

HOARDING POLICY

Hoarding Policy

Responsible Officer	Group Director Housing
This policy is applicable to	Karbon Group
Policy version	4
Date this version implemented	September 2026
Date of next review	May 2029

Policy Statement

This policy explains how the Karbon Group (the Group) responds when hoarding affects a customer's home, wellbeing, or safety.

We will take supportive, respectful and non-judgemental approach, recognising that hoarding can be linked to mental health or other personal circumstances.

The Group's priority is to keep people and homes safe. We will work with customers and partner agencies where needed to reduce risks, agree practical support, and only consider enforcement where serious safety concerns remain or legal duties cannot be met.

Risk the policy is designed to control

1. Health & Safety - Risk of failure by the Group to take all reasonable health and safety measures leading to serious injury or loss of life

Key performance measures

Compliance with this Hoarding Policy will be monitored through a programme of quality assurance audits. On a quarterly basis, 10% of all open hoarding cases will be selected for audit to assess adherence to policy requirements, including risk assessment, case recording, multi-agency working, safeguarding considerations, action planning, and case reviews. Audit findings will be reported to senior management and used to identify areas of good practice, address any compliance issues, and support continuous service improvement.

Definitions

Hoarding Disorder	A recognised mental health problem. It occurs when a person's pattern of collecting items becomes excessive and unmanageable, impacting their daily life and social activities.
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Abbreviations

OCD	Obsessive compulsive disorder
ASB	Anti-social behaviour

Policy Detail

1.0 Purpose of policy

- 1.1 This document sets out the approach to be taken by staff when dealing with hoarding.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is:
 - To recognise if a customer is a hoarder.
 - To engage and work with the hoarder to reduce their hoard.
 - To protect our homes.
 - To safeguard individuals and communities.
- 1.3 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Hoarding Procedure.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 The approach taken in this document aims to balance the rights of the customer with our duty to tackle issues that can cause a health and safety issue.
- 2.2 We will work with partner agencies, where appropriate. This includes subcontractors as well as support agencies and statutory services.
- 2.3 As described in the section above, our objectives are:
 - To recognise if a customer is a hoarder.
 - To engage and work with the hoarder to reduce the excessive items in their property or any communal areas.
 - To protect our homes.
 - To safeguard individuals and communities.

3.0 Policy detail

3.1 What is compulsive hoarding?

- 3.1.1 Compulsive hoarding means excessively collecting items that are of little or no value, or indeed items of value and/or not being able to throw items or rubbish away, resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter.
- 3.1.2 People with hoarding difficulties may suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), which may or may not be directly connected to their clutter problem. Hoarding is also often associated with anxiety and depression.
- 3.1.3 Hoarding has been classified as a mental health condition.

3.1.4 The hoarder may view their behaviour as a lifestyle choice, and to some extent this is the case.

3.1.5 Hoarding characteristics:

- The acquisition of and/or failure to discard possessions that appear to be of little use or value.
- Living spaces sufficiently cluttered to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed.
- Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by hoarding.

3.2 What kinds of things do people hoard?

3.2.1 Most often, people hoard common possessions, such as paper (e.g., letters, newspapers), books, clothing, and containers (e.g., boxes, paper, and plastic bags). Some people hoard rubbish or rotten food. More rarely, people hoard animals or human waste products.

3.3 Why is compulsive hoarding a problem?

3.3.1 It's important to encourage a hoarder to seek help, as their obsession can often lead to a need for more intensive tenancy management.

3.3.2 Because of the amount of clutter, the person may not be able to use the rooms in their home for their intended purpose or even be able to sit in a chair without having to move things.

3.3.3 In extreme cases the piles of clutter can become a fire risk and can result in the hoarder tripping and falling. Because the home is virtually impossible to clean, living conditions tend to be very unhygienic and can lead to rodent or insect infestations, blocked drains and other problems that may also affect neighbouring properties.

3.3.4 A hoarder may be reluctant or unable to have visitors or even allow their landlord or its contractors to carry out essential repairs.

3.3.5 Hoarding may literally take over a person's life, causing their work performance, personal hygiene and social life to suffer.

3.3.6 To summarise, hoarding becomes a problem when it negatively impacts on the hoarder's life or on others. For example, action needs to be taken when:

- It is associated with self-neglect or safeguarding concerns.
- It is contributing to a pest control issue.
- It has health and safety implications.
- The organisation is being hindered from carrying out a statutory duty (e.g., annual gas safety check).

3.3.7 Officers must remain objective and should avoid making judgments on the customer's living conditions. Instead, the focus should be on the property as an

asset, whether the room(s) can be used for the intended purpose, whether inspections can be carried out such as electrical and gas safety checks, and whether there are health and safety implications.

- 3.3.8 We recognise that each case is different, in terms of the type and extent of items hoarded, the risk, and the reasons behind the hoarding. We therefore use a combination of intervention and enforcement measures, including support to tackle the hoarding. In doing this, we will take a multi-agency approach, where appropriate.

3.4 Identification of Hoarding

- 3.4.1 Any member of staff who has concerns that a customer may be hoarding, should report this to the Housing team within 1 working day.
- 3.4.2 External contractors should raise the concern with their staff contact who will then report the potential problem to the appropriate Housing team who will then record the case on the housing system and review and follow the steps set out in the Hoarding Procedure.
- 3.4.3 Other situations where hoarding behaviour may be identified include:
- Complaints or concerns registered by a neighbour (pests, smells, unusual behaviour, blocked communal paths or areas).
 - Information from a statutory agency.
 - Where a concern about a garden raises a concern about the condition of the property.
- 3.4.4 A record of Hoarding case will be recorded on the Housing system via the ASB module
- 3.4.5 Action will then be taken to investigate. The accompanying Hoarding procedure and appendices contain guidance for Officers on what to do to tackle hoarding.
- 3.4.6 We will support a hoarder to take all steps to ensure that the hoarded items are reduced to a level that is safe for them, their neighbours and others who need to access the property.
- 3.4.7 If despite following the Hoarding Procedures there is no improvement in the level of hoarding and it remains a risk to the health and safety to our customers, the Group will take enforcement action which may include seeking an injunction to compel the resident to engage in the removal of excessive items in the property and/or enable it to remove the hoarded items itself. If an Injunction has been obtained and enforced and the resident starts to hoard belongings again in the absence of any exceptional circumstances, then the Group will apply for a court order for possession.

4.0 Customer Vulnerabilities

- 4.1 This policy is applied in line with our Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances Policy. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect, and access to our services.
- 4.2 We will support people in vulnerable circumstances to help us deliver this service. We will work alongside external agencies such as social services, the police and fire services and other appropriate agencies to help and support people in vulnerable circumstances and to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord.
- 4.3 Policies and key information are made available on our website.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 The Group Director of Housing is responsible for delegating the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.
- 5.2 This policy will be reviewed at least every 5 years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to good practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 This policy is applied in line with our Inclusion and Belonging Policy. This includes the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Workers Protection Act 2023 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 6.2 At the Karbon Group we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 6.3 If you would like this or any other policies in a different language or format please contact inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk.

7.0 Data Protection and Privacy

- 7.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.