Hoarding
Procedure

These procedures set out how:

- hoarded properties should be referred to the case manager
- the case manager should carry out a hoarding assessment
- the case manager should use the hoarding assessment outcomes to identify appropriate interventions and enforcement actions

The procedures should be read and applied in conjunction with the following:

- Hoarding policy
- Hoarding guidance
- Hoarding assessment tool guidance
- Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Gas servicing policy
- Repairs policy
- Pests policy

Contents

1. Roles and responsibilities

1.1 Peabody staff

Any member of Peabody staff who is notified by a third party or who suspects that a property is hoarded, is responsible for notifying the appropriate regional Neighbourhoods Team so that the case can be investigated.

1.2 Case manager

The case manager is the Peabody Neighbourhood Manager (NM) / Gallions Neighbourhood Services Officer (NSO) that manages the patch in which the hoarded property is located.They are responsible for:

- Maintaining an up-to-date record of all case notes, contacts and documents on QL and EDMS.
- Conducting the initial hoarding assessment.
- Identifying tenant support needs and making appropriate referrals for support.
- Developing and implementing an action plan to de-clutter a property, where there is no other service to support the tenant to do so.
- Attending joint visits with internal and external partners where necessary.
- Liaising with Legal Services to identify appropriate enforcement action.
- Working with partner agencies to develop multi-agency solutions to hoarding issues

1.3 Peabody Assistant Heads of Neighbourhoods / Gallions Neighbourhood Services Manager that manages the case manager

Responsible for:

- Approving referrals and associated spending to support or decluttering services.
- Approving enforcement action.

2. What is hoarding disorder?

Hoarding Disorder is a condition in which a person collects and fails to discard items – including things that appear to be of useless or limited value to others – to the point that it affects their day to day functioning.

Hoarding is a recognised condition. It is not caused by a general medical condition (e.g., brain injury), and is not the symptom of another mental disorder (e.g., hoarding due to obsessions in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder).

A hoarding issue must be addressed where at least one of the following occurs:
- The tenant's day-to-day functioning and use of their home is impeded. For example, they are not able to access rooms, leave or enter their home.

- The hoarded property poses a health and safety or fire risk to the tenant or others,
- The hoarding has been reported as causing nuisance or annoyance to others (antisocial behaviour), or
- The hoarding is delaying works programmes or preventing essential repairs or gas servicing from being carried out.

3. Referring a hoarded property for investigation

3.1 Any member of staff that suspects or receives information from a third party that a property is hoarded, will notify the Neighbourhoods team so that the case can be investigated.

3.2 The member of staff that suspects or receives information relating to a hoarded property will send an email to the Neighbourhoods team email address for the region in which the property is located.

3.3 The email subject line should state HOARDED PROPERTY REFERRAL and the body of the email should contain
- the property address
- tenants name
- a brief description of the case e.g nature of hoarding, items being hoarded, impact on communal areas, any contact had with the tenant.

4. Receiving notification of a hoarded property

4.1 When the case manager receives this email or becomes aware of a hoarded property, they will create a case management contact on QL. This will be used to record all actions taken as part of managing the case. All actions or updates taken as part of managing the case should be recorded within this one contact.

4.2 The contact must be raised and logged as follows:
- Additional classes: N_HOODS > ENQUIRY > REF_NM.
- Brief description section: Hoarded property
- Full description section: Details from referral email, any information known e.g. nature of hoarding, items being hoarded, impact on communal areas.
- The case manager should allocate the case to themselves
- Each action must be recorded using action code 0_UPDA.

Refer to Managing cases on QL and record keeping for further guidance.

4.3 The case manager will contact the tenant to arrange a home visit. The case manager should aim to complete the visit within 5 working days of receiving the notification email or becoming aware of the hoarding issue themselves.

4.4 The case manager will contact the Fire Risk and Safety Manager – or in their absence a member of the Fire Risk Team – to arrange for a member of the Fire Risk and Safety Team to accompany the case manager to the initial assessment.

4.5 If the case manager is unavailable, the SNM / Assistant Head / Neighbourhood Service Manager should arrange for the home visit to be completed within the target 5 working day timeframe.

5. Hoarding assessment

5.1 The case manager will complete the assessment form at the initial home visit. This will help to identify the following issues and considerations:
- the nature of the hoarding,
- the impact the hoarding behaviour has on the tenant,
- any repairs or structural issues
- any immediate health and safety or fire risks
- any support needs, vulnerability or safeguarding issues
- the tenants level of insight into the hoarding problem
- whether the tenant consents to engage in services to de-clutter the property

5.2 The case manager should include the assessment outcomes in notifications or referrals to internal or external partners (if the tenant has given consent for their information to be shared).

Refer to the assessment guidance which contains guiding questions to help the case manager structure and complete the hoarding assessment.

6. Actions following hoarding assessment

The hoarding assessment will identify and guide actions by the case manager. All actions and updates taken as part of managing the case should be logged in the QL contact. Refer to Managing cases on QL and record keeping for further guidance.

Fire

6.1 The case manager will notify the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and request a Home Fire Safety Visit. The case manager should give their name and contact details in the 'additional information' section of the online form.

6.2 A Home Fire Safety Visit must still be made even if the tenant does not consent to a visit. The case manager should note that consent has been refused in the 'additional information' section on the online request form but request that the LFB 'cold call' the property. The LFB will do a door knocking exercise at the

hoarded and surrounding properties to offer fire safety advice and attempt to engage with the tenant.

6.3 The case manager will Identify an appropriate exit route for the tenant from the property in case of a fire and make clearing this route a priority if it is blocked.

Support

6.4 The case manager will:

- Make referrals to Social Services, Community Mental Health Team or safeguarding where appropriate.
- Encourage and support the tenant to contact their GP to access treatment for hoarding e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. The case manager can also directly notify the GP that the tenant is hoarding where the contact information is available.
- Contact any family member or friends that provide support. They can assist the tenant's engagement process and provide assistance and support to de-clutter and clear the property.
- Refer the tenant to any support services that may provide needs specific support (i.e. befriending, disability)

6.5 Peabody Tenant and Family Services team (TFST)

A referral to TFST can be made where:

- The property has a clutter image rating of 4-9

- The tenant is at risk of eviction due to failing to appropriately maintain the property

- The tenant consents to engage with the support

- There is no statutory services involvement

Qualifying cases with a clutter image rating 4-5 will be eligible for early intervention support and up to 4 visits. Qualifying cases with a clutter image rating 6-9 will be eligible for crisis intervention and up to 7 visits.

To refer the case to TFST, email TFST a completed referral form.

TFST will not provide a de-cluttering service, but can offer emotional support and coaching to the tenant so that they can manage the transition through the de-cluttering process. Funding for de-cluttering must be agreed prior to TFST involvement to avoid any disruption or delay to TFSTs work with the tenant.

Repairs / pest control

6.6 The case manager will raise any repairs or support the tenant to raise the repair. The contractor must be notified that the property is hoarded.

6.7 Where necessary, the case manager should attend the property with the contractor to provide support for the tenant and assist the contractor to gain access.

6.8 Decisions regarding recharging the tenant for repairs or pest control services should be made on a case by case basis. Refer to the repairs policy for further guidance.

Gas safety and essential repairs

6.9 If gas check or essential repairs are required but cannot be completed because of the hoarding, the case manager will work with the tenant to de-clutter the immediate area so they can be completed.

6.10   The case manager will take immediate action to gain access to property in line with the gas servicing policy, if the tenant does not provide access for works,

6.11   Enforcement action should be considered if the tenant does not engage with de-cluttering process. See enforcement action for further guidance

7. De-cluttering the property

The overall goal for managing the clutter and what 'success' looks like will be different for each tenant. The minimum aim is to clear the clutter so that:
- each room can be used for its intended purpose,
- repairs or safety checks can be completed, and
- identified health and safety and fire risks are resolved.

7.1 The case manager will ensure the tenant is supported to organise and clear the clutter. This support may be from a partner agency or from the case manager (where no 3rd party support exists).

7.2 The case manager will visit the property regularly to review the tenant's de-cluttering progress, even where the tenant is receiving support from a 3rd party agency. The frequency of monitoring visits will vary from case to case, but should happen every 4 weeks as a minimum.

7.3 If the tenant does not engage with the de-cluttering process, the case manager could consider whether enforcement action may be appropriate. See enforcement action for further guidance.

7.4 If no de-cluttering service or support is in place or available, the case manager is responsible for developing and implementing an action plan to help the tenant manage their own clearance. The action plan must be agreed in writing with the tenant.

7.5 The action plan should contain realistic and time-framed goals which are prioritised; for example, clearing a room to allow access to a boiler with an outstanding safety check or to re-establish cooking or washing facilities. Refer to separate guidance note for tips and information on working with people who hoard.

7.6 Unless there is an immediate and significant health and safety risk, an enforced deep clean or de-cluttering will not resolve the hoarding. Clearing a property does not address the underlying hoarding behaviour and so the tenant will continue to hoard – possibly to a greater extent than before – to compensate for the loss of their original possessions. It will cause the tenant extreme anxiety and so will make them less willing to engage with future support.

7.7 Specialist support services – Clouds End

There are some agencies which provide specialist support to hoarders. Peabody has links with Clouds End, which works directly with people to address the impact of their hoarding behaviour.
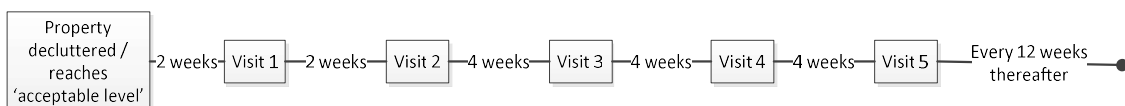
Referrals to Clouds End must be authorised by the relevant Peabody Assistant Head of Neighbourhoods or the Gallions Neighbourhood Services Manager, who are responsible for budget management.

The case manager should consider a referral to Clouds End if the hoarding behaviour is significantly entrenched, they are unable to engage with the tenant and there is a significant health and safety risk.

To refer a case, the case manager should send an email, outlining details of the case, property and concerns.

7.8 Support after de-cluttering

Once a property has been de-cluttered, or the hoarding reduced to an 'acceptable' level, a structured distancing of intervention and visits from the case manager is likely to help the tenant independently manage their behaviour. This distancing of direct intervention should involve clear timescales that are agreed with the tenant. Suggested timescales are as follows:

Property decluttered / reaches 'acceptable level' —2 weeks— Visit 1 —2 weeks— Visit 2 —4 weeks— Visit 3 —4 weeks— Visit 4 —4 weeks— Visit 5 — Every 12 weeks thereafter ●

12 week visits should continue until the property is consistently maintained at an agreed 'acceptable level'.

8. Enforcement

8.1 Decisions on what action to take will vary on a case by case basis, and must include a consideration of the rights of the person that hoards against those that are affected by their behaviour and/or the health and safety risk caused by the hoarding. In some cases this may include taking legal action.

8.2 Enforcement tools can give a swift short-term solution to a hoarding problem but will not generally be an effective way to manage the hoarding in the long term. People who hoard do not generally understand the problems caused by their hoarding behaviour and will be unlikely to respond to the rationality of the enforcement process and change their behaviour accordingly.

8.3 Enforcement action should only be considered if repeated and sustained attempts to support the tenant have been made, they have not engaged with this support and where:
- there is a significant breach of tenancy, or
- the property poses a significant health and safety risk

8.4 Enforcement may include:
- an **injunction**, when there is a particularly serious risk to health and safety or access is needed to carry out works. These could require the tenant to clear their property or provide access for repairs or checks or give Peabody or social services to enter the property to clean or make repairs or safety checks.
- **possession** – Possession proceedings should only be considered as a last resort. If the tenant is vulnerable or disabled then extra care must be taken to ensure that seeking possession is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim and that all other possibilities have been considered. Relevant factors the court will consider will include: the condition of the property, the number of times it has been cleared, how long the problem has persisted, what efforts we have made to engage with the tenant, what support has been provided and the impact on others.

8.5 Support should continue to be offered to the tenant to de-clutter the property even where enforcement is on-going.

9. Case management guidance

9.1 The case manager will maintain all relevant documentation and information so that there is a full and accurate history of actions that are taken when managing

a case. This is important if legal action is necessary or if we are required to provide information if there is a serious incident or case review.

9.2 The case manager should record all actions taken as part of managing the case in a QL contact. This contact should be raised and logged as follows

- Additional classes: N_HOODS > ENQUIRY > REF_NM.
- Brief description section: Hoarded property
- Full description section: Details from referral email, nature of hoarding, items being hoarded, impact on communal areas.

9.3 The case manager should allocate the case to themselves and record all actions taken as part of managing the case within this contact. Each action must be recorded using action code 0_UPDA.

9.4 Actions will include:

- attempts to contact the tenant. This should include method of contact (e.g. telephone, email, letter, visit) date and time.
- details of contact with the tenant. This should include method of contact (e.g. telephone, email, letter, visit) date and time.
- hoarding assessment outcome, form and details of action plan
- details of referrals made
- details of contact with internal and external agencies / partners (copy and paste emails, provide brief summary of telephone conversation)
- updates on the tenants progress following monitoring visits and a record of whether they are complying with the action plan.

9.5 Photographs should be taken at all visits to document and monitor the hoarding. The case manager should try to gain verbal consent from the tenant, however in cases where photographs are needed to record and document health and safety or structural issues, verbal consent may not always be necessary.

9.6 Photographs should be stored on EDMS and should be marked with the date and time they were taken.

9.7 <u>Safeguarding and self-neglect</u>

Safeguarding is any activity aimed at ensuring adults or children are protected from harm and abuse. The case manager is responsible for making a safeguarding referral.

Self-neglect can arise as a result of various mental, social, physical and environmental factors. Hoarding can be an indicator that someone is suffering from self-neglect or, conversely, hoarding behaviour can lead to self-neglect if extreme

clutter limits someone's ability to maintain proper hygiene or conform to care and/or medical plans.

Refer to the safeguarding procedures if there is a safeguarding concern about any adult or child living at the hoarded property, including in relation to self-neglect.

9.8 Information sharing and data protection

It may be necessary to share information about a hoarded property or person that hoards with other individuals or organisations. All staff have a duty to ensure that personal information is processed lawfully and fairly under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. Decisions about what information is shared, and with whom, should be made on a case by case basis with regards to the following:

- Written consent must be obtained from the person hoarding to share their information. It should be explained to them what information may be shared, and the purpose of it being shared.
- Information sharing should be done on a need to know basis.
- Information must be shared in reference to and in line with any Local Authority information sharing protocols, where they are in place.
- Information can be shared without the explicit consent of the person hoarding for the purposes of safeguarding.

Refer to the Data Protection policy and procedure and Safeguarding policy and procedures for further information.

9.9 Partnership working

Hoarding often involves complex issues which require an input from specialists in areas such as mental health, adult social services, housing and property services. Not all approaches are available to each partner, and so working with different agencies increases the opportunities and resources available to tackle the hoarding issue. Partnership ensures effective use of resources and reduces duplication of work.

Regular multi-agency meetings – attended by all agencies involved in the hoarding case – are an effective way to manage and coordinate the response to the hoarding issue. Where these meetings are not in place, the case manager should liaise with the appropriate agencies to convene them.

9.10   Lone working

Staff should ensure that all visits are carried out in accordance with the Lone Working policy.

The case manager should seek advice from the Health and Safety team or their manager if they have any concerns about entering a property.