

# **RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Hoarding Policy**

Review due: November 2028

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy outlines how Runnymede Borough Council deals with hoarding in homes managed by the Council. In this policy the term tenant can also refer to occupiers of temporary accommodation, including those with a licence.
- 1.2 Hoarding can be a manifestation of social or mental health issues, the impact on the individual can be serious and is likely to increase isolation and reduce contact with agencies.
- 1.3 Hoarding has been identified as a growing problem that has potentially serious and costly implications for housing providers, these include:
- Risk management challenges
  - Health and Safety concerns
  - Escalating legal costs
  - Safeguarding issues.
- 1.4 Compulsive hoarding can be a complex issue, requiring a collaborative and integrated approach.
- 1.5 This policy ensures there is a meaningful and coordinated multi-agency partnership working to effectively resolve problematic hoarding.
- 1.6 The Council takes a non-judgmental approach to dealing with hoarding cases and understands the complexities involved in this mental health condition.

## **2. Aim**

- 2.1 This policy sets out how the Council responds to hoarding and what tenants are expected to do to ensure their safety and well-being. The Council aims to:
- Develop an understanding of why hoarding has occurred and put an action plan in place to help tenants manage their environment.
  - Have a flexible approach in developing and maintaining our tenant relationship where hoarding is identified.
  - Promote safeguarding and multi-agency working.
  - Work with partners to deliver specialist services for and with our tenants who need it.
  - Promote fire safety and mitigate the risk of fire.
  - Ensure the health and safety of all the Council's tenants.

## **3. Scope, definitions and legislation**

- 3.1 The NHS definition of hoarding disorder is 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. It is common for people who hoard to also suffer with other mental health conditions<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Hoarding disorder - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

3.2 Hoarding is considered a significant problem when:

- The amount of clutter interferes with everyday living
- The clutter is causing significant distress or negatively affecting a person's ability to function- for example, their social life, employment and maintaining a safe environment.
- It makes cleaning difficult, leading to unhygienic conditions or infestations.
- There is an increased risk of fire and exits are blocked.
- There is an increased risk of trips and falls.
- There is an increased risk to other residents in a block.
- The condition of the property breaches tenancy or occupancy conditions.

3.3 This policy is in line with the following legislation:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005.

## **4. Policy Details**

4.1 The Council recognises that each case is different in terms of the type and extent of items hoarded, the risk, and the reasons behind the hoarding. Dealing with such cases is complicated and time-consuming. However, the Council takes action to achieve an outcome which is positive and sustainable for tenants, although there may be a requirement for repeat action.

4.2 The Council is likely to become aware of hoarding/clutter issues:

- During routine and/or planned maintenance works required at the property
- When complaints of anti-social behaviour are received; for example, those concerning the presence of vermin or clutter in outside spaces.
- When reports of welfare concerns from family members/anonymous/external services or neighbours are received.
- When access is denied to a property for a routine inspection or other issue.
- When a safeguarding referral is made.

4.3 Staff will take into account the sensitive nature of this issue but will make the tenant aware of any breaches of their tenancy or occupancy agreement and will take appropriate action following the Hoarding Procedure. Staff will work with tenants and adopt a multi-agency approach to provide appropriate support, advice and sign-posting as required.

## **5. Causes of Hoarding**

5.1 There is usually a reason for hoarding: objects are claimed to be sentimental; the tenant may feel that the objects they are keeping may become useful, or they are keeping them 'just in case' they need them again. The tenant may find it difficult to discard things and have problems with decision-making, organisation, and order generally. They often acquire more things than they throw away, and if they do throw them away, they will struggle to cope with the feelings of loss.

5.2 Compulsive Hoarding is associated with:

- A family history of hoarding
- Lack of relationships with family or friends
- The experience of deprivation.
- Struggling to cope with a stressful life event.
- Growing up in a cluttered home
- Another mental health condition, such as anxiety, depression or social phobia

5.3 Whatever the cause of hoarding the Council will engage with the hoarder and other agencies to work towards a resolution. Where this is not possible tenancy enforcement action will be taken to protect the tenant exhibiting hoarding and the welfare of other residents.

## **6. Mental Capacity**

6.1 Consideration will be given at an early stage to mental capacity, to determine if the tenant has the mental capacity to understand and make informed decisions regarding the concerns around their apparent hoarding behaviour.

6.2 The Mental Capacity Act applies to everybody who has dealings with people who may lack capacity, particularly if they have a professional relationship with the person.

6.3 We will comply with the requirements set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and will consider the Act's five key principles during interactions with tenants:

1. A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks capacity.
2. A person is not to be treated as unable to decide unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.
3. A person is not to be treated as unable to decide merely because he makes an unwise decision.
4. 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 best interests.
5. Before the act is done, or decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.<sup>2</sup>

## **7. Intervention and Support**

7.1 The Council will identify tenants who may be hoarding, by using the images on the Clutter Rating Scale (see end). Where tenants display behaviours that pose a risk or have a detrimental impact on themselves and others around them, we will in most cases take a graded approach to intervention. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and responses will be appropriate to the circumstances of the person involved.

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<sup>2</sup> [Mental Capacity Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

7.2 Staff will always explore what support is required and make the necessary referrals.

7.3 Where a hoarder is engaging and accepting assistance, the Council will:

- Engage with the tenant and work towards a sustainable solution.
- Set up proactive, multi-agency meetings plan effective and coordinated engagement
- Identity the most appropriate professional to engage with the tenant.
- Identify sufficient resources for engagement and for any remedial work, such as repairs.
- Work with the tenant and their support network to have items collected and cleared from the property and support the tenant to understand the importance of not bringing more items home.
- Ensure effective support is in place through check-up visits and partnership working to avoid repeat episodes of hoarding.

7.4 Where a hoarder is not engaging and is unwilling to accept assistance, the Council will continue to work with partner agencies while enforcing tenancy conditions to ensure the health and wellbeing of the tenant, their household and the wider community.

## **8. Risk Management**

8.1 Hoarding increases risks for the hoarder, other residents and the Council of:

- Fire hazard– Accumulation of combustible materials such as newspapers, clothing and rubbish. Items can also extend into the communal areas of a block.
- Structural Damage – If damage to the property is a danger to the occupants, public safety and also danger to adjacent buildings.
- Disease and injury– Storage of hoarded items makes cleaning nearly impossible, which can lead to tripping/falling, unsanitary living conditions, increasing the risk of disease.
- Infestations – Increases the chances of pests within the property and wider block/area.
- Social isolation – Distancing from people as you don't want them to find out.
- Impact on mental health – Decline in mental health due to hoarding and feelings of isolation and embarrassment.

8.2 Where there is a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents, contractors, staff and/or the public due to a tenant's hoarding tendencies, the Council will carry out works to return the property to a safe standard. The tenant may be charged for works carried out in relation to this that fall outside the landlord's legal obligations.

## **9. Monitoring and performance management**

9.1 We aim to review this policy in three years to ensure it reflects current legislation and the latest examples of best practices.

9.2 We will monitor the number of hoarding cases, actions taken and outcomes.

## 10. Equalities Implications

10.1 In producing this document an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out.

10.2 An EIA is a way of assessing the impact, or likely impact, that a particular policy, procedure or decision will have on particular groups. This is used to assess whether in making the decision whether the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) to; eliminate discrimination and any other conduct that is prohibited under this act and to advance equality between those who share a protected characteristic.

10.3 An Equality Impact Assessment screening found that this policy is likely to have a positive impact as hoarding can increase risks such as fire hazard, structural damage, diseases, injury, infestation, social isolation and impact on mental health. This policy is expected to minimize these risks by working effectively with tenants who are hoarding.

## 11. Related strategies/Documents

Tenancy Agreement  
Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984  
Environmental Protection Act 1990  
The Mental Capacity Act 2005  
Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 s(2)(1)c  
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005  
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

## 13. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	October 2025	Amendments to first draft to reflect consultation	November 2025	Deana Humphries	Housing Committee

## Clutter Scale Rating



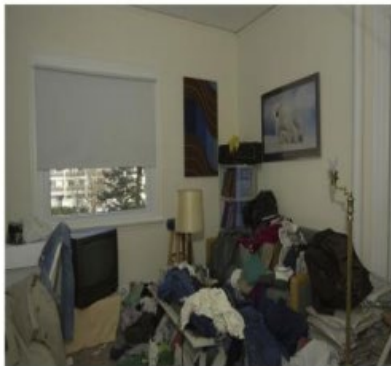
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