

HOARDING

TALKING HOARDING, THE DARTFORD WAY

DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



INTRODUCTION

In October 2024 we decided to review the way we dealt with compliance breach hoarded properties and shifted from enforcement to adopting a proactive and compassionate approach

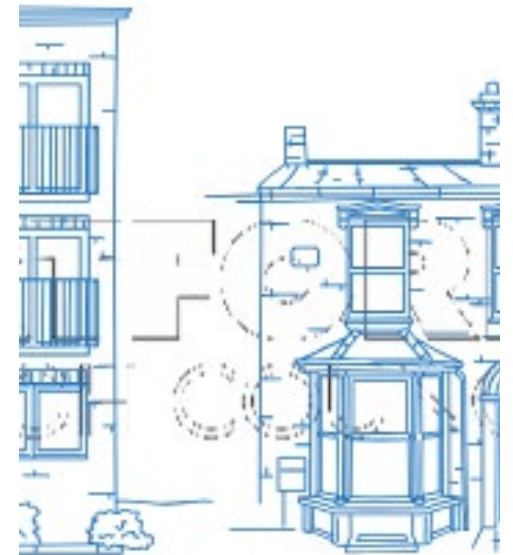
Our objectives were to:

- Identify individuals exhibiting hoarding behaviours
- Assess the risks associated with hoarding to individuals and the community
- Engage with affected individuals compassionately to offer support
- Collaborate with relevant agencies to provide comprehensive assistance
- Ensure compliance with health, safety, and housing standards including essential health and safety works



CHALLENGES OF HOARDED PROPERTIES

- Legal and regulatory consequences to Dartford Borough Council as landlord for compliance breaches
- Strain on the maintenance team (access, repairs, and compliance)
- Accelerated property deterioration and reduction in asset value
- Fire risk and blocked exits
- Health hazards (mould, vermin, sanitation)
- Social impact (neighbours, community safety)





OUR APPROACH

- Assigned a dedicated hoarding Housing Officer for compliance breach properties
- Reviewed and updated our Hoarding Policy
- Complete a hoarding risk assessment using a clutter scale
- Flag our hoarded properties on our housing database
- Discuss each compliance breach hoarded property at a monthly Case Management Panel where all addresses are discussed, and an action plan and timescales are devised moving forward. All the Housing Officers and the Housing Asset and Compliance are present and have an input.
- Actively Encourage multi-agency partnerships (for example Kent Fire and Rescue and Social Care)
- Partner with a professional decluttering company who offer sensitive, non-judgmental clearance and deep cleaning services





ROLE OF THE DEDICATED HOUSING OFFICER

The dedicated Housing Officer is allocated 5 of the oldest compliance breach properties at a time, with the other cases remaining with their Housing Officers.

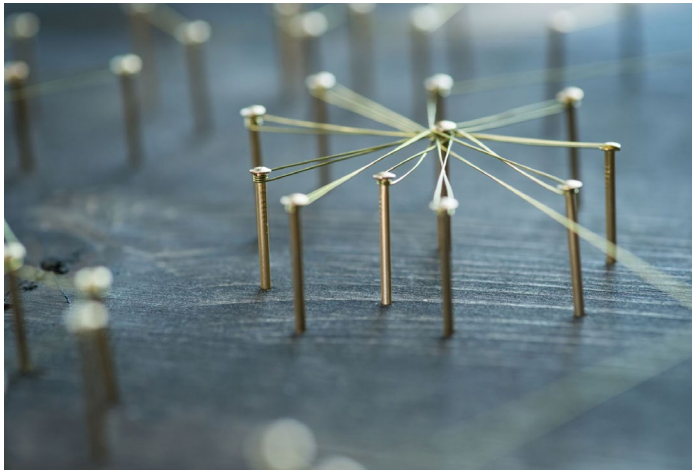
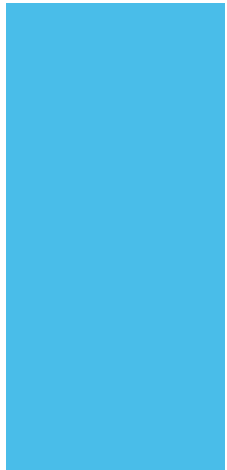
Acts as a single point of contact

Build trust with the tenants

Balances a firm but fair approach

Coordinates additional support and makes all the relevant referrals (agencies, skips, contractors etc.)

Encourages gradual decluttering, makes regular visits during the decluttering process and supports until the essential works have been completed





Since using a dedicated Housing Officer in October 2024, we reduced our compliance breach properties by 20

Organisational cost savings by avoiding legal enforcement action

Improved resident safety and wellbeing

Stronger engagement and trust with tenants

Positive community impact

Offers aftercare referrals to community support agencies if required

OUTCOMES AND SUCCESS



Engagement, not enforcement

Empowerment and respect

Partnership working

Consistency and compassion

Sustainable solutions not quick fixes



GOOD PRACTISE PRINCIPLES



CASE STUDY 1

Background

Supporting a family in a hoarded 3-bedroom house.

Hoarded property identified February 2023

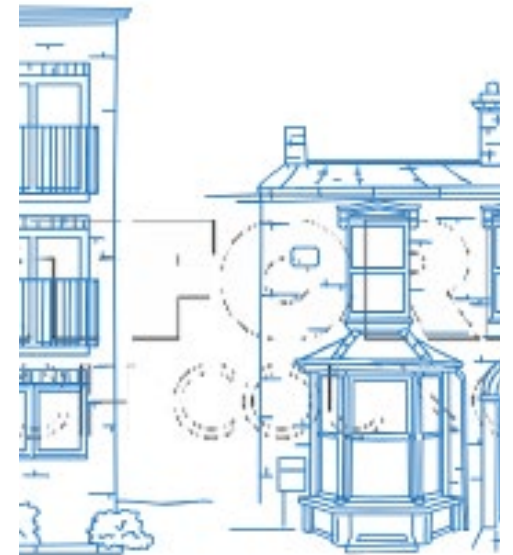
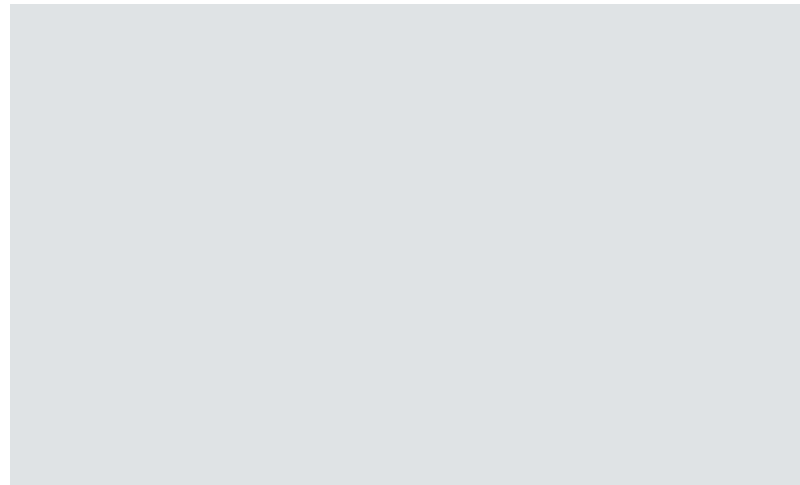
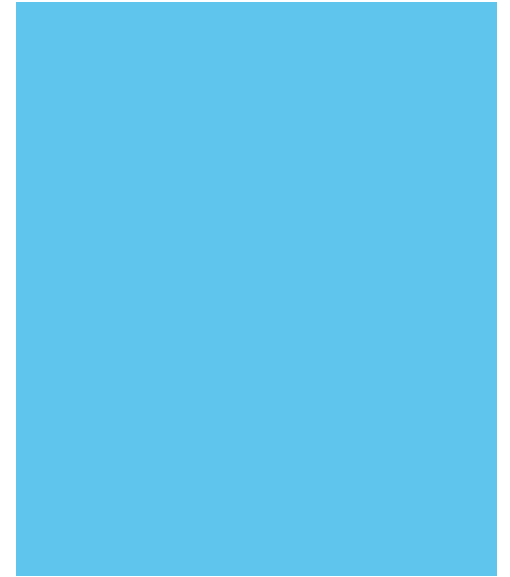
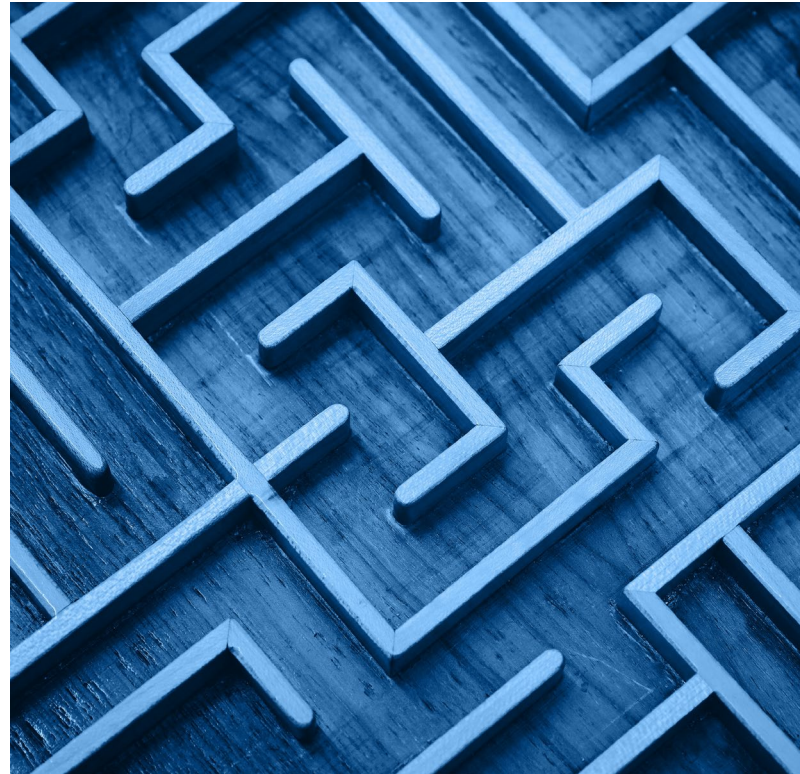
Household: Mum, adult daughter, and son (learning disability)

Property severely cluttered and at risk of enforcement action

CASE STUDY 1

Challenges

- Unsafe living conditions
- The property urgently needed an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) and subsequent rewire
- Risk of fire and hazards due to hoarding
- Every room needed de-cluttering



CASE STUDY 1

ACTIONS TAKEN

Complete a hoarding risk assessment using a clutter scale. Property was identified as Level 3 – High

Visited with Kent Fire and Rescue to discuss and implement immediate and essential safety measures

Focused on safety priorities first, focusing on clearing exits and pathways

Agreed an action plan with the family and booked two future visits while at the property

Booked and paid for a skip to remove bulk waste, supplied black sacks and labels

Worked with the family to assign roles to each family member and encourage family to label bags and boxes with Keep, Donate, Recycle and Dispose and this helps with decision making.

Discuss routines and encourage weekly 'mini declutter' times to maintain progress

Use the local charity shop for upcycling

Supported family through this sensitive clearance process respecting their belongings

Regular visits to celebrate progress and recognise achievements to keep motivation going





CASE STUDY 1

Outcome

Ensured electrical testing and rewire was completed and the property met safety standards

Improved engagement and trust between the family and services

Restored safe living conditions while respecting the family's needs

Photos : main bedroom before and after



CASE STUDY 2

Background

Supporting a single occupant in a hoarded 1-bedroom ground floor flat

Hoarded property Identified January 2024

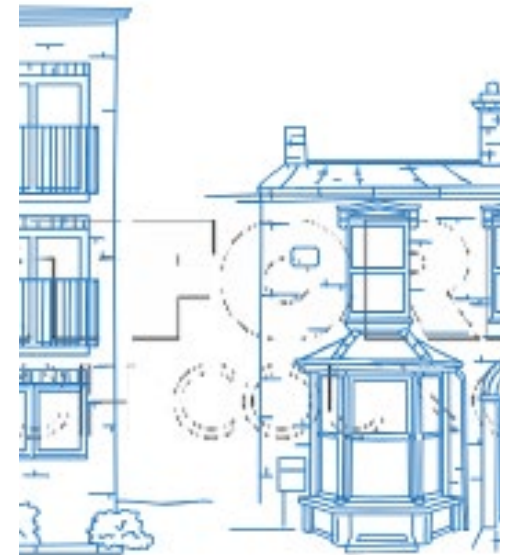
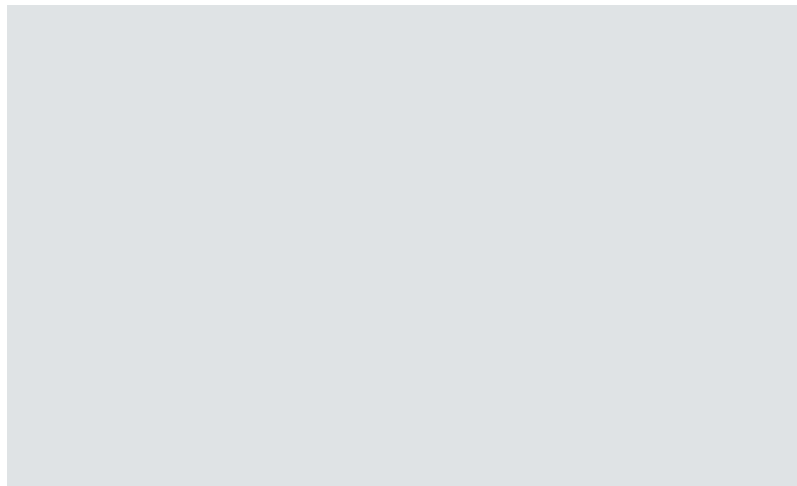
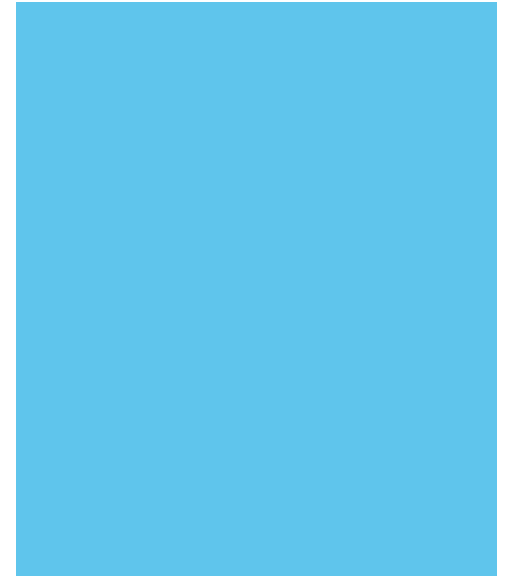
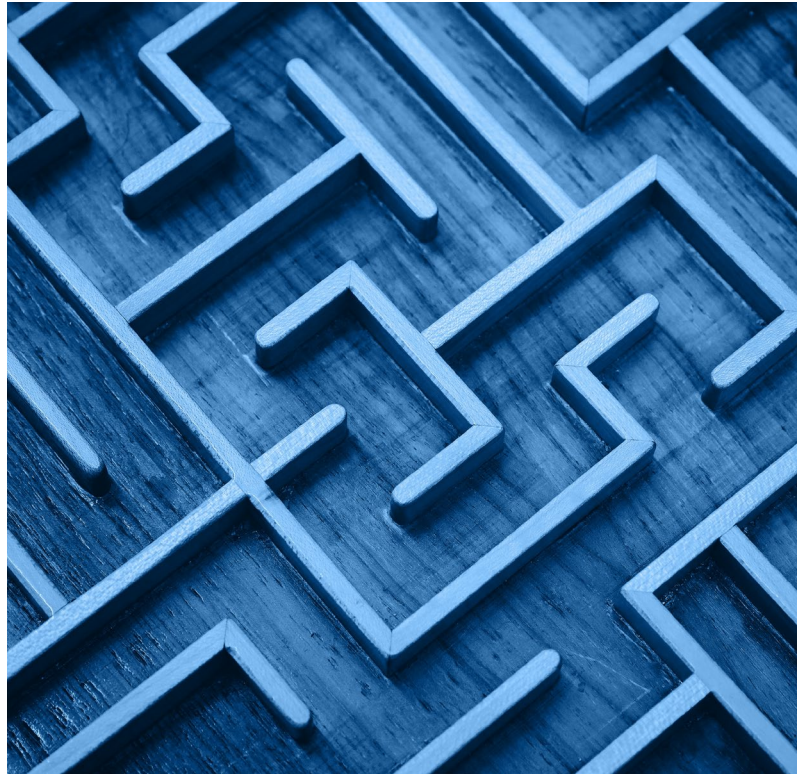
Household: Single lady with mobility issues

Property severely hoarded and unsafe

CASE STUDY 2

Challenges

- The property urgently needed an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) and subsequent rewire
- Clutter prevents safe access for work and contractors refuse to enter



CASE STUDY 2

ACTIONS TAKEN

Complete a hoarding risk assessment using a clutter scale. Property was identified as Level 2 – Medium

Visited with Kent Fire and Rescue to discuss and implement immediate and essential safety measures

Tenant agreed the clutter was overwhelming and she was unable to clear the property herself.

Tenant agreed to a referral into Social Care referral and was assessed to need ongoing support

With the tenant's agreement DBC introduced a De-Cluttering Service who worked with the tenant to create a plan that met their unique lifestyle needs and specialised in reducing clutter and cleaning. This service costs Dartford Borough Council £4680 for this property and we did not recharge on this occasion

The dedicated Housing Officer and de clutter service worked together as the risks were high, and the clearance was complex due to the tenants' disabilities and mobility restrictions

The dedicated Housing Officer provided reassurance and ongoing support throughout the process to the tenant encouraging the tenant to be involved when sorting out the items.

The tenant had no other family members, so we were unable to ask them for assistance





CASE STUDY 2

Outcome

Rewire completed

Avoided legal costs through enforcement

Tenant is now involved with Social Care Services

Photos : kitchen before and after



CONCLUSION

By investing in a dedicated housing officer for hoarded properties, we have improved safety, prevented enforcement, and built stronger trust with residents. This focused approach has strengthened partnerships with support services and ensured more sustainable outcomes for our most vulnerable tenants.

QUESTIONS???