

Finding Your Way

Questions to assist with knowing where to start

It can often feel there are no supports in place when beginning to address instances of Hoarding and/or Squalor environments (referred to as challenging domestic environments). This flowchart is designed to assist the individual or used in conjunction with the individual when identifying a starting point beginning to and working forward.

- Read and answer each question one by one and carefully, basing the answer on the closest response to the current situation.

It is recommended that a GP should be accessed as early on as possible. Red Cross’s brochure “[Hoarding Disorder: A GP’s guide to supporting patients](#)” promotes the responsibilities of the GP when dealing with patients in challenging domestic environments. This brochure can be printed/shown to the GP for guidance where necessary. A GP will be able to make referrals to appropriate services and agencies for support as part of an action plan (AP) or mental health plan (MHP). It is imperative to share with the GP as much information as possible for them to make informed recommendations of a treatment plan. It is suggested to take photos of the home environment, take a 2nd person to discuss their perspective or sharing extracts of diary providing insight into how you’re feeling (For more information and contact details refer to the resource directory under ‘[Health Services](#)’).

1 Does the home environment fit with one of the definitions of Challenging Domestic Environments?

- ❖ Use the definitions and assessment tools identified – [Severe Domestic Squalor Assessment Scale \(SDSAS\)](#) and/or [Clutter Image Rating](#).

YES	NO
<p>If the SDSAS score is greater than 12 then the person’s home is assessed to be a challenging domestic environment. Go to question 2</p>	<p>If the SDSAS score is less than 12 then the person’s home is assessed as not being a challenging domestic environment. However, if the home environment is assessed to be at risk, monitoring the situation may be required. This maybe through family, carer or friends or an existing service provider who is already involved with the person.</p>

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2 Is the person accepting of support/services from family, carer, friends or service agencies (where eligible)?

Yes	No / Unsure
<p><u>Go to question 3</u></p>	<p>No, person does not appear to have decision making capacity Contact Office of Public Advocate (Phone: 08 8342 8200 / website: http://www.opa.sa.gov.au) for guidance</p> <p>The following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the person making the assessment have sufficient evidence to support that the person has impaired decision making capacity. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, your observations during home visits, feedback from PMA and care workers, information from family/friends/significant others and/or GP/specialist. Impaired decision making capacity is not solely based on a diagnosis of dementia/mental health illness nor is medical evidence necessary. Impaired decision making capacity can also fluctuate and is not constant. <p>If a person has an Advance Care Directive and their decision making capacity is impaired whilst the document is in effect, liaise with the substitute decision maker (SDM) (if 1 or more has been nominated). Please note, that the SDM may also be living in the same home and could also be contributing to the state of the home environment. If this is the case, liaise with the persons GP to determine if the SDM is acting in the person's best interest or seek guidance from the Office of the Public Advocate.</p> <p>If the person has an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) and this</p>

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document is active, there is an expectation that the nominated attorney will be involved with any decisions made and actions taken. If there is no Advance Care Directive in place, liaise with persons GP to determine what further action is needed, if any at all. In your discussion, consider the risk to the person and/or others if action is taken or not taken.

Unsure, person has decision making capacity

Consider the following points.

- Communicate to the person the potential risks involved, i.e. health and well-being, accommodation may be at risk, council involvement and fines, existing services ceasing services (if completing a review); so that the person is aware of the possible repercussions of their decision not to take any action. It is important to know and understand that if the council become involved they are obliged by law to respond and enforce legislated procedures, which could result in a forced clean up at the residents cost. In speaking with the person/carer you are attempting to discuss possible avenues of action/intervention.

- If the person is still declining support, discuss with an existing service which has expertise in this area regarding other options. Determine if there is a risk to either the person/occupants of property or others (including children, pets, neighbour and general public) that would warrant sharing information with other agencies without the

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	<p>person’s consent. Risk could include open sewage on the property, no working toilet, no running water and/or significant rodent infestation. These scenarios not only place the occupant at risk but also the public. Persons/carers cannot be forced to accept services and have the right to self-determination, which must be respected.</p> <p>For more information about sharing details without consent please see the ‘Information Sharing Guidelines – for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing’ - http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/isg/</p> <p><u>To report concerns regarding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection, contact Families SA Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) / Yaitya Tirramangkotti (Aboriginal child abuse report line) on 131 478. • Pets/animals, contact RSPCA on 1300 477 722
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3 Are there other supports in place? Informal (family and/or friends) or formal (other community services)	
YES	NO
<p>Either the individual person or with permission from the person contact possible supports, introduce yourself and make a time to meet and discuss the issues at hand. Working with persons/carers living in challenging domestic environments is complex and there are many issues which need to be addressed. <u>Go to question 4.</u></p>	<p>Either the individual person or with permission from the person, consider speaking to their GP (see Red Cross’s Hoarding Disorder – A GP’s guide to supporting patients) This should begin a collaborative and interagency response to supporting the person create an action plan. Service providers may consider attending a regional Squalor and Hoarding Group or speaking with relevant individuals from these meetings to determine if any other agency can assist. (Details from local councils)</p>

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	Go to question 4.
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4 What type of accommodation does the person live in?

- ❖ Depending on the type of accommodation that is occupied, may mean there is eligibility to receive professional support from the housing organisation / landlord.

Privately owned home / Other (ie: caravan, granny flat)	➤ Privately owned homes and the category of 'other' contact the local council or Environmental Health Authorities.
Private rental	➤ Privately rented homes contact the landlord/real estate agent involved. If this information is not known contact the local council or Environmental Health Authorities.
Housing SA	➤ Housing SA contact the relevant office
Community Housing	➤ Community Housing contact the housing manager of the relevant organisation, i.e. ACH, ECH, Anglicare
Supported Residential Facility (SRF)	➤ Supported Residential Facility (SRF) contact the manager
Independent Living Unit(ILU)	➤ Independent Living Units (ILU) contact the manager

5 Is there a build-up of items – clothes, kitchen items, books, other household equipment etc.?

YES	No
All the information/research tells us that part of the characteristics of hoarding is the inability to discard	Go to question 6.

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<p>items. Person/carers may need assistance with sorting. This support may be through family, carers/ friends, paid support or support services i.e. domestic assistance and/or social support.</p>	
<p>5.1 Consider the following when with the process of sorting, “can anything be donated?”</p>	
<p>Yes – refer to the resource directory under ‘Donations of clothing and furniture’ for more information. <u>Go to question 6.</u></p>	<p>No – refer to the resource directory under ‘rubbish removal’ for more information. <u>Go to question 6.</u></p>

<p>6 Are there rodents/vermin (rats, cockroaches, insects etc) present?</p>	
<p>YES</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>If you own your own home or the person does, speak with them about contacting a Pest Control Company (refer to the resource directory - Pest Control) to see what can be done and how much any treatment will be. If the person is unable to pay, they may be eligible for financial assistance (refer to the resource directory - Finance)</p> <p>If the challenging domestic environment is in a rental property, liaise with the landlord/owner or manager of the facility to determine what is the following action is.</p> <p><i>Note, that depending on the level of risk the council / Environmental Health team may need to be contacted as a rodent and vermin infestation poses significant health risks to the resident and general public. If there is significant risk the council may need to take further action using their powers under the South Australian</i></p>	<p><u>Go to question 7.</u></p>

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Public Health Act 2011 (in South Australia only)

[Go to question 7.](#)

7 Are the utilities connected and working?

YES	NO
<p><u>Go to question 8</u></p>	<p>Identify which utilities are not working or connected and contact the appropriate utility company (<u>refer to the resource directory - Utilities</u>). Also self-reflect or discuss with the person why utilities are not working, are there financial hardship issues? If so, is financial counselling appropriate?</p> <p><i>When contacting utility companies have all your details ready, if you're calling on behalf of the person please do so with the account holder (person/carer) present. Utility companies may not speak with you without verbal permission from their customer.</i></p> <p><i>If there is no running water on the property the council/EHA need to be contacted urgently as no running water presence a public health risk and needs immediate action/follow up. The council/EHA can consider emergency orders (within the Environmental Health Act 1993) which could see the person/carer be accommodated elsewhere until such time that the risk is eliminated.</i></p> <p><u>Go to question 8.</u></p>

8 Is there open sewage on the property?

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YES	NO
<p>If the person owns the home, liaise directly with the relevant council / Environmental Health team (refer to the resource directory - Councils).</p> <p>If the challenging domestic environment is in a rental property, liaise with the landlord/owner or manager of the facility to determine the following action.</p> <p><i>If there is open sewage on the property the council Environmental Health team need to be contacted urgently as this presents a risk to the resident/s and public and needs immediate action/follow-up. The council can consider emergency orders and may need to take further action using their powers under the South Australian Public Health Act 2011 (in South Australia only)</i></p> <p><u>Go to question 9.</u></p>	<p><u>Go to question 9.</u></p>

Another hazard to consider is the risk of fire.

9 Are there a large number of combustible items, e.g. piles of newspapers, magazines, books, clothing, aerosol cans, and plastic bottles/containers etc.?

YES	NO
<p>Consider the following questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are there clear pathways into and out of the home/property? YES / NO ➤ Is there clear walking space within the home? YES / NO <p>When answering the above 2 questions, think of emergency services needing to access the</p>	<p><u>Go to question 10.</u></p>

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<p>property and home. If you answer No to 1 or both questions, consider an Occupational Therapy (OT) cross-referral for a home safety assessment <u>OR</u> A referral to the Country or Metropolitan Fire Service (CFS/MFS) for a Fire Safety Inspection. Consent is needed by the person/carer for a fire safety inspection, as the fire service has no authority to enter properties. Refer to the resource directory for contact details. <u>Go to question 10.</u></p>	
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10 Is the building/house structurally safe?	
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Yes	No / Unsure
<p><u>Go to question 11.</u></p>	<p>Liaise with the relevant agency depending on the type of accommodation (Refer to listing in question 4). A building inspection via the council may be needed. If any structural work is needed, how will this be achieved? If the home is privately owned by the person/ carer can they fund the repairs-partially or in full? If not, refer to resources directory for financial assistance options. If the challenging domestic environment is in a rental property, liaise with the relevant agency/manager. <u>Go to question 11.</u></p>

11 Do you believe that the environment/property poses an <i>immediate</i> health risk?	
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YES	NO
<p>Contact the relevant agency</p>	<p>There may be no immediate risk, but</p>

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<p>immediately depending on the type of accommodation. (Refer to listing in question 4).</p> <p>If the person/carer cannot remain in the home, refer to the resource directory for alternative/emergency accommodation. If the home environment is a very high health risk due to the squalid conditions the council Environmental Health team may force the person/carer out of the home immediately. If the person/carer's health is at imminent risk contact the SA Ambulance for immediate assistance.</p> <p><u>Go to question 12.</u></p>	<p>there are safety concerns, which still need to be resolved. If there are no other supports in place it would be encouraged they attend a GP appointment and speak about possible options.</p> <p><u>Go to question 12.</u></p>
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12 With all the above scenarios there is a question of financial capacity. Can the person/carer or family fund or financial contribute towards removal costs?

YES	NO
<p>Discuss with the person/carer or family what amount (full or partial) they can afford. If financial assistance is needed refer to the resource directory 'financial assistance' for further information.</p> <p><u>Go to question 13.</u></p>	<p>Refer to the resource directory '<u>financial assistance</u>' for further information. Also look at <u>local councils</u> with regard to hard rubbish collection.</p> <p><u>Go to question 13.</u></p>

13 Is Occupational Therapy (OT) and/or Physio Therapy (PT) intervention needed to ensure physical safety?

Yes	No
<p>Request referral to Occupational Therapist (OT) and/or Physiotherapist (PT) by GP</p>	<p>No action required.</p>

Please continue to use the website and resources for further support and information.