

Pest Control Policy

1.	INTRODUCTION
	Purpose
1.1	This policy sets out whg's approach to managing reports of pest within its housing stock and communal areas to help maintain a safe, healthy, and pest free environment for customers and the wider community.
1.2	The policy aims to provide a clear, consistent, and transparent approach to pest control including by specifying the circumstances when whg will and will not intervene and the specific responsibilities of customers to prevent and report pests
1.3	Pest is a generic term for vermin, rodents and insects which are commonly considered to be a pest. It includes pests that local authorities, owners and occupiers of land and properties within those local authority boundaries have a legal obligation to control as well as other pests not specially covered by law.
	Scope
1.4	This policy applies to: - whg customers living in properties that are owned and/or managed by whg, including all social, affordable and market rent homes; and - leaseholder properties where whg manages the building and communal areas.
1.5	whg will not normally carry out pest control for shared owners although each case will be determined by the lease.
	Legal and regulatory framework
1.6	Awaab's Law (as part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023), requires social landlords to address applicable significant hazards within fixed timeframes. Significant hazards that are assessed as an immediate and emergency risk to health, including emergency pest risks, must be addressed within 24 hours.
1.7	As a responsible landlord, whg has a legal duty to ensure that our homes are safe places for customers to live under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
1.8	The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 states that landlords must ensure that their homes do not put customers at risk of physical harm or injury, do not seriously affect a customer's health and ensure that customers can make full use of their home.
1.9	The assessment of hazards within our homes is carried out in accordance with the guiding principles within the operating guidance of the Housing Act 2004, Section 9, inspection and assessment of hazards given in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS),
1.10	The above legislation means that where we are aware of a home that has a prescribed hazard or which is not fit for human habitation, we have a legal obligation to address the problem.

1.11	whg recognises that the presence of pests may increase these risks, so we will work with customers to ensure that these risks are managed appropriately.
2.	POLICY STATEMENT
2.1	whg will investigate and act on the following types of pest reports: • Rats • Mice • Cockroaches • Squirrels • Birds in loft spaces This list is not exhaustive and whg may consider the treatment of other species of pests where they present a serious risk of harm to our customers or their homes.
2.2	whg will not investigate the following types of pests, but whg may seek guidance should the infestation be causing any disrepair to our home: • Foxes - Foxes are not regarded as pests. Nuisance relating to foxes can generally be eased by not leaving food out to encourage them and maintaining a tidy garden. • Badgers - Badgers and their setts are protected under The Protection of Badgers Act (1992). It is illegal to kill, injure or interfere with a badger or their setts. • Bats - Bats are protected by The Wildlife and Country Act (1981). It is illegal to kill or injure bats. It is also unlawful to disturb roosting bats or to damage or destroy any place used by bats for roosting. • Bedbugs - Bedbugs are primarily brought into a property via used furniture, luggage, backpacks etc. and therefore not the landlords' responsibility. whg may choose to deal with a bed bug issue if it begins to affect multiple properties and seek to recharge where the cause of an infestation is found. • Pigeons - Balconies are the responsibility of the customer to keep clean, free from rubbish and to deter pigeons • Wasps – wasps will only be removed if the nest is causing damage to the fabric of the building or there is a significant health and safety risk. • Bees - Bees are not regarded as pests and cannot be killed. In exceptional circumstances, if they present a major risk, bees can be removed by a registered bee handler. • Any other insects - including flies, silverfish, ants, fleas, spiders, and ladybirds - These are generally controlled by keeping your home clean and well-maintained We will treat pests from this list where the pest infestation is caused by a defect or a repair needed in the home that whg is responsible for.
2.3	whg will maintain the structure of your property, including the guttering, drains, walls, and pipework and any infestations caused by housing disrepair would fall under whg's remit. Where there is evidence that a pest issue occurred because of structural disrepair caused by the customer's actions, including the neglect of the property or due to the condition of the home that is a breach of the tenancy agreement; the cost of dealing with the pest infestation may be re-charged to the customer in accordance with the Chargeable Repairs Policy.

2.4	whg will not treat pest infestations that are solely present in gardens and not affecting or accessing the building of the home.
	Pests in the communal areas
2.5	whg will deal with pest infestations that are found in the communal parts of our buildings, such as lobbies, hallways, staircases, landings of blocks of flats, external communal areas and bin stores.
2.6	whg will take proactive measures to promptly address pest infestations within communal areas and mitigate the issue and deal with infestations that are present within the structure of the building.
2.7	whg will seek professional advice where needed. For example, some species of bees are an endangered species, and we may require specialist control to ensure the actions taken to resolve the infestation do not lead to the destruction of the bees.
2.8	Pest control in communal areas may be recoverable via a service charge.
	Customer responsibility
2.9	Customers are responsible for: - reporting any issues relating to pests to whg as soon as they become evident. In some areas we will encourage customers to report the issue to the Local Authority where the local authority runs a pest control service. - maintaining their home and garden in accordance with the relevant clauses in their tenancy or leasehold agreement. - taking reasonable actions to prevent infestations, including keeping living areas and gardens clean. - allowing whg colleagues and contractors appointed by whg to access their home and garden in line with the relevant clause(s) in their tenancy agreement. Should customers fail to maintain their responsibilities, whg will consider enforcement action, including recharging customers for the costs of work.
	Responding to reports
2.10	When a customer tells whg about pests, we will first check what kind of pest problem it is and decide if it meets the policy to carry out treatment.
2.11	whg will risk assess pest problems that require treatment by whg in accordance with the HHSRS and will prioritise cases based on this assessment as follows: Emergency – We will initiate emergency action to address hazards presenting an imminent and significant risk to the health and safety of customers or others. If we are unable to make the affected property safe within 24 hours, we will temporarily remove the customer and other members of the household until property is safe for them to return. Urgent – Following an emergency intervention, we will make an appointment and complete outstanding actions to address any hazards causing serious inconvenience within five working days. Significant – We will investigate all significant hazards that are not deemed an emergency within 10 working days from being made aware.

	• Low risk and follow up works – Lower risk pest hazards may require both preventative measures to reduce routes of entry and action to address the conditions that allow infestations to persist. We will make an appointment and complete appropriate actions within 90 calendar days.
2.12	whg will aim to provide an initial response to all customers within five working days to explain what may or may not be done to resolve the infestation and to manage customer expectations on when work will be completed.
2.13	If it is necessary to refer a case to a qualified pest control contractor, the pest control contractor will contact the customer to arrange an appointment and conduct a thorough inspection and implement appropriate treatment measures within the applicable timeframe.
2.14	Following an inspection, there may be occasions where a pest control contractor recommends treatment throughout an entire block. In such instances, we will make all reasonable efforts to engage with all customers of that block to ensure that treatment can progress. Where a customer does not engage with these efforts, we may take legal action against them in line with their tenancy or lease agreement, to safeguard other customers from the ongoing infestation.
2.15	Where reports from a pest control contractor confirm that the customer's actions or inaction is a likely cause or contributory factor of the infestation, such as overgrown gardens, inappropriate storage of domestic waste, fly tipping, and unhygienic living conditions within the home, we may recharge customers the cost of inspections or treatments. We may also recharge any legal costs that we incur should we need to take legal action to control and prevent ongoing infestations.
2.16	In addition to our own data and insight, we will use information recorded on how this policy is applied, as well as information from pest control contractors, to decide whether a preventative pest control programme is appropriate within a block or estate, this may be recovered through a service charge.
2.17	Some customers will have additional support needs, and the impact of the pest nuisance will vary as a result. In line with whg's Vulnerability Policy, whg will tailor its approach, treating the customer fairly and with respect. whg may involve external support agencies or its own in-house support services where it is felt this is necessary.
2.18	Where there is evidence to suggest that a pest issue is originating from the home of a private property, whg will ask the customer to refer the issue to the local authority and work with the environmental health to gain a resolution. whg will, where necessary, support our customer to do this, for example if they have a vulnerability which makes this more difficult for them to do.
3.	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3.1	whg will keep records of all reported cases of pest nuisance in line with our data retention policy and monitor the data to improve performance, report trends and tailor our services to the needs of our communities.
3.2	whg will periodically undertake compliance audits to check that practice reflects this Policy and relevant operational procedures. whg will implement any recommendations to ensure continued compliance.

3.3	whg will undertake regular casework reviews to ensure it is delivering a consistent and effective approach to pest reports and customers receive a high-quality service.
3.4	Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) will be monitored as our response to pest control will be picked up under the following measures, 'keeping our homes in good repair,' and 'responsible neighbourhood management,'
3.5	whg will deal with complaints from customers about the quality of its handling of pest infestation matters in line with the Customer Complaints Policy.
4.	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
4.1	All customers reporting pest reports to whg will be treated equally and with respect.
4.2	whg is committed to making reasonable adjustments where possible for vulnerable customers in line with our Vulnerability Policy.
5.	TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION
5.1	Colleagues within Community Housing, Community Safety, Neighbourhood Services, Customer Services, Homes Maintenance Services and Complaints teams will receive training or an overview on the Pest Control Policy.
5.2	Colleagues within Community Housing, Community Safety and Neighbourhood Services teams will receive appropriate training at the commencement of their role, at intervals throughout their role and in response to any relevant changes in legislation.
5.3	All wider business colleagues have access to the policy through the internal whoogle communications page.
6.	MONITOR AND REVIEW
6.1	This policy will be monitored by the Director of Housing and Customer Services, reviewed every three years by the Customer and Operations Panel.
7.	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
7.1	Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are: • Tenancy Management Policy • Neighbourhood Management Policy • Data Protection Policy • Empty Homes Policy • Repairs Policy • Chargeable Repairs Policy • Access to Homes Policy • Temporary Housing Policy • Market Rent Management Policy • Leasehold Management Policy • Vulnerability Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Customer Complaints Policy.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document author	Assistant Director of Housing - Communities
Document owner	Director of Housing & Customer Service
Reviewed/approved by	Customer and Operations Panel
Review Date	Quarter 3 - 2029
Our 2030 Plan	Forward thinking services
Key changes made	New standalone policy in line with the Housing Ombudsman's guidance. Pest control was previously part of the Tenancy Management Policy.