

# New approaches to supporting hoarding tenants: A conversation with Poplar HARCA

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## Key themes:

- **Setting the scene / A new reliance on the wider community**
  - The Safeguarding team at Poplar HARCA is normally largely reactive as a service; with hoarding however, it can be very difficult to discover the issues. With Covid-19 and lockdown they are now needing to be much more proactive in their approach to identifying tenants who are hoarders
  - A lack of home visits due to the Covid-19 has increased reliance on reports of so-called ASB (smells coming from properties, rubbish left outside) or of concerns for tenants not seen recently
  - Under normal circumstances, there would be reliance on contractors/estate services to report on hoarding, but with a policy of emergency repairs only, there is a sense that there are properties in their community that may have been missed
- **A new approach - technology**
  - The team have had to change their approach to hoarders, relying on smart phones with images sent of progress and on video calls. This is an ongoing approach to ensure they are still able to see inside people's homes and ensure progress is being made
  - Poplar HARCA are looking into a pilot of Facebook portal so they can have direct contact with tenants in their homes to explore how they are able to support them
  - This all signals a different relationship with tenants who are hoarders – out of necessity, Poplar HARCA are relying on a relationship based more on trust
- **New relationship dynamics**
  - With other agencies/teams: Hoarding and mental health have a direct correlation and they have been working closely with Adult Social Care, Community Mental Health team and the London Fire Brigade to ensure all cases are managed correctly and with the correct sensitivity
  - Streetwise is key to ensuring that all the information about a case is in one place and that various teams/organisations can manage cases with a more joined-up approach (All images of the property as progress is made are on the system, it's clear on the system which agencies are involved in a particular case, etc.)
  - With tenants who are hoarders: Some tenants who are hoarders are being even more evasive due to Covid-19 and it may be some time before the team are able to get into their homes
  - There has been a marked breakdown in relationships that have been built over time and the team will have to work hard to rebuild these post-lockdown

- Streetwise supports this by enabling the storage of all notes on the contact made with hoarding tenants, so any agreements made are written down for the team to enforce moving forward in their relationship with the tenant
- “It is very helpful to have all this information in one place, which makes Streetwise such a useful tool for us”

## Case Study:

- **Example of strong joint working:** Poplar HARCA were alerted to a tenant who had a serious hoard through their repairs team. They had recognised that no one had been in the property for several years as no repairs had been reported. They were now looking to complete an electrical test and upon attending for an unannounced visit, it became clear that the property was dangerously hoarded. This was referred to LFB and hoarding panel. The safeguarding team got involved and while initially, the tenant did not wish to engage, a relationship was built over many months and it was discussed that their estate services team could also help in disposing of items that he wished to get rid of. Over many months the property became clearer and the electrical test was carried out. A great example of joint working for the safety of the tenant.
- **Example of the impact of Covid-19:** Poplar HARCA have a hoarder who has been known to them for over 6 years; her house is severely hoarded, and she has worked with several of their support officers. This tenant will engage well and will start to make progress and then she will experience a major life event which will then halt her progress. Prior to lockdown she had once again, with the help of their support team started to make progress. Throughout lockdown, however they have kept in touch with her and she has said that she has huge anxiety around Covid-19 and has left the house very few times, so has not been able to make any progress. These are the cases that they are concerned about and need to ensure that once things start to get back to normal, they are once again able to build that trust up
- **Open to the attendees:**
  - An opportunity to share best practice and professional experiences