

HOARDING POLICY



Our approach to dealing with hoarding

Hoarding can have a profound effect on the person who is hoarding, on their neighbours, the local community, and on the property.

People who hoard items often have strong attachments to items which are not easy for others to understand. They are often resistant to the idea of clearing their home of the belongings, and the actual removal of the items from their homes can prove extremely traumatic for them.

As a responsible landlord, we must balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the local community. If we receive a report of hoarding we will try to work with the resident to address their support needs, their hoarding behaviour, and to remove the items in and around their home which are causing a concern. If the level of risk is high and/or the effect on the local community is unacceptable, we will take action alongside our partner agencies (Social Services, Environmental Health, the London Fire Brigade) to compel the resident to clear the property of the offending items.

What we mean by hoarding

Hoarding is usually characterised by:

- ▶ the collection of and failure to discard of items that appear to be of little use or value (such as rubbish, newspapers and furniture);
- ▶ living spaces or private outdoor spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to prevent activities for which the spaces were designed;
- ▶ significant distress to or impairment of the resident because of hoarding.



- ▶ Keeping a pet or higher than usual number of animals as domestic pets without an ability to properly house or care for them.

Serious hoarding can lead to properties that are unpleasant to look at, have a negative effect on the local environment (smells, vermin, and they can become a local dumping ground), and they can cause a severe health and safety risk.

What you can expect from our service

We will attempt to carry out a hoarding assessment of the property within 10 working days of receiving a hoarding report.

We will alert Social Services if there are concerns that the resident is a vulnerable adult and would benefit from community support.

If the resident does not make sufficient progress clearing their home we will 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.

What will happen if you report hoarding to us

We will attempt to visit the household suspected of hoarding within 10 working days to assess the level of hoarding. If the resident is not available or they do not allow us into their property to carry out the assessment we will reschedule the visit to take place as soon as possible.

If it is clear that the resident is hoarding items we will take action. What we do next depends on the level of hoarding, and the nature of the hoarding. For example, if the resident is:

- ▶ hoarding work-related items in their home (for example stock/inventory or tools), we will ask them to take immediate action to remove the items. If they do not we will take action against their tenancy;
- ▶ engaging in criminal/anti-social behaviour, we will notify the police and/or take action in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Dispute policy;
- ▶ hoarding items in a shared area, we will ask them to remove the items immediately, and take action in line with our Removing Fire Hazards from Shared Areas policy.

Working with vulnerable adults

Often people who hoard items do not want to clear the items from their home, and do not want assistance to address their behaviour. Typically people who hoard:

- ▶ believe that their behaviour is within normal bounds, or 'their business', and/or;
- ▶ display actions that may be characterised as compulsive. As such even if they acknowledge they have a problem, it can be extremely difficult for them to modify their behaviour;
- ▶ have a range of different health issues that contribute to their behaviour (such as Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour, Diogenes Syndrome, physical mobility issues, visual/hearing impairments etc.), or are a result of their hoarding.



If there are concerns that the resident is vulnerable we will identify the level of risk posed by their hoarding. We will also complete an action plan with them in order to support them to address their hoarding behaviour, and clear the clutter in their home.

We will try to work through the issues with the resident to a reasonable timescale, and ensure that they have appropriate support in place to engage them in a solution that works for them, the community, and for us. Hoarding cases can be complex so progress can be very slow, therefore we ask that you please be patient.

If the hoarding poses an immediate/high risk to the resident, neighbours, and/or the property, we will work with partner agencies (such as Social Services, Environmental Health and the London Fire Brigade) to compel the resident to take action. If it is clear immediate action is needed - and it is legally possible - we will take action to remove the hoarded items.

People who have hoarded are likely to hoard again. We will continue to monitor the property even if the hoarding appears to have been addressed.

How to contact us about hoarding

To report hoarding, or to discuss an open hoarding case you should contact your resident services officer, home ownership services officer or call our customer contact team on the number below.

Please contact us if you need any part of this information in Braille, on audio tape or explained in a different language.

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