



Hoarding Policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to residents when hoarding is identified and our way of managing those who have hoarding tendencies or a hoarding disorder. This policy applies to all our tenanted and shared ownership properties.
- 1.2 It recognises that hoarding is often described as when someone is unable or unwilling to dispose of excess or unused things to the point where their belongings are causing a risk to themselves or their home.
- 1.3 Hoarding can also become a concern for others when communal areas are threatened by the nature or amounts of 'clutter' accumulated.

2. Policy Principles

This policy aims to:

- 2.1 Reduce the risks associated with hoarding disorder on the individual, the community and Association.
- 2.2 Take a balanced approach to stop and/or control hoarding as quickly and effectively as possible by using a combination of measures.
- 2.3 We will take a sensitive approach to those who hoard and those affected by hoarding.
- 2.4 Outline the action plan we will take alongside our tenant and partner agencies if the risk, as a result of hoarding, is high and/or the effect on the local community is unacceptable.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Housing Services Manager is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.
- 3.2 The Managing Director is responsible for oversight and governance of the policy.



3.3 The Housing Management team are responsible for ensuring that all cases of hoarding that they become aware of are managed in accordance with this policy and its associated procedures.

3.4 All team members are responsible for feeding back any improvements that could be made to this policy (and its associated procedure) or problems they have found while trying to implement it.

4. Related Documents and Links

- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour policy
- Pet Policy

5. Scope and Objectives

5.1 This policy sets out how the Housing Management Team will respond to dealing with issues that arise when properties are cluttered or are being used to hoard large amounts of possessions including animals.

5.2 This policy covers the following points and should be read in conjunction with the related documents as stated below:

- Multi Agency Hoarding Tool Kit Hoarding - [Hoarding Toolkit.pdf \(safeguardingdurhamadults.info\)](#)
- Tenancy Agreement
- Hoarding procedure

6. Policy Detail

6.1 A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner, usually resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter. The items can be of little or no monetary value. Items that can be hoarded include:

- Newspapers and magazines
- Books
- Clothes
- Leaflets & letters including junk mail
- Bills and receipts
- Containers including plastic bags and cardboard boxes

- Food and other household supplies
- Animals

6.2. Taking Action

6.2.1 The Association considers hoarding a significant problem when the resident is likely to be in breach of their tenancy or lease and is putting themselves, others and their home at risk.

6.2.2 We will take immediate action where the hoarding poses a fire or health and safety risk.

6.2.3 When at least one of the following occurs, we will take further action to address the

issues:

- A hazard or potential hazard (including fire, health and safety, smell or vermin) is created for the resident, those living in the property, neighbours, staff or contractors.
- There is an increased risk of accidents, personal injury or fire.
- The resident's day to day functioning is impeded – for example, they are unable to use the kitchen or bathroom and cannot access rooms.
- The impact of the hoarding is negatively affecting neighbours or has been reported as anti-social behaviour.
- The impact of the hoarding is damaging or potentially damaging our property.
- There is a serious detriment to animal welfare.

6.2.4 The Association will take a risk-based approach when responding to hoarding and will consider the risk to the individual, others in the property, neighbours and staff visiting the property.

6.3 Managing Risk

6.3.1 All cases of hoarding will be assessed using the Clutter Scale Rating (See Appendix 1). A full risk assessment will be carried out and new case will then be opened by a Housing Officer, if the risk level is medium or above this will also be reviewed by a manager to agree how to proceed. The following risk levels provide an overall framework to work within:

- Low Level – Acceptable risk, signpost to external agencies and monitor.
- Medium Level – Involve other statutory agencies and monitor case. May include damage to property requiring major works or pest control.
- High Level – Risk of accidents, personal injury, self-neglect or fire. Immediate involvement of other statutory agencies including Fire Brigade and consider enforcement action.

6.4 Fire Safety

6.4.1 Hoarding may pose a significant fire risk to the hoarder's property and neighbouring properties, particularly in blocks of flats. It also significantly increases the severity of risks if a fire were to occur, due to increased load risk in the property and a lack of escape routes.

- 6.4.2 Where we are aware of a high-risk hoarding case we will monitor this against the agreed action plan until any immediate risk has been resolved.
- 6.4.3 The Association will inform the local fire service where we become aware of a hoarded property which poses a high risk to health and safety. In these cases, we will fully explain why we must do this to the resident.

6.5 Safeguarding

- 6.5.1 Living in hoarded properties can place both children and adults at risk. The Association will raise an appropriate safeguarding referral in accordance with local safeguarding criteria where:
- a person is declining assistance in relation to their care and support needs, and
 - the impact of their decision, has or is likely to have a substantial impact on their overall individual wellbeing
 - Lacks mental capacity

6.6 Partnership working

- 6.6.1 The Care Act 2014 statutory guidance formally recognises self-neglect as a category of abuse and neglect – and within that category identifies hoarding. The guidance outlines how partner organisations, such as housing associations, can and should work in partnership to help protect vulnerable people from abuse or neglect.
- 6.6.2 When a person's hoarding behaviour poses a serious risk to their health and safety, professional intervention will be required.
- 6.6.3 Any proposed intervention or action must be with the person's consent, except in circumstances where the level of hoarding and associated risks leads us to take immediate safeguarding action in line with our Safeguarding Policies.
- 6.6.4 Where cases of animal hoarding have been identified, the Housing Management Team will involve the RSPCA and other agencies, as appropriate, for further advice and assistance to ensure that any welfare concerns are addressed.

6.7. Responding to Hoarding

- 6.7.1 If we receive a report of hoarding we will:
- We will try a variety of methods to contact and engage with the tenant or leaseholder.
 - Visit the property to assess the level of risk. Where access cannot be gained, we will try to make contact with the next of kin, emergency contact or any known support worker.
 - Carry out an assessment and record what is being hoarded and the impact on the individual.
 - Use the Clutter Image Rating Scale to assist in measuring the degree of clutter in the home.
 - Consider any damage to the property requiring intervention.
 - Where animal hoarding is occurring, we will notify the RSPCA straight away
 - We will raise Safeguarding alerts in respect of impacted children and adults with care and support needs.

- Alert social services if there are concerns that the resident is a vulnerable adult or there are other occupants at the property who may be at risk.
- If the items being hoarded could represent a fire risk, or cause injury in the event of a fire we will contact the fire service to assist with completing a fire risk assessment including identifying mitigation measures.
- Work with the resident and other lead agencies to clear the home to an acceptable level such as health services, social services, environmental health, and specialist removal agencies.
- Remove hoarded items that are in shared areas.
- If the resident does not make sufficient progress clearing their home we may take legal action to compel them to clear the clutter if the level of risk and/or the impact on the local community is unacceptable.
- Provide support and advice to neighbours.
- Utilise any legal remedies available to bring the hoarding to an end and ensure the safety of others.

7 Monitoring

7.1 People who have hoarded are likely to hoard again. We will record all cases of hoarding and continue to monitor until the risks have reduced to an acceptable level. In some cases, we may continue to monitor the tenancy via property inspections for the duration of the tenancy where its deemed appropriate.

7.2 We will monitor this policy in line with any changes to the Equality Act 2010, the Care Act 2014 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1 Diversity is about respecting people's individual differences and ensuring that all people that come into contact with us have access to the same high standard of behaviour and service.

8.2 We are committed to ensuring that no resident will be treated less favourably because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation.