# UK experts call for urgent national strategy to tackle hoarding crisis



Experts from across the UK are raising alarm over the escalating crisis of hoarding, a condition that affects around four million individuals in various capacities. Whether as those who hoard, family members, or professionals assisting them, the impact of this complex mental health issue is profound and largely misunderstood. As Hoarding Awareness Week unfolds from 12-16 May, the UK Hoarding Partnership, led by Northumbria University, has appealed to the government for increased funding and heightened awareness to combat this growing concern.

The partnership has urged national bodies to amplify mental health service funding and develop comprehensive guidelines for professionals dealing with hoarding behaviours. Professor Nick Neave, director of the Hoarding Research Group at Northumbria University and chair of the UK Hoarding Partnership, described hoarding as much more than simple clutter or disorganisation. It is often rooted in emotional distress, mental health struggles, and traumatic experiences stemming from adverse childhood events. This multifaceted understanding is crucial, as the stigma surrounding hoarding can lead to widespread social isolation and hazardous living conditions for those affected.

The need for a coherent national strategy is urgent. Professor Neave pointed out that many individuals grappling with hoarding find themselves overlooked by various social care systems, health services, and mental health professionals. With current support often disjointed and inadequate, there are significant inefficiencies that lead to ineffective use of resources. He insisted that a prioritised approach from the government could significantly alleviate pressure on local authorities and the NHS by providing structured support to those who need it.

Kayley Hyman, director of Holistic Hoarding, echoed this sentiment, noting the growing demand for specialist support across the country. She advocated for national guidelines that would frame hoarding support as an essential component of equitable mental health care. Jo Cooke, from Hoarding Disorders UK, highlighted the urgency of addressing this complex issue, stating that it has reached a critical point requiring immediate attention and action.

Further complicating the landscape of hoarding is its multifaceted nature, which the Hoarding Research Group at Northumbria University is seeking to understand more thoroughly. Research areas range from self-neglect and safeguarding to animal hoarding and the implications of digital hoarding behaviours. Such research is crucial in addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals, providing insights that can inform better support strategies.

Additionally, organisations such as HoardingUK are pivotal in offering services tailored to those affected by hoarding behaviours. Established in 2008, this charity focuses on advocacy and support, promoting choice and control for individuals while urging a unified response to the issue. Meanwhile, resources like those provided by Independent Age and Mind underline the importance of professional help, particularly through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which has proven effective in many cases.

The conversation around hoarding has also highlighted the role of shame that many individuals feel, often acting as a barrier to seeking help. The Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Partnership emphasised a compassionate, non-judgmental approach to supporting those who hoard, advocating for understanding rather than a punitive response.

As calls for action grow louder, the need for a national framework and increased investment in mental health services becomes increasingly clear. The UK Hoarding Partnership, along with various charities and advocacy groups, is leading the charge in promoting awareness and prompting necessary dialogue to dismantle the stigma attached to hoarding. With a coordinated effort, there lies a potential pathway to meaningful change, improving the lives of millions while addressing the broader implications of this often-overlooked mental health issue.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/government-should-provide-more-support-for-people-who-hoard-say-experts-3385249)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/government-should-provide-more-support-for-people-who-hoard-say-experts-3385249)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/government-should-provide-more-support-for-people-who-hoard-say-experts-3385249)
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* Paragraph 7: [[2]](https://hoardingdisordersuk.org/), [[3]](https://hoardinguk.org/), [[4]](https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/health-wellbeing/mental-health/hoarding-disorder), [[5]](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/hoarding/treating-hoarding-disorder/)
* Paragraph 8: [[6]](https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/adults-board/cpsabprocedures/hoarding/), [[7]](https://www.dgppp.org.uk/article/22225/Spotlight-on-Hoarding)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/government-should-provide-more-support-for-people-who-hoard-say-experts-3385249> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://hoardingdisordersuk.org/> - Hoarding Disorders UK is a non-judgmental, trauma-informed organization dedicated to supporting individuals affected by hoarding behaviors and chronic disorganization. They collaborate with various professionals to create person-centered approaches that enhance the well-being of those impacted by hoarding. Their services include support groups, training courses, and resources like the 'Understanding Hoarding' book, which offers practical advice for individuals and families dealing with hoarding challenges.
3. <https://hoardinguk.org/> - Established in 2008, HoardingUK is the UK's only national charity solely focused on supporting people impacted by hoarding behavior. They offer a range of services, including in-home support programs, peer and professionally led support groups, training, and advocacy. Their mission is to promote choice and control for individuals affected by hoarding, emphasizing the importance of a coordinated approach to address this complex mental health issue.
4. <https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/health-wellbeing/mental-health/hoarding-disorder> - Independent Age provides comprehensive information on hoarding disorder, including its causes, effects, and available treatments. They emphasize the importance of seeking help from healthcare professionals, such as GPs, and highlight the role of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in treating hoarding. The organization also offers guidance on self-help strategies and provides resources for individuals and families affected by hoarding behaviors.
5. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/hoarding/treating-hoarding-disorder/> - Mind, a leading mental health charity, offers detailed information on treating hoarding disorder. They discuss the significance of consulting with a GP, the role of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and the potential use of medication for co-occurring conditions like depression or anxiety. Mind also provides tools to assist individuals in discussing hoarding with healthcare providers and emphasizes the importance of personalized treatment plans.
6. <https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/adults-board/cpsabprocedures/hoarding/> - The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board outlines a multi-agency protocol for working with individuals exhibiting hoarding behaviors. Recognizing the complexity of hoarding, the protocol advocates for a coordinated approach involving various agencies to deliver comprehensive, consistent, and personalized actions. It emphasizes the importance of involving the individual in the planning process and developing an action plan with clear goals and timescales.
7. <https://www.dgppp.org.uk/article/22225/Spotlight-on-Hoarding> - The Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Partnership highlights the challenges in supporting individuals who hoard, including a lack of insight into the severity of the problem and the associated risks. The article discusses the role of shame in preventing individuals from seeking help and offers practical tips for supporting those who hoard, emphasizing kindness, compassion, and non-judgmental approaches to address the issue effectively.