

**Paragon Asra Housing Limited**

# **Hoarding Policy**

August 2021

**Owning manager**

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**Department**

Housing Services

**Approved by EMT**

December 2023

**Next review date**

December 2023

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**Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) is committed to equality and diversity. This policy has considered the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics which are: race, gender, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage, civil marriage and partnership, and pregnancy and maternity explicitly.**

**We will make sure that all of our communication is fully accessible and to achieve this if a policy or document needs to be available in other formats we will provide them.**

## AUDIT LOG

Date of change	Who updated	Details of the change
19/08/21	Clare Foskett &Thomas Jackson	Reviewed policy and updated dates for next review.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) recognises the effect that hoarding and compulsive behaviour disorder has on the quality of life of its customers.
- 1.2 Hoarding has been recognised as a distinct mental health issue on its own and is referred to by the NHS as “Hoarding Disorder”. Hoarding disorder is challenging to treat, because many people who hoard frequently do not see it as a problem or have little awareness of how it impacts on their life or lives of others.
- 1.3 The Fire Service regards hoarders as being at higher risk in the event of a fire, due to an increased likelihood of fire starting and/or causing an injury or fatality.
- 1.4 PA Housing has adopted the Fire Service’s definition of hoarding which is:
  - collecting or keeping large amounts of various items in the home due to strong urges to save them or distress experienced when discarding them
  - many rooms in the home are so filled with possessions that the person can no longer use the rooms as designed
  - the home is so overloaded with things that everyday living is compromised
- 1.5 PA Housing is committed to dealing with hoarding, and will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations to provide advice and support to customers affected by this behaviour. Where there are sub-regional differences in London, the Midlands and the South East with partnerships and multi-agency working, we will ensure that current legislation and good practice is maintained.

## **2. Objective**

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to provide clear guidance on managing cases of hoarding, and any compulsive behaviour disorder associated with hoarding, so that they are dealt with in a consistent manner.

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner. The items can be of little or no monetary value and usually result in unmanageable amounts of clutter.
- 3.2 Hoarding can be described as collecting and being unable to discard excessive quantities of goods or objects. In some cases the problem may progress to become so severe that it causes significant distress and impairment. Though usually covert, hoarding can also become a concern for others when health and safety is threatened by the nature of the ‘clutter’ accumulating within and sometimes overflowing from the home.
- 3.3 Hoarding as a clinical symptom can occur in many different diagnosed disorders, such as dementia, schizophrenia, depression, learning disability, eating and personality

disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder. The two conditions in which hoarding is most likely to occur are elderly self-neglect (or 'Diogenes Syndrome) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) which is a form of anxiety disorder characterised by either obsessions (recurring thoughts or images that causes distress) or compulsions (repetitive behaviour or mental acts that the person is driven to perform to reduce stress or avoid a feared situation), or possibly both.

3.4 The following are the different types of hoarder:

- General hoarder, who can hoard anything
- Ordinary hoarder, who mainly hoards objects
- Specialist hoarder, who saves one or more specific categories of items
- Diogenes' Syndrome, also known as senile squalor. Extreme self-neglect, domestic squalor, social withdrawal, compulsive hoarding of rubbish and lack of shame
- Diogenes' Syndrome 'by proxy', where hoarding has led to the neglect of another elderly person sharing the same accommodation. This is an example of (unintentional) elder abuse
- Animal hoarder, who hoards more animals than they can properly care for
- Scarcity mentality hoarder, 'What if the depression returns'
- Frugality indecision hoarder, who believes that nothing should be wasted
- Frozen indecision hoarder, who finds no decision easy

3.5 There are many other causes. Hoarding could also be caused if the customer has a disability and is physically unable to clear things out, by downsizing (possibly as a result of welfare reform) or through family influences.

3.6 Animal hoarding is a complex issue and one that is not improved by simply removing the animals, because acquisition of more animals will often occur. The behaviour has significant effects on the individual concerned, their family, the animals and neighbours with huge costs to services.

## **4. Risks**

4.1 PA Housing has to consider the impact on a property and neighbours from significant hoarding. It can put the customer and their family at serious risk of health problems or injury and result in the removal of at-risk children or older adults from the home, homelessness or even death.

4.2 Homelessness can result if the customer does not engage with PA Housing or with other agencies to resolve the hoarding conditions, and it can be demonstrated in court that the level or type of hoarding seriously violates the tenancy agreement or lease.

4.3 Health problems include falls or accidents and inability of emergency personnel to enter or remove an ill person. Clutter and rubbish resulting in mould or infestation can cause respiratory and other health problems. Lack of sanitation can be particularly unsafe for customers with immune, cardiac or respiratory problems.

- 4.4 Blocked exits or heating vents can also pose a fire hazard and occasionally the nature or extent of hoarded items creates structural dangers due to excess weight. Hoarding of dangerous or flammable items poses great health and safety risks and as well as a potential risk to the property.
- 4.5 Safeguarding teams can remove children from a home that poses serious health and safety risks. Action may be taken on behalf of a dependent family member with a disability.
- 4.6 Hoarding of any type increases the speed of fire spreading. The Fire Service advises that the more clutter there is in a property, the more fuel there is for a fire to spread rapidly, making it harder to escape, particularly if exits are blocked.

## **5. Key points of policy**

- 5.1 PA Housing will work with partner agencies to reduce hoarding and compulsive behaviour by:
- supporting customers who are known or suspected hoarders or those who have a particular compulsive behaviour
  - raising awareness of hoarding and compulsive behaviour disorder
  - providing appropriate levels of training to staff, including basic awareness
  - adopting a robust approach towards managing cases of hoarding and compulsive behaviour disorder
  - acting upon all reports of such behaviour consistently in line with service standards
  - signposting those affected by this behaviour to appropriate support agencies
  - working closely with the Fire Service and other agencies such as the Adult Social Care Service to identify, monitor and reduce cases of hoarding and compulsive behaviour disorders.
- 5.2 PA Housing will use a range of interventions to resolve issues of hoarding, including working with various statutory and other agencies such as social services, GPs, Community Mental Health Teams, Anxiety UK and animal welfare agencies such as the RSPCA.
- 5.3 PA Housing will log hoarding cases on the housing management IT system which may be shared with partner agencies such as the Fire Service. Risk assessments and a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be completed and may be used when making referrals to partner agencies.
- 5.4 As a last resort PA Housing may consider taking legal action such as seeking an injunction, serving a tenancy caution or a notice of seeking possession of the property.

## **6. Monitoring and reporting**

- 6.1 Details of hoarders and particularly vulnerable customers will be logged on the housing management IT system or on a confidential register.
- 6.2 A PEEP will be completed and regularly reviewed. Any concerns raised from the assessment will be shared with partner agencies.
- 6.3 A vulnerability matrix will be used in case additional support or action needs to be taken to ensure the safety of the customer.
- 6.4 Line managers are responsible for monitoring this policy to ensure appropriate intervention where necessary. Monitoring will also include benchmarking externally where possible and appropriate.

## **7. Training**

- 7.1 Induction and refresher training will be carried out for all relevant staff to make sure that they are aware of this policy.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Customers have previously been consulted on this policy and their feedback was that it was clear and easy to understand.

## **9. Equality analysis**

- 9.1 This policy has undergone an equality analysis to ensure that PA Housing does not illegally discriminate and that it is accessible to everyone.

## **10. Legislation**

- 10.1 Tenants and leaseholders must comply with the relevant terms of the tenancy agreement or lease relating to acts of nuisance, pets, internal decorations, damage and access to property.
- 10.2 The Animal Welfare Act 2006 may apply or the Care Act 2014.
- 10.3 PA Housing will follow legislation and positive practice guidelines regarding data protection and confidentiality. Information will be passed to statutory agencies where required by law. In other circumstances, wherever possible personal sensitive information will be kept confidential.

## **11. Linked policies**

Anti-social Behaviour

Data Protection

Domestic Abuse

Estate and Communal Areas Management

Equality and Diversity

Fire Safety

Pet Management

Safeguarding

Services to Older Persons