

# Neglected and Hoarded Properties Policy

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## 1. Our policy statement

- 1.1. Hoarding disorder is a recognised mental health condition. It occurs where a person's pattern of collecting items becomes excessive and unmanageable, impacting their daily life and social activities.
- 1.2. People who hoard items often develop strong emotional attachments to their possessions, which can be difficult for others to understand. Hoarding behaviour is recognised as a complex issue. For customers affected, the prospect of removing items from their home can cause significant distress and anxiety.
- 1.3. As a responsible landlord, Sage seeks to take a balanced and proportionate approach, recognising both the needs of the individual customer and the impact on the wider community. Where hoarding concerns are raised, we will work with the customer to understand their circumstances, assess the level of risk, and identify appropriate support. Our approach focuses on engagement, safeguarding, and partnership working to help address the behaviour and reduce the risks posed by items within and around the home.
- 1.4. Where the level of risk is assessed as high, or where the impact on health, safety, or the local community is unacceptable, Sage will take further action in line with its policies and procedures. This may include working alongside statutory partners such as Social Services, Environmental Health, and the London Fire Brigade to ensure risks are appropriately managed. Enforcement action will only be considered where it is necessary, proportionate, and in the interests of protecting the customer, neighbouring households, and the wider community.
- 1.5. Sage will support and manage individuals with hoarding disorder, that meets the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the criteria which is noted below;
  - Ensure there is consistency across Sage when dealing with cases of hoarding disorder, whilst recognising variations in the level of partner engagement across our regions;
  - Reflect the communities we work in and ensure that these communities are sustainable, safe and secure;
  - To develop a pro-active approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighbourhoods;
  - Ensure that we are clear and transparent in respect of customers understanding their rights and responsibilities and vice-versa;
  - Take a proactive approach to ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of our approach to Hoarding.

## 2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Sage customers.
- 2.2 Our contractors working on our behalf and in accordance with contractual arrangements are required to escalate cases of suspected neglected and hoarded homes directly with Sage to investigate.

### 3. Hoarding

- 3.1 Hoarding has been recognised as a distinct mental health issue on its own and is referred to by the NHS as “Hoarding Disorder”. adopted The Fire and Rescue Service approach to defining hoarding, which recognises hoarding as behaviour where individuals collect or retain large volumes of items due to strong urges to save them or distress when discarding them. This can result in rooms being unusable for their intended purpose and significantly increases the risk of fire, injury or fatality. [Hoarding advice for carers and support | London Fire Brigade](#).
- 3.2 Sage acknowledges the diverse needs of its customer and recognises that everyday living will differ between households. Assessments will focus on proportionality, safety and risk whilst respecting the lifestyle choices of its customers.
- 3.3 Sage aims to raise awareness of hoarding disorder, with respect to the impact on the individual, others within the property, neighbours and the economic and environmental impact, through appropriate training and communication.
- 3.4 Sage will follow the hoarding action plan and hoarding ratings to assess the level of risk, as set out in the Neglected and Hoarded Properties Procedure.
- 3.5 It is our aim to support customers in addressing their hoarding behaviours and enforcement action should only be taken in instances when;
  - The customer’s behaviour is so extreme as to cause significant harm to themselves or other persons;
  - There has been sustained failed engagement, assessed through repeated attempts to engage with the customer and reviewed against agreed actions and timescales, and where the ongoing level of risk or impact remains unacceptable;
  - Where access to the property for any other statutory compliance checks are required and has been repeatedly refused in line with our policy and procedures, to ensure we meet our regulatory duties.

### 4. What you can expect from us

- 4.1 When we receive a report of a neglected or hoarded home, we will aim to carry out an initial assessment of the property within 10 working days. This assessment will consider the nature and extent of the hoarding, the level of risk, any impact on the customer, neighbours or the property, and whether the customer may have support needs.
- 4.2 Following the assessment, a risk assessment and action plan will be developed. Actions will be proportionate to the severity of the issue and the risks identified, including any threats to health, safety or the wider community. The action plan will be shared with the customer and where appropriate, any advocates or representatives involved.
- 4.3 Action plans may include an increased frequency of visits from the Homes and Communities Team to monitor progress and provide support. Where appropriate, and with the customer’s consent, this approach may also involve limited contact with known friends, relatives or advocates to help provide low-level practical assistance.

#### **Referrals and partnership working**

- 4.4 Depending on the circumstances, the action plan may involve engagement with, or referral to, external agencies, including but not limited to:
  - General Practitioners (GPs)

- Fire and Rescue Services
  - Mental health or psychiatric professionals
  - Adult and/or Children's Social Services
  - Environmental Health
- 4.5 Where concerns about vulnerability are identified, Sage will consider whether a referral to Adult Social Care or other relevant support services is appropriate.

#### **Escalation, enabling support and enforcement**

- 4.6 Sage will seek to work with the customer responsible for the hoarding to enable them to identify and progress their own solutions wherever possible. Where a customer does not adhere to the agreed action plan, or where there is a sudden deterioration or escalation in risk, Sage may need to escalate to the next stage in the process. This may include exploring enabling support, such as clearing or cleansing services, where appropriate.
- 4.7 Where multiple agencies are involved, Sage will adopt a case conferencing approach and, wherever possible and appropriate, will involve the customer in discussions and any subsequent revisions to the action plan.
- 4.8 If all reasonable measures have failed, Sage will approach the Local Authority to request support with the cost of removal. Where Local Authority assistance is not available, Sage may consider arranging removal itself and may, on a case-by-case basis, seek to recharge the customer for clearing or cleansing works. Sage may consider waiving reasonable recharge costs where customers are mentally or physically unable to remove hoarded items themselves.
- 4.9 Only as a last resort, and where sufficient progress has not been made and the level of risk and/or impact on the local community remains unacceptable, Sage may take formal or legal action in line with its policies. This may include requiring the removal of hoarded items and, where necessary, considering action to bring the tenancy to an end.

#### **Working with customers who may be vulnerable**

- 4.10 Hoarding behaviour is complex, and customers may be reluctant or unable to clear items from their home. This may be influenced by a range of factors, including physical or mental health needs, cognitive or sensory impairments, mobility issues, or financial pressures.
- 4.11 Where vulnerability is identified, Sage will work collaboratively with the customer to agree an action plan focused on reducing risk, addressing hoarding behaviour where possible, and ensuring appropriate support is in place. We will aim to agree reasonable timescales, recognising that hoarding cases can be complex and that progress may be slow.
- 4.12 Where hoarding poses an immediate or high level of risk to the customer, neighbours or the property, Sage will work closely with partner agencies to manage and reduce that risk. Where it is legally necessary and proportionate, and where engagement has not been successful, legal action may be taken to secure the removal of hoarded items.
- To manage future risks, Sage will log all vulnerabilities identified on the customers record. Sage will record and flag this information under 'poor property condition' to colleagues and contractors for awareness during visits.

## 5 Monitoring

- 5.1 Details of customers with hoarding tendencies and particularly vulnerable customers will be logged on Sage IT systems.

## 6 Equality and diversity

- 6.1 Sage is committed to ensuring all services are accessible to all our residents. Our staff will be trained to ensure they are communicating appropriately with our customers, and they have the relevant information.
- 6.2 This policy will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other defined within the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.3 On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print.

## 7 Delivery of this policy

- 7.1 This policy should be read alongside:

- Helping you access our services Policy
- Safeguarding of Adults Policy
- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding of Children and Young People Policy
- Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

- 7.2 The effective delivery of this policy including training, guidance and support required by staff for implementation of this policy will be provided by the Housing Operations Team.

## 8 Policy review

- 8.1 We will review this policy at least every three years to make sure it remains relevant and accurate unless:

- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, making sure that it continues to meet our aims and industry best practice
- We identify any problems or failures in this procedure as a result of customer and stakeholder feedback, complaints or findings from any independent organisations.

| Version | Checked by                 | Amendments                                        | Approved at/by | Date of Approval | Published by      | Date of Review |
|---------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1.0     | Head of Housing Operations | Strategic review and update to corporate template | LT             | June 2026        | Office Management | December 2027  |