

Pest Control Policy



Directorate: Assets, Growth & Sustainability

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Introduction

1. Salix Homes has a zero-tolerance approach to pests within our customers' homes. The below provides a list of what are considered pests however this is not an exhaustive list:
 - Rats
 - Mice
 - Bedbugs
 - Larder beetles
 - Fleas
 - Cockroaches
 - Flies
2. Pests such as these can cause a significant problem by damaging homes and possessions, spreading diseases and can potentially aggravate some existing medical conditions. This policy ensures that Salix Homes delivers an effective and timely response to all reports of pests and ensures that remedial measures are carried out to prevent reoccurrence.

Policy Statement

3. The aim of this policy is to ensure that Salix Homes provides an effective response to reports of pests within our customers' homes, or within their neighbourhoods, alongside setting out our proactive approach to identify unreported cases.

4. The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) is increasing the emphasis on landlords to improve their focus on the quality of housing accommodation and ensure that all homes meet the Decent Homes legislative standard, part of which places a requirement on housing providers to address and deal with any hazards prescribed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS has a dedicated hazard for domestic hygiene, pests, and refuse, and sets the following causes:
 - Inadequately stored/accumulated refuse allowing access to insect / rodent / pests / birds / squirrels / foxes / cats / dogs.
 - Service ducts and holes around pipes.
 - Access to open drains by rodents.
 - Access for rodents by means of ill-fitting doors and windows.
 - Uneven and/or cracked internal walls and/or ceilings allowing access for pests.
 - Missing/damaged brickwork including airbricks to external walls and other disrepair to external walls and roof.
5. Salix Homes has a zero-tolerance approach to pests and recognises the need to ensure all reports are treated seriously, addressed appropriately and promptly, and that customers are safe in their home.
6. The policy applies to Salix Homes owned homes, and properties managed under the Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme, however excludes remediation relating to preventative or underlying measures for PSL properties, as this would fall under the responsibility of the property owner.

Preventative Measures

7. There are various simple steps you can take to help avoid unwanted pests in your home. Any home can have a problem with pests as they often come in search of food or warmth. It's much easier to prevent an infestation than to deal with one, so customers are urged to take all reasonable steps to prevent pests becoming a problem by adhering to the following:
 - Don't let pests in – If customers notice any holes or gaps in the external fabric of the building (brickwork, roof, fascia, soffit etc) that pests could be using to get into their home, they should let us know immediately.
 - Don't provide food– Pests entering a home are looking for food or warmth, so it is especially important that customers keep their home clean, especially the kitchen. This includes cleaning their home regularly to remove any traces of food on floors and surfaces and if possible, storing food in sealed containers.
 - Don't attract them to the garden – Furniture, mattresses and other rubbish in garden areas or outdoor space is an attractive place for pests to nest. Salford City Council provides a bulky waste collection service for large unwanted items, such as furniture and mattresses. Removing these items can help stop any pests moving from the garden into a customer's home. Customers can find out more about the bulky waste service at www.salford.gov.uk/bulky

Treating A Pest Problem

8. Where the above measures have not prevented a pest problem, customers should let us know about this immediately. Once it's been reported, Salix Homes will take the following steps to help address the problem:
 - All reports of pests will be passed to our pest control provider who will attend to carry out an initial assessment and undertake any appropriate treatment required within five working days. A treatment plan will be provided which will set out how many visits will be required to eradicate the pests.
 - An inspection the property will also be carried out within five working days to assess if there are any holes or gaps in the structure which are enabling pests to get in. This will also include an inspection of any gardens associated with the property.
 - Where any defect in the property is identified which enables access for pests, Salix Homes will take full responsibility for the cost of the treatment and carry out the necessary works as an urgent repair.
 - A final visit will be carried out by our pest control provider to confirm that the pests have been eradicated, and confirm no further action is required.

9. Where it is identified that steps have not been taken by the customer to prevent a pest infestation, like keeping their home clean or there is rubbish in the garden, and the property inspection has identified no defects with the exterior of the property, then the customer will be charged for the cost of pest control. This is known as a 're-charge' and will be added on to the customers rent account. This will be discussed with the customer following the initial property inspection.

Communal Pest Problems

10. Where a report of pests is made in a property with shared indoor communal spaces, an additional assessment will be carried out by our pest control provider to establish if the problem is more widespread than a single property.

11. Salix Homes is responsible for treating pests in all communal areas and will provide pest control services to individual properties as detailed above. If, however, it is identified that a problem with pests exists in a customer's home due to another property being infested, the customer will not be re-charged the cost of the pest control treatment. Salix Homes will continue to provide treatment and still inspect the customers home to establish if there are any external repairs that could be carried out to prevent pests entering the property.

12. Salix Homes is not responsible for treating pests outdoors, for example if a customer sees rats or mice outside. If customers do see a pest outdoors, they should report this to Salford City Council at the earliest opportunity. If, however, a pest is identified in a garden, customers should contact us, and we will carry out an inspection of the customers home to ensure that the problem does not escalate into the property.

13. If treatment is applied in a communal block of flats which contains leaseholders, Salix Homes will re-charge leaseholders the cost of treatment within communal areas as part of the annual service charges.

Proactive Measures

14. Salix Homes will make every effort to prevent infestations using the below methods:
 - External inspections of a property will be carried out as part of all stock condition surveys. These surveys are used to determine the quality of your home, and ensure we are investing in things like new kitchen and bathrooms at the right time. We will use this opportunity to assess if external work is required to prevent pests entering your home.
 - Carry out an external inspection prior to all properties being re-let to new customers.
 - Carry out regular inspections of internal shared spaces to help identify a communal pest problem at the earliest opportunity.
 - Carry out neighbourhood walkabouts to identify untidy gardens or gardens containing rubbish, which could encourage pests.
 - Carry out bi-annual tenancy audits to ensure you have the right level of support to maintain your home.

Service Standards

15. Provide a swift response to reports of pests – All reports of pests will have pest control treatment, and a property inspection carried out within five working days. This property inspection will establish the cause of pests and highlight any repairs which need completing to prevent the recurrence of infestation.
16. Considering the customer – Salix Homes recognise the impact of pests can have different effects on individual customers or households, and therefore, a risk assessment will be carried out to assess if there are any specific vulnerabilities which may impact the standard course of action, and require a more immediate intervention, including a possible decant until the problem has been resolved.
17. Categorisation – All reports of pests within a property will be assessed in line with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and will be categorised if the infestation amounts to a prescribed hazard.
18. After care – All reports of pests will be post inspected following the completion of treatment and remedial works to ensure that the intervention has resolved the problem.
19. Proactive Approach – Salix Homes will proactively ensure all properties have a regular tenancy audit completed which will enable the Housing Officer to inspect the property. Additionally, all stock condition surveys will specifically look at pests as part of the HHSRS assessment and will raise any further work as required.

Risks

20. Failure to provide an efficient and effective response to reports of pests provides a risk to customers' physical and mental health.

Mitigation:

- Pest Control Policy and Procedure.
- Monitoring of policy effectiveness.
- HHSRS trained surveyors and inspectors who understand the health impact of pests and inadequate refuse facilities.
- Post inspections with customers to ensure treatment, and / or remedial works has been successful.

21. Reputational damage to Salix Homes should we fail to appropriately address reports of pests in our customers' homes.

Mitigation:

- Pest Control Policy and Procedure.
- Eyes wide open approach by colleagues, ensuring that all colleagues are aware of the policy and what to do with a report of pests from customers.
- Proactive tenancy audits to discuss any issues with customers.
- Remedial measures carried out alongside treatment to prevent reoccurrence.
- Proactive inspections for pest control issues at the empty properties stage.

Legal / Regulatory Links

22. Salix Homes is required to comply with statutory requirements and rules and guidance issued by the Government and its departments. The following is a non-exhaustive list of legislation relevant to this policy:

- Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Homes Bill (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards Bill 2017 - 2019)
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004)
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

23. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.
- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents;
 - Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences;
 - Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.
24. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity
25. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.
26. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
27. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make any reasonable adjustment to ensure compliance with the Act.

Related Documents

- Salix Homes Repairs Policy, Procedure and Handbook
- Salix Homes Tenancy Management Policy and Procedure
- Salix Homes Empty Property Procedure
- Salix Homes Environmental Services Policy and Procedure

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