

## Fact sheet 2

### Starting (and completing) your decluttering project

#### Where should I start?

Before you do anything, LOOK at your home as if you were a visitor seeing it for the first time. Take yourself on a clutter tour of your home. Take photos and look at them as if you were seeing them in a magazine. Ask yourself:

1. Why do I want to sort this space?
2. What works well in here, and what's definitely not working?
3. What's essential for me to keep in this space?
4. What's stopping me from getting this space organised?



#### Remember the benefits

- Less time spent looking for lost things, getting frustrated and angry
- All your rooms have a clear purpose and are put to good use
- More space in your home to move around more easily – prevent slips, trips and falls
- A calm and relaxing home where you want to spend time
- Your mind is clearer to think about things other than your stuff – prepare for life events
- You can focus on what is important in life such as relationships rather than things
- You can find your worth inside yourself rather than in your things
- Space in your home to keep treasured things that reflect your present life
- Room to make new memories – the old memories are still inside you and some may be in your memory box!
- Easier to clean your home and keep tidy
- More able to invite people over to visit or stay because you no longer feel embarrassed about your surroundings
- Improved relationships with the people you live with may improve
- Easier to cook and entertaining at home
- Minimise the effects of medical conditions – reduce stress

#### Start somewhere

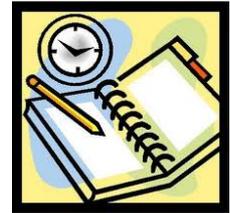
There is often a temptation at this point to feel overwhelmed. You may feel so much needs doing that you don't know where or how to begin. If you feel like this, just start somewhere. Any decluttering, even just 15 minutes, will put you and your home in a better place than where it was. You might also be surprised to find that once you get started, you want to carry on and so you achieve much more than you originally expected.

Good places to start when you feel the whole house needs tackling are:

- access areas – such as door ways, the hallway, landing or stairs
- front or back door
- the area which causes you the most frustration or stress
- your bedroom
- the most used areas - often the kitchen, living room or bathroom
- your paperwork area

## How to motivate yourself

1. Set a goal
  - Think about why you want to declutter. Remember the benefits at the start?
  - Decide where you will begin and what you want to achieve.
  - Decide where your sorting and purging area will be.
  - Book some time in your diary to get started and stick to it.
2. Use visualisation to help you imagine how you would like your space to look once it has been decluttered and organised. This tool can also help motivate you to get started. Put on some old clothes, grab some supplies (rubbish bags and duster) and stand in the place where you're going to start. Now:
  - Close your eyes and picture your space finished successfully
  - Imagine you can find all the things you need in this space
  - Picture the space being used for its intended purpose
  - Think about how you feel. Focus on this feeling to help motivate you to get started
3. Create a mood board
  - Make a scrap-book or mood board to collect your ideas
  - Include pictures, swatches, colours and textures
  - Stick your mood board on the wall of the room you're going to tackle
  - Frequently remind yourself of your vision to help motivate you



## Follow a decluttering plan

Decluttering isn't just about throwing stuff out. That's one part of the process, but it's not the whole thing. Decluttering also isn't just a one off event - it needs to be an ongoing process if you are going to keep the clutter away. Here are the 5 main stages of the decluttering process as seen in Julie Morgenstern's book, *Organising from the Inside Out*:

1. Sort – Handle your things, starting with the floor and working round the room towards the window. Create piles, grouping like-for-like together. Tackle one area at a time so you don't get completely overwhelmed.
2. Purge – Let go of anything broken, out of date, unlikely to be used, haven't seen in a while, and so on. Count how many you have of one thing. Do you need them all? Put straight into rubbish, recycling or charity bags. You will be left with what you want to keep.
3. Assign – Place the things you are keeping into the right room. Where will you use them? Divide your rooms into zones. This is a good way of keeping order within your rooms so you can find and put things away more easily.
4. Containerise – Put your things away in appropriate storage. Look for ideas on line or in magazines. Storage should be a good fit and suit your style. Clear storage is great for seeing what's inside. Label where possible.
5. Equalise – Keeping the clutter away requires regular maintenance, tidying away and clearing up after yourself (and others). Routines and housekeeping rules are important here.

## Staying motivated to the end

It may help to invite a trusted friend to be a clutter buddy alongside you and keep you motivated. Or you could keep a notebook and break down your decluttering project into small manageable chunks, scheduling a regular slot in your diary so it becomes part of your routine until you are finished. You might find it helpful to follow a decluttering plan on line – there are many to choose from including [flylady.com](http://flylady.com) which is very popular. You could put a date in your diary for some friends to come for dinner in your newly organised dining room, or book a decorator to come and spruce up your finished room. Whatever you do, try to relax and have fun getting you and your home sorted.