HOUSING POLICY

Pest Control policy, 2026

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Pest Control Policy

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Details of any changes or reviews should be added.	

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set clear guidelines around how London Borough of Harrow (LBH) deals with pest control within its council housing estates and to give residents advice on how to deal with pests where they live.

We will specify who can access the service, which pests we have a statutory obligation to treat and whether there will be a charge attached. We also outline our approach to reduce and control the reoccurrence of pests found within communal areas and homes including those managed by leaseholders.

We aim to clarify roles and responsibilities so that residents have a clear understanding of what to expect from London Borough of Harrow, as well as what is expected from residents to prevent and manage infestations and clarifying who pays for this service.

2. Scope

All London Borough of Harrow residents living in council owned social housing including those living in sheltered schemes can receive treatment for rats, mice, and cockroaches as standard. As this is a statutory regulation, there is no cost to the tenant, this also includes Council owned houses.

The costs of providing this service to leaseholders is recovered either via service charges or subject to an individual charge to the property.

All block treatments are rechargeable via service charges. Any other pest can be treated if agreed, subject to further costs which are not included within the basic pest control service.

Other pests typically encountered (not limited to) include bedbugs, fleas, pigeons, wasps, ants, moths, squirrels, and beetles. Animals such as bees and foxes will require a specialist and will be referred to the National Beekeepers Association or the Fox Project Charity. We will work with residents and partners, to try to achieve an effective solution to eradicate pests. Harrow's Residents First team, work in partnership with contractors to deliver block treatments and individual pest treatments.

We will also work with our Maintenance department to deliver proofing works (blocking holes) for London Borough of Harrow council homes and communal areas to offer positive solutions to pest control issues. Leaseholders and homeowners may be recharged through the service charges. Proofing works are categorised as non-urgent and will be raised as a Priority 3 which will be responded to in 2 to 5 days.

Approach to pests in communal areas:

- We will take a risk-based approach to the treatment of pest infestations within communal areas, assessing the severity and impact on residents to ensure the correct action is taken.
- For communal areas with persistent pest issues, we will carry out a survey and schedule routine, repeat treatments. The number of visits needed to treat each pest type, will vary dependant on the type of pest and the infestation level. Standard visit schedule of costs has been set out in Appendix 1.
- We will deal with pest infestations that are found in the communal parts of our properties, such as lobbies, hallways, staircases, landings of blocks of flats and bin stores.
- We will also deal with pest infestations that are present in the 'structure' of blocks of flats, such as drains, roof spaces, car parks, boiler rooms, and refuse/waste enclosures. This includes dealing with rats, mice, cockroaches, pigeons, squirrels, wasp nests, and beehives.

- Pest infestations found with the communal kitchens of sheltered schemes will be dealt with as a Priority 2 – our 24-hour service.

- We will carry out necessary proofing and remedial works to ensure that pests do not have access to our communal areas. This could include blocking holes in structural walls or major works such as renewing cracked or broken sewer pipes.
- We will seek professional advice where appropriate. For example, bees are an endangered, protected species and may require specialist control that does not lead to their destruction. This may also apply to some nesting birds, such as parakeets.
- Customers are expected to keep their garden maintained and tidy in line with their tenancy / lease agreements. We will not treat mice in gardens, but we may treat rat, fox, and badger issues in gardens where there are visible burrows.
- We will recover the cost of all pest control works carried out in communal areas through service charges paid by the customers who benefit from the service in line with their tenancy agreements and leases.

3. Definitions

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. Where the words 'we,' 'us,' or 'our' are used within this document, this refers to London Borough of Harrow, unless otherwise stated.

For the purposes of this policy, the word 'pest' refers to an animal pest, including, mammals and invertebrates (principally insects), deemed to cause harm or nuisance to humans or residential property. Individual property treatment refers to where a specific property requires treatment for pests. Proofing is the process of preventing infestations by sealing all entry points that pests could use to get into your home. Proofing prevents damage from rodents gnawing on pipes, cables, and doors, as well as harm from droppings, nests, and food contamination.

4. Objectives

As a responsible landlord, London Borough of Harrow has a duty to ensure that pest infestations are prevented where possible, restricted from spreading to other flats and neighbouring houses and are eradicated. We can achieve our objective by working with residents to make them aware of signs and promoting prevention methods for dealing with pests.

4.1 Detection

Early detection is the best way to control an infestation and prevent it from spreading. If you detect any signs of pests within your home or communal areas, you

should report it as soon as possible by emailing housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk .

Below are some signs that indicate you may have a pest infestation:

- Droppings: Mouse and rat droppings are small and dark; they will be scattered randomly and can often be found alongside skirting boards and on top of counters and in cupboards. Smaller droppings can be signs of insect infestation.
- Holes/bite marks. Holes in food packaging, storage containers and soft furnishings are obvious signs that rodents might be present.
- Smear marks: due to their poor eyesight rats and mice run along established paths, often following skirting boards and walls; the oil and grease in their fur will leave dark smudges on walls.
- Trail marks and webbing: Some pests like slugs and cockroaches will leave trails behind. Cockroaches leave a greasy brownish trail, and slugs and snails leave a silver/white coloured trail. Certain types of moths leave silk webbing and can cause damage to your clothes and fabric by causing holes in them.
- Bodies: whether finding dead bodies, casings or actual sightings of live animals and insects, they are all an indication that you might be facing a pest infestation.
- Unusual smells: most pest infestations will have a noticeable unusual smell.
- Scratching noises: if you hear scratching, pecking, nibbling, or moving sounds coming from internal walls, roof, or flooring. These are all signs that you have rodents such as squirrels, rats, mice, or birds nesting in parts of the home or roofing area.
- Gnaw marks: gnaw marks in woodwork such as skirting boards and bottom of doors are obvious signs of rats and mice. You may also come across chewed up electric cables.
- Larvae: if you see larvae or eggs along windows sills, skirtings, and walls these are signs that you have an insect infestation such as carpet beetles or other similar insects.
- Bites: if you are getting bitten regularly, this could indicate that you have a bed bug or flea infestation.

To learn more about identifying individual pests, please see Appendix 2.

4.2 Prevention

Keeping the home and surrounding areas clean and tidy will prevent pests from invading your home and communal spaces.

Below are some helpful tips to prevent pest infestation within your home:

- Clean all surfaces and floors regularly, especially after preparing or eating a meal.
- Keep your home clean, tidy, and free from clutter. Clutter provides places for pests to breed, hide and nest and makes it hard to get rid of them.
- Rubbish should be tied in a bag and thrown in the communal bins outside.

- Store food in sealed containers. Food scraps should be placed in tightly sealed bins.
- Do not leave pet food out overnight.
- Do not leave dirty dishes in the sink or anywhere else, especially overnight as most pests are nocturnal and will be attracted to the food debris left on them.
- Keep your garden tidy, keep grass and shrubs cut low and do not allow it to become overgrown and out of control. Do not leave rubbish and old furniture out, this will reduce the chance of mice and rats nesting in your garden.
- Feed birds using a table or a feeder high off the ground, ideally hanging out from a tree branch out of the reach of mice and rats. **Never** throw food on the ground for animals including birds.
- Keep communal areas on your estate clean by not leaving rubbish bags outside your door or anywhere else in the communal areas.
- Report leaks as soon as you spot them and do not let water accumulate anywhere in the home. Do not let water collect in trays under your house plants or refrigerator. This can attract flying insects.
- Block holes and gaps where pests can enter and hide. Seal gaps around pipework with filler (wire wool with mastic sealer).

5. Recharges and enforcement

Where we determine that a pest infestation is a result of a customer's action, or inaction (such as keeping their home or garden in an unacceptable condition, failing to allow access for treatment, or failing to report pest issues in a timely manner) we may recharge the full cost of the current and any future treatments to the property. We may also recharge for any repairs required to remedy the problem.

We may consider enforcement action (including possession or injunctive relief) where customers fail to adhere to their tenancy or lease agreement. This may include situations where customers do not allow access or do not comply with required processes for effective pest control treatment. This would also apply where the property is kept in an unacceptable condition.

We understand that some residents have vulnerability needs and may need additional support when dealing with pest infestations. For example, if we come across a resident who is hoarding, who also has a pest infestation issue, we will work across departments to put support in place to allow access to the property and treat the issue.

Below is a copy of the terms of your Tenancy Agreement:

*Section **C** states:*

*(**4**) "If we are charged money because you don't let us into your home to carry out any work, we may charge you those costs and add that amount to your rent account. You must pay us any costs we add to your rent account."*

*(**5**) "You must decorate the inside of your home and maintain your home to a reasonable standard, including any items that you have added with our permission."*

*(**8**) You must use your home properly and responsibly. You must take reasonable care to keep all grates, grids, drains and gullies (not including gutters that catch water from the roof) clean and clear, and you must not block toilets and sinks.*

Notes
*(**e**) If you are not able to take care of your home yourself, ask your housing officer about help that may be available.*

*(**f**) You are also responsible for cleaning the inside and outside of your home*.

Residents need to keep to the terms of their tenancy and lease and allow access to contractors when necessary to treat pest infestations. For treatments such as bed bugs, we may need to treat the whole block even if the issue did not originate within your individual home. London Borough of Harrow can take enforcement action against you if the above conditions are breached. London Borough of Harrow can also serve a notice on an owner or an occupier ordering work to get rid of the pest infestation under the following legislation:

- The Public Health Act 1961 and Pests
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949

6. Roles and responsibilities

Effective pest control is the responsibility of tenants and leaseholders as well as the London Borough of Harrow. We have clarified roles and responsibilities so that residents and landlords know what to expect from us and what we expect from them.

Our responsibilities

London Borough of Harrow has a statutory duty to treat rats, mice, and cockroaches for council tenants. Staff are responsible or their own health and safety and may refuse to enter a property if there is a known infestation or the conditions are unsanitary.

Any infestation that falls outside of the statutory category is not the London Brough of Harrow's responsibility. Discretion will be used in certain cases which may involve residents who have vulnerability needs or where there is risk of spread of infestation to other council properties within a block. Common infestations that fall outside the main statutory duty to treat include, but are not limited to:

Fleas
Moths
Ants
Carpet beetles
Silver fish
Flying insects
Bedbugs
Pigeons

Squirrels
Bees and Wasps

Any treatments to an individual property relating to these pests will be subject to a charge which must be paid in advance. The council may use its discretion to waive the charge levied to a property depending on individual circumstances.

Bedbugs

Although bedbugs fall outside Harrow's statutory duty to treat, they can cause major issues if an infestation gets out of control. We will look at each case and use discretion when deciding whether to treat or not. There may be instances when the tenant cannot pay or will not take responsibility due to vulnerabilities which will cause the issue to get bigger if left. This is a particular cause for concern for the affected individual dwellings within the block in question. Bedbug treatment requires intensive site preparation.

Pigeons/birds

Pigeons are a very contentious issue; we will install nets as part of proofing works for Harrow tenants where possible. However, residents are expected to clean their private balconies to include the removal of pigeon mess. Private balconies are considered part of the individual property and should be cleaned and kept in good condition. Pigeon mess should not be left to build up so much it that it requires professional cleaning. If it is left until it gets to this stage, residents may be recharged for the professional clean.

Your responsibilities

Residents have a key role to play in preventing and managing infestations as outlined below:

- Keep home and communal areas in good, clean condition and dispose of rubbish properly.
- Do not throw food on the ground for animals including birds.
- Report all pest infestations as soon as possible by emailing housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk
- Allow contractors access to survey and treat the problem.
- Follow any required processes to eliminate the pest issue.
- Let us know about any support needs that may be preventing you from getting treatment for pest infestation.

7. Implementation

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all relevant staff members are trained on the Pest Control Policy. Refresher training should be carried out each year, and managers should record any areas of noncompliance and take appropriate corrective actions.

8. Review

This policy shall be reviewed and updated after any relevant legislative or regulatory changes, new case law, guidance and best practice or operational issues.

9. References / other relevant policies

Related documents include but are not limited to:

- Repairs Charter
- Tenancy Agreement
- Relocation Scheme Policy
- Adult Safe guarding policy
- Child Protection proceedure
- Harrow Council Housing Neighbourhood Strategy – to come

10. Legislation and Regulation

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
- The Public Health Act 1961 and Pests
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, (COSHH)

11. Contact information

housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk

12. Equality impact assessment

We undertook an equality impact assessment as part of the development of this policy.

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 may need to help a vulnerable person if they are

hoarding, to clear a property or even leave the property for a short space of time whilst we treat for a severe case of bed bugs.

Appendix 1 Pest control schedule of rates

Cost of treatment to be recharged to the tenant or leaseholder and number of visits required.
Costs as of 2026 and will be subject to review

Pest	Number of Visits Required	Intervals	Cost
Wasps	1	No repeat treatment	£95.00
Fleas	2	Every 14 to 21 days	£250.00
Garden ants (black ants)	1	No repeat treatment	£108.33
Cockroaches	2	Every 10 to 14 days	£187.50
Mice	3	Every 7 to 10 days	£180.00
Rats	3	Every 7 to 10 days	£180.00
Clothes moths (1-3 rooms)	2	Every 14 to 21 days	£262.50
Clothes moths (4-6 rooms)	2	Every 14 to 21 days	£295.83
Pharaoh ants (yellow ants)	2	Every 14 to 21 days	£244.83
Bedbugs (1-3 rooms)	2	Every 14 to 16 days	£262.50
Bedbugs (4-6 rooms)	2	Every 14 to 16 days	£295.83
Combined mice and cockroaches	3	Every 7 to 10 days	£280.83
Combined rats and cockroaches	3	Every 7 to 10 days	£280.83
Combined rats or mice and bedbugs	3	Every 7 to 10 days	£345.83
Squirrels	1	No repeat treatment	£180.00
Silverfish	1	No repeat treatment	£95.00

Appendix 2 Pest descriptions

Please see visuals to help you identify the most common pests found inside parts of the home and communal areas and to understand what is involved in their treatment.

Bedbugs

We provide pest control treatment for bedbugs and have also provided some advice on how to recognise bedbugs and what you should do if you think you have an infestation or are preparing for treatment.

Adult bedbugs are oval shaped, flattened and about 6mm long. When unfed they are a pale brown in colour but become reddish brown when full of blood. Young bugs are nearly colourless, becoming brown as they mature.

Where do bedbugs live?

You can often find bedbugs:
Under carpets
Behind pictures which are hung on walls.
Behind door frames.
In soft furniture such as sofas and beds.

Bedbugs can crawl vertically up most surfaces including wallpaper, wood and plasterboard but cannot crawl up smooth polished surfaces such a bathtub.

Note: You can often see signs of bedbugs from their droppings which look like black dots. If you have no bites above the knee, the cause is more likely to be fleas.

Treatment to get rid of bedbugs

Treatment for bedbugs is a very intensive process; an adult must be present in the home throughout each visit whilst treatment is being carried out.
Treatments within the home involve two visits three weeks apart treating all affected areas of the home.
We will give you an advice sheet with information about the insecticide used, where it has been placed and any special precautions that need to be taken to protect children and pets in the household.

How to prepare your home for bedbug treatment

Before the treatment is carried out, you should prepare your home by doing the following:

- Remove all wall hangings including pictures, posters, and mirrors from the walls.
- Move all furniture and items away from the walls.
- Remove headboards from beds where possible.
- Empty any bed storage compartments or drawers.
- Remove all items from under the bed.
- Remove bedding from mattress.
- Empty wardrobes, drawers, cupboards and beds of all linen and clothing.
- Place any items which cannot be laundered in thick bin liners and seal tightly.
- Open and shake-out books, papers etc.
- Lift all carpets around the edge of the room and leave them loose.
- Thoroughly clean and vacuum all rooms and empty the vacuum bag into the external bin immediately.
- Do not move anything out of the rooms to be treated, apart from rubbish and clothing that will need to be washed.

Before the first and second visit any clothes or bed linen must either be:

- Hot washed at a minimum of 60 degrees C or
- Tumble dried at a minimum of 60 degrees C for at least 30 minutes or
- Placed in a deep freezer for at least three days or
- Dry-cleaned.
- Other things to do before the treatment starts, include:
    - Unplug all non-essential electrical items.
    - Turn off any aquarium pumps and cover the tank.
    - Leave rooms to be treated and take all pets with you.
- After the treatment, you should:
    - Wait three hours before re-entering the rooms.
    - Open the windows for an hour.
    - Turn on aquarium pumps and other electrical items after the rooms have been aired.
    - Do not vacuum, wipe, or polish any treated rooms for at least two weeks.
    - Sleep in your bed as normal - it helps to eradicate the bedbugs.

If you wish to get a new bed, do not do so until the infestation is completely eradicated (which normally takes a minimum of two weeks and sometimes longer).

Cockroaches

Cockroaches are attracted to food waste and stagnant water, so keeping your

surfaces clean and clear, keeping your food in airtight containers, disposing of food waste properly in a closed bin that is regularly collected, and making sure that you get rid of any old, dirty water that might collect in your garden, bathroom and kitchen can all help to avoid the problem.

If you spot any holes or cracks in the outer walls of your home, arrange to get them sealed in to avoid any pests, including cockroaches. If you have any leaks or notice water collecting anywhere in your home or building, let us know so we can investigate. If you do find cockroaches in your home, please contact us as soon as possible. housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk

Fleas

If you have a pet such as cats and dogs who go outside, they will be at risk of catching fleas which will then be bought into your home. Prevention is the best method for dealing with fleas. Please ensure that your pet is given regular flea treatments. Fleas can also get into your home through travelling on the clothing of people who visit your home or on soft furnishings from an infected environment. Bear in mind that if you have visited someone's home that has a flea problem you can bring them back on your clothes.

If a flea problem is left untreated, they can be difficult to eradicate, especially if they get into carpets and other soft furnishings so it is important to act quickly. To get rid of fleas that are in your rugs, carpet, and furniture, you can purchase a home flea spray and then vacuum thoroughly to get rid of any remaining fleas or eggs. If you have a serious flea infestation that you cannot solve using these tips, or you are not sure how the fleas are coming in, and they keep coming back after treatment. Please contact us as soon as possible. Email: housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk

Ants

The best way to prevent ants from invading your home is to locate and destroy the nest which is usually found outside the home in a front or back garden or surrounding grounds. If you find ants inside your home, you can apply insecticides at the entry points and directly on the infestation. Ants are attracted to food sources especially those that are high in sugar content. To prevent ants from invading your home, dispose of rubbish and food sources and make sure food is kept in airtight containers especially things like sugar.

Spiders

You are more likely to find spiders inside your home during the winter months. There are lots of ways you can make your home less welcoming to spiders. Vacuuming and dusting regularly will keep them away, and often essential oils like peppermint, tea tree and cinnamon can repel them without harming them.

If you see one or two spiders in your home, you can just trap them in a glass

and place them back outside. London Borough of Harrow does not provide treatment for spiders.

Silver fish

You might have seen a silverfish in your bathroom. They like damp, wet environments. They are usually harmless, but you might find them to be a nuisance, as they can sometimes get into dried food, or damage your books or clothes.

Silverfish live in damp environments; they can be prevented by ensuring that your home is well-ventilated and free from damp. You should pay special attention to kitchen and bathroom areas which can easily become damp from water and steam. Ventilation can be encouraged by opening windows and doors and using your extractor fans.

If you are worried you have a damp or mold problem in your home, contact us right away so we can help you.

To get rid of silverfish, you can buy treatments online or in most supermarkets.

Moths

Normal moths cause us little nuisance. However, if you notice that clothing inside your wardrobe have tiny holes in them, you might have clothes moths. Clothes moths are a specific type of moths that like to eat natural fibres.
You will most commonly find them in your wool or cotton clothing, but sometimes in your carpets, or you are bedding if they are made of natural materials.
Washing the affected clothes or areas is the best way to get rid of clothes moths.
There are lots of over the counter and natural remedies to get rid of clothes moths.
Cedarwood and cedar oil in your wardrobes and drawers are an effective moth repellent.

Wasps

Wasps are not the friendliest of creatures and finding a nest in your home can be concerning. Wasps, like many of the other creatures on this list, are attracted to food and rubbish. Make sure your bins are closed and that no waste is left lying around the house.

You can buy wasp repellent in shops, but nests will need to be treated professionally. We do not treat wasps inside individual homes but will treat nests in communal areas. There is lots of information online on how to deal with wasps safely inside your home or garden. If you see a wasp nest in the communal areas, usually in the masonry or brickwork. Please contact us housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk

Bees

Bees play a key role in the environment. Without pollinating trees and plants, food production for other animals would not be possible. It is common to see bees outside or in the garden during the warmer months of the year. The best way to spot a potential bee's nest is noticing many bees in one location. They will often nest in brick work and cavities on external buildings or in bushes or trees. It is exceedingly rare that bees would nest inside your home, but it is possible that they could find their way into roof or loft spaces. Honeybee nests will cause dark patches on the walls or ceilings. This is a clear sign that you have a Honeybee infestation. If you spot a bee's nest in a communal area or inside your home. Please contact us. housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk

Mice

Evidence of mice can include black staining caused by fur rubbing on surfaces, droppings, and gnaw marks. Mice can be prevented by emptying bins regularly, clearing up spills immediately and sealing cracks and holes around pipes and electrics.
If you have seen evidence of mice inside your home or communal areas, please contact us housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk. Please note, it is your responsibility to keep your home clean, in good condition, and free of rubbish that could attract pests. If you fail to do this, we could recharge you for dealing with pests in your home.

Mice can squeeze through exceedingly small openings and live and breed under floors, in cavity walls, ceiling voids and behind skirting boards. They can damage homes by gnawing, for example if mice chew through wiring, there is a risk of fire or electrocution. Mice can contaminate food and surfaces by leaving urine, droppings, and hair. They can also carry infectious diseases, so it is important to treat infestations as soon as possible.
Mice thrive in the home environment, particularly in dirty or unhygienic areas. They are usually light or dark grey, and adults can be 7 to 9cm long (not including the tail).

Rats

The Brown Rat is the most common species in the UK. Rats live in refuse tips, under floors, in cavity walls of buildings, sewers, bin stores and gardens. They often move into buildings in autumn and winter in search of shelter and food but may stay if there is an all-year-round food source. They are active just before dawn and after dusk and tend to move along hedgerows, walls, and riverbanks at ground level (although they can climb and jump).

Rats contaminate food and surfaces by leaving urine, droppings, and hair. Rats can carry infectious diseases such as Leptospirosis (Weil's disease), Toxoplasmosis and Salmonella, so it is important to treat infestations as soon as possible.
Rat holes or burrows are 6 to 9cm in diameter and tend to be in undisturbed areas near food. Runs are typically 5 to 10cm wide and look well-used. Greasy smear

marks may be seen where rats contact stone, wood, and metal, such as on steps and in cupboard floors.

Squirrels

Squirrels are not a nuisance if you just see them occasionally in the garden or communal areas. They become a nuisance if they find their way into your roof or loft space. You can often tell if you have squirrels in your loft space as you will hear them moving around above you. Once in the loft or roof space, they can cause damage by gnawing cables, wires, woodwork, and damage to roof tiles.

If you think you have squirrels in the loft or roof area, please do contact us. housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk.