



Safe and Habitable Homes Toolkit

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Introduction to self-neglect: a multi-agency approach

Understanding self-neglect

Self-neglect is a severe lack of self-care that poses significant risks to health and safety. Common manifestations include:

- hoarding behaviours,
- unable to use the rooms in the home for their intended purpose,
- unsafe, unsanitary, or uninhabitable living conditions,
- issues linked to addiction or poor mental health.

Challenges for professionals

Engaging with individuals who self-neglect can be difficult, as they often decline agency support. While there are limitations when a person is assessed as having the capacity to make their own decisions, professionals can:

- continue engagement and monitor risks;
- facilitate multi-agency risk meetings;
- refer cases to the Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) subgroup when risks remain high.

Self-neglect and hoarding in West Sussex

Safe and Habitable Homes

The West Sussex Community Initiative Partnership addresses self-neglect by:

- promoting safer, more suitable living conditions for those with self-neglect concerns;
- enhancing health and well-being;
- supports remaining at home in the community;
- preventing residential care placements;
- avoiding harm, injury, hospital admissions, and loss of life.

Key focus areas

The forum promotes a person-centred approach to cases complicated by:

- evictions
- cuckooing
- substance misuse
- domestic abuse
- rehousing after homelessness



Multi-agency collaboration

The forum comprises a diverse multi-disciplinary membership offering:

- practical practice advice and expert guidance;
- reflection and learning;
- innovative solutions tailored for customer-facing practitioners.

This strength-based, person-centred approach explores bespoke support where traditional methods fall short.

Practice consistency toolkit

The forum provides a toolkit aligned with the Sussex Self-Neglect Policy and Procedures Guidance, applicable in Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, and West Sussex.

Safeguarding and thresholds

Safeguarding may not always be the best approach for individuals who self-neglect, as it could delay effective support. Key considerations include:

- Safeguarding thresholds: Not all individuals meet these criteria.
- Risk understanding: Some individuals, despite their risks, can manage their situations.

For more information, visit the [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Thresholds: Guidance for Professionals](#).

Hoarding and Diogenes as a mental health concern

Hoarding Disorder (Syllogomania) is recognized as a mental health diagnosis (DSM V). However, not all individuals with hoarding issues qualify for statutory mental health services.

Diogenes Syndrome (Squalor) does not appear in the DSM-IVR. The estimated annual incidence among individuals over 60 years old and living at home is 5 per 10,000 in the population.

Diogenes Syndrome is not listed as a distinct condition in the DSM-5; however, does shares some features of Hoarding Disorder and can be comorbid. The key difference is that Diogenes Syndrome includes severe self-neglect and domestic squalor, which are not core features of Hoarding Disorder alone. Diogenes syndrome is often considered a manifestation of other underlying psychiatric or neurological conditions like dementia, depression, or OCD.



Best practices for supporting self-neglect

To achieve the best outcomes for individuals who self-neglect, agencies should:

- be **person-centred**
- work at the individual's **pace**
- use varied methods of **encouragement**
- maintain a **non-judgmental approach**
- explore diverse **support options**
- be **consistent** and **review progress**

Resources on self-neglect

The step-by-step toolkit includes references to:

- [Sussex Multi-Agency Procedures to Support Adults Who Self-Neglect](#)
- [Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(PDF, 2MB\)](#)
- [West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service – Safe & Well Visit](#)
- [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Thresholds: Guidance for Professionals](#)
- [Safe & Habitable Homes Roadshow Enquiry](#)

The safe and habitable homes toolkit

The toolkit offers practical guidance for addressing unsafe or unsuitable living environments. It aligns with Self-Neglect Thresholds and Housing Standards.

The toolkit steps

Step 1: Preparation: Review professional guidance before visiting.

Step 2: Home audit assessment: Apply a consistent and person-centred approach.

Step 3: Collaboration: Involve multi-agency support through a Team-Around-the-Person approach.

Step 4: Record-keeping: Track progress with a joint action plan.

Step 5: Peer forum: Share case management strategies and connect with core member services.

Step 6: Escalation: Refer unresolved cases to the MARM subgroup.



Step 1: Guidance and preparation for home visit

Overview

The Care Act 2014 defines self-neglect as neglecting to care for personal hygiene, health, and surroundings, which includes the home environment. Safe and suitable housing serves as the foundation for delivering effective health and well-being services.

The Safe & Habitable Homes Toolkit provides step-by-step guidance for addressing self-neglect through a Multi-Agency Team Around the Person (TAP) approach, as outlined in the PAN Sussex Safeguarding & Self-Neglect Policy and Procedure Guidance.

Preparing for a home visit

In preparation for a home visit you should:

- Review relevant guidance:
 - Familiarize yourself with the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Rated Assessment
 - Reference useful policies and procedures
- Prepare for environmental concerns:
 - Be ready to address immediate safeguarding and fire risks
 - Understand housing standards with guidance from Environmental Health
- Secure consent and engagement:
 - Aim to build rapport and trust during the first contact
 - Recognize that initial access may require speaking through a window or at the doorstep

Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

A health-based risk assessment system for housing standards in England and Wales, addressing the following key hazards:

- **Cold:** Risk of cardiovascular illness, hypothermia, and poor mental health
- **Heat:** Poor food storage, ventilation, and unsanitary conditions
- **Falls:** Tripping or slipping hazards
- **Damp and mould:** Health risks associated with moisture
- **Carbon Monoxide:** Poisoning risks
- **Radon:** Natural radioactive gas hazards
- **Other housing hazards, including:** Fire related concerns, structural failure, storage of food, electrical hazards, contaminated water, explosions, asbestos, entrapment, electromagnetic fields, lead in paint and old pipes, noise, gas leak/unburned, intruders, hot surfaces, domestic hygiene, pests, and inadequate lighting.



Your local authority environmental health and protection department

For advice and guidance regarding the above mentioned issues, you can contact:

Crawley Borough Council: environmentalservices@crawley.gov.uk

Horsham District Council: publichealth.licensing@horsham.gov.uk

Chichester District Council: environmentalprotect@chichester.gov.uk

Mid Sussex District Council: housingstandards@midsussex.gov.uk

Arun District Council: environmental.health@arun.gov.uk

Adur and Worthing Councils: private.sectorhousing@adur-worthing.gov.uk

For more detailed information, refer to the [HHSRS Guidance for Landlords & Professionals \(PDF, 2MB\)](#).

Person-centred conversation

Engage with the individual to understand their concerns and home environment. Key things to consider include:

Fire risk, safety, and hazards

- **Immediate concerns:** Check for flammable materials, overloaded sockets, smoke alarms, and evidence of previous fire damage.
- **Smoking and alcohol:** Smokers and alcohol consumption significantly increase fire risks.
- **Medical equipment:** Fire risk inequality increases when using oxygen, emollients, profile bed, medication that causes drowsiness.
- **Heating hazards:** Portable heaters, extension leads, and improvised heating/lighting (e.g., candles, cookers) may pose risks.
- **Access and exits:** Entrance doors and windows in good repair with accessible locks, possible to move between rooms, exits clear.

Utilities, heating, and repairs

- **Utility connections:** Ensure water, gas, and electricity are connected; confirm toilet functionality and accessibility.
- **Heating and hot water:** Check for obscured radiators, ventilated boilers, and accessible heating sources.
- **Safety inspections:** Verify annual gas safety checks and periodic electrical inspections for rented properties.
- **Urgent repairs:** Address drainage, leaks, electrical issues, and other critical concerns.



Living conditions and home environment

- **Stacking hazards:** Ensure items aren't stacked in ways that could block doors or fall onto heated surfaces.
- **Living room fires:** For solid fuel fires, confirm the correct fuel is being used.
- **Garden usage:** Assess whether the garden is accessible, used for storage, or spilling into communal areas.
- **Environmental Health:** Look out for evidence of unsanitary health risks and signs of vermin.

Kitchen, food, and hygiene

- **Meal preparation:** Assess ability to prepare meals, wash dishes, and eat at home.
- **Food storage:** Confirm refrigerator usage or appropriate cooling methods in hot weather.
- **Excess clutter and grease deposits:** Identify items stored on cooker hobs and high levels of grease.
- **Medication storage:** Ensure medications requiring refrigeration are stored properly.
- **Sanitary disposal:** Confirm proper hygiene practices, including toilet and waste management.
- **Provision of care:** Access to facilities to wash hands and provide care.

Bedroom, mobility, and accessibility

- **Sleeping arrangements:** Verify if the bed is clear, usable, and accessible.
- **Stair access:** Check for accessibility to upstairs bedrooms and the condition of stairs.
- **A place to sit:** Ensure there is an accessible space for seating during the day.
- **Mobility and safety:** Address difficulties with uneven floors, steps, and navigating around the house.

Community impact and security

- **Neighbour complaints:** Investigate complaints and assess risks to neighbouring properties.
- **Safety and security:** Evaluate ease of moving around the property and potential intrusions.



Sussex Safeguarding Adults Thresholds: Guidance for Professionals

The [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Thresholds: Guidance for Professionals](#) outlines self-neglect concerns which are non-reportable, require consultation, and are reportable. You can see an extract from the thresholds guidance below. All standard interventions must be used first to manage risk, e.g. Care Management/Care Plan Approach/Multi-Disciplinary Team.

Type of abuse	Non-reportable	Requires consultation	Reportable
SELF-NEGLECT A person living in a way that puts their health, safety, or wellbeing at risk. Ordinarily self-neglect may not prompt a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry. It is expected that all standard interventions will have been used in the first instance and agencies will have considered the self-neglect procedures within the Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures.	Lower-level concern where the threshold for a safeguarding enquiry is unlikely to be met. However, an internal written record of what happened and what action was taken should be kept. Where there are several low-level concerns, consideration should be given as to whether the threshold may be met for a safeguarding enquiry due to increased risk. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor self-care causing some concern, but no signs of impact or distress. • Property neglected but all essential services/appliances work. • Risks can be managed by current professional oversight or universal services. • The person is not at risk of losing their home, tenancy, or placement within the community. • Evidence of low-level hoarding – low level impact on health/safety. • No access to social care support. • Occasional non-attendance at meetings, such as health appointments. 	Incidents at this level should be recorded, and internal policies and procedures followed. Consultation should be undertaken internally as well as through the Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures. Action should be taken to reduce risk, and consultation with the local authority Adult Social Care department considered. Following this you may be requested to formally raise a safeguarding concern. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failing to engage with health and social care professionals. • Indication of lack of insight into self-neglect. • Lack of essential amenities/food provision. • Refusing medical treatment, care or equipment that will impact health and wellbeing. • Property or environment shows signs of neglect with evidence of unsanitary conditions, clutter, hoarding that are potentially damaging to health and wellbeing. • Where animals in property are impacting on the environment with a risk to health. 	Incidents at this level should be formally raised as a safeguarding concern with the local authority Adult Social Care department. Consideration should also be given as to whether the police or other emergency services need to be contacted. Ensure whole family approach if children or other adults may be impacted. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is living in squalid or unsanitary conditions that mean life is in danger without intervention. • Extensive structural deterioration/damage in the property causing risk to life including fire or gas leaks. • Lack of self-care and/or refusal of health/medical treatment resulting in a significant impact on health and wellbeing (i.e., malnutrition). • High level of clutter/hoarding leading to access being obstructed within a property and fire hazards. • Behaviours such as substance use that pose risk to self and/or others. • The individual is not able to accept any support or future arrangements to improve the situation.
Alternative actions to consider at every stage	Engagement with the person to consider options (e.g., domestic support/deep-clean) and/or any support network to consider alternative approaches. Referral to East or West Sussex Fire Service for a home safety visit. Referral to the local authority Adult Social Care department for an assessment or review.	Consideration for advocacy services. Consideration for whether a Mental Capacity Act assessment is required. Referral for multi-agency processes to support complex and multiple needs (e.g., Multi Agency Risk Management meetings). Referral to Environmental Health services.	RAISE SAFEGUARDING CONCERN If there is an indication a criminal act has occurred, the police MUST be consulted. Immediate safety plans must be implemented.

Please note: only exceptional cases of self-neglect will trigger adult safeguarding. Self-neglect is complex, and any referrals should be made after consulting the self-neglect guidance on the Pan Sussex Policies and Procedures website: [2.8 Sussex Multi-agency Procedures to Support Adults who Self-neglect | Welcome to Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#)

Self-neglect related to the home environment

A person impacting their home environment in a way that does not meet the tenancy agreement or housing standard, puts their health, safety, and well-being at risk. Environmental related risk in the home can be considered using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the Clutter Rating. Only exceptional cases of concern in the home environment will trigger self-neglect alerts for adult safeguarding.

Refer to the Clutter Rating images on pages 18-20 of this toolkit, alongside the following table.



Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
All entrances, exits, stairways, and windows are clear and accessible	Clutter is causing congestion and access is reduced between rooms, in stairs and exits	Severe levels of congestion throughout the property with risk of falls, fire, and no accessible access or exit
Rooms can be used for their intended purpose	Clutter is impacting on rooms' intended use, i.e. cannot access bed to sleep or bathroom or kitchen facilities	Rooms cannot be used for the intended purpose – lack of access to amenities for personal care
Smoke alarms fitted and functional or referral made for a Safe & Well Visit and install if criteria met	Smoke alarms are either not fitted or not functioning; referral made for a Safe & Well Visit	Smoke alarms are either not fitted or not functioning; referral made for a Safe & Well Visit
No evidence of smoking concerns	Evidence of scorches, smoking in chair or bed with bedding, and candles	Imminent risk of fire
All utility services functional and maintained in good order	Utilities not functioning – may present as no lights, tv, hot water, heating, etc.	Services not connected or functioning properly
Good lighting – no evidence of candles as replacement light	Lighting issues, i.e. bulbs not working – using torches, candles, trailing cables for lamps, etc.	No lighting – no electricity, broken fittings, vermin problems, improvised lighting causing potential risk
Appropriate use of central heating – i.e. not replaced with heaters or using oven to improvise heat	Inappropriate use of heaters, i.e. covered, or personal items too close to gas heater flame, or using other items to improvise heat such as oven	Inappropriate use of heaters, i.e. covered, or personal items too close to gas heater flame, or using other items to improvise heat such as oven
Gas Safety Check completed annually by landlord	Gas supply capped as refused Gas Safety Check	Tenancy at risk for Gas Safety non-compliance
Property is not at risk of action by landlord of Environment Health and meets standard of Housing Standard – Health & Safety Rating System	Unsanitary conditions in property caused by person and/or pets	Unsanitary conditions – no access to bathroom or toilet, or not functioning, and rotting food may be present
Property is clean with no odours (pet or other)	Offensive odour(s) in the property	Excessive odour may be evident from outside the property
Rubbish appropriately stored and disposed of – not on floor, sides, or otherwise stored	Concerns for levels of medication stored and/or expiry dates	Inappropriate use or placement of medical-related equipment, such as oxygen cylinders and air-flow mattresses, imminent risk of gas leaks
Pets well cared for and healthy	Concerns for welfare of animals, including hoarding of excessive number of pets	Either pets or hoarded animals in distress with unmaintained living conditions, or under/over fed
No evidence of flies, pests, or vermin	Evidence of pests or vermin, or excessive number of flies	Visible pests or vermin infestation, e.g. bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, or silverfish
No concerns for other household members	Concerns for other members of the household	Other members of the household with care and support needs
Engaging with agencies	Not engaging with professionals	Multiple reports from other agencies
Property in good repair	Concerns for Minor Works, repairs, cleaning and clearing	Evidence of structural damage or outstanding repairs, including damp
Property well ventilated	Lack of ventilation creating condensation and causing damp	Property lacks ventilation, which is causing concerns, e.g. ventilation for boilers (CO2)
The garden is accessible and maintained	Garden of concern where not maintained	Evidence of indoor items stored outdoors
Tenancy secure	Tenancy at risk because of the hoarding impact on the property – notice of seeking possession	Tenancy at risk because of the hoarding impact on the property – notice served
Stable home life	Concern for declining mental health or mental capacity	Concern for declining mental health or mental capacity

For working age mental health support, contact your professional lead. If there is any indication that a criminal act has occurred, consult with the police.

Self-neglect and hoarding or other unsanitary, unsuitable, or otherwise uninhabitable home concerns can be complex. Use the home audit assessment to identify:

- A place to sit
- Space to store and prepare food
- Accessible toilet and washing facilities
- A place to sleep fully extended
- Heating and hot water
- Working smoke detection
- Clear access and exits for emergencies

Develop a Team Around the Person Action Plan to address risks and establish resolutions in collaboration with community partners. For more guidance consult [2.8 Sussex Multi-agency Procedures to Support Adults who Self-neglect | Welcome to Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#).

Refer to the following tables for actions that you can take at each stage of the Clutter Rating scale.

Referring agency

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your concerns with the individual. Raise a request to West Sussex Fire Service for a Home Safety Check and to provide fire safety advice if appropriate. • Refer to Adult Social Care for a care and support assessment if care needs are identified. • Refer to GP if appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to landlord if resident is a registered housing tenant. • Refer to Environmental Health if resident is a freeholder. • Raise a request for a Home Safety Check with a consideration for monitored smoke alarms/assistive technology. • Provide details of garden services. • Refer to Adult Social Care for a care and support assessment. • Refer to GP. • Refer to debt advice if appropriate. • Refer to animal welfare if there are animals at the property. • Ensure information-sharing with all necessary statutory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise safeguarding concern within 24 hours if there are care and support needs. • If the individual does not meet the safeguarding thresholds for a referral, consider contacting Adult Social Care regarding a possible care needs assessment. • Raise a request for a Home Safety Check within 24 hours. • Refer to Environmental Health via the referral form.



Environmental Health

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an inspection of the property utilising a multi-agency approach. At the time of inspection, Environmental Health Officer decides on appropriate course of action. Consider serving notices under Environmental Protection Act 1990, Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, or Housing Act 2004. Consider Works in Default if notices not complied with by occupier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an inspection. At the time of inspection, Environmental Health Officer decides on appropriate course of action. Consider serving notices under Environmental Protection Act 1990, Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, or Housing Act 2004. Consider Works in Default if notices not complied with by occupier.

Landlord

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide details on debt advice if appropriate to circumstances. Refer to GP if appropriate. Refer to Adult Social Care for a care needs assessment if care needs identified. Provide details of support streams open to resident via charities and self-help groups. Ensure residents are maintaining all tenancy conditions. Refer for tenancy support if appropriate. Ensure that all utilities are maintained and serviceable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit resident to inspect the property and assess support needs. Refer internally to assist in the restoration of services to the property where appropriate. Ensure residents are maintaining all tenancy conditions. Enforce tenancy conditions relating to resident's responsibility. Ensure information-sharing with all necessary statutory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit resident to inspect the property and assess support needs. Attend multi-agency hoarding meeting or VPP/CPP. Enforce tenancy conditions relation to resident's responsibilities.



Practitioners and support workers

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Hoarding Assessment Form. Make appropriate referrals for support to other agencies. Refer to social landlord if the client is their tenant or leaseholder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an assessment of the property utilising the Hoarding Toolkit and multi-agency approach. Ensure information-sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and sustainable resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Hoarding Guidance Questions for Practitioners. Complete Practitioners Assessment Tool. Ensure information-sharing with all agencies involved to ensure a collaborative approach and sustainable resolution.

Emergency services

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to carry out a Home Safety Check if it fulfils service criteria and share with statutory agencies. Sussex Police and South East Coast Ambulance Service to ensure information is shared with statutory agencies if concerns at call out visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to carry out a Home Safety Check and share risk information with statutory agencies, and consider assistive technology. Sussex Police and South East Coast Ambulance Service to ensure information is shared with statutory agencies and feedback is provided if concerns are noted at call out. Any professional service may be called out for a welfare check if the person has not been seen for some time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to carry out a Home Safety Check and share risk information with statutory agencies, and consider assistive technology. Sussex Police and South East Coast Ambulance Service to ensure information is shared with statutory agencies and feedback is provided if concerns are noted at call out. Any professional service may be called out for a welfare check if the person has not been seen for some time.

Safeguarding children

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are children providing a supporting role – would they benefit from Young Carers support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Children's Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Children's MASH within 24 hours if children or young people are present.



Safeguarding adults

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-safeguarding but social care concerns should be referred with consent to Adult Social Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties with children/adults/carers presenting care and support needs should be referred to the appropriate Social Care referral point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding concern should progress to referral for multi-agency approach and further investigations made of concerns of abuse and/or neglect.

Animal welfare

Clutter Rating Green 1-3	Clutter Rating Amber 4-6	Clutter Rating Red 7-9
Rooms rated 1-3 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 4-6 on the Clutter Rating scale	Rooms rated 7-9 on the Clutter Rating scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action unless advice requested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit property to undertake a well-being check on animals at the property. Educate client regarding animal welfare if appropriate. Provide advice/assistance with rehoming animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit property to undertake a well-being check on animals at the property. Educate client regarding animal welfare if appropriate. Provide advice/assistance with rehoming animals. Remove animals to a safe environment. Take legal action for animal cruelty if appropriate.

Training

For more information you can access training via the [Learning and Development Gateway](#), including:

- Working with people that self-neglect
- Self-neglect and the Mental Capacity Act

Powers and enforcement

Housing and Environmental Health

Landlords and Environmental Health have specific powers to address cases of hoarding. Below is an outline of some key provisions and actions:

The Housing Act 1996: Grounds for seeking possession, particularly for unsuitable or uninhabitable homes:

- Ground 12: Breach of Tenancy
- Ground 13: Deterioration of Premises
- Ground 14: Nuisance



Landlord-related housing support for hoarding

Important Note: Social landlords must consider potential Human Rights Act defences under Article 8 (Right to private and family life, home, and correspondence). Proportionality is crucial, and courts will assess whether a possession order is necessary and justified only if the occupier raises a valid defence.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC):

- Requires the tenant's agreement and cooperation.
- Family or friends may assist to ensure compliance.
- May include terms allowing routine access to the property.

Injunctions:

- Effective for addressing issues related to housing standards such as hoarding or gas compliance.
- Facilitate granting landlords' access.
- Cannot be granted if tenants lack capacity to understand or comply.
- Requires solid evidence to support the application.

Possession proceedings:

- Complicated by potential defence arguments (e.g., capacity and equality).
- Requires compliance with landlord policies and procedures.
- Courts assess if possession is reasonable and proportionate to resolve the hoarding issue.
- Threshold for granting possession orders is high and rarely crossed.

Public Health and Environmental Legislation

Public Health Act 1936

- Section 79: Power to require removal of noxious matter by the occupier.
- Section 83: Cleansing of filthy or verminous premises.
- Section 84: Cleansing or destruction of filthy or verminous articles.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

- Section 4: Power for local authorities to require action to prevent or treat rat and mice infestations.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

- Section 80: Addressing Statutory Nuisances (e.g., issues impacting public health or safety).



Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- Section 215: Power to require proper maintenance of land.

Additional guidance

For further information, refer to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers' Professional Practice Note: "Hoarding and How to Approach It."

Historical resource: [CIEH Hoarding PPN \(May 2009\)](#): This document provides insights into statutory powers and their development over time.

Mental Capacity Assessment

For guidance on the application of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, refer to the [Mental Capacity Act resources](#) available on the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board website.

Legislation

- [Care Act 2014](#): Sets out duties to safeguard adults and promote well-being.
- [Mental Health Act 2007](#): Provides provisions for mental health treatment and capacity.

Tools and resources

- **Safe & Habitable Homes Forums:** Provides learning, sharing of good practice, and professional advice.
Contact: housing4health@westsussex.gov.uk for event dates and invitation to MS Teams.
Sign up to the S&HH Roadshow membership to receive optional calendar invites throughout the year.
- [WSCC DFG Aids & Adaptations and Deep Clean Fund](#): Guidance on minor adaptations and deep cleaning.

Key quotes on client engagement

- "Engaging in dialogue with clients on making decisions need not be seen as impinging on their autonomy, but as supporting it." (*Widdershoven and Abma, 2012*)
- "Engaging in practice that privileges relationship building and negotiation, aiming always to preserve the individual's sense of control." (*Braye, Orr, Preston-Shoot, 2017, p. 9*)



Step 2: Safe and Habitable Homes Toolkit

Initial home audit assessment

The Initial Home Audit Assessment evaluates whether the condition of a property or garden meets the threshold for self-neglect under the Care Act 2014. The assessment considers the environmental impact on the individual's health and safety and is guided by the [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Self-Neglect Procedures](#). You will need to refer to this document, alongside the clutter image rating tool, included in this document.

Questions to consider

- Can each room be used for its intended purpose (e.g., cooking, washing, sleeping)?
- Are there health and safety concerns (e.g., gas bottle storage, pest infestations, fire risks, unsanitary conditions)?

Personal details

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| • Name & surname | • Gender | • Property type |
| • Address | • Postcode | • Number of bedrooms |
| • Contact | • Joint occupant | • Audit completed by |
| • Date of birth | • Children | • Service |

Circumstances leading to hoarding alert

- Provide details of the situation.

Known risks

- System warnings or alerts (if applicable).

Items of concern (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household rubbish not disposed of • General household clutter • Excessive amounts of the same sort of item • Hobby collections (e.g., trains, figurines, crafting) • Book collections • Excessive clothing • Stacks of newspapers or magazines • Junk mail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's items with children no longer around • Unsanitary conditions • Faeces or urine • Signs of vermin |
|---|--|



Clutter Image Rating (CIR)

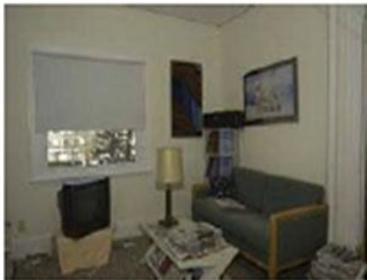
The following Clutter Image Rating Tools can be used to document conditions in each room.

Select which image most closely resembles the bedroom(s).

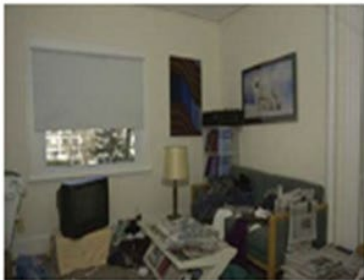
		
1	2	3
		
4	5	6
		
7	8	9



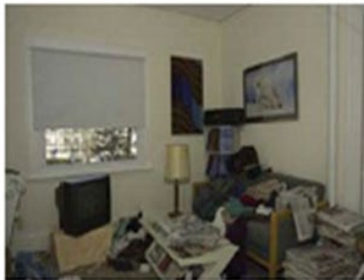
Select which image most closely resembles the lounge/front room/sitting room.



1



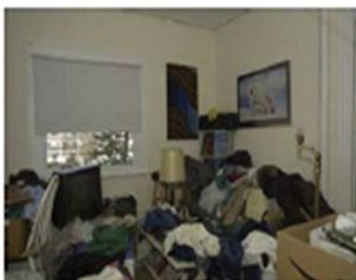
2



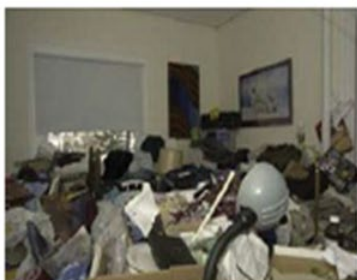
3



4



5



6



7



8



9



Select which image most closely resembles the kitchen.



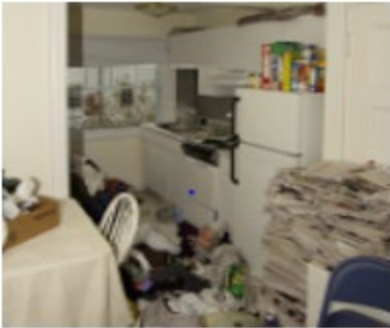
1



2



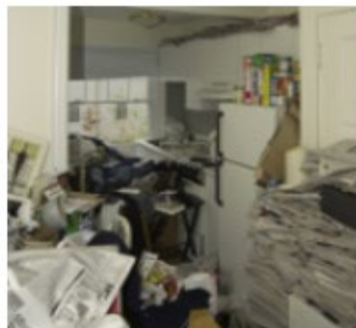
3



4



5



6



7



8



9



Room assessment

When assessing a room, look at the following locations and make note of usability, health and safety concerns, CIR rating, other observations, and finally include photos where possible.

- Access front door
- Hallway
- Lounge
- Kitchen
- Dining room
- Access back door
- Stairs
- Landing
- Bathroom
- Bedroom 1
- Bedroom 2
- Bedroom 3
- Separate W.C
- Loft space (RHP will not permit storage in lofts)
- Garden
- Communal area
- Outdoor storage

Essential home facilities checklist

Facility

- A place to sit
- Space to store/prepare food and dispose of rubbish
- Accessible toilet and water facilities
- A place to sleep
- Heating and hot water
- Working smoke detection
- Clear, accessible exits in case of fire

Existing support agencies

- Have you worked with a Social Worker?
- Are you connected to health, housing, or mental health support services?
- Do family, friends, or community groups provide assistance?

Record details of name/service and contact details, with consent.

Fire Safety Check: Safe & Well Visit referral

5Q Quick key questions

- Is there a working smoke alarm?
- Can you evacuate independently in case of fire?
- Are entrance and exit routes clear and accessible?
- Do you use medical items: oxygen, emollients, profile bed?
- Do you or anyone who visits you smoke or vape?



Duty for reporting concerns for fire risk: West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

When a person is identified to potentially have fire risk related issues at home, regardless of the level of risk rating registering on the clutter scale, they need to be advised of the increased risk of fire and the need to identify a safe, exit route. Also inform the person of your duty to report fire risk properties to the West Sussex Fire Service in order that the Fire Responder may be best prepared in the event of a fire. A referral can be made to [West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service - West Sussex County Council](#) for a [Safe and Well Visit - West Sussex County Council](#) (which will require the person's consent). A Community Fire Safety Officer can provide advice and assess for fire prevention & health related guidance as part of the multi-agency response. [Home fire safety - West Sussex County Council](#)

Make sure to record the narratives of the people, including their thoughts and wishes, as well as the practitioners' notes.

GDPR consent and sharing information

Safe & Habitable Homes is a group of multi-disciplinary organisations, services and charities working together under the guidance of Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures, with the aim to support people to live in the community in safe and suitable homes. The group focus is on avoiding harm, injury, admission to hospital or loss of life.

The group works in partnership to ensure you are referred to the most suitable agencies, who can work together and include you in developing a Joint Action Plan to support you with managing your home environment. There is a benefit in sharing time and resources to assist you to have a home that is safe and habitable.

How the group uses information

The Safe & Habitable Home Partners are using information to work together to support you in a range of ways. Our promise to you that is that as a group we will act fairly, listen to you, and respect the fact that the information is your information, and we will only share what is relevant. For more information about information sharing, visit:

- [Information sharing | West Sussex County Council](#)
- [Sussex Information Sharing Guide and Protocol | West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

If you need independent advice on GDPR you might speak to other independent advisors such as the Citizens Advice Bureau at 0808 2787969. The best resources to explain these rights can be found on the [Information Commissioner website](#).



Client consent options

- I consent to my General Practitioner being contacted.
- I consent to a Safe & Well Home Visit referral.
- I consent to photographs of my property being taken and shared.
- I consent to a referral to the multi-disciplinary services of the Safe & Habitable Homes.
- Are there any services or individuals you do not want information shared with?

Practitioner actions

- Check client consent and sharing of information completed
- Review Clutter RAG Rating – align action with Safeguarding Thresholds and WSFRS Fire Risk Matrix
- Review Safeguarding Thresholds Document – action according to RAG Rating
- Review WSFRS Fire Risk Matrix & apply 5Q's for quick assessment to action referral to Safe & Well Visit
- Step 1: Guidance
- Step 2: Home audit assessment
- Step 3: Team Around the Person and multi-agency Joint Action Plan
- Step 4: Multi-agency professional and review meeting
- Step 5: Safe and Habitable Homes: promoting TAP, advice, guidance and sharing of good practice.
- Step 6: Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) subgroup



Step 3: Team Around the Person action plan

This step involves creating a multi-agency, person-centred action plan to coordinate support for individuals experiencing self-neglect. Tasks, responsibilities, and associated costs should be clearly identified and monitored.

The following format is an example of a Team Around the Person Action Plan format.

The person's details

Name	
Personal reference	
Partner/joint occupant	
Personal reference	
Address	
Date of first Team Around the Person	
Initial assessor, including service	
Host of Team Around the Person, including service	
Lead person/agency, including service agreed at first TAP Meeting	

Involved agencies

S&HH Approach Support	
Housing Officer	
Advocate	
Tenancy Sustainment Service	
Social Worker	
Floating Support/Carer	
Environmental Health	
Mental Health Worker	
Disability/Specialist/Age Support	
Deep Clean Services	
Occupational Therapist	
Family/Friend/Peer Support	
Support Service Worker	
GP Surgery	
Care Support Staff	
Community Wardens	
Community Nurses	
Charitable Trusts	
Professional De-clutter Company	

Drug and Alcohol Team	
Community Support Services	
Fire and Rescue Service	
Police	
Ambulance Service	
Local Authority Housing	
Housing Manager	

Safe and Habitable Homes aims

Aim	Yes/no	Priority?
A place to sit		
A place to suitably store food, prepare a meal, and dispose of household related rubbish		
Access to toilet facility and water for personal care		
A place to sleep with feet raised and fully extended		
Suitable heating and hot water		
Working smoke detection		
Clear and accessible exits with the ability to leave independently in case of fire		

Action plan tasks

Ensure that within this plan you identify the support agencies and the specific actions of the multi-agency team. Consider issues arising, and proposed solutions to those issues.

Points to address	Action plan tasks	Forecast cost and actual cost
Person's thoughts and wishes: refer to the home audit assessment notes		
Risks identified: Housing Health and Safety Standards; Fire Risk Awareness; Safe & Well referral		
Housing support: What support is offered? Are there any enforcement actions to be aware of?		
Counselling: Plan involvement of professional counselling		
Sorting: Continue counselling with practical sorting to encourage the person to sort items, not lose them under coercion; create a relationship based on trust and understanding		

Resident actions: Resident-specific tasks to clear or clean, with measured and time-specific deadlines		
Additional personnel: Extra hands required for heavy lifting, etc.		
Removal of cleared items: Practical removal of agreed items signed over by disclosure document; removed by general rubbish, skip, man and van, donation to charity as appropriate		
Sourcing of essential items: Replacement of damaged or removed essential items such as bedding and kitchen goods		
Cleaning: General clean or deep clean as needed.		
Follow up: Monitoring for signs of hoarding and ongoing support		
Domiciliary care needs: Assess for personal care and support needs, and plan actions to provide for them		
Support needs: Assess for additional help and support with daily household tasks, socialisation, etc.		
Financial considerations: Explore ability to pay and resourcing charitable funding (consider recovery of costs)		

Agreement

Agreed with person (name)	
Supporting Agency	
Signed	
Dated	
Review date	

Step 4: Multi-agency professional review

The Multi-Agency Professional Review ensures ongoing monitoring and collaborative action for cases involving self-neglect. Regular reviews are critical to assess risks, update plans, and coordinate multi-agency efforts.

Key components

- **Agreement on lead agency:** Confirm the agency responsible for coordinating support.
- **Communication with the individual:** Provide clear, written communication.
- **Updating key contacts:** Inform all involved, including additional team members.
- **Multi-agency action plan:** Establish next steps using the provided template.
- **Contingency plan and escalation process:** Prepare for unresolved issues or increased risks.
- **Support/care plan updates:** Reflect current needs and actions.
- **Risk assessment:** Monitor progress during interventions like decluttering or repairs.
- **Case closure plans:** Ensure adequate monitoring is in place before closure.

Meeting guidelines

- Held under Sussex Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Adults at Risk.
- Information shared is confidential and only used for promoting adult protection and welfare.

Self-neglect in relation to home environment enquiry: professionals' meeting

- **Welcome and introductions:** Identify professionals attending.
- **Apologies:** Note any invited members unable to attend.
- **Meeting purpose:** Address risks, concerns, and individual preferences.
- **Key principles:**
 - Empowerment
 - Protection
 - Prevention
 - Proportionality
 - Partnership
 - Accountability
- **Individual's views and wishes:** Document their input.
- **Summary of case:** Provide a clear overview.
- **Chronology of contact:** List professional interactions to date.
- **Updates:** Highlight any new risks or relevant factors.
- **Clutter and fire risk assessments:**
 - Attach clutter rating (if completed).
 - Submit [Safe and Well Visit - West Sussex County Council](#)



Action plan

Action description	Responsible party	Due date	Activities completed

Next steps

- Distribute the updated action plan to all involved parties.
- Schedule the next review (recommended every 4-6 weeks).

Checklist for practitioners

- Adopt a person-centred approach.
- Complete a decision-specific mental capacity assessment if indicated.
- Engage all relevant agencies in the process.
- Coordinate information gathering and implement actions via the lead agency.
- Consider a Care Act 2014 assessment and safeguarding enquiry as needed.
- Maintain accurate records to ensure transparency and adherence to procedures.

Monitoring and ongoing support

Where all options have been exhausted:

- Maintain robust contingency plans.
- Ensure the individual understands the risks and consequences of their decisions.
- Reassure them that support remains available should they seek it in the future.

Approval and signatures

Case lead and service	Contact details	Monitoring Plan	Date



Step 5: Safe and Habitable Homes Roadshow

The roadshow is an event-based Community Initiative Partnership promoting a person-centred, multi-agency approach to address self-neglect in unsafe or unsuitable homes. It aims to provide learning, guidance, and reflection to:

- Sustain individuals in safer, more suitable housing.
- Promote health and wellbeing.
- Support strength-based practice.
- Sustain people in their homes in the community and avoid residential care.
- Prevent harm, injury, hospital admission, or loss of life.

These learning sessions are part of the Sussex Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Adults at Risk. Discussions around the person should remain anonymized and are solely for promoting the welfare of adults at risk.

For information about the schedule of Safe & Habitable Homes Roadshow events email housing4health@westsussex.gov.uk.

Key features

Regular Safe & Habitable Homes Roadshow events are hosted on Microsoft Teams. It focuses on looking at the Safe & Habitable Homes Toolkit and provides access to advice and guidance from core and specialist members representing health, mental health, housing, social care, support services, and charitable trusts. It aims to share best practices to sustain individuals in safe homes and enhance their well-being.

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Toolkit learning points
- Case management enquiries and best practice advice
- Local service updates and resources



Case management enquiries

If you wish to bring a case for discussion:

- Join the next Safe and Habitable Homes Roadshow Event
- Enter your name in the Microsoft Teams Roadshow Chat at the start of the meeting.
- The Chair will facilitate the session, and attendees can contribute by raising their hand.

Core objectives

The Safe & Habitable Homes Roadshow provides a collaborative platform for housing, health, and social care partners to master the Toolkit. It offers practical advice to promote the TAP to address complex cases involving:

- Unsafe or uninhabitable homes.
- Homes in disrepair.
- Eviction or cuckooing.
- Drugs, alcohol, or mental health issues.
- Reduced mobility or hospital discharges.

Additional support

For additional support professionals can:

- contact the Adult Social Care Safeguarding Hub on 03302 228400;
- contact [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#);
- submit a referral to the [Multi-Agency Risk Management subgroup](#).

Further learning

If you would like to expand your adult safeguarding knowledge, you can access the [West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board's Learning Pathway](#). This pathway will help you to cement your understanding of the basics of adult safeguarding, develop your skills and knowledge, and enhance your practice.



Step 6: Escalating to the Multi-Agency Risk Management subgroup

The Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) subgroup is a subgroup of the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, which meets monthly to consider further actions for adults where risk remains high despite measures attempted to address/mitigate risk.

The criteria is that:

- The adult appears to have care and support needs;
- Efforts have been made to reduce risk, and work with others to do this, and there continues to be a significant concern about the well-being and safety of the adult;
- The adult has a service or agency currently involved;
- An agency's risk assessment must have been completed and submitted with each referral.

MARM is not:

- A place for management oversight;
- A place to handover a case to another agency;
- To replace other procedures (e.g. safeguarding, self-neglect/hoarding)
- To replace other practice meetings (e.g. professionals/planning/multi-agency)

For more information and to refer a case to the Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) subgroup, visit [Multi-Agency Risk Management \(MARM\) Protocol | West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board](#).

