



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# HOARDING FRAMEWORK

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 02 October 2015

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Members with information about the development and introduction of a multi-agency Hoarding Framework.

## CONTACT OFFICER

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of any material to the point that a living space is sufficiently cluttered to preclude activities for what they are designed for. Hoarding disorder is a persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them.
- 1.2 Hoarding is becoming an increasingly complex issue that has recently been highlighted as a risk to the Service following an increase in the numbers of operational incidents at properties containing hoards.
- 1.3 Hoarding is a public health issue and can lead to a direct health and safety risk to the individual, family members and neighbours. Fires in hoarded homes are difficult to extinguish with an increased risk of spreading to neighbouring properties. Access is often difficult, making it hard to reach the occupier and also increases the risk to firefighter safety in the event of attendance at an incident.
- 1.4 The increase of known hoarding properties in the City and County presents a problem to partner agencies. Historically, no single agency has ownership over a hoarding case, with multiple partners committing resources to address the risk. The cost of hoarding to the agencies involved ranges from £10,000 to £60,000 per hoarding case.
- 1.5 Following a number of hoarding related fire deaths, a Rule 43 (Coroners statement where a death occurred that could have been prevented) was issued to all Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) detailing a number of recommendations to reduce the risk of hoarding related fire deaths.
- 1.6 The recent introduction of the Care Act 2014 recognises hoarding as self-neglect, a mental illness that requires local authorities and partners to treat the act of hoarding as a safeguarding concern.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 In light of the recent changes in legislation, accompanied by the increase in operational incidents, the Services lead for Housing and Hoarding established the Hoarding Steering Group.
- 2.2 Working in collaboration with Ashfield District Council Environmental Health Team, a review of all known hoarding cases was undertaken. The review examined aspects of each agencies involvement and case management of current hoarding cases.
- 2.3 The results of the scrutiny found that the hoarders required increased support to address the condition and negate the chance of repeat behaviour. The next phase of the review was to share the findings and gain agreement from partner agencies to adopt a new approach to managing hoarding cases.

- 2.4 To test the proposed change in case management, a pilot study was undertaken in the Ashfield District which assigned support workers and counsellors to address the cause of the hoarding behaviour. The findings from the pilot saw a significant increase in engagement and cooperation of hoarders with the requests of Environmental Health and partner agencies.
- 2.5 To ensure the success of the pilot was shared and best practice established, the Service lead for Hoarding and Housing formed the Environmental Health Officers meeting, a quarterly meeting attended by county and city Senior Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).
- 2.6 The Service organised a Workshop in April 2015 inviting over 60 representatives from Social Care, Police, Fire, Environmental Health, Housing Associations, Mental Health, Public Health and the NHS.
- 2.7 The workshop opened discussions about how partners can work together for the benefit of the individuals, organisations and the wider community, forming the basis of a multiagency Hoarding Framework. All agencies attending the workshop signed in agreement to the framework and committed to its implementation.
- 2.8 The framework is a toolkit and guidance document for partner agencies to refer to, including a set of actions and a list of open questions to ask the individual regarding their property. The adoption of the framework ensures standardised practice and a cohesive approach to the management of new and existing hoarding cases.
- 2.9 The Service led in the development of the framework, which has subsequently been adopted and promoted by both Nottingham City and County Safeguarding Boards. A quarterly performance report is provided to the boards by the Hoarding Steering Group to ensure performance is monitored and provide quality assurance.
- 2.10 The objectives of the framework are:
- Create a safer and healthier environment for the individual and others affected by the hoarding behaviour – eg: family, neighbours.
  - Develop a multi-agency pathway which will maximise the use of existing services and resources and which may reduce the need for compulsory solutions;
  - Ensure that when solutions are required, there is a process for planning solutions tailored to meet the needs of the individual and utilising a 'person centred' approach. Possible solutions should include professional support and monitoring, property repairs and permanent or temporary re-housing;
  - Develop creative ways of engaging individuals in the process.
  - To establish best practice and improve knowledge of legislation that relates to hoarding behaviour through the Hoarding Steering Group

- 2.11 The success of the Hoarding Framework has been shared widely with over 12 other FRS adopting the framework and supporting steering groups into their service delivery. At the request of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), presentations have been delivered to the CFOA Hoarding Steering Group and the Framework recommended as best practise.
- 2.12 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has now released the final version of the Hoarding Framework to all agencies in the City and County. The document will be reviewed at six monthly intervals, administered by the Hoarding Steering Group.
- 2.13 The housing lead for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service will provide a brief presentation to the Committee and will be available to answer any questions.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment of the Framework has been undertaken.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The adoption and introduction of the Hoarding Framework ensures the Service meets the legal responsibilities detailed in the Care Act 2014.

### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The adoption and introduction of the Hoarding Framework advises agencies to share information about hoarding properties. The risk to firefighters attending operational incidents at hoarding properties is reduced through raised awareness and early signposting of hoarding properties.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the contents of the report.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

John Buckley  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**