

Hoarding Policy

1. Summary

- 1.1. This Policy will show that SHAL has a commitment to identifying hoarding tendencies from information reported by operational staff visiting our homes and that SHAL is committed to dealing with issues of hoarding and clutter in and around our homes.
- 1.2. SHAL will work with our tenants, residents and partner agencies where necessary to ensure that tenants are supported, and their homes are safe.

2. Objectives

- 2.1. To highlight SHAL's approach to balancing the needs of tenants and deal with situations we believe to provide a detrimental effect including:
 - 2.1.1. Risk of fire/ flooding
 - 2.1.2. Obstruction of everyday personal functions and hygiene
 - 2.1.3. Obstruction of facilities and provision within a home and surrounding areas
 - 2.1.4. Environmental hazards: risk of infestations, noise nuisance, appearance of property and the surrounding areas
 - 2.1.5. Animal Welfare Act 2006 offences

3. Details

- 3.1. SHAL will promote independence and personal choices for tenants living in our homes and through intervention, will offer support to an individual displaying hoarding tendencies, whilst reminding of consequence.
- 3.2. SHAL will intervene with preventative measures to reduce health and safety risks to the tenants, visitors to their home and staff members and will work with tenants to reduce neglect and wilful damage to the property.
- 3.3. Tenants are responsible for their behaviour, that of members of their household and visitors to their homes and are required to comply with the terms of their

tenancy agreement. SHAL will take enforcement action in connection with any breaches of the tenancy agreement if necessary, using the tools and powers available with the ASB, Crime & Policing Act 2014 (see ASB Policy).

3.4. What is Hoarding?

3.5. SHAL defines Hoarding as:

3.5.1. The inability of individuals to dispose of items that may or may not have a meaning to other individuals

3.5.2. Having rooms at home which are not fit for purpose or not accessible

3.5.3. The impairment of a person's functioning (both physical and psychological)

3.6. Animal hoarding is less common. It is considered a problem if the owner:

3.6.1. Is not able to provide basic care needs for the animal, such as food, water, shelter and veterinary care

3.6.2. Is allowing their animals to live in poor conditions i.e. overcrowding or a severe lack of hygiene

3.6.3. Is not aware that the animals are having a negative effect on their personal health or the health of their family members

3.7. Where suspected animal hoarding has been identified SHAL will refer to the RSPCA and other agencies, if necessary, for advice and assistance to ensure that any welfare concerns are addressed.

4. Outcomes

4.1. To offer an initial inspection to assess whether there is a potential hoarding issue, any degree of risk to the individual and others living in or near the property, and the individual's willingness to engage with support (see High Risk Homes Policy)

4.2. SHAL will then visit the property regularly and work with the tenant to remedy any issues identified. We will use the 'Clutter Image Rating' provided by Hoarding Disorders UK (Appendix 1)

- 4.3. SHAL will look to identify any Health and Safety risks to the tenant, their household, visitors, neighbours and staff members and will take necessary action proportionate to any risks identified.
- 4.4. We will work with the tenant to find support if the home is difficult to clean or if the living conditions are unhygienic.
- 4.5. We will identify any issues that have or could lead to rodent or insect infestations, blocked drains and any other problems which could affect neighbouring properties or communities.
- 4.6. SHAL identifies that hoarding tendencies may highlight an undisclosed health or mental health condition, lifestyle choice or lack of education. If highlighted, SHAL will liaise with the tenant and other agencies, where necessary, to highlight our vulnerability and/or safeguarding concerns.
- 4.7. SHAL has a responsibility to ensure that our homes are safe to live in. We will actively clear rubbish or clutter if there is a detrimental risk to health or safety.
- 4.8. In extreme cases of hoarding where a serious health and safety issue has been identified or where there is damage to the property, it may be necessary to Decant the tenant and their household in order for the home to be properly assessed. Any costs incurred due to neglect or wilful damage will be recharged to the tenant.
- 4.9. SHAL will work with multiple agencies where necessary, to assist in reducing hoarding issues and improving the quality of life of our tenants and those who live with them. We will work to develop strategies responding to the needs of those customers who compulsively hoard, and by developing best practice in this area.
- 4.10. Where access to the property is problematic or there is a lack of engagement allowing SHAL to fulfil our obligations or where it has been identified that there is a health and safety risk which could have a detrimental effect on others, we will take the necessary legal steps to obtain an Injunction. Any costs incurred in doing so will be recharged to the tenant.

4.11. Safeguarding

- 4.11.1. If there are children living in the home, it may be necessary to refer to Children's Services. The Housing Officer or Housing Manager will discuss this with the tenant(s) and will complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA). The EHA document is available via Professional Choices (<https://professionalchoices.org.uk/>) and the guidance notes should always be referred to. Referrals at Family Intervention Service Level 3 must have consent from the tenant(s) prior to the referral being sent.
- 4.11.2. If it is not possible to gain consent from the tenant(s), or if the tenant(s) is not engaging with Shal and we have been unable to gain access to the home, the Housing Manager or CEO (Shal's Safeguarding Leads) should contact the Early Help Consultation Line to discuss the referral.
- 4.11.3. Depending on the areas of concern (listed above), this referral may then be escalated to Level 4 in conversation with the Early Help Consultation Line. A referral at Level 4 should only be considered when you are concerned that a child may be suffering or at risk of significant harm. A statutory assessment of the family is required at Level 4 and will be completed by Children's Social Care.
- 4.11.4. It may also be necessary to refer to other support providers such as Adult Social Care, The Mental Health Team, Somerset Drug & Alcohol Service (SDAS), Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDAS) or The Nelson Trust. If the home is within a Together Team area, this should also be referred to.

4.12. Trauma informed approaches

- 4.12.1. We understand that trauma is common, and most people will have some form of trauma in their lives. We do not need to question tenant(s) about their experiences, instead we will ask what's happened, and we'll explain why we may be asking sensitive questions.

4.12.2. We will always work to consider the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) on a tenant's current circumstances and help to ensure any support needs identified are met.

4.13. It may be necessary to issue a Notice of Seeking Possession and to remove the home from Shal's planned investment programme i.e. kitchen and bathroom replacement, until the home has been brought up to an appropriate standard, or the tenant can demonstrate the steps they are taking to remedy any breaches of the tenancy agreement.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. A draft copy of this policy will be available on our website to allow members of the public an opportunity to comment on its contents prior to being submitted for approval by SHAL's board.
- 5.2. All tenants will be contacted by text to advise of its availability online and a draft copy will also be made available on request.
- 5.3. SHAL's tenant scrutiny panel will also be invited to review the policy and suggest any comments and amendments prior to the policy being approved by the board.

6. Equality and Diversity

- 6.1. SHAL are committed to the principles of equality and diversity throughout the organisation. In the context of dealing with domestic abuse cases, we aim to:
 - 6.1.1. Meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds and take into consideration gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
 - 6.1.2. Ensure our service is responsive and meets the needs of our existing and prospective tenants and customers.
 - 6.1.3. Understand the cultural implications and barriers to responding to domestic abuse.

7. Value for Money

Current version	Date agreed/reviewed	Review due	Owner	Pages
2.0	2024-07	2027-07	HM	Page 5 of 7
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SHAL is registered in England and Wales as a Community Benefit Society and an exempt charity (number 27772R).				

- 7.1. We will regularly review our processes to ensure resources and services are providing best value for money to our residents.

8. Owner

8.1. Housing Manager

9. Version and Revisions

9.1. This policy will be reviewed every 2 year(s)

9.2. Revisions

New version	Date	Revision details
1.1	03/08/2022	Added image clutter ratings Amended wording around EHA referrals to include Family Intervention Service