Clutter and hoarding

Most of us have possessions in our homes that we don't want to get rid of. These may include clothes, furniture and common household items, photos or objects that bring back happy memories or remind us of loved ones, or things that form part of a hobby or personal collection (CDs, books etc).

Every now and again most of us will get the feeling that we've gathered too much 'stuff' and will have a clear out or spring clean to create some space.

But for some people gathering possessions in their home, and then not wanting to let some of them go, can become a problem. Suddenly they find that they are surrounded by too much stuff, with more coming in all the time, and don't know what to do.

This excessive gathering of possessions or 'clutter' in the home can then have a knock-on effect on other areas of a person's life:

- It can be difficult to get about the home because there are so many things in the way, and there can even be an increased risk of tripping, falls or other accidents
- It can be more difficult to find the things you need for day-to-day life - keys, money, documents etc
- There can be a hygiene risk as old food and dirt gathers unseen in corners of the property, leading to problems with mould, unpleasant smells, rodent and insect infestation and other hygiene issues. And this can then have a negative effect on neighbours
- There is an increased risk of fire
- And there can be a negative effect on a person's relationships and social life, as they become embarrassed about inviting people into their home, or as friends and loved-ones simply don't want to be in what they see as an unpleasant or uncomfortable environment

In the worst cases this 'clutter' can become even more problematic. Some people find that their homes can become full from top to bottom with all types of things - furniture, piles of papers, old clothes, things that they have found when out and about, and much more besides. Suddenly a person can find that there is literally no way around their home, and that they are living in one small space surrounded by mountains of possessions. To other people these possessions may seem like 'rubbish', but the person who has gathered them will attach great importance to them, and will not want to let go.

When the problem reaches this level it is known as 'compulsive hoarding'.

What causes someone to hoard?

The possible consequences of hoarding

Support with clutter and hoarding

Other information and advice