



# Hoarding policy

## 1. Purpose and scope

This policy outlines our approach to dealing with customers who have a problem with hoarding, in an effort to try and resolve or at least reduce the consequences of this type of behaviour. At the same time we will ensure that customers are treated fairly and receive adequate support and guidance.

## 2. Underpinning principles

We must comply with the Regulator of Social Housing Safety and Quality Standard 2024, and the Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard 2024. We also have particular responsibilities under the Care Act 2014, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Public Health Act 1936.

There are also reputational risks and legal consequences if we do not respond effectively when hoarding issues are identified, particularly where these are associated with the risks and effects of fire or safeguarding.

## 3. Policy details

### Definition

Hoarding is defined as "The acquisition of, and failure to discard, possessions which appear to be useless or of limited value."<sup>1</sup>

Hoarding is a complex psychological problem which is classified as a diagnosable mental health disorder in its own right. Due to the complexity of the issues involved and the likelihood of an extended need for support, traditional housing management approaches to dealing with hoarding, such as enforced decluttering and deep cleaning, can simply reinforce the problem because they only address the symptoms rather than the causes.

### Implications of hoarding for the organisation

Hoarding can have serious implications for us including:

1 Behaviour Research and Therapy Scientific Journal, Volume 31, Issue 4, The Hoarding of possessions – Research Paper, pages 339-437 - May 1993 - Frost & Gross.



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- risk management challenges
- health and safety concerns, particularly around fire safety, emergency hazards and significant damp and mould hazards
- adult and child safeguarding issues
- property damage
- legal costs
- neighbour nuisance
- higher costs during the lifetime of the tenancy.

Due to the increased risk of fire, infestation, gas and water leaks that hoarding brings, there is a clear need for us to take action in order to protect our assets, our customers and our communities.

Our Hoarding procedure sets out the processes we will follow to ensure that we support our customers, but also comply with our legal, regulatory and contractual responsibilities.

## **Multi-agency working**

We recognise that people who hoard often have a variety of mental, physical, financial and support needs. We know that hoarding can often be a sign of self-neglect, covering behaviours such as neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings. As a result of this, safeguarding issues can arise, as the person may frequently put themselves and others, such as family members, neighbours and animals at risk.

Managing the balance between protecting adults at risk from self-neglect against their right to self-determination, is a serious challenge for both us and any other services involved. However, a failure to engage with people who are not looking after themselves, whether they have mental capacity or not, can have serious implications for their health and well-being. It can also damage our reputation and the reputations of any other agencies involved.

We will therefore use a range of approaches to deal with hoarding,



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including playing a leading role in multi-agency partnerships involving agencies such as Social Services and the Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure that services are provided in a coordinated way. We will also develop appropriate strategies for working with and responding to the needs of customers who compulsively hoard.

For example, in Wiltshire we work closely with the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service who provide Safe and Well Visits, in order to support customers in managing the risks associated with hoarding, which includes ongoing monitoring.

## **Information, guidance and support**

We will provide information and guidance to customers about hoarding, and where they can go to for support, through a dedicated page on our website.

## **Tenancy enforcement**

We are committed to supporting customers with a hoarding problem who are willing to engage with support, but at the same time we need to balance this against the significant impact that hoarding can have on the needs of the people living there, residents living nearby and on the condition of the property.

Tenancy enforcement may therefore be necessary where the issue of hoarding is causing a hazard or significant harm to the customer or other persons, if the customer continuously fails to engage with support, or access to the property is refused or is not possible, particularly in relation to our legal obligations to carry out gas safety checks.

## **4. Signposting**

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005



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- Mental Health Act 1983
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
- Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
- The Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 (Awaab's Law)
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Care and support statutory guidance 2022
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Professional Practice Note: Hoarding and how to approach it – guidance for Environmental Health Officers and others – 2015
- Data protection policy
- Data sharing guidance document
- Hoarding procedure
- No access procedure
- Safeguarding children policy
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults policy
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**Policy Review Date** – 20 January 2029



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## Decision-making record

Date	Meeting/Minute Reference	Version/ Amendment
9 May 2017	Verena Buchanan	1
21 May 2018	Marc Robins	2
1 April 2020	Executive Team	3
31 January 2023	Executive Team Updated and a few changes made to the wording.	4
20 January 2026	Executive team The document has been updated, references have been made to Awaab's Law and emergency hazards and significant damp and mould hazards, a small section on information, guidance and support has been added, a reference to a dedicated webpage has been included, and some changes have been made to the wording.	5