



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

## ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA HOUSING MANAGEMENT

### Hoarding and Self-Neglect Policy

Aug 2025

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 RBKC is committed to ensuring that our homes are places where people want to live and feel safe. In January 2025, we had 186 ongoing cases of hoarding, highlighting the need for a clear and structured approach to addressing this issue. This policy sets out how we will provide residents with safe homes while offering the necessary support to help them manage and sustain their tenancies.
- 1.2 People who are hoarding put themselves, their neighbours, community, and the safety of their homes at serious risk. RBKC will work to identify and resolve such cases to safeguard residents and the Council’s housing portfolio.
- 1.3 The risks to residents posed by hoarding include, but are not limited to:
  - Adult Safeguarding (Vulnerabilities, additional support needs – either for immediate tenant or other household members)
  - Higher risk of fire due to higher quantities of flammable materials within the property

- Neighbourhood nuisance
- Health implications (i.e. Damp and mould)
- Higher risk of pest infestations

## **2 Related Documents**

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

- Hoarding Procedure
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- [Decants Policy](#)
- [Damp and Mould Policy](#)
- Vulnerability Policy
- Managing Vulnerability Around Repairs & Major Works Policy
- [Tenancy Policy](#)
- Housing Strategy
- Safeguarding toolkit
- RBKC Housing and Adult Social Care Services (ASC), and the Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) and Mental Health Services (MH) Joint Working Protocol

## **3 Legal Context**

3.1 This policy will ensure full compliance with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements and best practice around voids and lettings management.

3.2 This policy adheres to the following legislation and guidance:

- Public Health Act 1936
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Mental Health Act 1983
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Equalities Act 2010
- Housing Act 1985, 1996, 2004
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- Care Act 2014
- Children's Act 1989 and 2004
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Building Regulations 2010
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998

- 3.3 The Council can pursue legal action to remove risk and/or permit service access. This could include applying for an injunction, suspended or outright possession. Which could result in the ending of tenancies.

## **4 Definitions and Context**

### **4.1 Definition of Self-neglect**

- Self-neglect can cover a wider range of situations and behaviours, linked to numerous contributing factors including physical health problems, mental health problems, substance misuse, psychological and social factors, diminished social networks, personality traits, traumatic histories and life changing events.
- The Care and Support Statutory Guidance defines self-neglect as “covering a wide range of behaviours neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding”.
- Complex dilemmas arise when people appear to choose rationally or intentionally to self-neglect. In such cases there are often clinical, social and ethical decisions to be made in its management.

### **4.2 Definition of Hoarding**

- Hoarding is a specific type of behaviour marked by acquiring and failing to dispose of many items that would appear to have little or no value to others, severe cluttering of the person's home so that it is no longer able to function as a viable living space, and significant distress or impairment of work or social life.
- The Diagnostic Statistics Manual V (DSM-V) (American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.) identifies hoarding as a distinct disorder in its own right. In addition to consideration of this diagnosis, all practitioners working with someone who self-neglects and hoards should also consider the impact of childhood experiences and attachment issues, the impact of trauma and neglect on matters such as self-care, impulse control and the development of anxiety and depression may also need to be explored.

## **5 The Care Act 2014**

- 5.1 Hoarding is classified as self-neglect under the Care Act 2014, which places a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide assistance to eligible individuals. The Care Act requires local authorities to assess the needs of individuals who may be experiencing self-neglect, including those with hoarding behaviour, and provide appropriate support.

## **6 Policy Statement**

- 6.1 Housing Management recognises that hoarding is a complex disorder that presents significant challenges. Our primary aim is to ensure the safety and well-being of residents, both the individual, their neighbours and the wider community. This policy applies to all RBKC homes, including those owned by leaseholders, where Home Ownership and Neighbourhood Services will collaborate with Social Services and Mental Health teams to provide appropriate support. We are committed to working with residents to help them manage their homes safely and sustain them wherever possible.
- 6.2 We acknowledge that hoarding can be difficult to identify, as its indicators vary, and levels of severity can change over time. People may accumulate items due to sentimental value, emotional attachment, or a combination of both. Hoarding disorders are challenging to treat because some do not see it as a problem or have little awareness of how it's affecting their life or the lives of others. Others do realise they have a problem but are reluctant to seek help because they might feel ashamed, humiliated or guilty about it. It is important to encourage a person who is hoarding to seek help, as their difficulties discarding objects can not only cause loneliness and mental health problems but also pose a health and safety risk. We hope to foster trust through our coordinate, person-centred response and aim to provide practical assistance that helps individuals maintain their homes while also safeguarding the well-being of the wider community.
- 6.3 We encourage early intervention to prevent escalation and support residents in managing their tenancies safely. When a case is identified we aim to identify the level of support needed and use a multi-agency approach to with the necessary teams to manage the case effectively, a clutter rating scale helps us to do this (attached in the appendix). With this approach we hope to respond efficiently to the circumstances, especially in cases with excessive accumulation as this can lead to serious health and safety risks, including fire hazards, infestations, and structural damage. In some cases, this might mean enforcing clearance or even ending tenancies.

## **7 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **7.1 Housing Management Responsibility**

*The following are responsible for working on cases of hoarding:*

- Neighbourhood Services Team
- Tenancy Sustainment Team

*These teams may also draw on the additional support from the wider council, including the following:*

- Health and Safety Team
- Visiting Officers
- Income Team
- Property Services
- Estate and Environmental Services
- Mental Health Services
- Community Safety Team

- Hospital Discharges Team
- Sheltered Accommodation Team
- HM Fire Safety Team
- Damp and Mould Team
- Occupational therapy and adaptations team
- Environmental Health Team
- Homeownership

## 7.2 **Partnership Working:**

We may need to involve a range of agencies to work with the Council to reduce the level of hoarding and ultimately improve the quality of life for the tenant and their household.

Housing Management will work with a range of services/entities such as:

- RBKC Adult Social Care
- Safeguarding Team
- London Fire Brigade
- NHS Mental Health
- Police
- Specialist contractors/providers
- Family members and friends
- Charities

## 8 **Mental Capacity and consent**

8.1 The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves. The Act has 5 statutory principles, and these are the values which underpin the legal requirements of the act. They are:

- A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity
- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practical steps have been taken without success
- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he makes an unwise decision
- An act done or decision made, under this act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made in his or her best interests
- Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action

- 8.2 When a person's hoarding behaviour poses a serious risk to their health and safety, professional intervention will be required. Except for statutory requirements, the intervention or action proposed must be with the individual's consent. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to respect for private and family life) - is engaged. Interference with a person's life must be lawful, necessary and pursue a legitimate aim.
- 8.3 In certain cases, the very nature of the environment may lead the professional to question whether the person has capacity to consent to the proposed action or intervention and trigger a capacity assessment.
- 8.4 The MCA Code of Practice states that one of the reasons why people may question a person's capacity to make a specific decision is that "the person's behaviour or circumstances cause doubt as to whether they have capacity to make a decision". Some hoarding behaviour may therefore in the specific circumstances of the case, prompt an assessment of capacity.

## **9 Support**

- 9.1 Housing Management will work with partners to ensure the most appropriate support is offered and will work on a case-by-case basis. Some of the actions that will be considered as part of the resident's support package would be:
- For most cases quarterly home visits by Housing Management will be undertaken, in some cases this will initially be monthly then quarterly.
  - Cleaning regime
  - Home clearance
  - Monitoring of ongoing support requirements
  - Assistance with moving
  - Care plans involving Social Services, Mental Health and any other relevant support agency/third party agency
  - Depending on needs assessment, goods such as cooking facilities or bedroom furniture can be supplied.
  - Financial support through the Financial Inclusions Team.

## **10 Initial inspection and assessment**

- 10.1 When a case of hoarding and self-neglect is reported we will investigate the risk of the case using a clutter rating home visit referral report, which is a visual tool used to assess the level of clutter in a person's home to help identify potential hoarding risks.
- 10.2 For some cases our Health and Safety Team can visit cases and conduct a person-centred fire risk assessment, which can inform and help mitigate risks. We may share risks identified with the London Fire Brigade where appropriate, and a Home Fire Safety Visit can be arranged. For more information, please check the appendix.
- 10.3 Neighbourhood services will monitor most cases, when a high-risk rating has been identified, then the tenant can be contacted by the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

## **11 Creating a safe and healthy home**

- 11.1 People who exhibit hoarding behaviour can accumulate volumes of items that can lead to unsafe and unhygienic conditions within their home which poses a significant health and safety risk.
- 11.2 As a landlord we have a legal responsibility to ensure that our homes are safe to live in. If there is a health or safety risk, we may need to 'declutter' the property to make it safe. Our Tenancy Sustainment team will aim to work with the tenant(s) to provide support ahead of removing any items from the property.
- 11.3 We will aim to provide continuous support/ monitoring until the risk is minimised; working with the necessary teams/partners to help the tenant(s) maintain safe conditions going forward, (i.e. maintaining clear pathways for future repairs and inspections).
- 11.4 For some cases of hoarding where a serious health and safety issue has been identified or where there is damage to the home, then we may consider decanting the resident to allow us access to carry out the necessary works required. For more information, please refer to our Decants policy.
- 11.5 Any costs incurred due to neglect or wilful damage may be recharged to the resident. For more information, please refer to our Recharge policy.

## **12 Escalation and enforcement**

- 12.1 Housing Management aim to support residents in addressing their hoarding behaviours and enforcement action may need to be taken where:
- The case poses an immediate and serious risk to themselves and the community around them that requires a legal resolution.
  - The resident's behaviour causes high level risks to themselves or other persons.
  - There has been continuous failed engagement with the resident and the resident's actions have been proven to have a detrimental effect on their home and/or others.
  - Alternative multi-agency measures have been exhausted.
  - Access to the home for compliance related inspections is required, and has been repeatedly refused, to ensure we meet our duties as per regulations set out under the Health and Safety Executive, 1998.'
- 12.2 Supporting our residents and ensuring their safety is our highest priority. We will make every effort to resolve challenges through alternative means, but where all options have been exhausted, ending the tenancy may be a necessary last step.

## **13 Concerns and referral**

- 13.1 If you have concerns about an individual exhibiting signs of hoarding or self-neglect, please contact customer services 0800 137 111, or inform your Neighbourhood Services Coordinator.
- 13.2 For any concerns regarding the management of a hoarding or self-neglect case, please contact customer services 0800 137 111, or inform your Neighbourhood Services Coordinator for further guidance.

## **14 Safeguarding**

- 14.1 Ordinarily, hoarding and self-neglect is not seen as a safeguarding incident; however, in certain cases a safeguarding enquiry can be raised, as it may involve significant harm or risk to a vulnerable person, potentially leading to serious consequences such as trauma or the need for urgent intervention.
- 14.2 RBKC are currently working with the Safeguarding Adults Executive Board alongside Westminster City Council to produce a multi-agency self-neglect and hoarding toolkit which sets out guidance when working with adults who are hoarding and self-neglecting and will be signed off in March 2025.
- 14.3 In complex cases where hoarding and self-neglect are a factor with other vulnerabilities, we will refer to the complex case panel or other multi-agency forums to ensure a multi-agency approach.
- 14.4 For any information on safeguarding, please refer to the HM safeguarding policy.

## **15 Equalities Statement**

- 15.1 The Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equal opportunities in employment, the procurement of goods and as a community leader. The Council's policies, procedures and day to day practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all people.
- 15.2 Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability and age is not acceptable: the Council will take action to ensure no person using the council's premises or services receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be justified. The Council will tackle inequality, treat all people with dignity and respect and continue to work to improve services for all service users.

## **16 The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018**

- 16.1 As a directorate of RBKC, Housing Management shares the commitment to ensure that all data is:
- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.
  - Collected for a specific and legitimate purpose and not used for anything other than this stated purpose, or as provided for in our privacy and fair processing notices.
  - Relevant and limited to whatever the requirements are for which the data is processed.
  - Accurate, and where necessary, kept up to date. Any identified inaccuracies will be amended or removed without undue delay.
  - Stored for as long as required, as specified within RBKC's Records Retention policy.
  - Secured with appropriate solutions, which protect the data against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction, or damage.
- 16.2 For further information about the Council's commitment to GDPR, please see the Council's website at [www.rbkc.gov.uk](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk).

## 17 Compliance, Monitoring and Review

- 17.1 We will measure and monitor our performance against our key performance indicators and will make changes and improvements to the service where required.
- 17.2 The overall responsibility for the approval of this policy sits with the Housing Management Directorate.
- 17.3 The effective implementation and continued compliance of this policy will be the responsibility of the Assistant Director of Resident Services. They will be responsible for checking that officers are taking appropriate action in accordance with the policy.
- 17.4 The Head of Neighbourhoods will be responsible for reviewing this policy.
- 17.5 This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with the procedure every 5 years, or when legislative or regulatory changes take place that could affect it. The next review will take place by: **June 2031**.
- 17.6 We reserve the right to make minor amendments to the policy prior to its scheduled review date, under the delegated authority of the Director of Housing Management, dependent on the level of change required. This will still have accountability internally but will show much better value for money and efficiency timewise, for minor changes.

## 18 Appendices

- Appendix 1: London Fire Brigade Leaflet on Hoarding Behaviour ([Link](#))