

Hoarding Policy

Hoarding Policy

Responsible Officer	Assistant Director of Housing
This policy is applicable to	All companies
Approved by	Group Executive
Date approved	5 th June 2024
Frequency of review	Every 5 years
Date of next review	May 2029
Implementation date	June 2024
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoarding Procedure and associated appendices. • Tenancy Agreement. • Customers Handbook/Sign up pack. • ASB Policy.
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	CIH good practice guidance. Discussions with other housing associations and staff.

Version control

Version number (see note 1)		Author of Policy	Allison Carrahar Carol Kay
Equality Impact Analysis (see note 2)	Initial/Full	Equality Analysis Date	May 2024

Document change history

Version	Date	Changed sections

Consultation

Consultation Group (if applicable)	Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Staff	May 2024
Union(s)	NA
Customers	Pending
Human Resources / Organisation Development	NA
Health and Safety Working Group	NA
Other stakeholder (please state)	Various internal stakeholders

Policy statement

The impact of hoarding can create significant management problems and requires our input and support to resolve it effectively. Action is needed to both ensure the safety and wellbeing of the customer and secure the long-term condition of the home and surroundings.

This policy and associated documents discuss our approach to managing the problem.

Risk policy is designed to control

The health and wellbeing of our customers, their neighbours, staff, and subcontractors and any issues that can become health and safety problems

Definitions

Hoarding disorder is a recognised mental health problem. It occurs where a person's pattern of collecting items becomes excessive and unmanageable, impacting on their daily life and social activities.

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. We will work with partner agencies, where appropriate. This includes subcontractors as well as support agencies and statutory services. 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

What is compulsive hoarding?

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Hoarding has been classified as a mental health condition.
- 3.4 The hoarder may view their behaviour as a lifestyle choice, and to some extent this is the case.
- 3.5 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.

4.0 What kinds of things do people hoard?

- 4.1 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.

5.0 Why is compulsive hoarding a problem?

- 5.1 It's important to encourage a hoarder to seek help, as their obsession can often lead to a need for more intensive tenancy management.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 A hoarder may be reluctant or unable to have visitors, or even allow their landlord or its contractors to carry out essential repairs.
- 5.5 Hoarding may literally take over a person's life, causing their work performance, personal hygiene and social life to suffer.
- 5.6 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).

5.7 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.

5.8 A useful pictorial guide to hoarding and when it can present a problem can be found at Appendix 2 of the Hoarding Procedure – the Hoarding Rating System. Karbon Homes would consider there to be potentially an issue with hoarding for any room which appeared to at point 4 or over in the Hoarding Rating System.

5.9 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.

6.0 Identification of Hoarding

6.1 Any member of staff who has concerns that a customer may be hoarding, should report this to the Housing team within 1 working day.

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 A record of Hoarding case will be recorded on the Housing system via the ASB module

6.5 Action will then be taken to investigate. The accompanying Hoarding procedure and appendices contain guidance for Officers on what to do to tackle hoarding.

6.6 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.

6.7 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, Karbon 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 Karbon will apply for a court order for possession.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to good practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.
- 7.2 The Executive Director of Customer Services is responsible for delegating the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.
- 7.3 We will consult with customers/staff regarding this policy wherever this is appropriate.

8.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1 This policy is applied in line with Karbon's Equality and Diversity Policy and the associated legislation including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010. At Karbon 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.
- 8.2 However, we like to go even further. Beyond these protected characteristics we also take into consideration additional factors such as socio-economic status and language barriers which may also play a part. Our vision is for everyone to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect, and access to our services.
- 8.3 To help us achieve this, we will work to improve accessibility for all, offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove any barriers. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 8.4 All of our customer policies and key information are made available on the Karbon Homes website. Reasonable adjustments that can help for example to make our information and services more accessible are sign language and language interpreters. We will work to improve accessibility for everybody that we deal with offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove barriers that you may experience. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 8.5 We work together to look at options and agree what adjustments would be reasonable in your individual circumstances. If you would like to find out more, please get in touch with the team.
- 8.6 This policy is applied in line with Our Approach To Vulnerability Policy. Everyone matters. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect and access to our services. We will offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate. In delivering this service we may need to escalate a

particular case – if we do then customer vulnerabilities will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

- 8.7 We will support people with vulnerabilities to 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 with vulnerabilities in the delivery of our services but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord.
- 8.8 Details are provided in the appropriate areas in this policy.
All of our customer policies are available on the website.

9.0 Data Protection and Privacy

- 9.1 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 Homes Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.

10.0 Supporting People with Vulnerabilities

- 10.1 This policy is applied in line with Our Approach To Vulnerability Policy. Everyone matters. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect and access to our services. We will offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate. In delivering this service we may need to escalate a particular case – if we do then customer vulnerabilities will be considered as part of the decision-making process.
- 10.2 We will support people with vulnerabilities to 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 with vulnerabilities in the delivery of our services but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord. Details are provided in the appropriate areas in this policy.
- 10.3 All of our customer policies are available on the website.