

EastendHomes

HOARDING POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 EastendHomes aims to support the maintenance of tenancies; to assist vulnerable residents with their physical and mental health; and to prevent the creation of risks to public health or fire safety.
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following EEH documents:
- Vulnerability Strategy
 - Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Single Equality Scheme
 - Fire Safety Policy
 - Gas Safety Policy
 - Property Audit Policy
- 1.3 This policy relates primarily to EastendHomes' tenanted properties.

2. DEFINITION

- 2.1 EastendHomes believes that referring to an individual as a 'hoarder' can be considered derogatory or offensive by that person, and can damage the professional relationship between landlord and individual. Therefore this policy and the EEH Hoarding Procedure refer to a resident or 'an individual with hoarding tendencies', seeking to describe the behaviour rather than placing a label on an individual.
- 2.2 Hoarding can take on many forms, but will commonly involve:¹
- The acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be of useless or limited value
 - Living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed
 - Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding
- 2.3 EastendHomes acknowledges that for some residents the amount of possessions in their home does not relate to them having a hoarding disorder or other issue of mental health. Instead, 'clutter' may relate to issues of deterioration of physical health and/or lack of support networks. EastendHomes will seek to establish causes as a prerequisite to taking any action.

¹ Frost, Hartl & Gross

- 2.4 Although no two cases will be the same, three types of hoarding can be identified, and EastendHomes will aim to derive how we deal with residents with hoarding tendencies accordingly. These are:
- *Primary hoarding*: the main issue is hoarding although there may be related issues such as depression
 - *Secondary hoarding*: the main issue is a physical or mental illness, or alcohol or substance misuse. This causes the hoarding and it is the main issue which must be tackled
 - *Situational hoarding*: an individual who is prone to collecting a lot of clutter, and a change of circumstances such as moving to a smaller property means the issue escalates to hoarding

3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 EastendHomes will work in partnership with other relevant agencies to co-ordinate support for identified individuals. EastendHomes will seek to gain input from specialist agencies and other partners to develop appropriate strategies for each case, working with and responding to the needs of each individual.
- 3.2 EastendHomes aims to raise awareness of the impacts of hoarding, both on an individual with hoarding tendencies and on others. This includes impacts on neighbours and the economic and environmental impacts which can arise. Staff will receive appropriate training to support them in understanding and managing hoarding cases.

4. PROVIDING SUPPORT IN HOARDING CASES

- 4.1 EastendHomes is committed to supporting residents with hoarding tendencies who agree to engage with support, balancing their needs with those of other residents.
- 4.2 When a possible case of hoarding is identified and the individual agrees to engage with EastendHomes, an initial assessment will be carried out. This will assess whether there is evidence of hoarding, and where evidence is identified, the level of risk posed both to that individual and to others, and the degree of willingness to engage with support. A decision over the appropriate action(s) to take will then be made by reference to the EastendHomes Hoarding Procedure.
- 4.3 Where an individual does not agree to participate in an initial assessment, or refuses support at a later stage, EastendHomes may pursue enforcement to remedy identified risks to the individual or others. However pursuit of enforcement will not mean the withdrawal of support and EastendHomes will continue to offer support if the individual agrees to re-engage.
- 4.4 If EastendHomes has good reason to suspect that the individual with hoarding tendencies may lack mental capacity, a referral will be made to the Community Mental Health Team for a mental capacity assessment.

- 4.5 All cases of hoarding identified by EastendHomes will be reviewed at the quarterly Anti-Social Behaviour – Internal Performance Review meetings, including those which are not being managed through the Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure.

5. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 5.1 EastendHomes recognises that hoarding is a complex topic with a wide variety of contributing factors and causes, and that no two cases will be the same. Individuals with hoarding tendencies are also likely to have a variety of mental and/or physical health needs, and may need related support such as financial management. EastendHomes will in all cases seek to engage with appropriate specialist agencies to meet the identified needs of an individual and other affected parties.
- 5.2 EastendHomes will communicate to our external contractors an expectation that any suspected cases of hoarding identified by workmen are reported to the local housing centre. This will be written into contracts.
- 5.3 When working with external agencies to provide support, EastendHomes may need to share relevant personal identifiable information regarding the individual. This will be done in keeping with the EastendHomes Data Protection Policy. Where possible, referrals will be made with the individual's explicit prior consent, but where this is not possible (for example by reasons of capacity), appropriate information may be shared in keeping with data protection obligations.

6. ENFORCEMENT

- 6.1 EastendHomes acknowledges that the optimal solution in hoarding cases is for the individual to engage with support and resolve the causes of the hoarding. Forcing a resident who hoards to take part in a large-scale clearance of accumulated items is likely to present only a temporary alleviation of the impacts, and may have negative impacts on the well-being of the individual with hoarding tendencies.
- 6.2 EastendHomes also recognises however that the impacts of hoarding can be significant on neighbours and other users of the local area, as well as presenting risks to both the individual and others. Where the impacts or risks are significant enforcement may be necessary. Enforcement action will only be taken where:
- The individual's behaviour is causing significant harm to themselves or another party
 - The individual has consistently failed to engage with support offered by EastendHomes and/or other agencies and the ongoing actions have been proven to have a harmful impact on themselves and/or others

- Where access is required to carry out legal obligations such as gas safety checks, and the individual has repeatedly refused to grant access

6.3 Further to sign-posting to relevant support agencies, enforcement action may include:

- Enforcement action for breach of tenancy
- Enforcement under the EEH Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure, where a significant nuisance is being caused to other residents
- Referral to Environmental Health for enforcement on public health grounds
- Referral to London Fire Brigade where a significant fire risk is identified
- Enforcement for breach of covenant of a lease, where the hoarding is posing a nuisance to other residents, or there is a fire risk endangering other parties

6.4 All cases will be reviewed on an individual basis and the use of any enforcement action, on the same basis as the support offered to the individual, will be determined by an assessment of the best methods to achieve a long-lasting remedy to the hoarding, acknowledging that short-term action may be required in cases where there is an immediate or urgent risk to individual or property.

7. **REVIEW**

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or more often where identified best practice or learning from case management supports improvements to EastendHomes' work in this area.