

1. Background and objectives

- 1.1. The aim of this policy is to define Alliance Homes' commitment to preventing and handling pests and infestations in homes and communal areas. Incidents involving infestation and pests are likely to cause anxiety and distress and this policy and associated guidance will clearly inform our customers who is responsible for managing pests, our approach and response to concerns and give information about prevention.
- 1.2. In cases where the infestation is likely to cause injury or harm to customers and their households or cause damage to the fabric of a building, Alliance Homes will investigate and take prompt remedial action as required. Pest problems are frequently connected to other issues; a welfare or hygiene concern; a fault in the structure of a property; a mould and damp issue; bins that haven't been emptied; an overgrown garden. Reports of incidents will therefore be taken seriously with the appropriate advice given to customers and referrals made for our tenancy and repairs teams to carry out prompt investigations and act as required.

2. Policy Detail

Responsibility for managing pests and infestations

- 2.1. Our customers are required to deal with pests and infestations in their home. This is set out within the customer's tenancy agreement or lease. Customers will be directed to useful sources of information on pest prevention and treatment, and are responsible for:
 - Maintaining a property or garden so that pests are less able to find places to shelter and cause repeated issues in and around the property or to neighbouring land and property.
 - Taking action to prevent, remove and manage infestations that are the responsibility of tenants or leaseholders including, if required, the hiring of specialist pest control companies to treat affected areas.
 - Taking prompt action to pick up dog waste as required and clean up droppings from birds or rodents.
 - Allowing employees and contractors of Alliance Homes access to carry out pest control treatments where Alliance Homes has management responsibility.

2.2. There are circumstances where Alliance Homes is responsible for managing a pest issue or infestation. They are as follows:

- Communal areas of flats that are owned and managed by Alliance Homes.
- As defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to keep a property free from Category 1 Hazards (a pest infestation that is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety) where there is access in to and shelter within a dwelling, resulting from a defect in the fabric of a building.
- An infestation potentially affecting multiple homes and the wider community, defined as a public health concern by Environmental Health.
- During the process of re-letting a property.
- Where reasonable adjustments are required to meet a customer's specific need.

Our response to reports of pests and infestations

2.3. Alliance Homes recognises that pests and infestations in our customers' homes, or the prospect of such, are psychologically and emotionally distressing issues for many. We acknowledge that some customers may be unable to cope with the disruption and inconvenience caused by pest control matters in addition to their everyday circumstances. In serving our customers we will ensure that we meet the following measures:

- Provide information on our website and other formats about common types of pests, and the steps that can be taken to deter vermin and insect infestations. Examples of the likely types of pests and infestations to be managed are detailed in Appendix 2.
- Respond to reports of pests in a timely and understanding manner and prioritise locating the source of an infestation.
- Inform our customer what to expect from our pest control service at the outset.
- Aim to investigate reports of pests and infestations within 5 working days and if a treatment plan is required ensure action is taken within 14 working days from assessment.
- Consider any physical or mental health difficulties that our customer may have which might affect the practical application or effectiveness of any treatments or repairs.

PESTS AND INFESTATIONS POLICY



- Consider taking opportunities to make other repairs to a property, reducing the need to disturb the customer on multiple occasions.
- Ensure any required repairs are made to the property as soon as achievable following treatments, liaising regularly with the pest control contractor.
- Ensure where possible that our customer is contacted by the same member of staff within Alliance Homes and this contact should provide the customer with regular updates on the situation.
- Consider temporarily moving our customer where pests and infestations in their home present a serious and immediate risk to their health.
- Where the source of an infestation is found to be on a property not owned by Alliance Homes report this to Environmental Health so they can take follow up action.
- Where other residents are impacted by an infestation managed by Alliance Homes, they should be kept informed and appropriate action taken.

Prevention of pest issues in an around our properties

- 2.4. During our re-letting process we will ensure that properties are 'pest proofed' as much as possible. This includes ensuring that any holes or cavities identified are filled and any previous infestation professionally treated.
- 2.5. Investigate reports of pests accessing property walls, lofts, drains or foundations. Ensure that pests are removed and any necessary repairs to external access points are carried out promptly.
- 2.6. Communal land and bin store areas and will be kept clean and tidy, and we will work with our customers to encourage them to meet this commitment.
- 2.7. Carry out programmes of works to install netting around our solar panels to manage issues caused by roosting or nesting pigeons.
- 2.8. Where appropriate install spikes and mesh on chimneys and rooves to prevent gulls from nesting and causing noise nuisance and damage to property.
- 2.9. Assess potential for vermin to nest and feed in messy gardens, take action to limit food and other items left in the garden and attend to overgrown vegetation.
- 2.10. Provide advice to stop customers from throwing food on the ground specifically to feed pigeons and gulls. Such actions attract vermin and cause nuisance, potential harm to health and damage to buildings.
- 2.11. Liaise with Environmental Protection and take action against individuals who allow their pet(s) to repeatedly foul communal areas and walkways on property owned by Alliance

PESTS AND INFESTATIONS POLICY



Homes.

Enforcement

- 2.12. Alliance Homes' customers that are responsible for but fail to deal with pests or infestations and due to their neglect cause nuisance to neighbours or damage to the fabric of property, may face action for breach of tenancy or lease conditions.
- 2.13. Where customers refuse to deal with pest issues in their home, have severe pest issues or refuse to give our operatives or contractors access, Alliance Homes will intervene to address the problem.
- 2.14. Alliance Homes may charge customers who fail to meet their responsibilities for costs of treatment, clearance or any legal action taken.

Safe working practices for staff and information for customers

- 2.15. The Health and Safety Team will ensure that staff dealing with incidents of infestation keep to safe working practices and are provided with appropriate protective clothing and guidance.
- 2.16. Customers will have access to Alliance Homes' Pest and Infestations Guidance which will be available on-line or in other formats upon request. This will outline customer responsibilities, the types of pests that they should report to Alliance Homes and give advice regarding prevention and animals which are considered protected.

3. Monitoring, consultation, and review

The Board and our regulator will receive reports on the performance against agreed targets and indicators.

In line with our involvement, staff, tenants, leaseholders, and stakeholders will be included in:

- Monitoring our performance
- Reviewing this policy, to reflect their needs and priorities

Further details about how this will be achieved are set out in separate tenant and leaseholder involvement agreements.

The Tenancy Services Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed within two years of its approval by Tenancy Services Manager and will be approved by the Strategic Leadership Team.

4. Equality and Diversity

This policy is subject to a periodic Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

The purpose of such an assessment is to consider the effect of the policy regarding the recognised protected characteristics of equality and ensure that it does not unfairly impact any individual or group. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy and Single Equality Scheme. Remedial action will be undertaken if a detrimental effect is identified.

The EIA also requires the policy author to consider whether the policy is likely to negatively impact on a person's Human Rights.

This policy and any other related Alliance Homes publications can be provided in other formats for those with visual, literacy or language difficulties.

5. Associated policies and documents

- Lettings Policy
- Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Policy
- Messy Gardens Procedure
- Health and Safety at Work Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy

6. Version control and approval dates

Approval stage	Date completed
Equality Impact Assessment completed	3 rd June 2024
EIA reviewed by Equality & Diversity Manager	26 th June 2024
SLT review / approval	17 th July 2024
Next review date	31 st July 2026

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment must be conducted alongside the review of an existing policy or the creation of a new one.

1. Name the Strategy, Policy, Procedure or Function (SPPF) being assessed and name of author.

Pests and Infestations Policy

2. Aims of the SPPF being assessed.

- *Whose need is it designed to meet?*
- *Are there any measurable elements such as time limits or age limits?*

The policy seeks to define the responsibilities of both Alliance Homes and our customers regarding the prevention and treatment of pests and infestations in homes and communal areas. Customers will be advised of what to expect of pest control and repairs services from the outset; our target response times; prompt repair of properties following treatments; regular updates from staff with oversight of the case. The policy seeks to acknowledge that pests and infestations are for many a source of anxiety and distress and our approach must be empathetic and consider how mental health, physical or socio-economic difficulties may affect our customer's ability to deal with these issues or Alliance Homes' ability to manage the problem. As pest issues are likely to increase nationwide Alliance Homes must place more emphasis on taking practical preventative measures on our estates and communal areas and educate our customers so that incidence is reduced.

3. Who has been consulted in developing the SPPF?

- *Make reference or links to consultation/evidence documents*

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel, customers addressed through HIVE, tenancy and repair teams, have all had opportunity to comment and recommend alterations or improvements on clarity of message and connections to other policies and procedures.

4. Does the SPPF promote equality of opportunity?

Yes

5. Identify potential impact on each of the diversity "groups" by considering the following questions (the list is not exhaustive but an indication of the sort of questions assessors should think about):

- *Might some groups find it harder to access the service?*
- *Do some groups have particular needs that are not well met by the current SPPF?*

PESTS AND INFESTATIONS POLICY



- What evidence do you have for your judgement (e.g. monitoring data, information from consultation/research/feedback)?
- Have staff/residents raised concerns/complaints?
- Is there local or national research to suggest there could be a problem?

Protected Characteristic	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Information source/s **	Comments/evidence
Race	X				
Disability			X		The cost-of-living crisis has impacted access to pest control services for many vulnerable people. The majority of councils no longer have inhouse pest control services and the reduction in refuse collections and support will exacerbate matters. The policy seeks to acknowledge that Alliance Homes may need to intercede when customers are unable to deal with pests themselves due to their circumstances and take an empathetic and case specific approach.
Gender	X				
Transgender	X				
Sexual orientation	X				
Religion or belief	X				
Age			X		The cost-of-living crisis has impacted access to pest control services for many vulnerable people. The majority of councils no longer have inhouse pest control services and the reduction in refuse collections and support will exacerbate matters. The policy seeks to acknowledge that Alliance Homes may need to intercede when customers are unable to deal with pests themselves due to their circumstances and take an empathetic and case specific approach.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	X				
Pregnancy and Maternity	X				

PESTS AND INFESTATIONS POLICY



Rural issues				X	The policy seeks to demonstrate consistency of response. Customers in rural areas should expect to receive the same levels of service as those customers in urban areas.
Social mobility	X				

Was there a negative impact identified in question 5? If yes go to question 6. if not go to question 7.

6. If “negative impact” identified in table (4) above is it?

Legal -

YES	NO
HIGH	LOW

What is the level of impact? -

If it is not legal and/or high impact – (i.e.: if you have highlighted NO to legal and HIGH to impact, then the document should be referred to Head of HR)

7. If positive impact has been identified in table 4 above, how can it be improved upon or maximised, either in this SPPF or others?

There may be opportunities to address pest control issues in tandem with recently revised Messy Garden procedures. Also, with the prospect of reduced public waste services likely, Alliance Homes may need to consider taking more proactive preventative measures on our estates and/or enforcement action.

8. Full EIA (or if you decide full EIA is not necessary but some changes should be considered)

- Are there changes you could introduce which would make this SPPF work better for this group of people?
- Is further research or consultation required?

9. Does this proposal have any potential Human Rights implications?

If yes, please describe (if necessary, please refer to the Alliance Homes Group Human Rights Policy)

No

Appendix 2

Types of Pests and Infestations that may require treatments

Mice and Rats

Mice and rats can cause damage to homes and furnishings and chew through electrical wires, increasing the risk of fire or serious injury. They also carry infections that can transmit to people.

If mice or rats have entered the living areas in a home it will be necessary to investigate how they have gained access, carry out any required repair of the building to prevent further infestation and treat/remove vermin inside the home.

Rats nesting in gardens can be remedied by removing any food source, water or shelter such as brambles and long grass. Alternatively, specialists can advise on the best course of direct action to remove vermin.

Fleas

Flea infestations are commonly transferred to homes by pets but can appear in homes without animals present. Flea eggs can lay dormant for significant periods and hatch when conditions are right. Infestations can be treated with sprays together with normal household cleaning. For larger infestations it may be necessary to contact a pest control service.

Bedbugs

Bedbugs 'hitchhike' from an infested location or item, such as used furniture, clothing, luggage or backpacks. Bedbugs are blood feeders and are adept at finding hiding places near their food source, often a mattress or other item of furniture in a bedroom, unseen until the infestation becomes large enough to be noticeable. First signs of bedbugs may be bites on areas of exposed skin while sleeping, notably on the face, neck and arms, or small spots of blood on bedding. Infestations are difficult to treat because bedbugs can hide in very small places. Treatment from a qualified pest control service together with a regimen of household cleaning and clothes/linen washing is the best way to tackle this nuisance.

Wasps and Bees

Wasps only become a problem if they build a nest in a loft, the eaves, or a cavity wall space in a property. Wasp nests should not be approached or disturbed to avoid swarming if they feel threatened. A pest control service should be contacted to give advice on identification and removal of the nest.

Bees are not classed as a pest and can be mistaken for a wasp, so some help with identification is useful. Honeybees must not be killed as they are protected by law, but they may be rehomed by a local beekeeper if they have built a nest on the property. The National Beekeepers Association provides help and advice on who may be able to assist in a particular locality.

Other issues

Pigeons

Pigeons can present as a nuisance when roosting and nesting in large groups. Moreover, they can cause damage to property and pose a health risk to people. Nesting debris can get lodged in gutters, drains, vents and chimneys causing blockages, and bacteria found in pigeon droppings can be harmful to humans and pets. Feeding pigeons is therefore to be discouraged as they are sociable birds and available food inevitably attracts large groups. Pigeons have a liking for nesting under solar panels and programmes to fit netting or mesh to prevent this are common practices. Deterrents such as anti-bird spikes and decoy kites are used to deter pigeons with varying degrees of success.

Gulls

Gulls like pigeons are not technically a pest but can present as a nuisance and cause damage to property. Gulls will nest on a roof if the conditions are right. They look for spaces that are quiet, sheltered, in the shade and where they can perch. If food is being offered nearby it is more likely that they will nest in that neighbourhood. Hungry gulls can be aggressive and feeding gulls teaches them to loiter near adults and children in the hope of getting food. Feeding gulls is to be discouraged not only as it leads to nesting and causes nuisance behaviour, but because low nutrition food is not what a gull needs to remain healthy, worsening issues associated with the significant quantities of droppings that may require removal and which contain toxins harmful to health. When nesting they can be destructive, damage insulation & air flow systems, pull up exposed roofing felt and will even pull away lead flashing. Other damage includes blockages to rain-water gutters, down pipes and even gas flues. Once established, gulls tend to return to the same roof to nest every year. Their young (usually one per year) will call for the adult bird almost ceaselessly while it gathers food, causing not insignificant noise nuisance issues for some residents. Deterrents are sometimes required to prevent gulls from nesting, such as anti-bird spikes and meshing around chimneys. Gulls and their nests are protected under law, so any deterrents need to be assessed and put in place by a suitably qualified pest control service.

Cockroaches

Cockroaches are attracted to certain conditions in a property and prefer warm, dark, humid parts of a home such as areas around pipe ducts in kitchens and bathrooms or underneath cookers where there is abundant food. They carry bacteria and can contaminate food that they walk over. Cockroaches also carry other pathogens that can lead to serious illnesses. A pest control service should be contacted to advise and eliminate any infestation.

Moths and Carpet beetles

Moths can be prevented from infesting clothing and linen through normal household cleaning and storage routines. Infestations may go undetected for long periods of time if items are not inspected regularly. Carpet beetles can damage woollen carpets or rugs in a home but can be prevented through good housekeeping. Treatments for both can be tackled using household products, however for carpet beetles if the infestation is significant contacting a pest controller may be the better option.

Silverfish

Silverfish live in damp and humid environments and prefer to hide in dark undisturbed areas of the home. They don't carry a serious health risk, but they can swarm if not dealt with. Normal household cleaning routines and vacuuming are usually sufficient to deal with them. However, if they become out of control, it may be advisable to seek help and advice from a pest control professional.

Mould Mites

Mould mites are attracted to properties primarily because of the presence of mould and fungi, their primary food sources. They like damp and humid conditions common in homes with moisture issues. They are not directly harmful as they do not bite or sting and can be removed using common cleaning products.