

Hoarding Policy

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Policy Lead:	Director of Neighbourhoods
Approved by:	Executive Team
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Purpose and scope of the policy

This policy applies to you if you're a Moat customer who is hoarding.

Hoarding is when you have so many things that you can't manage the clutter where you live, and you find it difficult or impossible to throw things away. Hoarding can also include animal hoarding which is when you have so many animals that you can't adequately care for them.

This policy sets out how we'll support you with non-judgemental understanding and empathy and empower you to declutter if you seek our help or the hoarding needs to be addressed because it's causing a risk to either:

- your safety and the safety of any other people and animals who live with you or visit you,
- the safety of other people – for example, your neighbours and people who work for or on behalf of us,
- the condition of your home.

It also sets out the approach we'll take if we need to carry out essential repairs or safety checks in your home and can't do this safely because of hoarding.

1. Our Policy – Non-judgemental Understanding, Empathy and Support

1.1 If you're hoarding, we understand there may be all sorts of reasons for why you're hoarding, for example:

- You may have limited mobility and be physically unable to clear the clutter you've acquired.
- You may be unable to categorise and dispose of items due to dementia or learning disabilities.
- You may be hoarding because of a mental health condition such as hoarding disorder, depression, a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- You may have strongly held beliefs related to acquiring and discarding of things, such as "I may need this someday" or "If I buy this, it will make me happy" or you may be struggling to cope with a stressful life event, such as the death of a loved one. We understand that you may have strong emotional attachments to items that other people may not.

1.2 You may not see your hoarding as a problem or fully understand how it's affecting your life and / or the lives of others, and the thought of needing to discard things may bring up strong emotions and feel overwhelming. Or you may realise that you have a problem but be reluctant to seek help because you feel ashamed, embarrassed or worried about being judged or what might happen if you do seek help. We don't want you to feel this way and we can help.

1.3 If we become aware that you are or may be hoarding, we'll contact you to make an appointment to visit you in your home to inspect the property and assess for any risks.

1.4 Where necessary, we'll work with you and relevant support agencies to agree a reasonable action plan to clear the property or affected part of the property sufficiently to inspect the property where necessary and/or address any health and safety issues or hazards. This may include making a safeguarding referral to the local authority in accordance with our safeguarding policies.

2. Taking legal action

2.1 If we're unable to address any safety issues that are being caused by your hoarding by working with you and relevant support agencies we will, where we see no reasonable alternative, take appropriate legal action.

2.2 The specific action we may take will depend on the specific circumstances but may involve an injunction being sought against you to compel you to clear the property to ensure any health and safety risk is brought to an acceptable level.

- 2.3 In the most serious cases which involve health and safety risks to you and/or other members of the household or neighbours, or to our property, possession action may be taken but this will not happen without due warning to you.

Definitions

Hoarding is when you have so many things that you can't manage the clutter where you live, and you find it difficult or impossible to throw things away.

Hoarding can also include **animal hoarding** which is when you have so many animals that you can't adequately care for them.

More recently, hoarding of data has become more common. This is where someone stores huge amounts of electronic data and emails that they're extremely reluctant to delete.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This policy will be delivered in accordance with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for this policy and considered as part of the approval process.

Data protection

This policy will be delivered in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. A Data Impact Assessment was completed for this policy and considered as part of the approval process.

Related legislation and regulations

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Housing Act 1998
- Housing Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England

Related policies and procedures

- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Asbestos Management Policy
- Customer Alerts Policy
- Damp and Mould Policy

- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Management Policy
- Gas and Heating Management Policy
- Health and Safety Management Policy
- Hoarding Procedure
- Home Adaptations Policy
- Legionella Management Policy
- Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Pets Policy, Pets Procedure
- Recharge Policy, Recharge Procedure
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Safeguarding: Adult Safeguarding Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Adult and Children Safeguarding Procedures
- Temporary Moves Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy, Tenancy Management Procedure
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Customer engagement

On 25 September 2024, we contacted our Customer Advocates to invite them to comment on a draft of this policy by completing a survey. The survey, which closed on 11 October 2024, asked the following questions, and invited them to provide comments:

- Did you find the policy clear and easy to understand?
- We are keen to remove jargon and buzzwords wherever possible. Were there any words, phrases, or sections that you feel we should change to ensure it is plain English?
- Thinking more generally about the policy, is there anything you would change?
- Would you support Moat's adoption of this policy?

Feedback, comments, and suggestions provided by customers through the survey have been used to improve the policy.

Document Revision History (Record of any changes made to the policy)

Date	Changes approved by	Details of changes made