

Hoarding Policy

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TWO RIVERS HOUSING

Hoarding Policy

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to clarify how Two Rivers Housing (TRH) will approach reports of or becoming aware of hoarding situations within tenants homes.
- 1.2. This document provides clear guidance and policy statements relating to assured and assured shorthold tenancy management.
- 1.3. This policy should be applied in conjunction with all TRH policies in existence at the time of using it. Most specifically:
 - Tenancy Management policy
 - Safeguarding policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
 - Reasonable Adjustments policy
- 1.4 This policy is legally compliant at the time of writing and will be reviewed on any change in law or best practice.
- 1.5 Unless otherwise stated, we will acknowledge all requests within five working days.
- 1.6 Legislation that applies includes, but is not limited to:
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
 - The Care Act 2014
 - Mental Health Act 2005
 - Environmental Health Acts
 - Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

2. Hoarding

- 2.1 Hoarding is not just an untidy property and is a recognised mental health condition. It is defined by the NHS as:

“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”.

2.2 Hoarding is recognised within the Care Act 2014 as one of the manifestations of self-neglect and requires all public bodies to safeguard individuals at risk of harm and neglect.

2.3 Hoarding can become a risk in someone’s home when:

- The amount of clutter interferes with everyday living e.g. a person cannot use a room for its intended function or they cannot access certain areas of the property.
- The property poses a health and safety risk e.g. a fire risk or increased risks of trips and falls.
- The clutter causes significant distress or negatively affects the quality of life for the person or their family or the person becomes overwhelmed when someone tries to clear the clutter.
- When the level of clutter does not allow free air flow around the home that may lead to issues of damp and/ or mould.
- When the home is at risk of becoming damaged or unstable.

2.4 Common types of hoarding are:

- Inanimate objects - newspapers, books, magazines, food packaging, glass or plastic bottles etc.
- Animals – unable to offer the basic care to any pets they may own or have in their possession. Have a large number of animals, who may be living in unhygienic conditions and not cared for.

2.5 People may hoard for many reasons, the following challenges must be considered:

- Physical Health such as fatigue, illness or mobility problems
- Mental Health such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, dementia
- Learning difficulties
- Self-Neglect
- Family history or learned behaviours

3.0 Our approach:

- 3.1 We recognise that the nature and causes of hoarding are complex and that each case will be different. We will take a person-centred approach to managing all cases and will wherever possible, work with the tenant to find actions and solutions that take their needs and circumstances into account.
- 3.2 In line with the Mental Health Act 2005, we will assume that in the first instance everyone has mental capacity to make decisions in relation to their home and living situation.
- 3.3 If someone is found to not have capacity around their own wellbeing, decisions may be made in their best interest on their behalf. No decisions will be made in isolation, save for in an emergency situation. Any decision will be made in accordance with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and in liaison with the necessary statutory services and agencies, involving carers and family members as appropriate.
- 3.4 We will take a case conferencing approach both internally and with multi-agencies to support our tenants to sustain their tenancy. This is to reduce or resolve the impact their hoarding is having on them, household members, neighbours and their home.
- 3.5 We will notify the relevant authorities where we identify any safeguarding issues, such as self-neglect or where vulnerable adults, children and/or young people are at risk.
- 3.6 We will carry out a risk assessment using the Clutter Image Rating scale (see appendix 1) to assess the severity of the hoarding and the risk posed to the tenant, home and surroundings.
- 3.7 Whilst carrying out the risk assessment, we will talk to our tenants and listen to what they need or how they want to approach the situation, taking care to resolve issues their way if possible. This includes looking at the vulnerability of the tenant so that our response recognises and meets their additional support needs. For example, we may arrange for more frequent visits for a longer period of time whilst they are de-cluttering and cleaning their property.
- 3.8 The risk assessments will be used to rate the risk, to determine the action that needs to be taken place on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.9 As a guide, level of risk and actions taken will be:
 - **Low risk (clutter rating 1-3)** where minimal risk or issues are identified; we will review the matter every 12 months with the tenant to ensure that it does not escalate until we are satisfied that it will not progress.

- **Moderate risk (clutter rating 4-6)** where potential risks and issues are identified, which if not tackled or monitored and the behaviour continues, the problem may get worse, we will inspect and document as agreed with the tenant, but this will be at least every 3 months.

- **High risk (clutter rating 7 or above)** where there are unacceptable risks and issues which need to be resolved urgently. This will be as agreed with the tenant, and other agencies but should not exceed 2 months between visits.

- **Excessive risk** where level of hoarding is extremely dangerous and there is immediate risk of harm or urgent safeguarding needs. In these circumstances, we may act in the first instance, but always in the best interests of the tenant and health and safety matters, without consultation with other agencies, however a Multi-Agency meeting will be called within 7 days of the initial inspection. Any safeguarding concerns will be raised within 24 hours, if not immediately.

3.10 Where a tenant is willing to work with us, we will support them to de-clutter and deep-clean their property. This will typically consist of a phased approach where we may initially clear problem areas and remove or move any items which may cause a health and safety hazard.

3.11 Where reasonable, and possible, we may employ the services of an external agency to assist to support the tenant during the clearance of their home or at least for part of it.

3.12 We will signpost our tenants to obtain information and independent help in most cases.

3.13 We will make all reasonable efforts to work with and support our tenant, their advocates and other relevant agencies before we begin any enforcement action.

4.0 Enforcement

4.1 We will not take legal action (unless for emergency purposes) unless we consider it to be a last resort and after attempts to work with the tenants have not been reasonably successful.

4.2 Where the tenant is considered to have capacity, in the first instance we will request an injunction to ensure that the tenant complies with the terms of their tenancy.

4.3 In the event that the tenant is deemed not to have capacity, or has not worked with us to clear the home within reasonable timescales, we may request possession of the property.

- 4.4 If TRH are served with a notice by the Local Authority, we must act to ensure that this is complied with.
- 4.5 If there are any other breaches of tenancy, such as no access for safety checks, anti-social behaviour or rent arrears, these will be taken into account when considering taking legal action.
- 4.6 TRH may re-charge the tenant for any costs incurred in relation to the clearance, decluttering, cleaning, rechargeable repairs and court costs when necessary.
- 4.7 We will continue to offer support to the tenant to clear their property even after we begin enforcement action, as we recognise that a tenant may change their perspective of the situation at any point.
- 4.8 We will record and monitor cases of hoarding to ensure best practice and effective service delivery.

5.0 What others may expect

- 5.1 We understand that living next to or close to a hoarded property is concerning and sometimes affects others living in the area.
- 5.2 At all times, we will do what we are able to give assurance to the person reporting concerns that action is being taken.
- 5.3 We must recognise that this may not be visible and appreciate that the reporting person may get frustrated that we are not able to share detail or, or updates without the tenants consent.
- 5.4 We will explain to the reporting person, what we can and what we cannot share within 14 days of the initial report.

6.0 Responsibilities

- 6.1 All TRH colleagues are expected to report back to the Neighbourhood Management Team where they see evidence of hoarding or poor property condition.
- 6.2 The Neighbourhood Manager will be responsible for carrying out the initial risk assessment and for liaising with other teams within TRH and supporting agencies.
- 6.3 The Housing Manager will have oversight of all hoarding cases and will review at each 121 with their direct line report and highlight any concerns with the Safeguarding Lead and Head of Neighbourhoods.

- 6.4 The Safeguarding Lead will provide advice and assistance to the Neighbourhood Managers, that may include sourcing external help and or resources, or supporting the multi-agency meetings.
- 6.5 The Head of Neighbourhoods will ensure that this policy is implemented and reviewed where appropriate.

Version	Date	Author	Change description	Approved by	Date approved
1.0	December 2025	Sally Howell	Creation of standalone policy.	Customer, Culture, Colleague Committee	17 th June 2026