



An example of hoarding behaviour

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## Finding new ways to support older people who hoard with their move into assisted accommodation

The prospect of moving into assisted accommodation can be difficult for any older person but can be particularly hard for older people who hoard.

Many older people moving into supported housing have to do so because of health issues or declining mobility, meaning they often have to move house fairly quickly and haven't had the chance to fully come to terms with leaving their home and sorting through their belongings.

This can be even harder for people who have gathered many possessions over the years and have recognised attributes of hoarding disorder and worry about downsizing, losing their independence and even of being ‘locked away in an old people’s home’.

Academics from Northumbria University’s [Hoarding Research Group](#) already work with many housing providers and charities across the North East to assess the impact of hoarding behaviours.

They joined forces with several regional organisations on a study, funded by the [Sir Halley Stewart Trust](#), to find ways to provide better support for people moving from their own homes into supported housing.

The researchers met with older people from across the region – both with and without hoarding behaviours – to explore the barriers they faced as they prepare to move into supported housing.

They spoke with people who had moved into supported housing over the last six months to learn about their experiences and any advice they may have to offer and consulted with housing professionals working with the older people about the issues they faced before, during and after the moving process.

[Professor Nick Neave](#), Director of the Hoarding Research Group, explained: “There are many factors that need to be considered as we age. We know that as we get older and our mobility and health decline and moving from independent to supported housing can bring major benefits.

“We also know that hoarding behaviours can often get worse as people get older, and this can impact on social housing providers and other local services, as well as creating more anxiety for the individual about needing to move to a new home.

“We wanted to find out more about the barriers faced by older people both with and without hoarding behaviours, in moving into supported housing to make recommendations for the best ways that local authorities and service providers can assist them during this transition.”

Over a 12-month period the researchers worked with people from Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland who were either thinking

about moving into supported housing, or who had recently moved into their new home.

They also worked with housing and charity professionals who provided advice and guidance to people before and during their move.

They found that prior to moving, many had concerns about the moving process itself, and many also mentioned a stigma within their social circle about moving into supported housing.

However, the response from participants who had recently moved was overwhelmingly positive, with all reporting they were glad to have done it.

The team have since created a series of recommendations for housing professionals about how to best support people with the transition which will be shared at an online Teams meeting on Wednesday 30 March at 10am.

Deborah Ewart, Head of Housing Support at Gateshead Council, has been working with the University for more than five years on social housing and hoarding cases and was keen to contribute to the study.

She explained: “As a landlord, working with hoarding cases brings many challenges. We want to support our customers and help address underlying causes and ensure support is tailored to the individuals’ needs.

“However, we have to balance this with our obligations to ensure tenancies are managed effectively, tenancy agreements adhered to and that our residents are safe in their home.

“Taking part in the research is helping us all to understand this complex issue more. We can use this learning to develop multi-agency approaches that can successfully support people in the long-term.”

The research team are keen to encourage anyone interested in the transition journey from independent to supported housing for older adults and professionals working with older adults to attend their online dissemination event on Wednesday.

Anyone wanting to attend should email Senior Research Assistant [Claire Murphy-Morgan](#) and request an invitation to the meeting

Northumbria University's [Hoarding Research Group](#) is a multidisciplinary effort which together brings academics from the North-East universities, stakeholders from the local authorities, housing associations, charities, social care services, mental health services, the NHS and emergency services.

The partners work together to develop a better understanding of Hoarding Disorder and explore the impact of this disorder on both the individual and society.

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