



# Hoarding Policy

## 1.0 Purpose & Scope

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The policy sets out our approach to managing residents engaged in hoarding in our properties or communal areas.

We work with all residents who display hoarding behaviour (which includes those living with hoarding disorder) to support them to maintain their occupancy agreement, whilst meeting our health and safety responsibilities to all residents, primarily with the goal to maintain their tenancy in our capacity as a landlord.

This policy applies to all residents across all housing tenures.

The Policy links its approach with the [Safeguarding](#), [Building Safety](#) and Health and Safety Policies.

## 2.0 Definitions

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**Best interest meeting**- a meeting held by various agencies, residents' representatives and, if possible, the resident, to make a decision for a resident who lacks mental capacity to consent to a proposed action.

**Clutter**- refers to unorganised and chaotic cluster of things or items, also referred to as an untidy collection of items. An example would be a disorganised pile of cloths, mixed with toys, books and other household items. The severity of which can be determined with the use of the clutter image rating index.

**Contravention notice**- an enforcement notice that outlines the risks identified at the property in the building, and what action residents need to take under what timeframes. Failure to meet the actions could result in a county court order.

**Hoarding disorder**- refers to a mental health condition involving the acquisition of, and inability to discard, items.

## 3.0 Our Response

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A resident may have a condition, such as neurological condition (e.g., dementia), physical health conditions or reduced mobility, that may lead them to exhibit what we perceive is hoarding behaviour. Different conditions require different support approaches to be effective. In our response we presume that a resident has the mental capacity to consent to proposed actions, unless it is established that they lack capacity.

We follow up on all instances when we have information about the potential hoarding situation in one of our properties, (e.g., reports from contractors or third parties).

We do not require a formal diagnosis of hoarding disorder to engage with a resident who is displaying hoarding behaviours.

We visit and offer support to the resident where we are alerted that:

- The resident's day to day functioning or use of their home is impeded,
- The hoarding poses a health and safety risk to the resident or others, or
- The hoarding has an impact on the wellbeing of the resident or others.

Our goal is to help the resident to independently manage the hoarding behaviour for the long-term and to maintain their safety and wellbeing, and not just to remove any associated risks. As such, our intervention will include signposting to and/or collaboration with mental health teams or other health social care or support provision.

To protect and prevent hoarding related harm following neglect and self-neglect under our safeguarding policies, we work with the appropriate statutory services such as Children and Adult Social Services, Fire Brigade; when we have identified individuals with care and support needs, regardless of whether the needs have been met or not by the local authority.

## **4.0 Management of hoarding**

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We handle hoarding situations sensitively recognising that they can be the result of trauma and can negatively impact on the resident if handled poorly. Residents who hoard may have a high emotional connection to their items regardless of how others may perceive their value, so fear of losing the items can cause distress.

Staff take a collaborative approach to determining our actions, this will include discussion with managers, experienced colleagues within NHG, health and social care professionals, fire service and the resident themselves.

### **4.1 Risk assessment**

We complete a risk assessment of the hoarding situation and update this assessment following each visit to the property. In this risk assessment, we consider:

- The quantity of the items (using the Hoarding clutter image ratings and tool guidelines)
- Details of the rooms affected
- What is being hoarded and associated risks (e.g., increased fire risk due to explosive or flammable materials, or risk of attracting vermin)
- The impact on the safety of the residents and rest of the building (e.g., damage to floorboards or structure or the building), in line with [NHG Building Safety Policy](#)
- Whether the hoarding contributes to other known risks (e.g., pre-existing health conditions or mobility issues that are being exacerbated or issues of access such as preventing access to toilet facilities or heating).

If we have concerns about the health, safety and wellbeing of the resident or others, including any children or animals in the property then we contact the appropriate authorities and follow our internal procedures, e.g., safeguarding, to monitor and regularly re-assess the identified risks.

### **4.2 Taking action**

We use a multi-agency approach, alerting and working with the fire brigade, social services, and other support providers to help the resident manage the hoarding and any associated risks.

Where we believe there is a hazard at the property due to hoarding (e.g., a fire risk), we communicate with the Fire Brigade about hoarded properties, to enable them to respond appropriately in the event of a fire and to undertake a Home Fire Safety visit, to see what practical advice and assistance they can provide the resident in respect of fire safety.

We consider a range of actions to deal with hoarding, ultimately including legal enforcement, if:

- Possessions prevent us or external contractors from gaining access to the property to carry out essential gas safety checks, maintenance or repairs
- Possessions are leading to damage of our property
- We are required to respond to an environmental health notice
- There is a significant health and safety or fire risk.

We make clear and concise records using non-judgemental language. We obtain residents' consent before taking photographs of their property.

We communicate with residents about their safety and the safety of others to ensure we are clear about both our and resident's responsibilities in relation to the safety of the building, when dealing with hoarding. In instances where a building is classified as an occupied higher risk (7storeys/18m+), where residents fail to meet their safety obligations, we may employ contravention notice, as outlined in Building Safety Policy.

We may refer hoarding cases to the Environmental Health Team within the local authorities, which has legal recourse and can take action when premises are identified as untidy and unclean, such as odour and vermin, which is seen as a nuisance.

### **4.3 Action plan**

We treat every resident individually and we draw up a person-centred action plan, which can track progress made.

Part of this Action Plan will be the requirement to undertake a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA), to determine whether they also exhibit other behaviours, such as smoking, or alcohol misuse, which could heighten the risk of a fire at home. If such behaviours are identified, a full PCFRA will be completed to determine whether there are further fire safety measures that need to be installed into the property to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

From the PCFRA, we develop an action plan, where we also communicate all aspects of building safety, which provides residents with information about how to keep their home safe, which is further explored in our Building Safety Policy.

We invite residents to share development of this plan with their social network for ongoing support and encouragement with tackling the hoarding.

If a resident does not engage, we may draw up the action plan with the multi-agency teams. We may seek advice from the multi-agency teams about how the actions set out in the action plan will impact on the mental health of the resident. These actions may include decluttering or deep cleaning (emptying) of the property, for which the resident may be recharged. We will only do that in high-risk cases as a last resort and with the mutual agreement from both professional support network involved and a resident.

As part of the action plan, we set progress review dates with the resident based on their individual situations. We recognise that at times we will need to be mindful about the frequent visits the property and that this increased frequency may be appropriate even after the hoarding behaviour is resolved, to recognise signs of relapse. We consider a resident wellbeing and ensure that the property is managed effectively, whilst monitoring hoarding behaviour.

#### **4.4 Mental capacity**

If a resident lacks the mental capacity to consent to a proposed action, we work with local authority Safeguarding Team and follow up on the NHG Safeguarding Policy. Any action decided on behalf of a resident who lacks mental capacity is made as a result of a best interest meeting. We share relevant information from these plans with agencies that are involved in supporting the resident.

#### **4.5 Sharing information**

When supporting residents with hoarding, we are working in partnership to ensure information is not withheld unnecessarily and staff follows up on our Data protection and information governance Policy.

Where possible, staff seeks residents' consent to share the information with third parties, who are involved with those who experience hoarding issues.

#### **4.6 Support for staff**

We recognise the emotional impact hoarding cases can have on our staff, especially in most complex situations. In addition to their regular one-to-one sessions, staff can seek support in a number of different ways.

#### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Staff can access support from our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) via LifeWorks which includes a confidential telephone advice and counselling service.

#### **Mental Health First Aider**

Staff can also get in touch with a Mental Health First Aider, who provide initial support to colleagues who may need somebody to talk to in those difficult moments.

## **5.0 Training, learning, and monitoring**

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As a part of our approach in raising awareness and recognising the challenges that comes along when assisting residents with hoarding issues, we ensure that all staff have access to learning materials that promote better understanding about hoarding.

Additionally, when monitoring hoarding related activities and data recording, we learn from reports about hoarding and residents experience, to ensure best practice.

## **6.0 Our approach**

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In writing this policy we have carried out an assessment to ensure that we are considering equality, diversity, and inclusion. The DIIA highlighted that a deep clean can have a negative impact on a resident's mental health.

If you'd like a copy of the assessment, please email your request to [policy@nhg.org.uk](mailto:policy@nhg.org.uk)

## 7.0 Reference

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### 7.1 Legislation

- Building Safety Act 2022
- Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Public Health Act 1936

### 7.2 Useful links:

- [Useful contacts - hoarding - Mind- mental health support for helping someone who is hoarding, as well as helping yourself](#)
- [Home - Hoarding Disorders UK- expert advice and practical support for people affected by a hoarding disorder](#)
- [Training Dates | HoardingUK- not-for-profit focused on supporting people impacted by hoarding behaviour](#)
- [Hoarding disorder - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)- understanding the mental health implications of hoarding](#)
- [Hoarder Cleaning Services | Severe, Moderate and Mild Hoarders \(cleantechservices.co.uk\)](#)
- [Hoarder Cleanup Services in the UK - Ideal Response](#)

### Document control

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<b>Approval date</b>	24/04/2023
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### Version Control

<b>Date</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Version</b>
April 2019	New NHG policy	V1.0
April 2023	Updated Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Linked a number of related policies to hoarding</li><li>• Reviewed definition section</li><li>• Clarified on the way we engage with statutory services and with other services</li><li>• Updated the policy and linked it with the Building Safety approach when developing an action plan</li><li>• Included a new reference to contravention notices in line with the Building Safety Policy</li><li>• Added a new support for staff section</li><li>• Provided information on training and learning materials for staff.</li></ul>	V1.1