

Pest guidance

- Pest infestation can be extremely distressing for residents and of significant difficulty for landlords to resolve. This expectations document sets out what landlords and residents should be expected to do when there is an infestation, whether that be in a home or communal area.

Guidance for landlords

- After a resident has reported the issue, a landlord should undertake timely inspections of homes/impacted areas
- Linking to this, there should then be timely repairs which links to the organisation's repairs policy and depending on the severity of the issue
- You should not place the onus on the resident to sort the problem – whilst they may have a part to play, they may not be the root cause and landlords should investigate this fully before deciding who is responsible
- All reports of pest infestation should be taken seriously and not be dismissed
- If you are concerned that a resident's actions may be contributing to a pest infestation e.g. waste in the home, you should identify the problem and support the resident to resolve it
- The Ombudsman understands that it can sometimes take multiple attempts, but it is key to keep the resident updated during this time and be clear with communication and timescales to manage expectations
- Following on from this, landlords should keep effective records (as stated in our Knowledge and Information Management Spotlight report) to not repeat the same actions that are not working
- Landlords should employ expert surveyors and seek input to guide responses
- Any pest control policy should have methodological steps in establishing whether it is the landlord's responsibility or not
- The landlord should conduct a risk assessment of the situation to assess whether it is appropriate to decant the resident – this should take into account the resident's circumstance (as stated in our Spotlight report on attitudes, rights and respect)
- Landlords could consider adopting a severity chart for infestations e.g. communal areas possibly low risk against a vulnerable person being higher risk

- You must join the dots between pests and disrepair as well as multiple reports of pests in the same block or locality
- When hearing of the above, best practice would be a thorough investigation of that whole area as a precaution to ensure there is no pattern
- A joined up link between any local pest control companies and the landlord – automated and streamlined – needs to think about a link ‘officer’ or ‘person’
- For landlords with homes in many different local authority areas, it is best to see what the different approaches are in those areas to ensure correct advice is given to each resident and partnerships can be forged in those areas
- There could be a role for other community organisations, for example local authority environmental health team, if the infestation is in wider areas
- For landlords looking to take pre-emptive action, you could assess which homes would be at a greater risk of infestations e.g. near a river, and conduct proofing works accordingly

Guidance or residents

- As soon as there is an infestation issue, or a potential infestation issue, you should report this to the landlord immediately
- Being clear about the extent of the problem is important – not all infestations immediately render the home uninhabitable
- If you are a resident from a social housing provider and the pest infestation is coming from a private resident then you should contact your local authority’s environmental health department
- Landlords should communicate with you throughout and be able to provide an action plan or update during any works
- Residents should minimise any risk of infestation; [read our online guidance](#)

What does the Housing Ombudsman consider pests?

- Rats
- Mice
- Daddy long-legs
- Silver fish
- Bed bugs

- If you have a pest infestation complaint and your belongings are damaged, the Ombudsman may be able to help if the damage was due to landlord inaction. Otherwise, it might be more appropriate to make a claim against your landlord's insurance company.