Hoarding Policy
(Ref: HM18)

Purpose of Policy: The purpose of this Policy is to outline how the Association complies with the requirements of relevant legislation in relation to dealing with cases of hoarding.

Policy Monitoring Details	
Department:	Housing Management
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Status:	Association
Date Approved by Management Board:	29 April 2026
Planned Review Date:	3 years after approval
Regulatory Outcomes being achieved:	Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes 1 Equalities 2 Communication 4 Quality of Housing 5 Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements 7-10 Housing Options and Access to Social Housing 11 Tenancy sustainment
Association Values	▪ Committed ▪ Agile ▪ **People-Focussed** This Policy clearly explains how the Association deals with hoarding cases. ▪ Professional
Relevant Legislation	• Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 and tenancy agreements • Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 • Environmental Protection Act 1990 • Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 • Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 • Equality Act 2010
Tenant Consultation Required:	Yes
Equalities Impact Assessment	Yes

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1. Introduction

1.1 Hoarding can have a serious impact on the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals, neighbours, staff, and the wider community. As a landlord, we have a duty to ensure properties are maintained in a safe condition while also supporting tenants who may experience difficulties linked to hoarding behaviour.

1.2 This policy outlines how the Housing Association identifies, manages, and responds to hoarding. It supports a compassionate, person-centred approach while ensuring that legal and health and safety obligations are met.

2. Purpose of the Policy

2.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide a clear framework for recognising and responding to hoarding.
- Ensure a sensitive, supportive approach that considers underlying causes, including trauma, disability, or mental health conditions.
- Minimise risks to individuals, neighbours, staff, and property.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and tenancy obligations.
- Promote partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to:

- All tenants of the Housing Association.
- All staff, including housing officers, support teams, contractors, and maintenance staff.
- All properties owned, leased, or managed on behalf of the Housing Association.

4. Definitions

4.1 Hoarding

Hoarding is the ongoing accumulation of items or animals, accompanied by an inability or unwillingness to discard them, which results in living spaces becoming cluttered, unsafe, or unusable as intended.

4.2 Hoarding Disorder

Since 2013, Hoarding Disorder has been recognised as a diagnosable mental health condition under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM5). Characteristics include:

- Persistent difficulty discarding possessions.
- Living areas obstructed or unusable.
- Significant distress or impairment to daily functioning.

4.3 Types of Hoarding

- **Practical hoarding –** items kept for perceived future use.
- **Sentimental hoarding –** items kept due to emotional attachment.
- **Animal hoarding –** keeping more animals than can be adequately cared for.
- **Digital hoarding –** rarely relevant to property risk assessments but may accompany physical hoarding

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

5.1 This policy reflects responsibilities under:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 and tenancy agreements
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 (duty to safeguard adults at risk)
- Equality Act 2010 (recognising hoarding disorder as a potential disability)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Housing Officers

- Identify concerns and complete initial assessments.
- Conduct regular tenancy visits where hoarding is identified.
- Coordinate support and referrals to relevant agencies.
- Offer practical assistance and motivational support.
- Work collaboratively on agreed plans with tenants.

6.2 Property Services Team and Contractors

- Report any signs of hoarding that affect safety or access.
- Follow safeguarding and health and safety procedures.

6.3 Tenants

- Maintain their home in a safe, clean condition as required by their tenancy agreement.
- Engage with reasonable steps to manage risks and maintain access for statutory checks (gas, electrical, fire safety)

7 Identification and Assessment

7.1 Signs of Hoarding

- Blocked access to rooms, exits, or windows.
- Excessive items stored in hallways, stairways, or communal areas.
- Accumulation of waste or food items.
- Presence of pests.
- Refusal of access for repairs or inspections.

7.2 Hoarding Risk Assessment

Staff will use an agreed assessment tool (e.g., clutter rating scale) to determine:

- Level of risk
- Impact on health, fire safety, or structural condition
- Ability of the individual to manage daily living
- Need for immediate action or emergency intervention

7.3 Practical Barriers to Disposing of Items

The Association recognises that hoarding or the build-up of belongings can occur for reasons unrelated to mental health.

Some tenants may experience:

- Lack of access to transport for removal of bulky or recyclable items
- Physical disabilities or mobility issues that prevent lifting or moving items
- Financial barriers to arranging private uplifts
- Local council's kerbside-only uplift policies, makes non-kerbside disposal difficult for vulnerable tenants

The Association acknowledges that these practical barriers may lead to clutter or accumulation through circumstance rather than choice, and this should not be viewed or labelled as a mental-health-related hoarding disorder.

Where this is the case, a supportive, non-stigmatising, problem-solving approach will be taken.

7.4 Further details on the referral process, agency coordination, and operational steps are set out in the Association's Hoarding Procedure.

8. Response and Intervention

8.1 Person-centred Approach

The Housing Association recognises the emotional and psychological aspects of hoarding. We commit to:

- Treating all tenants with dignity and respect.
- Avoiding judgemental language.
- Recognising the distress that clearing belongings may cause.

8.2 **Support Options**

Depending on the assessment, support may include:

- Referral to mental health or social care services
- Fire safety home visits
- Advocacy support
- Financial or wellbeing support
- Decluttering support from specialist agencies
- Specialist support for animal hoarding i.e. Dogs Trust, Cats Protection or SSPCA

8.3 **Disposal Support and Uplift Services**

The Association will provide tenants with information and support on how to safely dispose of unwanted items, including large or bulky goods. This may include:

- Support tenants with assistance in clearance of items
- Assistance to access Local Authority bulky uplift services
- Help for tenants who cannot move items to the kerbside because of physical limitations
- Signposting to external agencies that offer low-cost or free collection, including charities, re-use organisations, and community groups
- Coordinating multi-agency support where required (e.g., social work, occupational therapy, voluntary sector partners)

Where a tenant is physically unable to move items or does not have transport, the Association will take reasonable steps to support identifying alternatives, ensure fairness, and reduce risk of unintentional accumulation.

8.4 **Enforcement Actions**

Where risks are severe, and support has not been effective, enforcement may be necessary to prevent harm or breach of tenancy. This may include:

- Rechargeable property clearances
- Formal warnings
- Legal notices to ensure access for safety checks
- Environmental health intervention
- Injunctions or possession proceedings (as a last resort)

All enforcement action will be proportionate, risk based and accompanied by support where possible.

9. Multiagency Partnership Working

8.1 Effective hoarding management requires collaboration. We will work closely with:

- Social services
- NHS mental health teams

- Fire and Rescue Service
- Environmental Health
- CEC Social Work Safeguarding teams
- Pet Specialist Agencies (such as Dogs Trust and SSPCA)
- Voluntary and community organisations

Information will be shared appropriately in line with data protection legislation and safeguarding duties.

9. Safeguarding

8.1 Hoarding may indicate that a person is vulnerable or at risk of self-neglect. Staff must follow safeguarding procedures where:

- There is risk of harm
- Children or vulnerable adults may be affected
- A tenant is unable to protect themselves from risk

9. Access for Statutory Checks

8.1 Tenants must allow access to:

- Gas safety checks
- Electrical testing
- Fire safety installations
- Repairs essential for health and safety

Where hoarding prevents access, Manor Estates Housing Association will take reasonable steps to work with the tenant to resolve the issue. Failure to provide access may result in legal action (HM Forced Access - guidance note.docx)

9. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Each case will have a plan that includes:

- Risk level
- Actions required
- Agencies involved
- Timescales for review
- Measures for improvement

The Hoarding Policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if changes in legislation or best practice require it.

9. Equality and Diversity

8.1 Manor Estates Housing Association is committed to equality and recognises that hoarding behaviour may be linked to disability. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where appropriate, balancing safety and wellbeing.