

Hoarding Policy

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Responsible Director	Customer Services
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Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) Required?	No

VERSION CONTROL NOTICE

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Contents

1.0	Introduction and scope	3
2.0	Legislation.....	3
3.0	Policy Statement.....	5
3.1	Introduction	5
3.2	Identifying Hoarding Issues	5
3.3	Managing the Issue.....	5
3.4	Provision of support	6
3.5	Referrals	6
3.6	Escalation	6
3.7	Extreme Cases	6
3.8	Enforcement.....	6
3.9	Confidentiality and Sharing Information.....	7
3.10	Recording cases	7
3.11	Further information and guidance.....	7
4.0	Equality & Diversity/ Human Rights	7

1.0 Introduction and scope

This Hoarding Policy has been developed in line with Wandle's values, which are:

- Think customer
- Build relationships
- Work together
- Aim high
- Own it

It will ensure that actions we undertake will be underpinned by our vision of:

"Homes to be proud of and services you can trust"

Wandle is committed to promoting independence and personal choice for customers living in our homes. There may, however, be occasions when through life style choices or as a result of a medical condition the collection of excessive quantities of goods or objects by customers becomes problematic for themselves or a nuisance to others. This situation, although taking many different forms, is known collectively as 'hoarding'.

Scope

This policy sets out the approach Wandle will take with its customers when it becomes aware of hoarding that has a detrimental effect in some form, such as:

- Inability to use facilities within a home and surrounding areas.
- Inhibiting personal functions and hygiene.
- Increased risk of fire / flooding hazard.
- Environmental hazard, including noise nuisance, unsightly appearance of properties and outside spaces, risk of infestation.
- Offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Hoarding is a safeguarding and mental health issue and is identified as an example of self-neglect in the statutory guidance to the Care Act 2014. This policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Adults Policy (or Safeguarding Children, if appropriate).

In pro-actively supporting customers to manage hoarding issues we deliver value for money by helping maintain the cleanliness and safety of our properties. More widely, we also deliver value for money for the public purse by helping customers with mental health conditions and thus potentially reducing hospital admissions and strain on public health services.

2.0 Legislation

Wandle will comply with the requirements of the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) [Regulatory Framework](#). This framework specifies that registered providers must:

- Treat all customers with fairness and respect.

- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their customers, including in relation to the equality strands and customers with additional support needs.
- Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

In delivering this Policy, Wandle will ensure we comply with all relevant legislation, the most notable of which includes:

Legislation	Main powers and relevance to <i>policy subject</i>
Housing Act 1988	Ground 12 – covers tenants in breach of their contractual (lease or tenancy) agreement conditions, other than rent payments. Ground 13 – covers waste, neglect or default concerning damage to the tenant's accommodation or common parts.
The Mental Health Act 1983	The main piece of legislation that covers the assessment, treatment and rights of people with a mental health disorder.
Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984	Outlines the legal action which can be taken in regard to any premises that is in a state which is harmful to health or causing a nuisance.
Environmental Protection Act 1990	Outlines the definition of 'Statutory Nuisances' which prevent the normal use of a premises.
The Animal Welfare Act 2006	Outlines the responsibility of owners and keepers of animals for ensuring that the welfare needs of their animals are met.
The Mental Capacity Act 2005	Designed to protect and empower individuals who may lack the mental capacity to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. Applies to individuals aged 16 and over.
The Care Act 2014 – Statutory Guidance	Identifies hoarding as a form of self-neglect, which is a category of abuse and neglect.
Public Health Act 1936	Outlines the powers available to local authorities to remove 'noxious matter' from, or cleanse, a residence or premises.
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	The requirement to identify fire risks, evaluate them and implement suitable controls to protect occupants of residential buildings.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 Introduction

Wandle will promote independent living and the right for all of its customers to make individual choices even when this requires tolerance of unconventional lifestyles or where people appear to act in ways that are against their best interests.

However, where customers display behaviours that pose a risk or have a detrimental impact on themselves or others around them, Wandle will take necessary action, on a case by case basis. This could include removing items in communal areas which pose a fire or health and safety risk.

When a customer's hoarding behaviour continues to pose a serious risk to their health and safety, professional intervention may be required. With the exception of statutory requirements, any intervention or action proposed must be with the customer's consent. In extreme cases of hoarding behaviour Wandle may need to consider whether the customer has capacity to consent to the proposed action or intervention.

3.2 Identifying Hoarding Issues

Wandle will identify customers who may be experiencing hoarding issues through a variety of means, including:

- Through staff observations from periodic tenancy visits.
- Via regular visits for supported housing customers.
- Via tenancy audit visits or annual gas safety checks.
- Via reporting from third parties, including neighbours, friends, family, advocacy groups or statutory enforcement agencies.
- Via self-referral or requests for assistance.

Any member of staff, or contractor, who may feel they have identified a potential hoarding issue regarding our customers should refer this via the formal referral process to the Resident Support Service.

Wandle will consider checking properties on a periodic basis where we are aware of customers who have exhibited previous hoarding behaviours.

3.3 Managing the Issue

In all identified hoarding cases the Team Leaders, Neighbourhood Customer Service Officers (NCSOs) and Resident Support Officers will ensure an objective, sensitive and non-judgmental approach is adopted to customers. There will always be an assumption of mental capacity unless there is a professional assessment confirming otherwise, in which case the use of qualified professionals will be considered.

Once a hoarding issue has been identified we will carry out a risk assessment and action plan to determine the best approach for dealing with the issue. The action plan will be shared with the customer and any advocates that may be involved. In the first instance, the emphasis will always be on provision of support and 'action by consent', collaborating with the customer and getting them to work through their own solutions to the problem.

3.4 Provision of support

Wandle will first look to provide support to the customer from within our own resources which will involve working directly with the customer to try and resolve the issues. This may include increased frequency of visits from Resident Support or NCSOs. We may also involve known friends, relatives or advocates of the customer for low level assistance. This will only be done when appropriate, and with the consent of the customers, unless exemptions apply.

3.5 Referrals

If customers showing symptoms of hoarding fail to respond to the above measures, referrals may be made to external agencies including General Practitioners, Social Services Departments and Community Mental Health teams, and for enforcement issues, Environmental Health Officers and/or the London Fire Brigade (if this has not already been previously required).

Where this does occur Wandle are likely to adopt a case conferencing approach (Multi-agency) between the multiple agencies concerned and will where possible and appropriate, involve the subject of the hoarding concern in any discussions and subsequent revisions to the action plan.

3.6 Escalation

Where the customer fails to stick to the plan or there is a sudden worsening of the situation, Wandle may have to consider escalation to the next stage in the process, which may involve providing some form of enabling service including clearing /cleansing services.

Items in communal areas will be dealt with in accordance with Wandle's Fire Safety Management Policy.

Wandle may choose to recharge the customer the costs of any clearing / cleansing works and each case will be considered on an individual basis.

3.7 Extreme Cases

Wandle will ensure any clearing of items from properties is carried out with due regard to the legal requirements and legislation. In extreme cases Wandle may consider moving the customer(s) responsible to alternative accommodation to provide a 'clean start'. This may take the form of downsizing a customer to assist in management of their property.

If the level of fire risk is high and/or the effect on the local community/other building occupants is unacceptable, we will take action alongside our partner agencies (Social Services, Environmental Health, and/or the London Fire Brigade) to compel the resident to clear the property of the offending items.

3.8 Enforcement

Wandle will assess each case of hoarding on an individual basis and will respond appropriately to the circumstances involved. Where the above actions have failed to bring about appropriate improvements, Wandle will consider taking enforcement action. This may include legal action to recover tenancies.

Any decisions to bring a tenancy to an end as a result of hoarding will be taken by the Neighbourhood Manager having considered all relevant information from the Neighbourhoods and Resident Support Team.

3.9 Confidentiality and Sharing Information

We strongly believe that a right to independence, choice and self-determination is integral to people's life chances. This right extends to their having control over information about themselves and how that information is shared.

We also recognise that information sharing between organisations is essential to safeguard adults at risk. Therefore, decisions about what information is shared and with who will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

The Data Protection Policy must be followed. Wherever possible, we will seek an adult at risk's consent to share information. However, we cannot guarantee full confidentiality when a duty to safeguard adults at risk, vital interests or the public interest is greater than our responsibility to an individual.

3.10 Recording cases

Clear and detailed procedures will outline the process for recording hoarding cases.

3.11 Further information and guidance

Please see the [Health and Safety guidance for managing the fire risks associated with hoarding](#).

4.0 Equality & Diversity/ Human Rights

Equality & Diversity is central to our business; promoting fairness and opportunity for customers and staff; helping provide the best services shaped by and for customers; and right for recruiting and developing our staff.

We are committed to celebrating diversity. To ensure equal access to our services is available, Wandle will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and all other legislative requirements relating to equality. We will work to avoid exclusions or restrictions that are not appropriate to the housing and support needs of our customers and that may lead to discrimination. We will endeavour to ensure that all customers receive a consistent level of quality service.

At Wandle, we have adopted equality, diversity and inclusion as core values and place all our policies in the context of the following objectives:

- Ensuring that all our customers and staff are treated with dignity and respect
- Providing a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for staff, customers and visitors
- We seek to be a genuinely inclusive organisation and our aim is to integrate equality and diversity in all aspects of our day-to-day activity.
- We are committed to supporting customers and staff access information in a way that suits individual needs.

Equality Consideration

Under the *Equality Act 2010* Wandle must consider whether our policies adversely affect our customers and/or staff.

The following table identifies whether this policy disproportionately impacts upon any individuals in regard to the key protected characteristics, as identified in the Act:

Special Characteristic	Any impact? (Yes or No)
age	Yes
disability	Yes
gender reassignment	No
marriage and civil partnership	No
pregnancy and maternity	No
race	No
religion or belief	No
sex	No
sexual orientation	No

As this policy may impact upon individuals in regard to one or more of these protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and can be found at: <https://intranet.wandle.com/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=3326>