

2.2 Addressing hoarding issues within properties enables households to remain in their home safely and can have a wider positive impact for neighbouring properties.

3 Recommendations

3.1 To fund a part time (0.5FTE) Hoarding Co-ordinator role employed by the HIA. The cost for this is estimated to be IRO £30,000 per annum.

3.2 Provide a £15,000 per annum budget funded from the BCF for clearance & clean-up works.

3.3 Authority to enter into the contract with the HIA be delegated the Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health.

4 Introduction and Background

4.1 The Care Act 2014 recognises hoarding behaviours as one of the manifestations of self-neglect and requires all public bodies to safeguard people at risk.

4.2 The definition of self-neglect used by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) centres on:

- lack of self-care - neglect of personal hygiene, nutrition, hydration and/or health, thereby endangering safety and wellbeing; and/or
- lack of care of one's environment - squalor and hoarding behaviour (see below); and/or
- refusal of services that would mitigate risk of harm.

4.3 Self-neglect may happen because the person is unable to manage to care for themselves or for their home, or because they are unwilling to do so, or sometimes both.

4.4 As defined by the Kent and Medway Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures to Support People that Self-Neglect or Demonstrate Hoarding Behaviour (see Annex 1), hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material to the point that living space is sufficiently cluttered to preclude activities for what they are designed for.

4.5 Hoarding may be characterised by:

- a persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them.
- an intense emotional attachment to objects that may not be regarded as having the same value to others.

- distress at the thought of getting rid of the items.
- 4.6 Hoarding is a recognised mental health diagnosis.
- 4.7 In accordance with the Kent and Medway Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures to Support People that Self-Neglect or Demonstrate Hoarding Behaviour, if hoarding is identified in a property to be at level 4 or above on the Clutter Image Rating Scale, Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS) and the local authority must be informed.
- 4.8 Hoarding related service requests can come into the Council from multiple sources such as Social Services, members of the public (often neighbours) and external organisations such as the community wardens, the Police, KFRS, and Health and Housing Co-ordinators as part of the hospital discharge function.
- 4.9 Those hoarding related service requests may then be sent to multiple teams such as the Housing Improvement Team, Environmental Protection for associated rodent problems and accumulations external to the property, the Community Safety Unit and the Safeguarding officer. Each team will then process the service request within their respective area of expertise, but responses are often not co-ordinated and the much-needed support to enable the vulnerable resident to de-clutter and change their hoarding behaviour is not available.
- 4.10 The cluttered property conditions and associated problems such as pests and disrepair can have a significant impact on the health, safety and well-being of the occupants, neighbours, visitors, and the Fire & Rescue Service personnel due to the increased fire loading in the property.
- 4.11 It can also result in the resident losing their tenancy as they may be evicted by their landlord due to the property conditions or where the conditions are such that there is an immediate threat of serious injury or threat to life including for owner occupiers, they may be determined as homeless, placing additional financial burden on the Council.
- 4.12 Extreme disrepair may be present and poor electrical wiring may exacerbate fire risk, prompting action by the Council. This could be in the forms of Improvement or even Prohibition Notices, and where there is an imminent risk of serious harm, their emergency variants.
- 4.13 Sometimes hoarded material is visible to neighbours or to other persons living in the community, which may be harmful to the amenity or quality of the environment.

4.14 Table 1 below gives the number of hoarding related service requests received in the Housing Improvement Team:

Table 1: Hoarding related service requests

Financial year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024 to date
Number of hoarding related service requests	1	6	5	8	9

4.15 It should be noted that there is likely to be many more cases in our system where the customer would benefit from support with hoarding related issues, but due to the way our system works they may be recorded as other case types.

4.16 The BCF provided by Government to local authorities supports local systems to successfully deliver the integration of health and social care in a way that supports person-centred care, sustainability and better outcomes for people and carers.

4.17 This grant funding is paid to Kent County Council (KCC), who must pass down the DFG funding element (BCF) to their district councils in full, and in a timely manner, to enable the districts to continue to meet their statutory duty.

4.18 From this element, the Council agrees annually to an amount being retained by KCC to replace the Social Care Capital Grant that ceased in February 2016. This is known as the Social Care Capital Top-Slice.

4.19 BCF received by the Council must only be used for the specific purposes stated below:

- Approving DFGs in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the 1996 Act)
- Providing housing assistance in accordance with a locally published Housing Assistance Policy under The Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) powers.
- Using a portion of the DFG funding for other social care capital funding purposes.

4.20 This funding is used across Kent in a variety of ways, including the provision of mandatory and discretionary disabled facilities grants, hospital discharge schemes, handy person schemes and hoarding co-ordinator schemes.

4.21 The Council currently fund Health and Housing Co-ordinators and a Handyperson Enablement scheme, delivered by the HIA.

- 4.22 The HIA utilise the Council's discretionary Home Safety Assistance to fund clearance & cleans costing less than £1,000, or £3,000 where hoarding is confirmed, to enable residents in the borough be discharged to a clean and safe home to prevent bed blocking.
- 4.23 This will include residents with hoarding disorders and poor property conditions which have resulted in them being admitted to hospital, sometimes on multiple occasions.
- 4.24 Table 2 illustrates the spend on Home Safety Assistance for those hospital discharge cases.

Table 2: Home Safety Assistance

Financial year	2022/23	2023/24	2024 to date
No. of Home Safety Assistance cases for Hospital Discharge Scheme (up to £1,000 per case)	11	10	8
Sub total	£6,590.10	£6,279.68	£6,058.00
No. of Home Safety Assistance cases for clearance & cleans assessed with a Clutter Image Rating of above four (up to £3,000 per case)	2	2	1
Sub total	£4,860.00	£5,862.00	£2,331.00
Total spend	£11,450.10	£12,141.68	£8,389.00

- 4.25 Foundations, the national body for HIAs, have reported than an effective service for people with a hoarding tendency requires:
- A specialised hoarding service with a dedicated caseworker coordinating the approach.
 - Funding for decluttering, preferably delivered by a specialised hoarding company.
 - Ongoing support to prevent relapses, for example, the provision of CBT, group therapy or peer support.
 - Established referral networks and well-maintained partnerships.
 - Close cooperation with enforcement services, the NHS, Fire Services.

- A local hoarding protocol setting out the steps of intervention and eligibility for services.
- 4.26 Further details can be found in their report titled Hoarding: a report into best practice.
- 4.27 The HIA already provide a hoarding co-ordinator service on behalf of several Kent local authorities, funded through their BCF. These hoarding co-ordinator services complement the existing Health and Housing service as there is often cross over with patients discharging from hospital who have been identified as hoarders.
- 4.28 This Hoarding Co-ordinator service is provided as follows:
- Sevenoaks District Council 1 FTE post (increased from 0.8FTE)
 - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 1 FTE post (increased from 0.8FTE)
 - Thanet District Council fund 1 FTE post
 - Folkestone & Hythe District Council fund 1 FTE post
 - Dover District Council fund 0.4 FTE post
- 4.29 Gravesham Borough Council fund a hoarding service delivered by another contractor, rather than the HIA.
- 4.30 Referrals into the service are from other professionals such as Local Authority teams, KFRS, Care Navigators or Health & Social Care colleagues, as well as self-referrals, and those from friends and family where the customer has provided consent.
- 4.31 In discussion with the customer, a program of support is determined and a support plan created identifying and agreeing their ongoing needs and where possible setting SMART goals. This plan must ensure the customer is at the heart of all decisions and that they are actively encouraged to take ownership of their issues and be involved and engaged in the journey to clear & clean their home.
- 4.32 The hoarding co-ordinator works with the customer to establish the root cause that has led them to becoming a hoarder and how they manage daily living, gain their trust and to make small changes at a time.
- 4.33 Other needs would be identified and addressed, such as social isolation, suitable local groups and activities, potential for befriending, signposting to hot meal delivery services and entitlement to benefits.

- 4.34 With the customer's consent, referrals to appropriate support services can be made. For example, bereavement counselling, debt advice or Mental Health services, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).
- 4.35 If the house is in disrepair or they are unable to fund a clearance & clean, they can be supported to apply for local authority grants/ loans or charitable funding.
- 4.36 The customer is encouraged to maintain their cleaned environment by undertaking some cleaning themselves or funding a regular cleaning service where finances permit.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 The Council will fund a 0.5FTE hoarding coordinator, employed by the HIA and paid for from BCF.
- 5.2 The Council will provide a £15,000 per annum budget funded from the BCF for clearance & clean-up works.
- 5.3 Initially, the co-ordinator will engage with a customer weekly for a period of six weeks. If after this time no progress has been made, then an informed decision is made whether to continue the service or refer on or back to Social Services.
- 5.4 It is acknowledged that in some cases progress may never be made as some customers simply do not want to engage, make change, or accept any help.
- 5.5 This service will commence 1 April 2025 for twelve months, with up to three, 12-month extensions in line with the existing contractual arrangements. More information can be found in the section titled 'Financial and Value for Money Considerations', below.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 We could consider direct employment of a Hoarding Co-ordinator however the benefits the HIA's experience in this field and wider working in the context of support etc would be lost.
- 6.2 We could decide not to have a Hoarding Co-ordinator post however the availability of the BCF allows the opportunity to really make a difference for residents who need support in this area and enables the Council to respond more holistically to complex cases.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 The DIRECTOR OF Planning, Housing & Environmental Health confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

- 7.2 BCF has continued to be underspent by the Council in recent years, accumulating a brought forward balance of £1,388,000. The proposal set out in the Capital Plan Review 2024/25 is to reprofile £1,000,000 across the years until 2028/29.
- 7.3 The diversion of £45,000 per annum to support further revenue initiatives under the BCF is highly unlikely to impact the DFG service provided under the capital scheme and will indeed provide essential support, especially around the discharge from hospital in respect of hoarding in the community.
- 7.4 Funding the hoarding service from BCF will enable a reduction to the Housing Assistance budget by £15,000, where the current clearance & cleaning costs associated with hoarding cases are being picked up.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 None

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) conducted a tender exercise with and on behalf of its partner authorities, Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC), to award several contracts for the provision of Hospital Discharge, Home Straight (hoarding co-ordinator) and Handyperson services commencing 1 April 2024 for an initial period of 1 year. Provision was made for up to four 12-month extensions.
- 9.2 These services are commissioned as part of broader Health and Social Care and Housing pathways to support people in the community. As such they are governed by a framework of national legislation, policy and guidance.
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/7/contents/enacted>
 - Care Act 2014
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted/data.htm>
 - Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
- 9.3 The inclusion of the additional hoarding service contract doesn't exceed 50% of the original contract value. Therefore, provision of this service by the HIA can be handled as a contract variation/ modification.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 There has been liaison with other local authorities and the HIA to understand the part this scheme can play in supporting the work of housing teams and making a difference for residents.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 We will liaise with TWBC and the HIA regarding our decision to include the hoarding service under the existing arrangements.
- 11.2 We will instruct TMBC Legal Services to review and issue the draft contract.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.
- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- Healthy Lifestyles

- 12.3.1 The link between decent, safe housing and health & wellbeing is well documented and evidenced.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - Multi-agency self-neglect and hoarding policies and procedures