

# Hoarding Policy

## 1.0 Scope and Aims

- 1.1 This policy applies to hoarding identified within Hexagon Housing Association (Hexagon) homes.
- 1.2 This policy uses the definition of hoarding provided by the NHS:

*"A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner. The items can be of little or no monetary value and usually result in unmanageable amounts of clutter." (NHS)*

- 1.3 The policy outlines the approach to both supporting the resident involved and addressing the effects of hoarding.
- 1.4 The policy aims to address the negative impact of hoarding on the resident concerned, their property and surrounding properties.

## 2.0 Equality and Diversity Impact

- 2.1 An equality impact assessment 'initial screening' has been carried out which determined there to be a potential positive impact on those with disabilities (particularly hoarding disorder).
- 2.2 A compassionate and consistent policy gives Hexagon the scope to address this activity in a way that benefits all parties and reduces harm.

## 3.0 Resident Consultation

- 3.1 This policy was shared with the Hexagon Resident Advisory Group on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and their comment taken into account.

## 4.0 Policy Statement

- 4.1 Hoarding disorder is a recognised mental health problem; compulsive hoarding can also result from other mental health issues, trauma or feelings of isolation. It is a serious condition in itself that is accompanied by self-neglect and deterioration of health due to accompanying living conditions. It is estimated that up to 5% of people in the UK suffer from a hoarding disorder, according to charity Hoarding UK.

- 4.2 People who hoard items often have strong attachment to them which is not easy for others to understand. People are often resistant to the idea of clearing their home of their belongings and the actual removal of the items from their homes can be extremely traumatic for them.
- 4.3 The effect of hoarding large quantities of items within a flat can pose a serious risk to the resident concerned and those in neighbouring properties. It greatly increases fire risk by reducing escape routes within a flat, can prevent essential repairs and compliance checks being done, can cause structural damage if heavy enough, can facilitate pests and prevent their removal. Hoarding can have a profound effect on the person who is hoarding, on their neighbours, the community and on the property.
- 4.4 Hexagon acknowledges the necessity for sensitivity when approaching a resident who is hoarding. Staff will approach any case with compassion and understanding. Staff will aim to work with the resident and identified why this is happening to them and put their safety at the centre of a more holistic approach.
- 4.5 The principles of this policy apply to hoarding of any clutter image rating (as defined by Hoarding UK [Promoting Choice & Control since 2008](#)).
- 4.6 On receipt of 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 through an action plan. 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.
- 4.7 It is important that communication is in a way that does not create blame or appeared to label it as anti-social behaviour. Hexagon will ensure information is available on its website.
- 4.8 Hexagon will ensure the relevant Neighbourhood and Property staff are trained in this area to ensure this approach is sustained rather than waiting for the need to carry out repairs or safety checks.
- 4.9 Hexagon may be required to use enforcement action in serious cases; however this will always be a last resort.

## 5.0 Support

- 5.1 Hexagon will inspect any report of potential hoarding in resident's homes.
- 5.2 Staff will use the clutter image rating scale, provided by Hoarding UK, in order to rate the level of hoarding.
- 5.3 Hexagon understands the most effective way to approach hoarding is for the resident concerned to acknowledge that hoarding is taking place and needs to be addressed. A consensual approach will always be prioritised to preventing or containing hoarding.
- 5.4 Hexagon will actively engage with support services, including Local Authority Hoarding Panels, where available, able to provide specialist help or assistance. In particular, Hexagon will work with the London Fire Brigade [Advice for carers and support workers- Hoarders and fire safety | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#) to reduce fire risk.

## 6.0 Enforcement

- 6.1 Hexagon will use enforcement action where appropriate taking a proportionate view, following a case review. This is likely to be when supportive or consensual removal has not worked and the hoarding represents a serious risk or is having a negative impact on health either within the home or on the safety of others in neighbouring homes.