

Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out Soha's approach to addressing issues related to clutter, hoarding behaviours, and unsanitary properties.

Soha is committed to identifying, supporting and improving the lives of adult hoarders who live in our properties by providing comprehensive assessments, personalised actions plans, and access to external agencies to:

- **Ensure Safety:** Protect the health and safety of tenants, residents, and the community by addressing hazards associated with cluttered and unsanitary living conditions.
- **Promote Well-being:** Support individuals struggling with hoarding behaviours by providing access to resources and assistance, improving their quality of life.
- **Maintain Property Standards:** Ensure properties are kept in a condition that meets health, safety, and aesthetic standards, preventing deterioration, pest infestation and potential damage.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Adhere to local laws and regulations regarding property maintenance and safety, avoiding legal issues and potential fines.

By establishing a clear policy, Soha can systematically address hoarding behaviours, ensuring a balanced approach that considers the needs and rights of individuals and the wider community.

Scope of the Policy

This policy should be used by all employees to understand the obligations placed upon the organisation to maintain a safe environment for our residents and employees within our properties.

Definition of Hoarding

Hoarding behaviour is a psychological condition. There are three distinguishable characteristics, as defined by Frost and Hartl (1996):

- The acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of 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.

Hoarding behaviour has historically been considered a form of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) because between 18 and 42% of people with OCD experience some compulsion to hoard. However, hoarding behaviours can also affect people without OCD.

Hoarding can manifest in various forms, each with its own characteristics and challenges. Here are some common types of hoarding:

Inanimate objects:

This could consist of one type of object or a collection of a mixture of objects such as old clothes, newspapers, food, containers or papers

Animal Hoarding:

This type involves keeping a large number of animals without the ability to properly care for them.

Digital Hoarding:

There is little research on this matter and it may not seem as significant as inanimate and animal hoarding. However, people who hoard data could still present with same issues that are symptomatic of hoarding. Data hoarding could present with the storage of data collection equipment such as computers, electronic storage devices or paper. A need to store copies of emails, and other information in an electronic format.

Intervention and support

We will identify residents who may be hoarding, by using the Clutter Image Rating Scale see Appendix 1 alongside our Hoarding Risk Assessment questionnaire.

Where residents display behaviours that pose a risk or have detrimental impact on not only themselves but others around them, we will follow our Hoarding Risk assessment to take a graded approach to intervention in order to provide a measured response to the issue dependent upon its severity.

Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and responses will be appropriate to the circumstances of the person involved. Sometimes it may be necessary to take steps out of sequence. We aim to ensure that the referral pathways are followed, managed and monitored.

Partnership working

Soha will work with a range of services such as social care, community mental health teams, the Fire Service, environmental health service and any other relevant person/agency as required.

We will notify the relevant authorities where we identify any safeguarding issues, such as self-neglect or where children and young people are at risk.

Multi-agency meetings to share information should be considered in complex cases, where there are significant risks so they can be understood, and the risk can be appropriately managed. Wherever possible the person themselves should be included in the meeting along with significant others and an independent advocate where appropriate.

Tenancy Enforcement

We will take all possible steps to work with the resident, their advocates and other relevant agencies before we begin any enforcement action. Where appropriate, especially in cases of extreme hoarding which have been identified as posing an excessive or high risk, we assess whether a resident has capacity before we take any further action.

We will consider a range of actions – including enforcement – against a resident where they refuse to engage with offers of support and where:

- A resident does not provide access for essential health and safety checks such as gas safety and electricity safety
- The condition of the property makes it virtually impossible or presents a fire safety risk for works to be carried out by a member of staff or contractor
- We are required to respond to a statutory Environmental Health Notice
- The health and safety of the resident or others is at risk

We will continue to offer support to the resident to clear their property even after we begin enforcement action, as we recognise that a resident may change their perspective of the situation at any point.

We will work to consider legal action only as a last resort or where there are sufficient risks. If we feel that it is appropriate, and that we have exhausted all avenues and where the resident has not engaged with offers of support.

We may recharge the resident where we de-clutter and deep clean a property or for the cost of any repairs caused by hoarding behaviour.

Legal Options

The individual's tenancy agreement or leasehold agreement will set out the specific clause that supports any enforcement action considered as part of this policy.

The **Housing Act 1988** Schedule 2 Grounds for Possession Gr 12, 13 & 14 sets out the following for Assured tenants;

Ground 12: Any obligation of the tenancy (other than one related to the payment of rent) has been broken or not performed.

Ground 13: The condition of the dwelling-house or any of the common parts has deteriorated owing to acts of waste by, or the neglect or default of, the tenant or any other person residing in the dwelling-house and, in the case of an act of waste by, or the neglect or default of, a person lodging with the tenant or a sub-tenant of his, the tenant has not taken such steps as he ought reasonably to have taken for the removal of the lodger or sub tenant. For the purposes of this ground, “common parts” means any part of a building comprising the dwelling-house and any other premises which the tenant is entitled under the terms of the tenancy to use in common with the occupiers of other dwelling-houses in which the landlord has an estate or interest.

Ground 14: The tenant or a person residing in or visiting the dwelling-house— (a) has been guilty of conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to a person residing, visiting or otherwise engaging in a lawful activity in the locality, (aa) has been guilty of conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to the landlord of the dwelling-house, or a person employed (whether by the landlord) in connection with the exercise of the landlord's housing management functions, and that is directly or indirectly related to or affects those functions, or (b) has been convicted of—(i) using the dwelling-house or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes, or (ii) an indictable offence committed in, or in the locality of, the dwelling-house.

It is imperative that appropriate and due consideration is given to **s15 of the Equality Act 2010**, to ensure no form of discrimination arises from a disability, or that a person is treated unfavourably because of something that arises due to the persons disability. However, it can be shown that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Proportionality assessments and pre-legal checklists must always be completed prior to any form of legal action being sought.

Legal options are not just restricted to Possession Action but can include other judicial interventions such as:

Injunctions A resident must have mental capacity to understand the terms of an Injunction and so an Injunction is only useful where the resident can control their behaviour and comply with the terms of the injunction. In such cases, a proportionality and pre legal checklist should be completed prior to any application being made. This will be very important because a breach of Injunction can lead to the contempt of Court and thus can lead to a substantial prison sentence.

Mental Capacity Act

Consideration needs to be given at an early stage to mental capacity in determining if the resident has the mental capacity to understand and make informed decisions regarding the concerns around their apparent hoarding behaviour.

The Mental Capacity Act applies to everybody who has dealings with people who may lack capacity, and particularly if they have a professional relationship with the person.

We will comply with the requirements set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and will consider the Act's five key principles during interactions with residents: • A presumption of capacity – every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise

- Supporting individuals to make their own decisions – a person must be given all practicable help before anyone treats them as not being able to make their own decisions.
- Unwise decisions – just because an individual makes what might be an unwise decision, they should not be assumed to lack capacity to make that decision.
- Best Interests – an act done, or decision made under the Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done in their best interests.
- Least restrictive option – anything done for or on behalf of a or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so.

We will take the opportunity to confirm capacity when appropriate (eg.at tenancy sign up, review and termination; during arrears discussions, anti-social behaviour incidents and complaints).

We will carry out an assessment when a person's capacity is in doubt, either because their behaviour causes concern about lack of capacity or because they have been diagnosed with an impairment or disturbance that affects the way their mind or brain works.

Learning and development

Resident facing roles will receive specialist training to:

- Identify, assess and engage with residents who may be hoarding;
- Provide guidance and support to those who hoard and, where applicable, refer them to further support;
- Promote awareness of hoarding and establish best practice and an awareness of legislation relation to hoarding.

The Clutter Image Rating Scale is the national tool used to assess levels of hoarding; we will use it as a tool to raise awareness across all resident facing teams.

Performance Measures

We will monitor the number of hoarding cases we manage through QL, and the associated costs and outcomes of cases in each financial year.

Resident Involvement

Members' Forum approved the policy

Responsibilities

This Policy will be reviewed by the Head of Communities and the Head of Housing at least every three years or sooner if there are changes in legislation or our operating environment.

Context

SP19 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy
Mental Capacity Act 2005
Equality Act 2010
Housing Act 1988

Members' Forum Approved	15 May 2025	SLT approved	16 April 2025
EIA Completed	10 April 2025	Review Due Date	By April 2028
DPIA Checklist Completed	11 July 2025		

Appendix 1

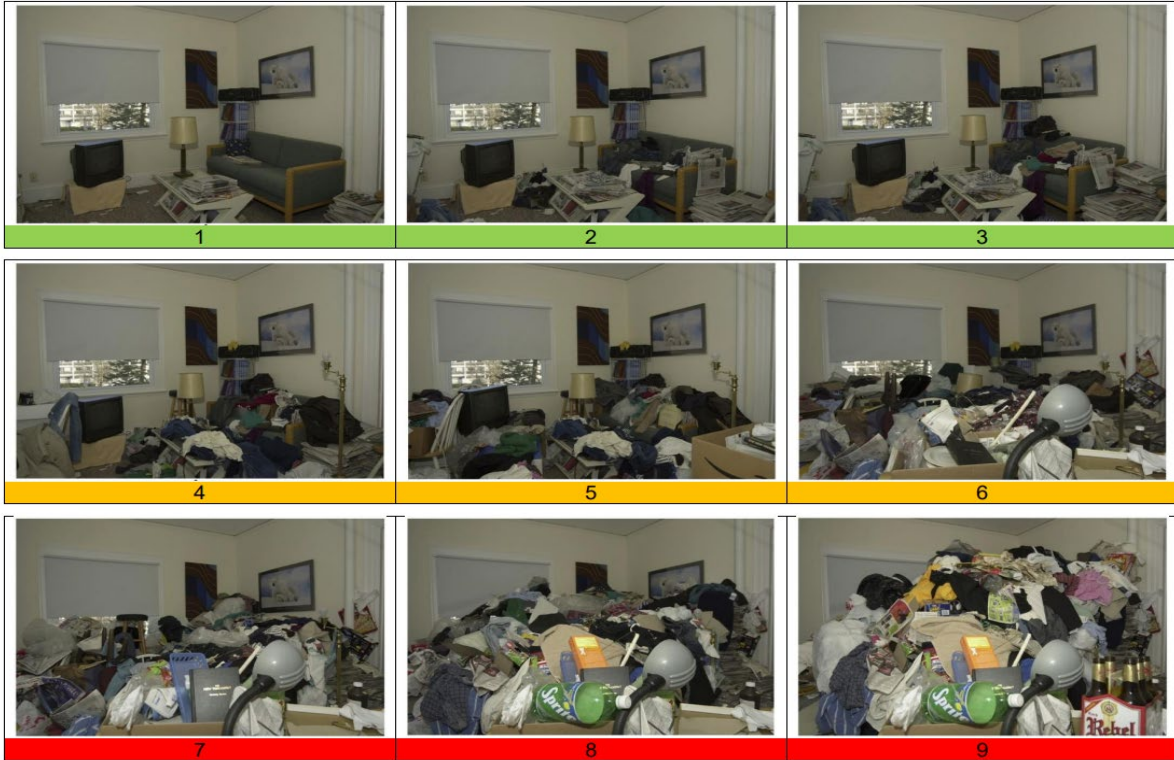
Clutter Image Rating – Bedroom

Please select the photo which most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.

 1	 2	 3
 4	 5	 6
 7	 8	 9

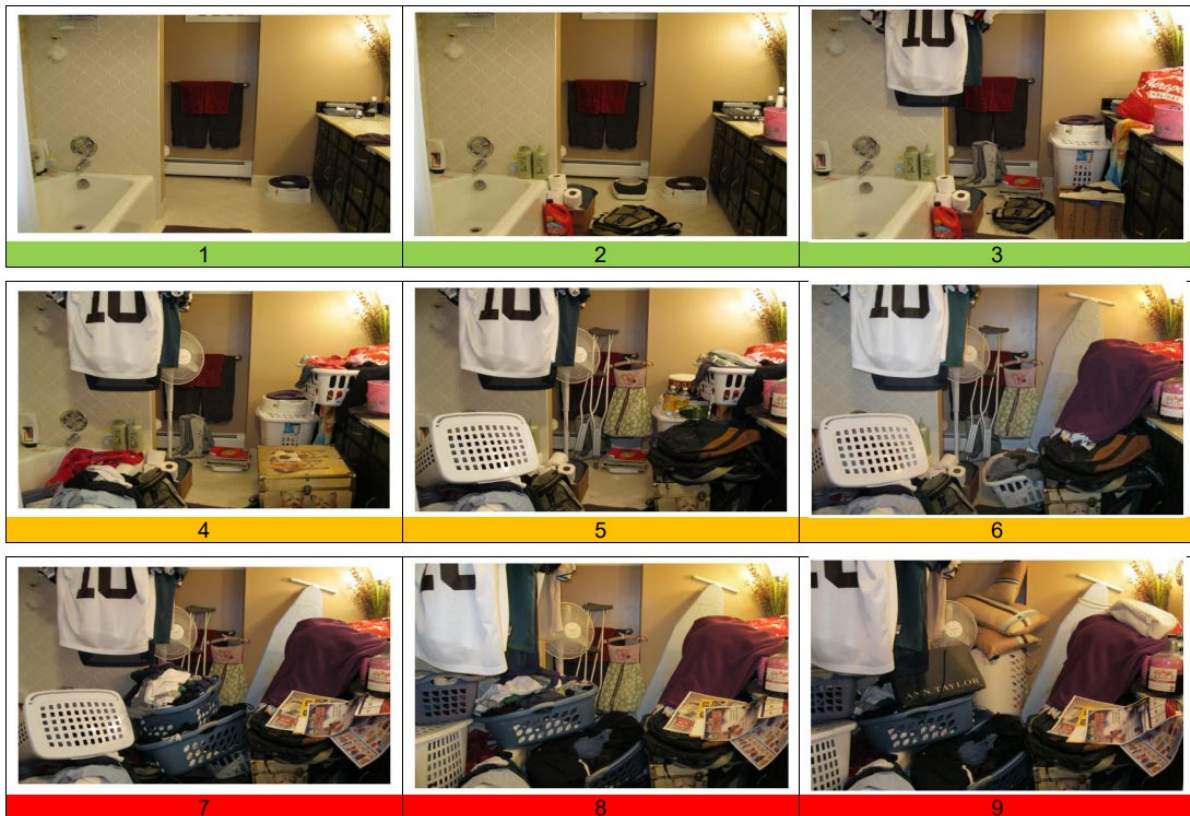
Clutter Image Rating – Living Room

Please select the photo which most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



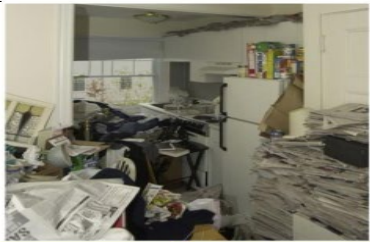
Clutter Image Rating - Bathroom

Please select the photo which most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



Clutter Image Rating - Kitchen

Please select the photo which most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.

		
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