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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy aligns with our corporate plan which includes the values 'Put Service to the public first' and 'Open honest and fair in everything we do'. It also contributes to the stated approach set out in our housing strategy which specifically includes 'improving the quality, standard and safety of housing'.
- 1.2 It outlines Lewisham Council's approach to the control and the reduction in recurrence of pests found within properties directly managed by our housing services. This includes tenanted, leasehold and hostel properties.
- 1.3 Effective pest management and control is the responsibility of residents, the landlord, and in certain circumstances both parties. This policy aims to clarify roles and responsibilities in this respect. In doing so, it sets out what residents can expect from Lewisham Council's Housing Service, as well as what is expected from residents to help prevent and manage infestations.
- 1.4 We acknowledge that a pest problem may be a sign or symptom of other issues such as disrepair or challenging family circumstances. As such, we will seek to join the dots in pest control cases and, where required, to resolve problems holistically, focussing on sustainable prevention rather than purely on reactive treatments.
- 1.5 Infestations may be considered alongside other habitability criteria when considering whether to decant (temporarily relocate) a tenant while disrepair is being addressed.



## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 Pest control refers to the regulation or management of a species defined as a pest, usually because it is perceived to be detrimental to a person's health, the ecology or the economy.
- 2.2 Where the words 'we', 'us', or 'our' are used within this document, this refers to Lewisham Council's Housing service, unless otherwise stated.
- 2.3 For the purposes of this policy, the word 'pest' refers to an animal pest, including mammals, birds and invertebrates (principally insects), deemed to cause harm or nuisance to humans or residential property. Invasive vegetation is out of this scope and will be covered in a separate policy.
- 2.4 Some terms used in this document are defined as follows:
- Planned core block control treatment – where a core block programme is agreed in advance. The blocks, or parts of blocks, listed on this programme typically have historic or persistent issues with one or more pest types.
  - Ad-hoc (one-off) block control treatment – where a block treatment is commissioned in response to several reports of infestations. This would normally follow a block survey, the finding from which would determine the need for a particular treatment program for all or part of a block.
  - Individual property treatment – where a single property requires treatment for pests.
  - Proofing – preventative measure to stop pests entering properties. Typically, this means blocking holes which allow pests to enter or move between units.
- 2.5 Although no specific pest is automatically a statutory nuisance, infestations may be a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if:
- Repairs are needed to stop pests getting in, or
  - An infestation makes a home unsafe to live in
- 2.6 The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 includes matters which could cause a property to be found defective so that it is not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. This includes domestic, hygiene, pests and refuse.

## 3. Working in partnership

- 3.1 We are committed to working in partnership with other parts of the Council (London Borough of Lewisham/LBL), including the specialist pest control team which delivers both block and individual\* pest treatments through its in-house pest control team. The housing service provides support, management, and communication to our residents, to ensure a resident-focussed, joined-up and efficient service. (\*Individual treatments to leasehold properties are the leaseholders responsibility).
- 3.2 We will work with partners, including neighbouring owners and landlords, to try to achieve an effective solution where we are aware of a pest control problem affecting neighbouring properties as well as those we own or manage.



- 3.3. We expect effective problem solving and cooperation across our housing services, focussed on residents' needs. This will help us 'join the dots' to effectively identify and treat for pests where appropriate, and to address contributory factors. Our cross-service response may for example include actioning solutions where infestations may be part of a wider disrepair investigation, and where a resident may even need to be temporarily moved. For more information, please see our Temporary Relocation (Decant) policy.
- 3.4 Landlords can insist on gaining access, and the Local Authority can seek a warrant to force access under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or the Public Health Act 1936. We will seek to gain access by any legal means, which where it is deemed necessary, may include seeking forced access.

### Resident partners

- 3.5 Our residents are key partners in helping us to control and reduce the incidence and spread of pests. Residents have a responsibility to maintain their property in line with the tenancy agreement or lease, and our stated policies. This includes taking steps to prevent pests, dispose of waste properly, report repairs and infestations promptly, arrange for eradication treatments if needed, and allowing access to investigate or treat for pests where required.
- 3.6 Residents are expected to contact us as soon as practically possible after the discovery of a pest or infestation, to report the problem, and give as much information as possible, to enable measures which will reduce the risk of wider infestation.
- 3.7 Where a block programme is in place, all residents (including landlord leaseholders) must provide access for inspection and treatments to take place, whether they believe they have a pest problem in their individual property or not. It is essential that we gain access each time to every property within the programme, to ensure effective treatment of pests. Where a resident gives us sufficient notice of a potential access issue, we will try to arrange an alternative date if this is reasonable to do without jeopardising the effectiveness of the programme.
- 3.8 Lewisham's internal pest control service are the sole provider we use. Where treatment work is a residents responsibility, we do not seek to oblige residents to use this service, and where we do not provide a commissioned treatment, residents may choose to engage another licensed pest control practitioner. However, we signpost our tenants and leaseholders to this service as it is provided at a reduced rate to them. Additionally, we encourage residents to report an issue to us even if they are dealing with it, as the pests could already have been reported in other properties, which would potentially trigger a wider treatment, and a potential saving to the individual.

## 4. Scope and Exclusions

- 4.1 Lewisham Council will commission treatments, where appropriate, in tenants' homes and hostel licensees' homes to deal with infestations. We will also commission treatments in leaseholders' homes as part of any block treatment, but these will be subject to service-charging. This applies where Lewisham Council is the landlord or acting as the landlord's agent.



- 4.2 We do not apply treatment to homes leased from private sector landlords unless the property is part of a block where a block treatment is being carried out.
- 4.3 The types of pests for which we would normally consider commissioning treatments, where appropriate, are the following:
- Rats
  - Mice
  - Tropical ants including Pharaoh ants
  - Cockroaches
  - Any infestation which is likely to mean the home is unfit for human habitation
- 4.4 Lewisham Council will arrange treatments in our managed properties for rats, mice, pharaoh ants, and cockroaches in the following circumstances:
- Planned Core Block treatments
  - Ad-Hoc block treatments following a survey
  - Pests in communal (shared) areas of a block
- 4.5 In most circumstances, treatments will be considered as part of either a planned or a reactive block control programme. However, under some circumstances, we will also consider request from individual tenants where their home may be the only one affected (See section 7).
- 4.6 We will not treat for the following:
- Pigeons (see 4.7)
  - Squirrels
  - Foxes
  - Field mice in external areas
  - Garden ants
  - Bees (see 4.9)
- 4.7 Pigeons are not monitored as part of a core block treatment. As pigeons are likely to affect the external property, individual treatment for pigeons is the residents responsibility. We will not, for example, proof private balconies for pigeon activity, as this is the resident's responsibility. However, treatment will be carried out if after investigation, it is found that pigeons are causing a nuisance to a block or communal area such as a loft space, as an ad hoc treatment.
- 4.8 Preventative control including some proofing works, may take place under this policy. Where we do not provide treatment, we may sometimes provide proofing, for example, for an adjacent communal area. This will usually be determined on a case-by-case basis, subject to access, available resources, and a decision as to what action is reasonable for us to take. We exercise the right to apply discretion, taking all information into account.
- 4.9 We do not treat for bees. However, we will take advice from the local beekeeper who will be informed of the location of a nest, and can advise how best to deal with it.



### 5. Planned Core Block treatment

- 5.1 We will continue to use historical data such as type and number of pest issues along with the location and structure of properties to help us determine the likelihood of future pest control issues. We use this information to decide on the blocks to be included in the following years core programme. We revise the core programme annually.
- 5.2 If identified as a block on the core block programme, properties will typically be revisited at 4-8 week intervals, however this may differ according to the infestation. The exact programme and number of the visits will be shared with the residents in advance.
- 5.3 Residents of a block included in an annual core block programme can book a free treatment via the Lewisham Council website, within the same year the core block programme is being carried out. For example, if a core block programme is scheduled to take place between June 22 to August 22, the resident can book at free treatment, from April 22 to March 23. Only pests identified as part of the core programme will be treated with no upfront cost to the resident. Block control treatments are subject to service charging.
- 5.4 All of our Independent Living blocks will continue to be included in the core block programme covering mice, cockroaches and pharaoh ants. They will also continue to be monitored for bed bugs.
- 5.5 Hostels or temporary accommodation blocks are routinely monitored by our staff for signs and reports of infestation, due to shared facilities and potentially higher levels of occupancy turnover. Any required treatment will be raised ad-hoc as required.

### 6. Ad-hoc Block treatment

- 6.1 Not all blocks that suffer with pest issues have an ongoing need for regular treatments. Properties which are not on the core block programme may be considered for an Ad-Hoc block treatment if a block wide issue is identified.
- 6.2 We may request a block survey to be carried out first before commissioning treatment to establish the type of pest and level of infestation within the block. We will act on the recommendations and advice from such a survey. This approach helps to ensure our decisions reflect wise use of funds and deliver value for money for services used.
- 6.3 If a block wide issue is identified, an ad-hoc block treatment will be arranged at no upfront cost to each resident. Such costs will be reflected in actualised service charges.
- 6.4 In addition to, or sometimes instead of, an ad-hoc block treatment, we may use our discretion to raise individual treatments where deemed appropriate (See section 7). The discretion lies with the Manager of the Service (Repairs and/or Environment) whose decision will be made in accordance with criteria set out in agreed processes including our Pest Control procedure, which supports and implements this policy.

### 7. Treatment to individual homes

- 7.1 We have no specific duty to treat pests at, and will not routinely fund treatments to, individual homes. However, we will consider the circumstances affecting individual households when residents report pest issues and will use reports as an opportunity to



consider whether there are underlying issues to which we may have an obligation to address.

- 7.2 Under the tenancy agreement we are responsible for keeping the home in 'good repair'. Therefore, if an infestation is deemed to have been caused by our not making certain repairs to a tenant's home, we may also be held responsible for associated pest control. Likewise, where an infestation means the tenant's home is unsafe or 'unfit for human habitation'. An individual occupier may also take action through the courts if we have not dealt with an infestation that qualifies as statutory nuisance.
- 7.3 We will consider commissioning treatments to individual properties for rats, mice, pharaoh ants and cockroaches where, following an assessment, there is a significant pest problem, and the wider circumstances justify arranging for it – such as preventing infestations spreading. Suitably trained staff may also use their discretion to request assessments for other types of pests. Discretionary individual treatments apply only to Council tenants and residents of Temporary Stay Hostels, and not to leaseholders or tenants of other landlords. (NB. An individual assessment may trigger a block survey or block treatment from which all tenures may benefit, but may be subject to a service charge).
- 7.4 Treatments to individual properties may be subject to recharge. (See the Rechargeable Costs policy). The decision whether to arrange treatment and to apply or waive a charge will be based on the residents circumstances, condition of the property, level of infestation, and risk of the infestation spreading. Such a decision may be accompanied by other action such as support, education or enforcement. The emphasis will be upon solving the problem holistically.
- 7.5 Our response may include the use of pesticides, addressing the physical sources of the problem, and supporting residents in managing their homes to help eradicate the pest and prevent their recurrence.
- 7.6 Among the other types of pests where we may consider the circumstances of individual households and the condition of the property are:
- Pigeons (inside the home)
  - Fleas
  - Wasps
  - Bed bugs
  - Silverfish

## 8. Preventative activity and access

- 8.1 As a responsible landlord, Lewisham Council has a duty to ensure that pest infestations are controlled in block situations and are prevented or restricted from spreading throughout the block, potentially impacting on neighbouring properties and areas that may not have been initially affected.
- 8.2 Residents may collectively or individually be given advice that they are expected to follow and share with other household members to help prevent pests entering, multiplying or spreading in their property or to other properties.
- 8.3 We will give adequate notice to residents of an upcoming block treatment programme. Dates are arranged to support an efficient treatment programme. Residents are



required to give access to allow us to investigate and proof as part of such preventative activity. Under some circumstances we may be able to arrange an alternative date, if this is reasonable, without jeopardising the effectiveness of the program.

- 8.4 Where access is denied, forced entry will be a last resort. For more information see our Required Access policy.

## 9. Monitoring and controls

- 9.1 Implementation of this policy will be in accordance with details set out in the Pest Control services SLA, agreed between London Borough of Lewisham Housing services and London Borough of Lewisham Pest control Team.
- 9.2 Regular Pest control meetings take place to ensure lessons are learnt, and to undertake an annual revision of the core block treatment list.
- 9.3 We may conduct satisfaction surveys, and together with analysis of complaints, and other relevant resident feedback we will review our performance with a view to continuously improving our service.
- 9.4 We will regularly monitor and review the budgets required to deliver effective treatments, and will keep effective records for the service, including costs as part of service charges to residents.

## 10. Legislation and regulation

- 10.1 Legislation and regulation relevant to this policy includes but is not limited to:

- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
- Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Housing Act 2004 introducing the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) legislation
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

- 10.2 In addition both the tenancy and lease agreements set out requirements for the tenant or leaseholder to provide access, and for the disposal of waste.

## 11. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 11.1 We undertook an equality assessment as part of the development of this policy.
- 11.2 The policy allows for an assessed approach block-by-block, and sometimes case-by-case depending on the type of property, circumstances and needs of residents. We considered for example that we will keep Independent Living schemes within the core programme, due to their shared facilities, and the higher likelihood of people potentially more vulnerable to infection.
- 11.3 We have amended this policy to now include an approach to undertaking individual treatments, including where there is an increased risk of infestation spreading to other



properties. This could for example be the case where someone is dealing with a disorder that has led to hoarding.

## 12. Communication and consultation

12.1 This policy will be available to our tenants, leaseholders, and external stakeholders, through the Lewisham Council website.

12.2 This policy will be available to staff on our staff intranet. We will ensure training and briefing for any of our services that have a key role in helping us delivery this policy. We consulted with key staff as part of the way we plan to deliver this policy and its procedures.

12.3 A Pest control survey took place in June 2022 to establish residents understanding of the pest control process and gain feedback. We followed this up in October with a consultation on the new policy As a result of this and other resident feedback a number of findings have been included in this policy including:

- A more flexible response to individual ad hoc requests
- Proofing works may be carried out by LH in conjunction with pest control treatment
- Better communication with residents, specifically on the process and how to report a pest control issue
- More safeguards around forced access
- Additional pests included

12.4 Complaints will continue to be handled under our housing services complaints process.

## 13. Related documents

Related documents include but are not limited to:

- Repairs
- Required Access
- Hoarding
- ASB
- Temporary relocation (Decanting)
- Safeguarding policies and procedures

<b>Replaces:</b> Pest Management policy 2023 (Lewisham Homes) Minor updates to reflect the return of landlord services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council	
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