



Hoarding Policy

1.0 Policy

- 1.1 Irwell Valley Homes understands the impact that hoarding behaviour can have on customers, their neighbours and the organisation's property and assets.
- 1.2 The organisation will take a robust yet sensitive and fair approach to dealing with the consequences of hoarding behaviour and will work with customers, statutory agencies and relevant third parties and voluntary agencies, to minimise the impact and the risks posed by this behaviour on the customer themselves, their neighbours and the organisation's assets.

2.0 Characteristics and Effective Management

- 2.1 Although the number of households affected is relatively small (estimated at 2-6% of all households), according to the charity, Hoarding UK, between 25 to 30 percent of fire deaths in the UK are related to hoarding.
- 2.2 The impact of hoarding can be significant. Public health issues such as vermin, flies, toxic substances, exposed wiring, damp and mould, and the increased fire risk and structural damage can all pose serious risks.
- 2.3 The risks posed by hoarding have resulted in it being detailed within our risk register.
- 2.4 The primary characteristics of hoarding are:
 - The acquisition of and failure to discard possessions regardless of monetary value, worth, usefulness or need;
 - Living spaces that are sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed;
 - Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by hoarding.
- 2.5 Hoarding becomes a problem when it starts to negatively impact on the hoarder's life, on their living environment, on the hoarder's neighbours and on the organisation's assets.
- 2.6 Customers who may be hoarding may show signs of self-neglect, which is a safeguarding concern, by:
 - Going without food or hoarding rotten food and rubbish;

- Having a lack of access to water;
 - Having a lack of warmth, with signs of damp and mould;
 - Having a lack of sleeping space;
 - Having a lack of toileting and/or bathing facilities
 - Showing signs of poor hygiene
 - Neglecting their own safety or that of others
- 2.7 When people who hoard feel distressed, they may seek comfort obtaining further possessions to keep, and they seek closeness to things they feel attached to. This can also include animals.
- 2.8 Action is required 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 hindered from carrying out a statutory duty – for e.g. annual gas safety check
- 2.9 Irwell Valley Homes colleagues will be professionally curious if they believe there is a hoarding concern.
- 2.10 Hoarding can occur in all households. Incidents of hoarding may be discovered by any visiting member of Irwell Valley Homes or our contractors, or it may be reported by other customers, relatives/friends or statutory agencies.
- 2.11 Irwell Valley Homes will use a person-centred procedure when dealing with hoarding in customers' homes and gardens. The procedure will ensure that appropriate and timely trauma-informed interventions are made, to prevent hoarding becoming an unmanageable problem for our customers. It will ensure appropriate action is taken to resolve issues, and that reasonable action is applied consistently in all cases.
- 2.12 Safeguarding Adult Reviews indicate that alcohol use can be a contributing factor to safeguarding risks. Safeguarding risks may also be exacerbated by other co-existing behaviours, support needs, medical conditions and/or other intersectional circumstances. IVH will consider the customer's wider circumstances when assessing and supporting with hoarding issues in order to increase the likelihood of a successful intervention.
- 2.13 Since hoarding is likely to affect a wider household, we will take into account the needs of any other members of the household, especially children and vulnerable adults in the household, noting that they may be at need of safeguarding intervention if suffering from neglect, coercion or other negative impacts on their wellbeing. This is known as 'a whole family approach'.
- 2.14 In order to encourage and achieve a manageable and satisfactory outcome, colleagues handling hoarding cases will be trained and fully supported.

- 2.15 When appropriate we will engage with statutory agencies (local authorities, fire service) and, if required, specialist third party organisations and voluntary agencies when dealing with cases of hoarding. Statutory agencies will rely on available legislation to support the customer to manage their hoarding, including, but not limited to, the Care Act 2014.
- 2.16 Intervention will primarily be concerned with reducing the impact of hoarding and assisting the customer to comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement, in particular the sections relating to the condition of the home and requirements regarding health and safety. It must be noted that interventions contained within the Care Act (and other relevant legislation) may be the responsibility of the local authority or other statutory duties, and not Irwell Valley Homes.
- 2.17 The Care Act 2014 recognises hoarding as one of the manifestations of self-neglect. Self-neglect is neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings. The Act requires public bodies to safeguard people at risk.
- 2.18 To ensure colleagues visiting a property remain safe, we may ask a customer to clear specific areas to allow for essential repairs, safety checks and maintenance.
- 2.19 In high-risk situations we may work with a customer to temporarily stay in alternative accommodation to ensure essential work can be completed safely; this approach is a safety-led, short-term measure, not a punitive one.
- 2.20 We may recharge a customer if we need to clean and clear some areas within a property or the whole property. Any recharge will be subject to consideration of vulnerability, safeguarding duties and the customer's circumstances, and will be applied proportionately and in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- 2.21 Legislation will also be relied upon in the event that enforcement action is required in any case.
- 2.22 Whilst we acknowledge that compelling a customer that hoards to participate in large clearances can often exacerbate their condition and have a negative impact on their long term mental health and wellbeing, proportionality will be used to not only balance the needs and risks to the customer, but to the property itself and other residents living in the vicinity. In some situations tenancy enforcement may be necessary, which may include the use of:
- Civil Injunctions
 - Possession Proceedings
 - Liaising with environmental health for enforcement and public protection.
- 2.23 This policy, and the associated procedure, supports IVH's mission to enable people to live well in their home and communities.

3.0 Responsibility

- 3.1 The Board of Management holds overall responsibility for ensuring the organisation

effectively prevents, responds to, and manages hoarding cases.

- 3.2 The Chief Operations Officer is accountable for the effective implementation of this policy.
- 3.3 The Head of Independent Living acts as the corporate lead for IVH safeguarding matters, including where hoarding poses a safeguarding concern.
- 3.4 Operational safeguarding is led by the Sustainment Services Manager. The Sustainment Services Manager, Housing Services Manager, and Housing Manager are responsible for case management and carrying out checks on hoarding cases. All colleagues have a responsibility to report concerns regarding hoarding in line with this policy.

4.0 Performance Indicators/Targets/Standards

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis.
- 4.2 Whilst there are no performance indicators or targets directly linked to this policy, hoarding cases are monitored through safeguarding processes and complex case management arrangements. Safeguarding is included in IVH's risk register and reported on to Board on a quarterly basis via the CAF report.
- 4.3 The effectiveness of this policy is monitored through safeguarding performance reporting to the Board via the Combined Assurance Framework and the annual Safeguarding Report. Line management supervision will provide operational assurance that cases are managed inline with the policy and the associated procedure.

5.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

- 5.1 Irwell Valley Homes is committed to treating people with honesty, dignity, respect, and trust. This applies to all colleagues, customers, potential customers, contractors, and Board/committee members.

At IVH:

- Equality is about ensuring every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
 - Diversity is recognising differences and responding positively to those differences.
 - Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.
- 5.2 IVH will be mindful of the Equality Act 2010 in all its actions and will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:
 - 5.3 Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age,

Marriage/Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly.

- 5.4 Further to the protected characteristics, IVH will be mindful of socio-economic disadvantage and will do everything in its power to minimise this and other forms of disadvantage.
- 5.5 Reasonable adjustments will be made in how expectations and interventions are communicated and delivered.

6.0 Associated Documents and Good Practice

- 6.1 We must operate in the framework created by legislation. This policy has been written having regard to relevant legislation and good practice. This includes the following (non-exhaustive):
 - The Care Act 2014
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - The Mental Capacity Act 2005
 - The Public Health Act 1936 and 1961
 - Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- Hoarding Procedure
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure
- Communities Good Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Communities Decant Policy
- Communities Pets Policy
- Communities Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Homes Damp and Mould Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Management Policy
- Home Repairs Policy
- EDI Strategy
- Data Privacy Policy
- Communities Rechargeable Repairs Policy