Hoarding

The impact on the Fire Service
Introductions
Aims

• To Analyse the impact of Hoarding on The Fire Service.

• To look in more detail at 2 different cases involving Hoarding:
  - Newton Aycliffe
  - East Durham
• Is Hoarding an existing problem or a growing problem?

• Is there an increased awareness as a result of media coverage?
How does it impact on the fire service?

• Hoarding increases the Fire hazard
• Often blocked exits prevent escape
• Responding firefighters are put at additional risk:
  o Obstructed exits
  o Falling objects
  o Excessive fire loading can lead to collapse
  o Fighting fires and searching for occupants is much more difficult
• Adjacent properties or structures are put at higher risk
What can we do about it?

- Work closer with partners to establish links
- Train staff to recognise signs and symptoms
- Share information with partners
- Coordinated and collaborative interventions are more successful
- Early interventions can often prevent a situation from getting out of hand
Existing Cases

- CDDFRS are currently dealing with 68 cases of hoarding of varying degrees.
- All cases are discussed on a regular basis within vulnerable person forums
- Success within East Durham as a result of partnership working
Newton Aycliffe

14/05/2012

ToC: 12:47hrs
Female (65 yrs)

- Resident for 28 years
- Lived with her son, (38yrs)
- Husband died in 1979, Tenant had suffered with mental health problems ever since
- Chronic hoarder
- Refused repeated attempts by housing association to upgrade the premises
- No evidence of drinking / substance abuse.
Initial concerns

- Son rescued via toilet window.
- BA crews had difficulty getting mother to the window.
- Rear & front doors were blocked floor to ceiling.
- Both doors had to be cut-up in situ to gain access.
Extreme Hoarding
Cause of fire

Cause of fire: Electrical – arc damage to plug, socket & 5m extension cable.
Secondary cause: arcing in cable ignited flammable materials
Smouldering fire

Electrical arcing from the damaged extension cable started a smouldering fire in piles of flammable materials, the smouldering fire surfaced in the kitchen on a fuel-rich incline.
Moving Forward

Changes to procedures
• Coroners Rule 43 Letter – Sent to all agencies

• All housing agencies looked at existing /new procedures

• Increased Partnership working

• Increased information sharing
East Durham Homes – Successful Outcome

- Concerns raised over existing tenant (Clutter rating 9)
- Joint visit EDH/Fire Service
- Over the next few weeks EDH tried various interventions:
  - Provided Skip
  - Offered various advice
  - Installed hard wired smoke alarms
  - Threatened Legal Action
Next Step:

Interventions were unsuccessful

File compiled by EDH along with a report from ourselves and submitted to court to obtain injunction

Successful application - Conditions

- The defendant to take all reasonable steps to clear the property of excessive belongings which are a fire risk and cause the property to be unsafe. The defendant will clear the property of these excessive belongings within 14 days of the order.
- In the event that the defendant fails to comply with paragraph 1, the defendant will allow EDH or contractors appointed to act on their behalf access to the property at an appointed time to allow removal and disposal of the excessive personal belongings. EDH will give at least 24 hours notice of the appointment.
- In the event that the defendant refuses to allow access to the property EDH or contractors appointed to act on their behalf will be entitled to use reasonable force to access the property.
- Once the property has been cleared of the excessive personal belongings, the defendant will keep the property in a safe state and ensure that all rooms are fit for purpose.
- The Order will remain in force until the date of expiry of the defendant’s tenancy unless by further Order of the Court.
• Tenant given 14 days to clear clutter
• No attempt made
• Tenant was informed contractors would enter property 16\textsuperscript{th} January to clear clutter
• Estimated 1.5 – 2 tonnes of rubbish removed from property
• EDH will attend property on a regular basis to monitor
• Proves value of cooperation with partner agencies
• Even the tenant commented that he was relieved the clean up had taken place!
Living Room

Before

After
Bedroom

Before

After
• To Date:

• Regular visits are being made to monitor the property (Now Monthly).

• Property is untidy, but free of clutter.
Partnership Working-Obstacles

• Vulnerable person forums

• Obstacles-Open Discussion
  o Who to contact
  o Guidance on best practice
  o Sharing of policies/procedures
What can we do about it?

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ANY QUESTIONS ?