



Lancaster City Council

Housing and Property: Council Housing

HOARDING POLICY

March 2026

Prepared by:	CC
Effective from	March 2026
Approved by	JW
Review date	March 2029
Revision number:	1.2

(01524) 582929



councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk



Contents

1. Purpose of the Policy.....	3
2. Scope	3
3. Policy Aims	3
4. Definition of Hoarding	3
5. Causes of Hoarding.....	4
6. Levels of Hoarding (Risk Framework)	4
Level 1 – Low Risk.....	4
Level 2 – Medium Risk	4
Level 3 – High Risk.....	5
7. Early Identification	5
8. Risk Issues	5
9. Recording of Cases	5
10. Council’s Approach.....	6
11. Support for Tenants	6
12. Access for Repairs and Compliance	6
13. Enforcement Action	6
14. Safeguarding	7
15. Information Sharing	7
16. Monitoring	7
17. Related Policies and Procedures	8

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out Lancaster City Council's approach to identifying, assessing and managing hoarding behaviour within its homes. Hoarding can present significant risks to the safety, wellbeing and tenancy sustainment of residents and those living nearby.
- 1.2. This policy supports a consistent, supportive, trauma-informed approach which prioritises risk reduction, safeguarding, and sustaining tenancies wherever possible.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
 - All Lancaster City Council tenants
 - Leaseholders where hoarding poses health and safety risks
 - Staff working within Housing & Property, Repairs & Maintenance, Supported Housing and any contractor acting on the Council's behalf
 - Multi-agency partners involved in safeguarding or risk management

3. Policy Aims

- 3.1. Lancaster City Council aims to:
 - Support tenants to sustain their tenancy and live safely in their homes.
 - Identify hoarding early and intervene in a sensitive and respectful way.
 - Reduce risks to tenants, neighbours, staff and contractors.
 - Take a multi-agency approach, working closely with Social Care, Health, Fire & Rescue and specialist organisations.
 - Comply with legal and regulatory responsibilities, including HHSRS, Fire Safety duties, safeguarding, and the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards.

4. Definition of Hoarding

- 4.1. Lancaster City Council adopts the World Health Organisation classification of Hoarding Disorder (ICD-11), characterised by persistent difficulty discarding possessions, leading to accumulation that puts the resident's health, safety or home at risk.
- 4.2. Hoarding may include:
 - Excessive accumulation of belongings
 - Blocked routes/exits
 - Fire hazards
 - Unsanitary conditions
 - Excessive animals
 - Refusal of access for essential checks or repairs

- 4.3. Not all hoarding is intentional or linked to a mental health diagnosis. The Council will approach each case with an understanding of trauma, disability and inequality.

5. Causes of Hoarding

- 5.1. There is always a 'reason' why someone hoards, objects are claimed to be sentimental, they are pretty, or the tenants may feel that the objects they are keeping may come in useful, or they are keeping them 'just in case' they need them again.
- 5.2. The tenant may find it difficult to discard things, and have problems with decision making, organisation and order generally. They may be buying things that they may feel will 'make them happy'. They often acquire more things than they throw away, and if they do throw them away, they will struggle to cope with the feelings of loss.
- Compulsive Hoarding is associated with:
 - A family history of hoarding
 - Lack of relationships with family or friends
 - The experience of deprivation.
 - Struggling to cope with a stressful life event such as bereavement.
 - Growing up in a cluttered home
 - Another mental health condition, such as anxiety, depression or social phobia.
- 5.3. Hoarders do tend to have a typical profile, they may collect items that have no monetary value, such as junk mail or carrier bags, or items that they try to reuse or repair. When visiting regularly it may be obvious that they have not thrown anything away and are just moving items from one place to another. It may be clear that they are struggling to manage 4 everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and paying bills. They may not socialise and find it hard to maintain relationships.

6. Levels of Hoarding (Risk Framework)

- 6.1. The Council will assess hoarding using a three-tier risk level, drawing on national good practice:

Level 1 – Low Risk

- Mild clutter
- All rooms accessible
- No fire or health hazards
- Tenant engaging with staff

Response: Early support, wellbeing conversation, signposting.

Level 2 – Medium Risk

- Rooms partially obstructed
- Hygiene concerns
- Concerns from neighbours

- Repairs access difficult
- Tenant struggling to manage

Response: Action plan with tenant, regular monitoring, multi-agency involvement as needed.

Level 3 – High Risk

- Serious fire hazards
- Threat to life or structural risk
- Vermin, waste, or severe unsanitary conditions
- Total refusal of access for essential safety checks
- Significant safeguarding concerns

Response: Urgent multi-agency response, fire service involvement, formal notices only as a last resort.

7. Early Identification

7.1. Hoarding may be identified through:

- Routine home visits
- Repairs appointments
- Gas and electrical safety checks
- Neighbour reports
- Complaints or safeguarding alerts
- Staff must record concerns promptly and sensitively.

8. Risk Issues

8.1. Hoarding increases risks for both tenant and Lancaster City Council: -

- Fire – Accumulation of combustible materials such as newspapers, clothing, and rubbish.
- Structural Damage – If damage to the property is a danger to the occupants, public safety and also danger to adjacent buildings.
- Disease, injury and infestations – Because storage of hoarded items makes cleaning nearly impossible, which can lead to unsanitary living conditions, increasing the risk of disease.

8.2. In the cases of unsanitary and disease then joint working with Environmental Health and the Fire service will be essential.

8.3. Lancaster City Council will hold a record 'Hoarding' case and the level of risk will be monitored.

9. Recording of Cases

9.1. All cases of serious hoarding will be recorded including the risks presented, and an action plan created to manage and reduce the risks.

10. Council's Approach

- 10.1. The Council will take a **person-centred**, non-judgemental and trauma-informed approach, focusing on engagement and support. Our principles include:
- Respect and dignity – tenants will not be criticised or shamed.
 - No forced clear-outs unless there is a serious and immediate risk.
 - Multi-agency working – recognising hoarding is often a symptom, not the problem.
 - Clear risk assessments and action plans, agreed with the tenant wherever possible.

11. Support for Tenants

- 11.1. Support may include:
- Visiting support officers
 - Financial inclusion or welfare advice
 - Help accessing mental health support
 - Fire safety visits from Lancashire Fire & Rescue
 - Cleaning or de-cluttering support (where eligible)
 - Assisted access for mandatory safety checks
 - Referrals to Adult Social Care or safeguarding
- 11.2. Where hoarding results from disability or mental health conditions, the Council will ensure compliance with **the Equality Act 2010, including** making reasonable adjustments.

12. Access for Repairs and Compliance

- 12.1. The Council has legal duties to ensure functions such as:
- Gas safety
 - Electrical checks
 - Fire safety
 - Damp and mould investigations
 - Repairs affecting health and safety
- 12.2. If hoarding prevents safe access, the Council will work with the tenant to agree a manageable plan. Only where all support options fail will tenancy enforcement be considered.

13. Enforcement Action

- 13.1. Enforcement action will only be taken as a last resort where one or more of the following instances are present:

- There is significant risk and the tenant refuses to engage
- The Council cannot meet its legal compliance duties
- Neighbours' safety or wellbeing is seriously affected

13.2. Possible actions include:

- Formal written warning
- Community protection notice (in extreme cases)
- Injunction requiring access or clearance
- Possession proceedings (only after all alternatives are exhausted)

13.3. Any enforcement must be authorised by the relevant senior manager and be supported by safeguarding records.

14. Safeguarding

14.1. Hoarding may be a sign of self-neglect, mental ill health, or exploitation. Staff must consider safeguarding responsibilities for adults or children in the home and make referrals when required.

15. Information Sharing

15.1. Information will be shared in line with GDPR and safeguarding legislation. Partner agencies may include:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Lancashire Fire & Rescue
- NHS Mental Health Services
- Police
- Environmental Health
- Charitable or voluntary sector organisations

16. Monitoring

16.1. Information will be shared in line with GDPR and safeguarding legislation. Partner agencies may include:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Lancashire Fire & Rescue
- NHS Mental Health Services
- Police
- Environmental Health
- Charitable or voluntary sector organisations

- 16.2. This policy will be reviewed every three years, and will be kept up to date and amended accordingly to reflect any changes in response to revised legislation, regulatory guidelines and standards.
- 16.3. The processing of Personal and Sensitive Personal Data collected from Tenants and third parties in connection with this Policy will be undertaken in accordance with the Principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 16.4. A full copy of Lancaster City Council Privacy Statement is available on the Lancaster City Council Website.

17. Related Policies and Procedures

- Safeguarding Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Fire Safety Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Vulnerability Policy