



Complex Living Environment Risk & Engagement Matrix

The Hoarding Hub

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This matrix supports professionals working with hoarding and complex living environments by helping them consider **both environmental risk and engagement readiness** when planning interventions.

Hoarding situations often require professionals to balance **risk management, safeguarding, and compassionate engagement**. This tool helps guide proportionate responses.

Environmental Risk Level

Level 1 – Low Environmental Risk

Indicators may include:

- Mild clutter present
- All essential rooms accessible
- No significant fire or health risks
- Normal use of kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping areas

Professional response:

- Offer advice and early support
 - Monitor where appropriate
 - Encourage voluntary organisation or support
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Level 2 – Moderate Environmental Risk

Indicators may include:

- Clutter restricting some areas
- Limited access to certain rooms
- Increased fire risk due to item accumulation
- Hygiene concerns beginning to emerge

Professional response:

- Early intervention recommended
- Supportive engagement



- Environmental support planning
 - Consider involvement of housing or support services
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Level 3 – High Environmental Risk

Indicators may include:

- Significant obstruction of rooms or exits
- Limited access to bathroom or kitchen
- Fire hazards present
- Potential health hazards

Professional response:

- Multi-agency involvement may be required
 - Environmental risk reduction planning
 - Consider fire service referral
 - Supportive but structured intervention
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Level 4 – Critical Environmental Risk

Indicators may include:

- Severe access restrictions
- Structural or sanitation hazards
- High fire risk
- Immediate danger to resident or others

Professional response:

- Safeguarding referral may be required
 - Multi-agency coordination essential
 - Consider statutory powers where necessary
 - Prioritise immediate safety
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Engagement Readiness Scale

Stage 1 – Not Recognising the Issue

The individual does not see their environment as problematic.

Professional approach:

- Avoid confrontation
 - Build rapport
 - Focus on safety conversations
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Stage 2 – Aware but Defensive

The individual acknowledges concerns but resists change.

Professional approach:

- Use non-judgemental communication
 - Avoid forced clearance
 - Explore fears and attachments
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Stage 3 – Ambivalent

The individual recognises problems but feels overwhelmed.

Professional approach:

- Break tasks into small steps
 - Encourage shared decision making
 - Focus on achievable goals
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Stage 4 – Open to Change

The individual is willing to make some changes.

Professional approach:

- Support gradual environmental improvement
 - Reinforce progress
 - Introduce structured support plans
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Stage 5 – Actively Engaging

The individual is motivated to improve their environment.

Professional approach:

- Collaborative planning
 - Practical environmental support
 - Long-term maintenance strategies
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How to Use the Matrix

Professionals should consider both:

Environmental Risk Level

AND

Engagement Readiness Stage

This helps determine the most appropriate response.

Example:

High Environmental Risk + Low Engagement

→ Focus on **relationship building while managing immediate risks**

Moderate Risk + High Engagement

→ Focus on **structured support and gradual environmental change**