

# HOARDING

# POLICY

<b>Version Number</b>	V5
<b>Date of Current Version</b>	May 2025
<b>Approved by / Date</b>	Customer Service Committee / May 2025
<b>Annual Review Date</b>	May 2026
<b>Full Review Date</b>	May 2028

<b>Executive Summary:</b>
<p>This policy outlines Rochdale Boroughwide Housings (RBH) approach to tackling hoarding, in relation to its homes and the safety and wellbeing of its customers.</p>

<b>Policy Grouping / Directorate</b>	Customer & Community	
<b>Owner Name / Job Title</b>	Kirsty Wild / Interim Head of Independence & Wellbeing	
<b>Author Name / Job Title</b>	Victoria Wardleworth / Safeguarding Coordinator	
<b>Reviewed by Policy Team</b>	Date: 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025	Name: Sarah Wilson
<b>EIA Completed</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Publication</b>	Intranet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Notes:</b>		

## 1 Introduction and Aims

- 1.1 This policy outlines how Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) will approach instances of hoarding in our homes., in relation to the health and safety of our customers and their homes. It outlines how we will work with customers and partners to understand, support and tailor our approach to ensure we deliver effective, sustainable, and safe outcomes.
- 1.2 The aims of the policy are:
- To understand the different underlying reasons that can lead to hoarding.
  - To understand the difference between a hoarding disorder and a customer who displays hoarding behaviour.
  - To differentiate between hoarding and property condition cases.
  - To recognise the benefits of having an adaptable approach when working with individuals and families who hoard.
  - To understand the role of statutory agency partnerships and their legal obligations.
  - To identify customers who display signs of hoarding as part of our safeguarding process to ensure adequate support is put in place.
  - To treat each case on an individual basis and to look objectively to see the person and not the hoard.

## 2 Context

- 2.1 This policy has been developed following research into best practice within the housing sector and from NHS guidance on hoarding. The World Health Organisation (WHO) classifies hoarding as a medical condition (Appendix A – WHO definition).
- 2.2 RBH adheres to the following legislation in relation to hoarding:
- Mental Health Act 1983
  - Mental Health Capacity Act 2005
  - Care Act 2014 – Statutory Guidance
  - Housing Act 2004
  - Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - Equality Act 2010
  - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
  - Animal Welfare Act 2006
  - The Public Health Act 1961

## 3 Values

- 3.1 The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:
- Putting People First:** We listen with empathy, respond with compassion, and make it easy for our customers to access our services. This policy will help ensure a tailored, person-centred approach is followed when supporting customers who hoard. Our approach will be trauma-informed, sensitive, supporting and delivered in a caring manner.
- Doing What We Say:** We earn trust through honesty, integrity, caring and keeping our promises. We will explain clearly to customers when we need to work with them to deal with issues of hoarding and provide clear actions for ourselves and the customer.

**Working As One:** We embrace our mutuality and work together to deliver great outcomes for the people living in our homes and communities. We will ensure a person-centred approach throughout the journey whilst exploring collaborative working with our partners and agencies who can help support and reduce the impact of hoarding.

**Delivering Quality:** We invest wisely in our people and make it easy for them to deliver services and create places that our customers are proud to call home. This policy supports a forward-thinking approach to working with hoarders and our partners to find innovative and smart ways of working to resolve issues of hoarding.

**Open & Transparent:** We are curious, embrace diverse ways of thinking and seek feedback to help us improve. We will use professional curiosity, working openly with our customers and take into account their needs to help to fully manage the tenancy longer term.

## **4 Policy Statement**

- 4.1 RBH recognises that hoarding is a complex issue. It is important that we understand what hoarding is, but that we also understand what hoarding is not. Assessing and identifying a person who hoards and understanding behaviours as to why they are hoarding is key to delivering the correct support. We understand that this may cause difficulties in engaging with RBH and other services.
- 4.2 We will always seek to see the person beyond the hoarded property. We will work proactively with individuals and multi-agency partnerships to safeguard and support individuals and their families, including children. We will do this in a trauma-informed manner to develop trust and provide choice for the customer.
- 4.3 Generally, some people with a hoarding disorder excessively acquire items that they do not need or for which no space is available and typically experience distress if they are unable or are prevented from acquiring items. Common features of the disorder include indecisiveness, perfectionism, avoidance, procrastination, difficulty with planning and organising tasks, coping with progress, maintenance, and sustainability.
- 4.4 The arrangement of possessions does not always indicate that an individual has a hoarding disorder. Individuals displaying Squalor/Diogenes syndrome are not hoarders. Some individuals live in various degrees of unsanitary conditions (squalor), that may be a logical consequence of severely cluttered spaces and/or related to planning and organising difficulties. Other causes could be an impairment of cognitive function caused by an undiagnosed condition such as dementia.
- 4.5 RBH will consider the risks if an individual with hoarding issues is not correctly supported:
  - The Individual/family may be unable to work with services
  - There is an increased risk of accident or harm to the individual/family
  - Increased likelihood of not allowing access for compliance and repairs
  - Risk of fire to individual, as well as fire spreading to neighbouring properties
  - Increased risk of damp and mould
  - Legal enforcement action and costs

In every case, RBH will make necessary referrals to our Fire Safety team and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service for a risk assessment.

- 4.6 RBH must consider the tenancy agreement in terms of both hoarding behaviour and property condition. Clause 5.3 Internal Condition states: *You must keep the internal condition of the property to a reasonable standard at all times.* Clause 7.9 Hygiene states: *You must keep the property clean and tidy. If you don't, we will charge you our reasonable costs for any work we need to do because of this, such as removing rubbish.* Alongside this, RBH will seek to ensure that the right tenancy sustainment provision is in place, and signpost for specialist support if required.

## **5 Monitoring**

- 5.1 We will monitor the effectiveness of our approach through customer feedback and monthly case audit reviews. We will monitor the number of cases which lead to legal action and complete learning reviews to see where we can make future improvements.

## **6 Review**

- 6.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.
- 6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

## **7 Links with Other RBH Documents**

- 7.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:
- Safeguarding Policy
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
  - Fire Safety Policy
  - Rochdale Council's Allocation Policy
  - RBHs Hoarding Process
  - RBHs Property Condition Process

## **8 Inclusivity statement**

- 8.1 We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all. We ensure that everyone is valued and respected. Our policies aim to be inclusive, and will comply with UK laws, including the Equality Act 2010, to create a diverse and supportive environment for people to thrive.
- 8.2 We understand not everyone absorbs information the same way. If you have any difficulty understanding or interpreting this document please email [people@rbh.org.uk](mailto:people@rbh.org.uk) or call Freephone 0800 027 7769. We will work with you to ensure your individual needs are met.

## Appendix A – World Health Organisation definition of Hoarding Disorder

“Hoarding disorder is characterised by accumulation of possessions due to excessive acquisition of or difficulty discarding possessions, regardless of their actual value. Excessive acquisition is characterized by repetitive urges or behaviours related to amassing or buying items. Difficulty discarding possessions is characterized by a perceived need to save items and distress associated with discarding them. Accumulation of possessions results in living spaces becoming cluttered to the point that their use or safety is compromised. The symptoms result in significant distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning.”