



# The Hoarding Research Group & UK Hoarding Partnership

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# Summary of Hoarding..

- Hoarding is a genuine psychiatric condition and is not a 'lifestyle choice' or due to 'laziness'.
- It may be a type of PTSD caused by childhood trauma, or related to the Autism Spectrum.
- People who hoard need support and treatment – forcibly emptying their property and evicting them does not help them.
- A multi-agency approach based around a trauma-centered approach appears to be the best way forward.
- There needs to be greater understanding of what hoarding disorder is, how it can manifest and how it can be reduced/cured.



# HISTORY of the HRG & UKHP

- In 2017 I established the Hoarding Research Group (HRG) to develop high-quality multi-disciplinary research to explore the psychological characteristics of hoarding and related behaviours, and to devise novel intervention strategies to reduce its impact, both economically and socially.
- The Group draws on members from the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences at Northumbria, and from other North East Universities (Newcastle and Sunderland), with experts in cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, clinical psychology, health psychology, developmental psychology, social work and social policy, public health interventions, mental capacity, and vulnerability.
- The Group became overwhelmed with requests for help and assistance from various organizations and agencies who deal with hoarding behaviours, and so we created the North East Hoarding Partnership – now expanded to be a national partnership (UKHP).

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# The Groups

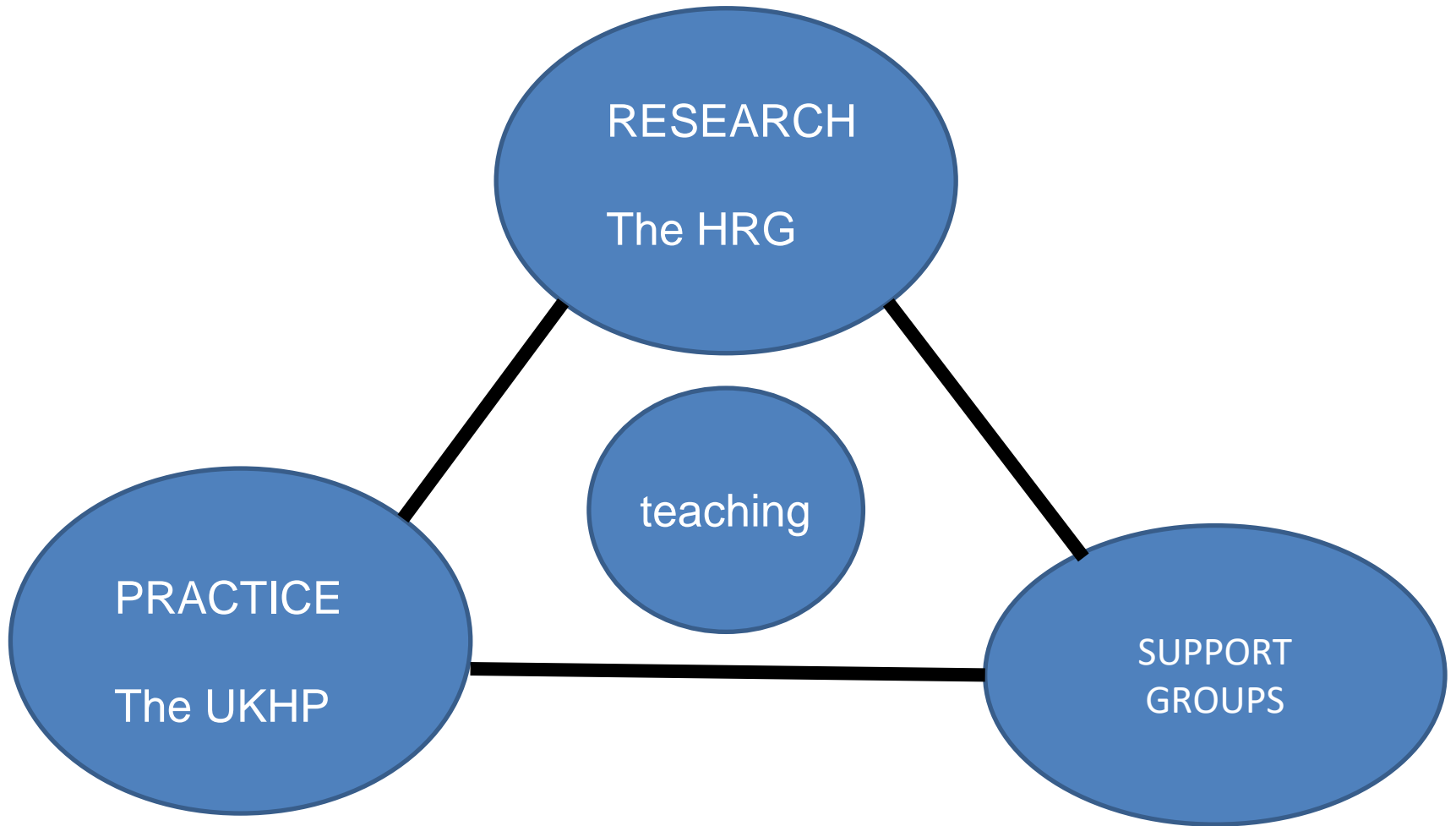
## Hoarding Research Group (HRG).

- Established within Northumbria University in 2017.
- Meets monthly.
- Brings together researchers (academics and research students) interested in better understanding hoarding behaviours.
- Publish research.
- Apply for external funding to run research projects.
- Feeds into the NEHP.

## UK Hoarding Partnership (UKHP).

- Established in 2020.
- Brings together professionals who work with individuals who hoard.
- Meets 3-monthly.
- Discuss issues relating to professional experiences of hoarding behaviours, and share best practice to better support professionals, and people with lived experiences of hoarding.
- Takes a trauma-centred approach.
- Suggests research questions for the HRG to explore.





# MEMBERSHIP OF THE UKHP

Age UK  
Believe Housing  
Cardiff Council  
Castles & Coasts Housing  
Clouds End  
Durham& Darlington Fire &  
Rescue Service  
County Durham Housing Group  
Durham County Council  
Everyturn Mental Health  
Filofax – Personal Organizer  
Friends Action North East  
Gateshead Council  
Holistic Hoarding  
Karbon Homes  
Livin  
Mental Health Concern  
Mental Health Matters  
Mind  
MotherClutter UK

Moving Forward Norfolk  
Newcastle City Council  
Newcastle Mental Health Social Work Team  
Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board  
North Tyneside Council  
North Yorkshire Council  
Norwich City Council  
Royal Borough of Greenwich  
Search Newcastle  
Specialist Cleaning Group  
Stockton On Tees Council  
Starfish Partnership  
South Tyneside Homes  
South Tyneside Council  
Sunderland Council  
Tidy Homes Tidy Minds  
TyneGroup  
Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service  
Your Homes Newcastle

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# CURRENT ACTIVITIES

**Some examples:**

**The prevalence of animal hoarding and how it is addressed.**

**Transition from independent living to sheltered accommodation, and how this may particularly affect people who hoard.**

**Multiagency approaches to hoarding.**

**How hoarding develops and is maintained.**

**Novel clinical interventions for hoarding.**

**Mental capacity and safeguarding issues.**

**Legal, environmental and practical issues.**

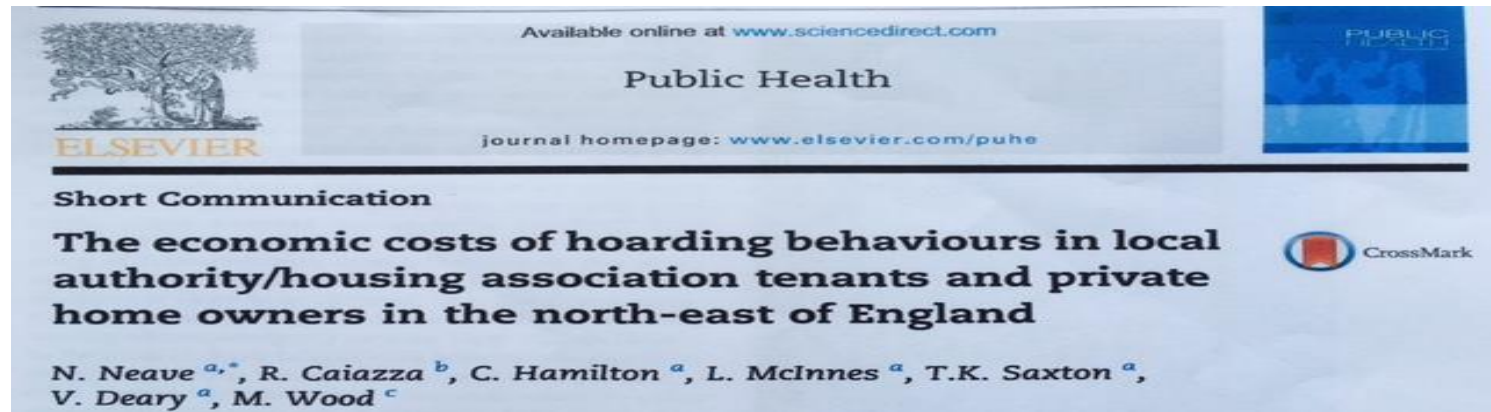
**Psychological and mental health aspects of hoarding.**

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# Example: The economic costs of hoarding



- We assessed the economic costs of individuals who hoard in the North East.
- Surveys were sent to 13 social housing providers and one Emergency Service (Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service), 7 Housing providers responded.
- The average number of housing tenants was 15,755, with hoarders comprising 0.14%



# Key data

- While numbers were small, the majority required significant action in terms of increased staff attention, clean-up operations, and legal action.
- Over half of the cases also required the involvement of health and social care services and were highlighted as safeguarding concerns. These costs were not included.
- Less than 10% of cases were resolved.
- The Housing Providers estimated that each case of hoarding cost them around £15,000 per year, but more complex cases involving evictions/legal fees etc cost up to £35,000.
- Hoarding behaviours were estimated to cost the Fire & Rescue Service around £107,000 per annum, and their properties posed a significant danger to fire officers in relation to ease of access.



# Issues

- Incidences of hoarding were few, but these likely represented the most serious cases that had been reported – many other cases are likely to be ‘hidden’.
- Each case is unique and complex, and mostly remain unresolved.
- Current ‘resolution’ in the form of house clearance and specialist de-cluttering and cleaning are costly and their effectiveness is short-lived.
- Studies from around the world suggest that the best ‘strategy’ for dealing with hoarding behaviours are longitudinal multi-agency responses, with the cause of the hoarding (often trauma) being addressed. This does not yet happen in the UK.
- More work is need to develop effective intervention strategies which ease the problems in the short-term, and resolve the trauma/hoarding in the long-term.



# Example: Animal hoarding in England






BRIEF RESEARCH REPORT article

Front. Public Health, 30 August 2022

Sec. Public Mental Health

Volume 10 - 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.899378>

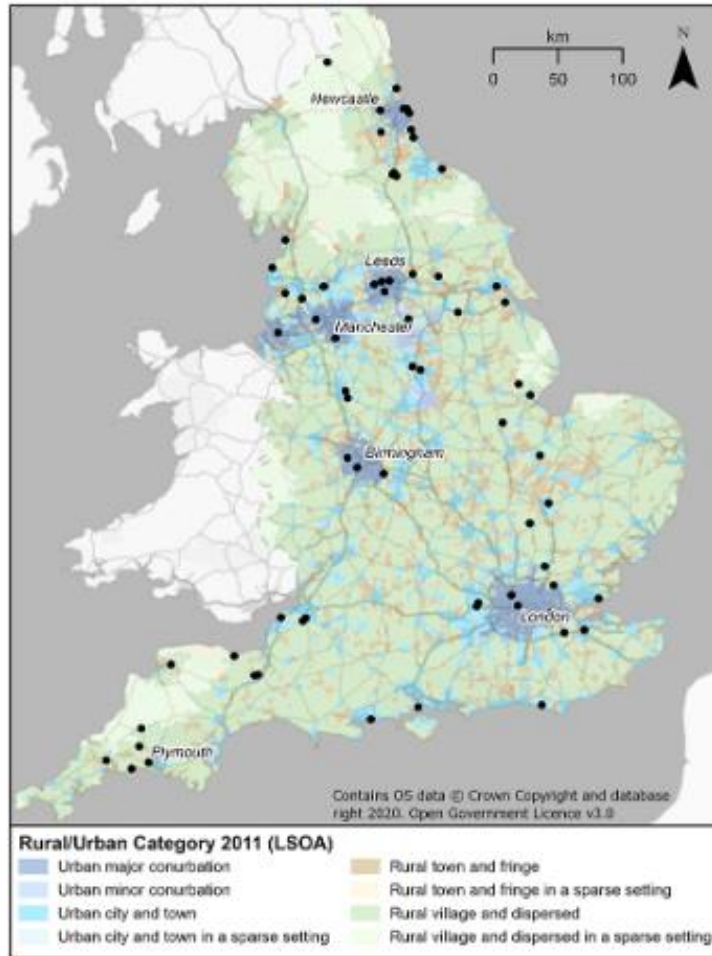
## Animal hoarding cases in England: Implications for public health services

 Justine Wilkinson<sup>1\*</sup>,  Mariyana Schoultz<sup>2</sup>,  Helen M. King<sup>1</sup>,  Nick Neave<sup>3</sup> and  Catherine Bailey<sup>2</sup>

- Part of wider research into understanding how practitioners manage animal hoarding.
- We explored the characteristics of animal hoarding cases as a first step in informed case management through media reported prosecutions.
- 66 prosecutions between January 2015 and December 2020.



# Characteristics of the area



Found across all areas but particularly those with higher population density.  
More likely to be found in:

- Urban rather than rural areas (particularly 'C1 Urban City and Town')
- Areas with high Indices of deprivation
- Areas with self-reported health as 'bad' or 'very bad'
- Areas with higher numbers of >60s
- Areas with rental properties

# Summary of characteristics

	Sex (%)	Mean Age	Single Household (%)	Mean number of animals per case	Frequency of animal species (%)
Our Study	Females 64%	49	71	44 Range 5 – 201	Cats – 61.5 Dogs - 60
Nadal et al., (2020)	Females 74.9%	55.6	51.8	64.1 Range 6 -918	Cats – 65.2 Dogs - 61

- Dead animals / those requiring euthanising in 53% of cases
- Evidence of recidivism in 39% of cases including 20% breaching previous bans
- Typical living conditions described as ‘squalid’
- Common outcomes: Animals removed (98%), disqualification orders (90%), 32 individuals received suspended sentences mean (range 6 weeks to 18 months), 18 individuals received Community Orders –average 25.8 days, 14 individuals received a custodial sentence, 23% were fined – mean £371 (range £100 - £9,000)
- Costs awarded in 80% of cases – mean award £1,683 (range £85 - £50,000)

# Summary of this study

- Each case is unique, usually complex, costly and lengthy.
- Often involves unresolved trauma.
- Animal welfare and individual freedoms are a fine balance presenting moral and ethical challenges to those responding.
- No magic solution but as no one agency can determine a holistic opinion, taking a multi disciplinary approach is important.

# PRIORITIES

- **Development and evaluation of Multiagency approaches.**
- **Better understanding of how childhood experiences (e.g. trauma/uncertainty) lead to hoarding.**
- **Better understanding of the psychological and clinical aspects of hoarding that can inform novel intervention and treatment strategies.**
- **Digital hoarding, and how this relates to digital anxiety/overload, cybersecurity and compliance behaviours, and sustainability.**
- **Development of online and written training packages for professionals.**
- **Development and evaluation of support groups (online and ftf)**
- **Obtain funding from a variety of sources to achieve these (and other) priorities, and create significant real-world impact.**
- **Strengthen existing collaborations and develop new ones to help achieve these priorities.**



# THANK YOU

# Any questions?

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<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/academic-departments/psychology/research/health-and-wellbeing/hoarding-research/>

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