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Pest control policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out Sutton Housing Society's (SHS) approach to preventing, reporting and managing pest infestations and clarifies the responsibilities of both SHS and residents.
- 1.2 Pests are unwanted creatures that can appear in any property, even in the cleanest of homes. They can cause a multitude of concerns such as anxiety, distress, food poisoning, skin conditions, trigger allergic reactions and exacerbate existing conditions such as asthma or eczema. They can also cause damage to homes and / or to personal possessions.
- 1.3 Common pests include rodents (mice / rats) and insects (cockroaches, ants, bed bugs, fleas, spiders, or wasps). This is not an exhaustive list, but an example of the most common type of pests.
- 1.4 Dealing with pest issues in individual homes is the responsibility of the resident (tenant). Pest issues in communal areas such as a wasp nest in a block of flats would be SHS' responsibility to address.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all homes, communal areas and estates managed by SHS.

2 Regulatory and legal framework

- 2.1 SHS ensures compliance with relevant legislation when carrying out work relating to pests. This includes the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Environmental Protection Act 1990, Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), and compliance with the Homes Standard from the Regulator of Social Housing.

3 Signs of pest infestations

- 3.1 Apart from the obvious sightings of pests or remains, signs include:

- Droppings, trails, tracks or footprints
- Discarded wings, empty eggshells etc.
- Damage to property or belongings (including plants)
- Itching/irritation on skin
- Unusual sounds or odours
- Signs of nesting/nesting materials

In the case of bedbugs in particular:

- Small bloodstains on mattresses, sheets or dark brown or red spots on walls

- The bed bugs or their eggs in folds of bed linen, in mattress seams, tufts or springs, curtain pleats, loose wallpaper, furniture crevices etc.

4 Sutton Housing Societies responsibilities

- 4.1 SHS will investigate reports relating to pests in communal areas and arrange treatment in these areas where necessary. We will also address infestations that arise from any structural defects within our homes and communal areas.
- 4.2 When carrying pest control work to communal areas, residents will be advised of this and made aware of any health and safety concerns when treatments are underway etc.
- 4.3 SHS would not usually be responsible for treating pests in individual homes as this is the responsibility of the resident.
- 4.3.1 In our schemes for older people where there are communal lounges or kitchens, if there is a pest outbreak, such as bed bugs in more than one home, we will take responsibility for treating all communal areas and the homes impacted by the outbreak. Residents must report any outbreaks to us immediately. Treatments will continue until the pest control professionals confirm the pests are eradicated.
- 4.3.2 We are not responsible for treating the origin of the pests. However, if we do intervene to help treat and resolve the infestation in the original home(s) we do retain the right to recharge this work to the resident where the pests originated from.
- 4.3.3 We will advise all residents within the building if a pest infestation occurs to raise awareness and enable residents to take relevant precautions.
- 4.4 When dealing with a pest infestation, we will work with the pest control professionals / contractors:
- Decide whether it is necessary to close communal areas
 - Share with residents the pest management plan to address the current infestation and advise how to best prevent future infestations
 - Ensure anything taken out of an affected property is bagged up to avoid spreading infestation
 - Address any repairs or maintenance issues contributing to the infestation quickly
 - Keep residents regularly updated with clear, accurate timescales as well as continued guidance to prevent further spreading e.g. not using communal lounges / guest rooms, not visiting other schemes (or even other people), and not sharing furniture or other possessions
- 4.5 SHS will also advise contractors of any on-going pest infestations to enable them to take appropriate precautions if visiting the home / schemes.

5 Residents' responsibilities

- 5.1 Residents are responsible for maintaining their homes and gardens in a clean and hygienic condition and for storing and disposing of household waste correctly. They are also responsible for ensuring that items such as second-hand furniture do not have pests such as bedbugs before bringing them to their home.
- 5.2 Residents must report any pest infestations promptly to their Housing Manager, who can provide the appropriate advice and signposting residents for support and assistance, where needed.
- 5.3 Residents must not leave food in the communal gardens. This encourages pests such as rats and can lead to other issues that impact health and safety.
- 5.4 Should a pest infestation spread to 2 or more homes within our homes for older people, as outlined in 3.3.1 above SHS will intervene and take responsibility for treating homes and communal areas as needed. Residents must provide reasonable access for inspections and treatment.

6 Rechargeable costs

- 6.1 Where investigations determine that an infestation is attributable to a resident's actions, neglect or failure to comply with tenancy obligations, SHS may recharge the resident for inspection, treatment or associated costs in accordance with tenancy agreements and relevant policies.

7 Complaints

- 7.1 Residents dissatisfied with the handling of a pest-related issue may use the Society's complaints policy, starting with a service request.

8 Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 8.1 Our employees are sensitive to residents' individual needs and will tailor our services and approaches accordingly.

9 Review of this policy

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner where legal, regulatory or operational changes require.