditary
- Abnormal brain development & brain lesions
- Brain damage; strokes, surgery, injuries or infections
- Family experiences & psychological factors
- Emotional stress

Advice & Treatment

If you are concerned about yourself, family member, friend or neighbour, further information can be obtained from:

- Isle of Man Fire and Rescue Service tel: 647303

Possible results of Hoarding

- Fire
- Health Hazards
- Infestations
- Inability to have guests over
- Inability to prepare or eat food in the home
- Inability to find possessions
- Inability to finish tasks
- Interpersonal conflicts about the clutter





What you can do if you suspect someone is hoarding

If a member of your family or someone you know is a compulsive hoarder, try to persuade them to come with you to see a GP. This will not be easy, as someone who compulsively hoards may not think they need help and may not want to seek treatment.

Ask your GP to refer you to your local community mental health team, which may have a health professional who specialises in OCD and is familiar with hoarding.

Reassure your loved one or friend that nobody is going to go into their home and throw everything out. You're just going to have a chat with the doctor about their hoarding to see what can be done and what support is available to empower them to begin the process of de-cluttering.

It's generally not a good idea to call in the council or environmental health to clear the rubbish away, as it won't solve the problem and the clutter often quickly builds up again.

However, local authorities may take legal action to ensure that the property is cleared if the problem is not addressed.

Do not be tempted to get extra storage – this is only a quick fix, is costly, and does not address the problem. The problem is too much stuff, not too little space to keep it in.

Typical profile of someone who hoards

Someone who hoards may typically:

- Keep or collect items that are of no monetary value, such as junk mail and carrier bags, or items they intend to reuse or repair
- Find it hard to throw anything away and just move items from one pile to another
- Find it hard to categorise or organise items
- Have difficulties making decisions
- Struggle to manage everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning and paying bills
- Become extremely attached to items, refusing to let anyone touch or borrow them
- Do not socialise with other people

Some studies suggest that hoarding often starts in the teenage years (as early as 13 or 14), where broken toys or school papers may be collected. The hoarding then becomes worse with age.

It is estimated that around 2-5% of the UK adult population experiences symptoms of compulsive hoarding.