

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 3rd June 2008

As the Credit Crunch continues, more and more people are trying to turn their unwanted clutter into cash. Yet as people begin to sort through their clutter they're realising that it's not just them who can make money from their unwanted clutter.

One business that specialises in helping people to create more space and find homes for their unwanted belongings says that more and more people are asking them for advice on how to clear, sort and reduce their unwanted clutter and turn it into much needed cash. As the demand for help increases it's uncovering a disturbing relationship with another modern day problem - identity theft.

As people find it harder to make ends meet they're turning to their clutter to help out with the added cost of living. Whether it's clearing the clutter from their spare room so they can rent it out, to make more space because they can't afford to move to a bigger home, or simply having a clearout during Recycle Now week to be environmentally friendly, one company that helps people clear their clutter has discovered that the majority of people are so focused on their ultimate aim of making or saving money that they're overlooking one big problem - that the paperwork, junk mail and old bills they're throwing away are making money for the fraudsters who are helping themselves to their unwanted paperwork clutter.

With over 1/5 (23.7%) of people saying they need help with paperwork clutter and over 1/4 of those (26.4%) simply putting their 'rubbish' out for the bin men or taking it to the tip without shredding it first it's no wonder that identity theft is on the increase. These are only the people who have asked for help with their clutter - there are more who do not ask for help but continue to throw away their identity. According to the Directgov statistic for 2007, 79% of Britons are still being careless with their identity with 1/3 of people still throw away everything a fraudster needs to steal a persons identity and 11% of people throw away whole credit card or debit card numbers.

'Very few of our clients think about what to do with unwanted paperwork' says Clare Baker of the Clutter Clearing Consultancy. 'I've worked with people who are so focused on turning the spare room into a room to rent, searching for the heirloom that they're sure is worth a fortune and they know is somewhere amongst all their 'stuff', that anything they deem unnecessary to keep simply gets put in a black plastic bag and out for the bin men. They don't realise that it doesn't matter how old the paperwork is it needs to be shredded and if they want to recycle it, put it in an old cereal box before going out for recycling, or put it in their compost bin to turn into compost. It's the only way to be sure that your identity isn't being used to make someone else money.

What makes life difficult as well for people is when they don't open bills and statements until several months after they've arrived in the post. This is on the increase as people fear what's inside - late payment charges, repossession orders etc. Normal bills are being ignored as well. It's very difficult to remember what you spent money on or argue with the bank if you've left it a month or more to check your statements and bills. Many people think that paying by direct debit makes life easier, but it can actually cost them more because they don't tend to check the bills when they come in.

I've had to literally spell it out to people that not only is that not environmentally friendly as the paper could be recycled, but also costly if someone gets hold of the paperwork and steals their identity. People don't realise that even junk mail can be used if it's got a name and address on it. Look at Jeremy Clarkson - he had his identity stolen when he read out his card details on TV, and they didn't even need his address to do that. Imagine what they could do if they had your old bank statements.'

Clare advises people on what to do with their clutter and has seen a 3 fold increase in the number of people asking for help in the last 3 months. 'I've had to take on consultants to help' says Clare.

Clare has been helping people with their excess clutter in the UK since 2003 and is now taking on local consultants across the country. 'There are so many people who need help that I need consultants to help me. Helping people clear their clutter is not about doing it for them, it's about enabling them to make the decisions and

giving them a process to follow – after all, it's not my place to make judgements on other people's belongings. If it was as simple as that I'd save them some money and tell them to get a skip!'.

'We've helped lots of people in lots of different ways. One person found a first edition Beatrice Potter book which was valued at £6,500. One lady contacted us because she'd received a quote for an extension to her house – primarily to create more storage space for her clutter, but after our help she didn't need it. One person found a pickled monkey on the dining room table - we're still trying to figure out how to dispose of it. We can't bury it because it looks like a human fetus, and we can't burn it because it's so well preserved.

We not only help people de-clutter but we also help people get access to local services, charities and recycling information to help them pass on their clutter or get it valued. It's not as simple as deciding 'to keep' or 'to throw away'. Anything that helps reduce the amount of landfill has to be a good thing!

Clare is also finding an increase in demand from local estate agents who have vendors whose clutter is causing a problem for potential buyers. 'The housing market is getting tougher' says Clare. 'People expect the dream home when they're looking for a place, with lots of storage space and that magazine style look to it, but often forget that they need to create that sense of space and clutter free lifestyle in their own home. In the current credit crunch cluttered homes are not selling, so we're being called in to help.'

To find out more about Clare and her work with Clutter, log onto <http://www.clutterclearing.net/clare.php> or call her on 0777 5897955, 01295 275030, 0203 3030 152 or 01604 269 129.

Notes to editors:

1. Clare Baker can be contacted on 0777 5897955, 01295 275030, 0203 3030 152 or 01604 269 129.
2. Clare Baker is available for interviews, discussions, phone-ins etc on clutter clearing issues.
3. Clare Baker has contributed to articles on the issue of clutter for many well known magazines, newspapers and radio stations. (visit <http://www.clutterclearing.net/news.htm> to see a full list)
4. The Clutter Clearing Consultancy is the only clutter clearing business that offers FREE practical help for de-cluttering.
5. People can learn how to de-clutter in several ways – either by providing a 1-2-1 home consultation, a group consultation, a telephone consultation or buying her unique eBooks and workbooks to help people get started and find a process to follow.
6. Clare Baker runs The Clutter Clearing Consultancy – www.clutterclearing.net.
7. The Clutter Clearing Consultancy has a weekly FREE top tip that people can sign up for on-line at <http://www.clutterclearing.net/toptips.htm>
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5 top tips

- Give yourself time to clear the clutter. It took you months if not years to accumulate so it's likely to take you more than a weekend to clear it.
- Do a little at a time so you can feel you've achieved something and cleared and reduced something and NEVER do more than 2 hours at a time.
- Give yourself more options of what to do with your clutter than just 'keep' or 'throw away'. There are lots of things you can do with your unwanted and un-used clutter – our unique Clutter Clearing Category Cards will give you ideas (http://www.clutterclearing.net/shop_tools_cards.htm)
- Don't take on responsibility for other people's clutter. Deal with your own and set the example – you'll be surprised what habits others pick up and they might even ask you how you did it!
- ALWAYS reward yourself once you've done between ½ hour and 2 hours of clutter clearing. You've achieved something positive so go on – treat yourself! (We have reward ideas at: http://www.clutterclearing.net/shop_rewards.htm)

Survey Results

(Source: Clutter Clearing Consultancy Top Tip Subscribers)

- The largest proportion of people's clutter contains:
 1. paperwork clutter (22%)
 2. Clothes (16%)
 3. Unknown belongings (8%).
- 27% of single people never clear clutter
- 17% of men never have a clearout
- Over a quarter of under 25's hoard almost everything
- Northerners are more wasteful with 61% just chucking things away
- 71% of Londoners give their unwanted clutter to charity
- 54% of the UK give their unwanted clutter to charity
- Those in Yorkshire are the biggest hoarders with 19% never clearing out

Clare Baker

Specialist Clutter Clearing Consultant

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Clear the Clutter, Imagine the Possibilities....