



HOARDING POLICY



Version Control and Document Governance

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Introduction

This Policy outlines Broadacres' approach to dealing with issues of clutter and hoarding in its properties. We recognise that some tenants 'collect' or 'hoard' possessions that they do not want to part with, and this can become a problem for them and the landlord. However, we also recognise that hoarding behaviour is a mental health condition and the idea of clearing customers' homes can prove extremely traumatic for them.

This policy has been produced to protect and support our customers, their neighbours and the wider community.

Aims:

The approach taken in this document aims to balance the rights of the customer with our duty to tackle issues that are a health and safety concern and a fire risk.

We value the importance of joint working and we will work collaboratively with other agencies, including support services, the fire service and statutory services to ensure a joined-up, holistic but flexible approach.

Where necessary a safeguarding concern referral will be made and we will look to work with specialist agencies, such as Hoarding Disorders UK where appropriate.

As hoarding is a recognised mental health disorder, we would look to refer to the mental health services or Broadacres mental health support service where appropriate.

Our objectives are:

- To recognise if a customer is hoarding.
- To engage and work with the customer to reduce their hoarding behaviour.
- To safeguard individuals and communities.
- To protect our assets.

Policy Detail:

Hoarding characteristics:

- Hoarding means excessively collecting items and not being able to throw them away, resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter.
- Living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed.
- Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by hoarding.
- Keeping a pet or higher than usual number of domestic animals without an ability to properly care for them.

What kinds of things do people hoard?

Most often, people hoard common possessions, such as paper (e.g. letters, newspapers), books, clothing and containers (e.g., boxes, paper and plastic bags). Some people hoard rubbish or rotten food. More rarely, people hoard animals or human waste products.

Why is compulsive hoarding a problem?

- Due to the amount of clutter, the customer may not be able to use the rooms in their home for their intended purpose, or even be able to sit in a chair without having to move things.
- In extreme cases the piles of clutter can become a fire risk and could result in the customer tripping and falling. Because the home is virtually impossible to clean, living conditions tend to be very unhygienic and can lead to rodent or insect infestations, blocked drains and other problems that may also affect neighbouring properties.
- A customer may be reluctant or unable to have visitors, or even allow Broadacres Property Services in to carry out essential repairs.
- Hoarding may literally take over a person's life, causing their work performance, personal hygiene and social life to suffer.

However, it is when it negatively impacts on the hoarder's life or on others that it becomes an issue which requires action to be taken. For example, when:

- It is associated with self-neglect or safeguarding concerns.
- It is contributing to a pest control issue.
- It has health and safety implications.
- The organisation is being hindered from carrying out a statutory duty (e.g. annual gas safety check).

Our colleagues must remain objective and should avoid making judgments on the customers' living conditions. Instead, the focus should be on the property as an asset, whether the room(s) can be used for the intended purpose and whether there are health and safety implications.

We recognise that each case is different, in terms of the type and extent of items hoarded, the risk, and the reasons behind the hoarding. We therefore use a combination of intervention and enforcement measures, including support to tackle the hoarding. In doing this, we will take a multi-agency approach, where appropriate. Ultimately if the hoarding behaviour continues and is a health and safety risk we will take legal action in line with the terms of the tenancy agreement or lease.



Identification of Hoarding

- Any colleague who has concerns that a customer may be hoarding, should report this to the relevant Housing Officer or via the SOS service.

Other situations where hoarding behaviour may be identified include:

- Complaints or concerns registered by neighbour (pests, smells, unusual behaviour).
- Information from a statutory agency.
- Where a concern about a garden raises a concern about the condition of the property.

Investigation

Action will then be taken to investigate. If hoarding is identified, the Housing Officer will work with the Housing Support Officer to support the customer in tackling the hoard. The accompanying procedure document and appendices contain guidance for our colleagues on what to do to tackle hoarding.

Tenancy Enforcement

Broadacres will demonstrate that all options to reduce hoarding have been explored before enforcement is taken. Broadacres recognise that in some cases the hoarding behaviours can have a significant negative impact on others living in the property and therefore tenancy enforcement may be necessary.

Vulnerable Customers Statement

We are committed to developing an equal and diverse culture where people are valued from all sections of society. We therefore oppose any form of discrimination in service delivery and employment practice. We aim to treat all customers fairly and we will look to tailor our policies, procedures and services to meet the needs of all our customers.

Where we identify a customer who is vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, we will look to make reasonable adjustments to our services accordingly to meet the needs of these individuals. This may include altering the way we communicate with a customer or adjusting the service we offer to that person. Each case will be judged on its individual merits to avoid a one size fits all approach. We will monitor our services regularly to ensure we are meeting all our customers' needs and make any adjustments required to improve and enhance the service we deliver.

Training

To understand and to increase awareness of compulsive hoarding, Broadacres ensures that colleagues working in housing support roles are trained in hoarding awareness.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Housing Services Manager, Housing Customer Experience Manager and Housing Team Leaders are responsible for the operational delivery of this policy. Overall responsibility for this policy sits with the Head of Customer Experience Housing and support.

Key Contacts

We have dedicated Housing Support Officers who are able to provide help and assistance with our customers who may be struggling with issues around hoarding, or sign post you to relevant agencies. If you need support please ring our Contact Centre on 01609 767900 or email **info@broadacres.org.uk**

Consultation and Review

We will consult our key stakeholders, partners and customers on this policy.

We will undertake a review of this policy at least every 3 years or sooner if there are any relevant changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, case law or good practice that would impact on this policy. We will also provide regular performance reports to our Leadership Team, and our Customer Experience Committee will receive an annual update on hoarding cases including action taken and support provided as part of the annual safeguarding report.

Publicity

We will publicise this Policy in a number of ways including on our website. We will make this Policy available in different formats to suit the needs of our customers.


This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Hoarding Procedure
- Tenancy Agreements
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures
- Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The relevant legislation is primarily:

- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998



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