



## Hoarding Policy

*JUNE 2020 Update: In response to the Government guidance and restrictions relating to the Coronavirus pandemic, Irwell Valley Homes reserve the right to amend any affected procedures to ensure that we are following safe ways of working to ensure the continued safety of customers and colleagues.*

### Policy

Irwell Valley homes understands the impact that hoarding behaviour can have on customers, their neighbours and the organisation’s property and assets. The organisation will take a robust yet sensitive and fair approach to dealing with the consequences of hoarding behaviour and will work with customers and statutory agencies to minimise impact and the risks posed by the behaviour upon the customer themselves, their neighbours and the organisation’s assets.

The risks posed by hoarding have resulted in it being detailed within our risk register.

The primary characteristics of hoarding are:

- The acquisition of and failure to discard possessions that appear to be of little use or value;
- 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.

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. 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.

Although the number of households affected is relatively small (estimated at 2-6% of all households), according to the British Psychological Society (2015) one in four domestic fire-related deaths can be linked to hoarding.

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.

Irwell Valley homes has a procedure that colleagues will adhere to when dealing with hoarding in our customers’ homes and gardens. The procedure aims to ensure that appropriate and timely

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interventions are made, taking a trauma-informed approach, to prevent hoarding becoming an unmanageable problem for our customers. It also ensures that appropriate action is taken to resolve issues, and that the action is reasonable and applied consistently in all cases. Colleagues handling hoarding cases will be trained and supported to do so, encouraging customer engagement to achieve a manageable and satisfactory outcome.

Where appropriate we will engage with statutory agencies (local authorities, fire service) 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. 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 on 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.

Legislation will also be relied upon in the event that enforcement action is required in any case.

This policy, and the associated procedure, supports the organisation’s mission to enable people to live well in their home and communities.

**Responsibility**

The Executive Director, Customer and Communities is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

**Performance Indicators/Targets/Standards**

This policy will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis. There are no performance indicators or targets directly linked to this policy. The effectiveness of the Association’s policy and the associated procedure will be monitored through line management supervision of cases.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

Irwell Valley Homes is committed to treating people with honesty, dignity, respect, and trust. This applies to colleagues, customers potential customers, contractors, and Board Members. At IVH:

- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences.
- Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

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: Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age, Marriage/Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly. 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.

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