

HOARDING POLICY
FOR NORWICH HOUSING SOCIETY

2018

Introduction

This policy outlines Norwich Housing Society's approach to identifying and dealing with issues with hoarding in our properties.

There is a fine line between a `Collector` and a `Hoarder`, but a collector tends to collect neatly, with organisation, whereas a hoarder is disorganised.

The term `Hoarder` can be considered offensive and derogatory and may damage the relationship the tenant has with the Society. The term `an individual with hoarding tendencies` describes the behaviour, as opposed to labelling the individual.

Preventative measures must be put in place to reduce the health and safety risks to the tenant and others, as well as to reduce the neglect of the property and any damage to it.

Enforcement action may have to be taken if there are any breaches to the Tenancy Agreement.

Norwich Housing Society will work with other agencies to help develop strategies in responding to needs of our tenants with hoarding tendencies.

We will ensure that staff who work in the community are trained to identify and support the tenant.

Support

The Society will offer support but will also consider the needs of others who may be affected by the hoarding.

If the tenant is willing to engage with us, we will assess whether they struggle with hoarding and the degree of risk to the tenant and to others.

A decision on the appropriate action will then be made. This may include the tenant and the Society working in partnership with other agencies.

If a tenant is not willing to engage with an assessment, tenancy enforcement may be considered. The offer of support should remain open. Should it be suspected that the tenant lacks mental capacity the Society should refer the matter urgently to Social Services.

Management of the Tenancy

The Society have staff who regularly visit tenants in their homes. Staff will be required to identify and report any issues around excessive clutter or hoarding to the Property Services Manager and CEO. We also expect our regular contractors to report any concerns they have around clutter and hoarding in our properties.

It must be noted that clutter can lead to health and safety issues like trips and falls. If unclean, the living conditions can become unhygienic with rodent infestations, blocked drains and other problems that may affect other properties.

Hoarding and clutter may cause complaints of anti-social behaviour.

Clutter and hoarding issues could be a life style choice or lack of education, as well as a mental health disorder.

Once the issue has come to the Society's attention, regular checks will need to be made.

At this stage an action plan will need to be put in place. If the tenant will not engage then tenancy enforcement will need to be considered. The process can be very long, taking many months to over a year. It is not expected that a property will become totally clear, but agreements will need to be set as to what is expected.

Partnership Working

It may be necessary to involve other agencies where appropriate, ideally family members initially but also possibly Social Services, Environmental Health, the Fire Service and other community services.

Tenancy Enforcement

It is the Society's aim to support the tenant through the process, but it must also be remembered that hoarding has a negative impact on others, including others who live in the property, the neighbours and the property itself. Therefore enforcement may be necessary.

Whilst we aim to give support, enforcement action may need to be taken where:

- The tenant's behaviour is so extreme as to cause significant harm to themselves or others.
- There has been continuous failed engagement with the tenant and this has had a detrimental effect on other people or the property.
- Access has repeatedly been denied to contractors to carry out safety checks.

Any costs incurred where injunctions are obtained or due to wilful damage or neglect will be recharged to the tenant.

Equality and Diversity

The Society will aim to foster good relations with people when providing services to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality.

All actions taken by us will be in accordance with the requirements of current legislation.

