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Orbit Living

Hoarding Policy

Scope: This policy sets out the aims, principles and values that will be adopted by Orbit Living in its dealings with individuals with hoarding tendencies.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 You should read this policy together with the following documents:

- Information Security Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy and Framework
- Fire Policy

It may also be useful to refer to the following policies:

- Hate Crime Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy

1.2 This policy relates to the management of Orbit Living rented homes and shared ownership properties.

2.0 Definition

2.1 Orbit recognises that referring to an individual that hoards, as a 'hoarder' can be damaging to the professional relationship and the individual, as people who hoard often find the term offensive and derogatory. Throughout this policy the individual will be referred to as the customer or 'an individual with hoarding tendencies' – describing the behaviour as opposed to labeling the individual.ⁱ

2.2 Orbit has adopted Frost and Hartl's (1996)ⁱⁱ Definition of Compulsive Hoarding, characterised by the following features:

- The inability of individuals to dispose of items that may or may not have a meaning to other individuals
- Having rooms at home that are no longer fit for purpose
- The impairment of a person's functioning (both physical and psychological)
- Excessive acquisition

2.3 Orbit recognises that with some customers the 'clutter' or deterioration of their property is not due to them having some form of hoarding disorder, as it may first seem, but is instead the result of issues not related to their mental health. For example, deterioration in physical health, combined with a lack of support, may lead to the property falling into disrepair.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 We will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure services are provided in a co-ordinated way, to develop appropriate strategies for working with and responding to the needs of those customers who compulsively hoard, and by developing best practice in this area.

3.2 We aim 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, communications, campaigns and publicity.

3.3 Awareness training will be offered to staff that visit customers in their home through Orbit Care and Repair's Hoarding Training and Development Team to help Orbit meet the commitments set out within this policy.

4.0 Supporting customers who hoard

4.1 Orbit is committed to supporting individuals with a hoarding tendency, who are willing to engage with support, whilst balancing the needs of other impacted people living in the property, residents and home owners.

4.2 As part of this offer, when a potential case of hoarding is highlighted Orbit will conduct an initial assessment, providing the customer is willing to engage with the assessment process. The assessment will assess whether the individual struggles with hoarding, the degree of risk to the individual and others living in or near the property, and the individual's willingness to engage with support. A decision over the appropriate course of action will then be made. The intervention process, and referral pathways, can be found in Orbit's Hoarding Procedure.

4.3 Where a customer is not willing to engage with the assessment and support process tenancy enforcement may be considered, under the circumstances identified in paragraph 7.3.

However, should enforcement action begin to take place, the offer of support should remain open. Where it is suspected someone may lack mental capacity the staff member should refer, as a matter of urgency, through to social services for a mental capacity assessment, and seek advice from an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA), if deemed necessary.

5.0 Training

- 5.1 We aim to provide **Hoarding Awareness training** and ensure it is promoted to all housing management, contractors and maintenance staff who visit customers in their own homes, to increase their awareness and understanding of Compulsive Hoarding.
- 5.2 We aim to provide Compulsive Hoarding training in Orbit's **Compulsive Hoarding Toolkit** and ensure it is promoted to all support workers and case workers who work with customers that compulsively hoard, to ensure effective interventions, resolutions and prevention planning.

6.0 Partnership working

- 6.1 Orbit recognises that no two individuals, or cases, are the same and that people who hoard often have a variety of physical, mental, financial and other support needs. Therefore, partnership working is essential in meeting the needs of the customer and others living in or near the property.
- 6.2 There is an expectancy that external contractors highlight cases of suspected hoarding with the contracts manager who will report into housing management.
- 6.3 relevant personal identifiable information will be shared with Orbit's partners (e.g. other agencies) to ensure that a full collaborative service is delivered to the customer irrelevant of which agency is responsible for delivering which part of the overall service the customer requires ; however, a judgement needs to be made as to the right point in time to involve a partner agency. Too many agencies involved at one time may overwhelm the customer.
- 6.4 Where appropriate and practical, prior consent will be obtained from customers and recorded, where this is not possible an assessment will be made against the DPA by Orbit (supported by the Information Governance & Security Specialist) to ensure customers rights and privacy are fairly respected and that it is in the interests of the customer when decisions are made.

7.0 Tenancy Enforcement

- 7.1 Orbit acknowledges that forcing a customer who hoards to participate in large clearances, without their will, can often lead to the exacerbation of the individual's condition and have a long term negative impact on their mental health and well being.
- 7.2 Orbit recognises, however, that an individual's hoarding behaviours can have a significant negative impact on others living in the property, neighbours and the property itself and, therefore, tenancy enforcement may be necessary.
- 7.3 It is our aim to initially support customers in addressing their hoarding behaviours and enforcement action should only be taken where:
- The customer's behaviour is so extreme as to cause significant harm to

themselves or other persons.

- There has been continuous failed engagement with the customer and the customer's actions have been proven to have a detrimental effect on the property and/or others.
- Where access to the property for gas safety checks is required, and has been repeatedly refused, to ensure we meet our duties under gas safety regulations (Health and Safety Executive, 1998ⁱⁱⁱ).

7.4 We acknowledge that each case is individual and as such, Orbit will consider the most appropriate method of solving the problem, considering a range of available options, and taking into account the severity and urgency of the situation. Options may include:

- Providing a support worker or case worker to work with the client to resolve their hoarding behaviours.
- In areas of the business where a support worker is not available, referral onto floating support or another local service provider
- Assisting the customer source grants to aid funding the costs of removals.
- Sign posting to relevant organisations.

8.0 Emergency Services and Supporting Agencies

8.1 In the interest of public safety, the emergency services and supporting agencies should be notified of cases where the clutter within the property presents a risk to the welfare of others - see point 6.6.

9.0 Information Security & Data Protection Act

9.1 We will handle your personal identifiable information in a safe and secure manner and only share relevant information that meets the requirements of the (Data Protection Act, 1998^{iv}).

10.0 Marketing and Publicity

10.1 Our commitment to consider any Public Relations (PR) or marketing around hoarding will be considered very carefully. We will ensure that any PR or marketing work we take up will promote the work of Orbit in dealing with a vulnerable customer group, while ensuring that the individual or group are comfortable and protected; and that staff involved are also happy with any opportunity we move forward with.

11.0 Equality and Diversity

11.1 We will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our residents and customers. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion / faith, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity or any other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity policy.

11.2 When applying this policy we will:

- act in line with Orbit's values, with respect and in consideration of the diverse needs of individuals and communities
- take positive action to reduce the discrimination and harassment in local communities

11.3 This policy and any other Orbit publication can be made available in other formats (e.g. other languages, braille, large print, audio).

12.0 Monitoring and Accountability

12.1 The respective Orbit Boards/ Operations Committees will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented in full.

12.2 Members of Orbit Living will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and Recommend policy changes to improve service delivery.

13.0 Review

13.1 We will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every two years.

ⁱ In May 2013 Hoarding Disorder was re-classified as a condition in its own right under the US Diagnostic Statistic Manual-V (DSM-V) by the American Psychiatric Association, (2013).

ⁱⁱ Frost, R. O., and Hartl, T.L., 1996. A Cognitive-Behavioural model of compulsive hoarding. In: Behavioural Research. s.l.:s.n., pp. Vol 34 (4) 341-350.

ⁱⁱⁱ Health and Safety Executive, 1998. Safety in the installation and use of gas systems and appliances. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/I56.htm>
[Accessed 17 10 2013].

^{iv} Data Protection Act, 1998. Legislation.gov.uk. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>
[Accessed 17 10 2013].