



HOARDING SERVICE

PROCEDURE FOR UNDERTAKING TASKS IN PRIVATE RESIDENCES

1. INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

When dealing with hoarders in domestic settings certain hazards to health and safety may arise for De-Clutter Buddies. Mind in Croydon seeks to remove these risks or where this is not possible, to reduce them to a manageable level. This procedure is intended to provide a framework to assess and reduce the risks that working with hoarders may present. The policy applies to all our stakeholders who may undertake tasks with hoarders. Those people in turn have a duty to ensure that by their own acts and omissions, they do not put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others.

Issues of health and safety can arise where, while supporting clients who come under our hoarding service someone is engaged in activity in a residence in the community where someone who hoards lives. The De-Clutter Buddy will be physically isolated in the residence and potentially without access to immediate assistance. It must be borne in mind that people engaged in tasks for Mind in Croydon's Hoarding Service can also be isolated in an occupied building where the structure of the building makes it difficult to get immediate help.

2.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECURING THE HEALTH & SAFETY OF THOSE ENGAGED IN THE HOARDING PROJECT WITH CLIENTS

Mind will do its best to ensure that when people are undertaking tasks in residences with hoarders they do so in a way which is as planned and safe as possible. In turn it is requested that those people do not knowingly put themselves at risk of harm in the course of performing their tasks. If at any time they feel there is risk of harm, they should report this to the Manager of the Counselling Service who is also the Manager of the Hoarding Service.

Consideration of the risk factors involved in working with service users is built into the assessment processes of the Counselling/Hoarding Service. People undertaking these tasks are expected to use these systems to make a sensible judgment as to whether they consider it safe to work alone with a service user (or group of service users) in any given setting, including a reappraisal of the risks when the situation changes.

However the nature of this work means that the circumstances and settings vary considerably. Because of this the person undertaking the task and the Manager of the Counselling/Hoarding Service shall keep practices under regular and ongoing review by means of the many mechanisms run by Mind to ensure good practice generally in its projects (this includes meetings with the Senior Management Team, Trustees etc). The priority must always be that people feel safe in the course of carrying out tasks with hoarding clients and that they are not knowingly exposed to circumstances where this may be in doubt.

3.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

The practice of the Hoarding Service may be reviewed at handovers, management meetings and at other times as required, for example when an incident occurs and learning needs to take place. Individual practice will be addressed in regular discussions with those who carry out these tasks. The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review, and will take place around every 3 years.

4.0 PROCEDURE FOR UNDERTAKING WORK WITH HOARDING CLIENTS IN PRIVATE RESIDENCES

4.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

Before going alone, an assessment of the risks should be undertaken by the Manager of the Service or someone with relevant experience who is chosen to deputise for them. The assessment of risk should consider all relevant information to make a reasoned judgement about risk, including the following issues:

- The service users concerned: Mental state, mood, medication, past and recent history of challenging behaviour, known triggers for this.
- The nature of the task: Size of the group, sensitivity of the task, activities with access to tools/potential weapons, special circumstances or history of problems associated with this activity (e.g. service user under the influence of drugs or alcohol).
- The environment: Location, isolation, security, access and exits, any risks the building itself poses e.g. faulty lighting and heating systems.
- Communication: Reliability of the technology provided e.g. mobile phone, alarm systems and whether the individual concerned is able to use it.

- Support systems: Level of access to immediate assistance, knowledge, experience and ability of the individual to manage the risks.
- Transport: Can the individual manage transport arrangements for service users and self where required

Once the potential hazard(s) and degree of risk have been identified, a judgement needs to be made by the Manager whether the risks can be managed or reduced to an acceptable level. If the outcome of the assessment is that safe working practice cannot be sustained, the work should cease until agreed adequate safeguards can be put in place. Decisions not to proceed should at all times be based on a risk assessment which identifies that safe practice cannot be undertaken. The decision should wherever possible be made in conjunction with the Counselling/Hoarding Service manager. However where this is not possible, people are NEVER expected to proceed where there is a perceived risk to their safety.

4.2 COMMUNICATIONS

Those undertaking tasks in private residences with hoarding clients must only undertake this work during hours when the counselling service is staffed at Pampisford Road. They must ensure that the Counselling/Hoarding Service knows when they will be working alone, the exact location of where they will be working and with which service user(s). This must be communicated to Counselling/Hoarding Service by contacting the office on 020 8763 2064 / 07842 948813 or by e-mailing; counselling@mindincroydon.org.uk or hoardinggroup@mindincroydon.org.uk. This information must be reported to the Counselling/Hoarding Service before departure and on return from each visit. This includes situations when the individual goes straight home after lone working rather than returning to base. Individuals must inform the base of the time they expect to be back at base or to have finished their span of duty. If they fail to return or to check in at that time, the Counselling/Hoarding Service Manager will assess the situation and take appropriate steps in response - this response is likely to vary according to circumstances. The Counselling/Hoarding Service staff will maintain a rota which will be managed by the Counselling/Hoarding Manager who will be responsible for updating when necessary. It will be kept as a paper record with the Counselling paper diary and will be accessible to all staff at base who have access to the Counselling paper diary kept in the general office.

In cases where regular and routine work with a Hoarding client alone is undertaken in a private residence, the line manager will undertake an individual risk assessment on an annual basis. Those who carry out tasks with Hoarding clients in private residences will be issued with mobile phones. They will be responsible for ensuring that the phone is in working order, charged and with sufficient credit.

Mind in Croydon's Counselling/Hoarding Service will maintain a record containing details such as description, mobile phone number, home address and telephone number, NoK and any other relevant information. This information can be used to assist in tracing the individual should this be necessary and will be stored in the Counselling Office of Mind in Croydon. It will be the responsibility of each individual to report changes in their personal information to the Counselling/Hoarding Manager who will amend the record. Where a risk to personal safety is identified, the work should be discontinued until safe working practice has been discussed and agreed upon by the individual undertaking the tasks and the Counselling/Hoarding Manager. Individuals are NEVER expected to undertake a visit where there is a perceived risk to their personal safety. Any incidents of hazard, threat, violence or 'near miss' must be reported to the Counselling/Hoarding Service Manager by the next working day. Mind in Croydon will examine whether these procedures need to be amended in any way, based on this real-life experience.

4.3. SHARING & RECORDING

All those involved have a duty of care for each other and must promptly communicate any risk from service users to the Counselling/Hoarding Manager who will consider what action needs to be taken in response to this risk and will ensure that everyone necessary is informed promptly and appropriately and with due regard to issues of confidentiality. All those involved will be expected to routinely share information about service users and incidents with each other where it is relevant and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.