

Housing Services Hoarding Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (the council) is committed to ensuring that all tenants live in safe, healthy, and well-maintained homes. Hoarding can create significant risks to the tenant, neighbours, visitors, and staff.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how the council identifies and manages hoarding behaviours, and how the council works with tenants to reduce risks while supporting their wellbeing. The approach is centred on safety, dignity, and early intervention.
- 1.3 Compulsive hoarding is highly complex and requires a collaborative and integrated approach.

2. Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for responding to hoarding within council-managed properties. It aims to ensure that risks are identified promptly that tenants receive appropriate support, and that properties remain safe and compliant with legal standards.
- 2.2 This policy also outlines the responsibilities of tenants and the actions the council may take where hoarding presents a serious hazard.

3. Definition of Hoarding

- 3.1 Hoarding is characterised by the excessive accumulation of items or waste and an ongoing difficulty discarding possessions, regardless of their actual value. Hoarding becomes a concern when it prevents rooms from being used for their intended purpose, creates fire hazards, obstructs exits or essential pathways, or results in unsanitary or unsafe living conditions.
- 3.2 The council recognises that hoarding is often linked to complex emotional, psychological, or social factors, and therefore requires a sensitive and supportive response.
- 3.3 Anything can be hoarded, in various areas including the tenant's property, garden or communal areas. However, commonly hoarded items include but are not limited to:

- Clothes
- Newspapers, magazines or books
- Bills, receipts or letters
- Food and food containers
- Animals
- Medical equipment
- Collectibles such as toys, videos, DVD, or CDs

4. Legal and Regulatory Context

4.1 The council has a legal duty to ensure that its housing stock is safe and that tenants are not exposed to avoidable risks. Relevant legislation includes the;

- Housing Act 2004
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Care Act 2014
- Housing Act 1988 (as amended by Housing Act 1996)
- Human Rights Act 1998 (Article 8)
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

4.2 Hoarding may also constitute a breach of tenancy conditions where it results in damage, prevents access, or creates health and safety risks.

5. Identifying Hoarding

5.1 Hoarding may be identified during routine tenancy visits, tenancy update visits, repairs appointments, fire safety inspections, or through reports from neighbours or partner agencies.

5.2 When concerns arise, officers will approach the tenant in a respectful and non-judgemental manner. The aim is to understand the situation, assess any risks, and agree on the next steps. All observations will be recorded accurately and handled confidentially.

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 Once hoarding is identified, an assessment will be carried out to determine the severity of the situation. This assessment considers factors such as fire

risk, blocked access routes, the condition of essential facilities, the presence of pests, and any impact on neighbouring properties. The assessment also considers the tenant's health, vulnerability, and any safeguarding concerns. The outcome will guide the level of intervention required.

7. Support and Intervention

- 7.1 The council's approach prioritises support over enforcement. Where hoarding is identified, the tenant will be offered assistance tailored to their needs. This may include referrals to mental health services, social care, RSPCA or the London Fire Brigade for fire safety advice.
- 7.2 The council may also coordinate multi-agency meetings where appropriate. The tenant will be encouraged to participate in a support plan that sets out achievable steps to reduce risks and improve living conditions.

8. Enforcement Action

- 8.1 Enforcement action may be considered when significant risks remain, and the tenant is unwilling or unable to engage with support. In such cases, the council may issue formal warnings, take action through Environmental Health, or seek legal remedies such as injunctions. Possession proceedings will only be pursued in the most serious situations where all other options have been exhausted.
- 8.2 Enforcement is always balanced with safeguarding responsibilities and the need to protect life and property.

9. Access to the Property

- 9.1 Tenants are required to provide reasonable access for inspections, repairs, and safety checks. Where hoarding prevents access or creates unsafe conditions for officers, the council may take action to ensure that essential works can be carried out.
- 9.2 Failure to provide access may lead to enforcement measures if risks to health or safety are identified.

10. Safeguarding Responsibilities

- 10.1 Hoarding can be a sign of self-neglect or other vulnerabilities. Where concerns arise, the council will follow safeguarding procedures.

10.2 This may involve referrals to Adult Social Care, joint visits with partner agencies, or multi-agency safeguarding meetings. The tenant's wellbeing and safety will remain central to all decisions.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 The council will monitor cases of hoarding to ensure that support plans remain effective and that risks are managed appropriately.

11.2 This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in legislation, best practice, and operational experience.

12. Equality Impact

12.1 Applying this policy consistently and sensitively will ensure that all tenants and their household members in Council owned homes who have protected characteristics and/or are deemed vulnerable for other reasons receive services that are based on a recognition of their vulnerability. The Council will make all appropriate adjustments to the services they receive in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts on them and to ensure they receive fair and equal treatment from the Council as their landlord.