

# HOARDING POLICY

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## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 This Hoarding Policy sets out Cambridge City Council's (CCC) position on working with tenants who exhibit hoarding behaviours. CCC is a signatory of the ['Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Multi-Agency Protocol for Working with People with Hoarding Behaviours'](#) (2016) ('the Protocol') and is committed to upholding its approaches. These include:

- The assessment of hoarding cases in an evidence based, structured, systematic and consistent way so that information about the risks and challenges can be shared and understood with partner agencies
- Establish best practice when working with people who display hoarding behaviour, so that a personalised response is provided and the person's rights, choices and autonomy are respected
- Develop multi-agency solutions, maximising the use of existing services and resources of professional support and monitoring
- Focus on prevention and modification of hoarding behaviours, aiming to reduce the need for formal or compulsory solutions.

- 1.2 CCC recognises that hoarding is a complex condition which cannot be resolved quickly. Successful management of the behaviour requires significant input from several agencies and cooperation from the tenant. In its capacity as a landlord, CCC does not expect to resolve the hoarding behaviour, but rather, work with the tenant and external partners to source appropriate support, while mitigating any health, safety and environmental risks to the tenant and neighbours, and limiting damage to the property.

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2018 the World Health Organisation (WHO) formally recognised the hoarding disorder through its inclusion in the **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)**. The **ICD** was presented at the World Health Assembly in May 2019 for adoption by Member States in January 2022. The ICD and the **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)** (2013) both categorise hoarding under Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders.

- 2.2 The ICD definition of hoarding is as follows:

*“Hoarding disorder is characterised by accumulation of possessions due to excessive acquisition of or difficulty discarding possessions, regardless of their actual value. Excessive acquisition is characterized by repetitive urges or behaviours related to amassing or buying items. Difficulty discarding possessions is characterised by a perceived need to save items and distress associated with discarding them. Accumulation of possessions results in living spaces becoming*

*cluttered to the point that their use or safety is compromised. The symptoms result in significant distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning.”*

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- 2.3 The Care Act (2014) formally recognises hoarding under the category of self-neglect. Self-neglect is defined as an extreme lack of self-care. This can include, refusal or inability to cater for basic needs, including personal hygiene and appropriate clothing, feeding, or tending appropriately to any medical conditions. If, when working with a tenant who exhibits the hoarding behaviour, the CCC Housing Officer considers there to be a care or support need and a risk of self-neglect then the necessary referral to Cambridgeshire County Council will be made in-line with CCC’s Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy (2016).

### 3 MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

- 3.1 CCC is committed to working closely with partner agencies to ensure that high-risk cases of hoarding are assessed in a timely manner. To help inform multi-agency discussions the CCC Housing Officer will complete 3 risk assessments:
- Assessment 1: Premises Risk Assessment
  - Assessment 2: Clutter Image Ratio Tool
  - Assessment 3: Hoarding Insight Characteristic Assessment
- 3.2 The tenant’s insight into their hoarding behaviour (Assessment 3) will be instrumental as to how the case will be managed. If the tenant has **no insight** into their behaviour, then the CCC Housing Officer

will instigate a multi-agency meeting with external partners to identify what support can be implemented and next steps. The CCC Housing Officer will also notify the CCC Tenancy Enforcement Panel (TEP) to ensure that appropriate enforcement action can be considered, and any health, safety or environmental risks mitigated.

- 3.3 While CCC are keen to support all residents impacted by hoarding, under current funding arrangements we cannot offer the Tenancy Sustainment Service to leaseholders or residents who have purchased property through affordable home ownership schemes. Instead, we will encourage individuals to contact the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue (CFRS) Safe and Well service for guidance on improving fire safety in the home. We will also signpost the individual to support services and charities such as Hoarding UK.
- 3.4 Tenants who have a **good/fair** insight into their behaviour will be referred to the Tenancy Sustainment Service (TSS). The TSS will work with the tenant to agree the actions needed to mitigate the identified risks and improve the hoarding behaviour. Central to this process will be the development of an action plan which the tenant will be required to sign and will be shared with relevant partner agencies. The TSS will maintain regular contact with the tenant over a **6-month period** to help ensure that the agreed actions are completed.

3.5 The actions agreed by the tenant as part of the action plan will only be shared with partners directly involved in providing support. This includes, but is not limited to:

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- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- CCC Environmental Health (EH) colleagues

3.6 If the hoarding behaviour does not improve with the support of the TSS, and the risks to the household are still apparent, then the CCC Housing Officer, with support from the TSS, will make an internal referral to the Tenancy Enforcement Panel (TEP) and Tenants at Risk (TAR) group. The purpose of which will be to identify appropriate enforcement action and the provision of external support.

3.7 Cases which are assessed as **low risk** across all 3 assessment tools will be referred to the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue (CFRS) Safe and Well service for guidance on improving fire safety in the home. The tenant will also be encouraged by the CCC Housing Officer to contact support agencies for further assistance.

## **4 ENFORCEMENT**

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4.1 CCC recognises that hoarding is a complex condition and the act of clearing a property will not always lead to a change in behaviour. Therefore the enforced clearance of items against the will of the tenant with the hoarding behaviour will only be undertaken when the following points are satisfied:

- The agreement of the multi-agency partners identified in the action plan has been obtained
- Other approaches (such as clearance of the property by the tenant) have been exhausted
- The clearance is proportionate to the scale of the issue
- The agreement of the CCC Tenancy Enforcement Panel (TEP) has been obtained
- A breach of tenancy or leasehold agreement is confirmed and an injunction or a court order for possession of property has been obtained, or possession or forfeiture of the property is confirmed

4.2 All enforced clearances will be payable by the tenant. The tenant will be encouraged to satisfy the payment in-full prior to the clearance, but where this is not possible the debt will be added to the tenants sub-account on a recharge basis.

4.3 If individuals exhibiting the hoarding behaviour are found to have stored items in communal areas, then due to fire safety risks, CCC will clear the area in-line with the 'Storage in Communal Areas – Zero

Tolerance Policy (2018)'. The cost for the removal and storage of items will be charged in-line with the National Schedule of Rates. 7

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