

# **Pest Control Policy**

Last reviewed: November 2025

## Document Control Sheet

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## Version Control

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Reviewed by<br/>(name and title)</b>         | <b>New version<br/>number</b> | <b>Summary of changes</b>  |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| November 2025 | Helen Hann<br>(Regional Director<br>Localities) | V. 1.0                        | New Policy replacing both former<br>organisations' previous Pest<br>Policies |

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## **1. Scope**

This policy applies to all customers, regardless of tenure, who live in properties owned or managed by Sovereign Network Group (SNG). It sets out our approach to pest control in customers' homes and communal areas.

The rights and responsibilities of our customers and of SNG are detailed in the tenancy, licence or lease agreement. Where we are not directly or legally responsible, we will collaborate with customers, other landlords and other organisations to ensure the safety and appearance of shared spaces.

## **2. Purpose and objectives**

This policy aims to:

- prevent and control pests to maintain a safe, healthy and compliant environment in our customers' homes and communal areas, to mitigate risk of disease transmission and property damage
- clarify which responsibilities and accountabilities lie with SNG, with customers, or with the Local Authority when dealing with pest infestations
- ensure that a consistent approach is taken, in line with the relevant tenancy, licence or lease agreement
- clearly set out the responsibilities of customers, signposting them to appropriate pest control advice or organisations that can assist
- comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory requirements, including the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard, and good practice. This includes the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, and the forthcoming Awaab's Law (under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023), which from 2026 will enforce strict timelines for addressing hazards associated with pests.

## **3. Policy statement**

SNG is committed to managing and preventing pests to ensure safety, hygiene and compliance with regulations and legislation. We recognise the impact that pests can have on customers, their homes and communal areas.

We will work in partnership with customers, contractors and Local Authorities to ensure our homes and communal areas are safe, healthy and pest-free.

#### 4. Definitions

| Term                                | Definition   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Tenancy                             | Tenancy Agreement, Lease, Licence and any other form of occupancy agreement for the purposes of this document.   |
| Localities                          | Responsible for the proactive management of customers, assets and place within the Locality.   |
| Neighbourhood                       | An area with defined geographical boundaries where the community has a sense of belonging. In terms of this Policy these are the homes that SNG own or are responsible for managing directly or through a managing agent.  |
| Managing Agent / Management Company | <p>May be responsible for looking after the entire estate, or just for the management of an individual block.</p> <p>The management company will normally appoint a private company, known as a managing agent, to provide the services and oversee the day to day running of the estate. In some cases, however, the management company will provide the services directly without appointing an agent.</p> |
| Stakeholders / Partners             | This includes customers and service users, suppliers and contractors, local authorities, elected members, the wider community and voluntary sector.  |
| Communal Areas                      | The internal and external parts of the neighbourhood or building that are shared by customers, such as entrances, hallways, stairwells, lifts, pathways, bin stores, drying areas, parking areas, gardens and play areas.  |
| Shared Spaces                       | Relates to areas of land adjacent to SNG's land but of which we have no ownership or management responsibilities. We will use our influence and work with partners to help shape attractive neighbourhoods in which customers feel safe and are proud to call home.  |
| Pest                                | The term 'pest' is used as a generic term for vermin, this is any organism, usually an animal which is judged as potentially carrying disease that can harm humans in the homes they occupy. Pests are commonly considered to be a public nuisance, due to their effect on the home, health, or environment. Types of animals and  |

| Term                             | Definition   |
|----------------------------------|--|
|                                  | <p>insects considered to be pests include wasps, bees, fleas, bed bugs, mice, rats, cockroaches, feral pigeons and ants.</p> <p>Japanese Knotweed and other invasive species may also be classified as a pest as they can cause structural and environmental damage. Removal and destruction of these species need to be dealt with in accordance with relevant legislation.</p> <p>Japanese knotweed is particularly hard to eradicate compared with other plants, requiring multi-year treatment with herbicide or excavation and there is also an ongoing risk that the plant will regrow, either because it is only made dormant by herbicides or because fragments of the plant remain in the soil.</p> |
| What is not classified as a pest | <p>Animals such as foxes, bats, badgers, other wild birds, crickets, sand lizards, slow worms, snakes and common frogs or toads are not considered pests but may present some nuisance. Many of these are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which prohibits the killing or injuring of these animals. Investigation and action can be taken by police, Natural England, Environmental Agency and National Wildlife Crime Unit. Wild European species of animals (including birds) and their eggs are also protected under Offences under the Habitats Regulations 2017. Customers and staff should seek clarification before taking action.</p>   |
| Statutory Nuisance               | <p>The Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines premises that are in such a state as to be 'prejudicial to health or a nuisance' as a statutory nuisance. Some infestations, such as those of rats, mice, pharaoh ants and cockroaches can count as a statutory nuisance.</p>   |
| Remedial works                   | <p>Corrective actions, repairs or modifications to a building or system to fix defects or damage and prevent pests from entering the property.</p>   |

## 5. Policy

This Policy sets out:

- our expectations of our customers in preventing pests through maintaining cleanliness at home and refraining from behaviours and activities that attract pests
- our customers' expectations of us and being clear when we will or will not get involved in dealing with pest infestations
- the responsibilities that are within the remit of the Local Authority under their statutory duties and legal powers.

## **5.1. Our expectations of our customers**

We expect our customers to:

- review their tenancy, licence or lease agreements, which will determine who is responsible for removing and eradicating any pests or infestations. We will assist them in this if required – how to contact us is included in Section 6 of this policy
- report any concerns to us immediately, particularly where the pests are in communal areas. Customers are also encouraged to report the behaviour of other households where they consider that this may be attracting or generating a pest problem. Details of the type of pest, the severity and any suspected entry points should be reported
- ensure that homes, balconies, gardens and communal areas, particularly bin stores, are kept clean and clear of clutter
- maintain good household hygiene, properly disposing of waste, and taking steps to prevent attracting pests, including refraining from feeding wildlife
- to seek advice and take appropriate action to deal with any pests or infestations where it is their responsibility, for example using ant powder to address an ant infestation
- cooperate with us, our contractors and the Local Authority, where necessary, to resolve issues. This includes proactive communication about the infestation and allowing access for pest control inspections and works to be carried out. If access is refused or delayed, we may take reasonable and proportionate enforcement action
- undertake any actions advised by SNG or pest control experts. We will take proportionate action in situations where this doesn't happen, and the infestation continues or deteriorates.

## **5.2. Customers' expectations of us**

Customers expect us to maintain the structure of our buildings to prevent pest entry, and for treating infestations that arise due to these defects or were present at the start of the tenancy. Under our landlord responsibilities we are also responsible for pest control in communal areas.

SNG will hold a contract with suitably qualified and accredited pest control contractors. The contractors shall carry out the services in accordance with legislation, industry standards and best practice.

Where the customer is responsible for the pest treatment, SNG may pass on the details of approved contractors that may be able to assist. Any agreement between the customer and

the contractor is directly between the two parties and SNG will not be held responsible for the treatment or payment of costs associated with the treatment.

We will arrange inspection of the pest infestation as a priority under our repair response times and arrange any follow-up treatment or actions in accordance with the professional advice. Treatments may continue for several months in some cases. We will accommodate reasonable adjustments for access and treatment where this is required due to the customer's vulnerability or needs. We will give customers notice of visits and keep them updated during pest treatments with treatment plans and safety information.

We recognise that pest infestations can carry stigma, potentially leading to embarrassment, isolation or strained neighbour relationships. With this in mind, we will maintain confidentiality and our communication will be sensitive and appropriate. We will take the opportunity to promote awareness and education about preventing pests, working with partner agencies where possible.

We will record information about the infestation on our housing management and associated systems, including photographic evidence, before and after reports, and any follow-up inspections to confirm eradication.

SNG will become involved where:

- the tenancy, licence or lease agreement states that SNG is responsible
- the infestation was proven to be present at the point of letting
- the infestation is due to a defect in the property's structure, such as a hole that allows pests in. In such cases SNG would carry out the repair to stop access and the pest eradication
- the infestation is because of SNG's failure to carry out necessary repairs that led to a pest problem
- the infestation is in a communal area. Treatment costs may be recovered through service charges where the infestation is due to the behaviour of customers
- there is an infestation in several connected properties
- there are flats within a block or shared accommodation where the infestation may affect the wellbeing of other residents in the property
- where the infestation makes the home unsafe to live in and it is a hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- the Local Authority has deemed that there is a statutory nuisance which they consider we are responsible for dealing with.



Our staff will be trained to identify early signs of infestations and to recognise statutory nuisances. Where pest infestations relate to safeguarding or mental health issues, for example hoarding or self-neglect, we will make referrals to the appropriate Safeguarding or Tenancy Support teams to seek support for customers who may have underlying vulnerabilities.

We will carry out regular visual assessments of our sites and estates. Officers will report any concerns that make the scheme unsafe or untidy. The assessment typically involves:

- checking communal areas within blocks of flats to check that these are clean and tidy, that there are no personal items or rubbish in these areas that could present a health risk or fire hazard
- checking bin stores and the communal areas for any fly tipping, rubbish and repairs
- checking the communal grounds, including grassed areas, pathways, parking areas, garage blocks and drying areas, are in a clean and tidy condition.

We will work with management companies and managing agents to ensure agreed standards are met and issues are responded to.

We will work proactively to prevent pest infestations through the design of new developments and major works programmes, so areas such as bin stores, drainage and vents are designed to deter pests as far as possible.

### **5.3. Exceptions**

Where SNG is not responsible for dealing with pests, there may be exceptional circumstances where we may consider offering financial or practical support to customers at our discretion, as follows:

- our involvement is in accordance with our Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustments Policy where consideration will be given to the customer's disability, vulnerability or culture so they are not disadvantaged by SNG's position
- where there is clear evidence of financial hardship which makes the cost of treatment unaffordable to the customer. Assessment of this would be via the Better-Off Calculator or similar to ensure consistency of approach
- where there is a risk to the customer's wellbeing or to other households through the pests spreading

- where the cause of the infestation does not solely rest with the customer. In cases where an infestation is linked to both the customer's use of the property and to a structural defect/identified repair, and it is unclear who is responsible, SNG will carry out the necessary repairs and support the customer to manage the infestation
- Where responsibility cannot be clearly determined at the outset, SNG will initially investigate and confirm responsibility in writing before any chargeable works commence.

In these cases, the customer must be willing to positively engage with us in addressing the problem, allowing us to carry out remedial works with no inference or refusal of access.

We recognise that some customers may need extra support to deal with pest infestations. Where this is the case, we will help identify and signpost them to appropriate sources of advice or financial assistance, such as local welfare schemes, charitable organisations or other relevant support networks.

#### **5.4. Pests in communal areas**

When there is a pest infestation in a communal area, it is the responsibility of SNG to ensure the infestation is managed. Failure to deal effectively with such infestations may present a health risk to customers leading to enforcement action by the Local Authority.

Keeping communal areas clear and disposing of waste responsibly will help to limit the chances of pest infestation in our customers' homes and in communal areas. We have a zero-tolerance approach on items left in communal areas and we may take enforcement action against customers who don't comply. The cost of removing items and the treatment of pests may be recovered through service charges.

If there is evidence to show that a customer is responsible for causing or encouraging infestations, this may be considered as a tenancy breach. In these scenarios, we may take reasonable and proportionate action against the customer for breach of tenancy/lease, considering the support needs and circumstances of those involved.

#### **5.5. Local Authority responsibilities**

Local Authorities have a statutory duty and legal powers to deal with concerns about pests and infestations. SNG will have a formal information-sharing protocol with Local Authorities' Environmental Health teams to ensure timely coordination on multi-property infestations.

Customers are advised to contact their Local Authority if they consider that SNG has failed to act or there is a dispute over responsibility for the treatment. Should the Local Authority consider the infestation requires their professional intervention, this will generally be coordinated through their Environmental Health department.

Local Authority powers extend to:

- taking action to remove the pest or infestation
- serving enforcement or abatement notices
- the right to enter a property, carry out inspections, provide advice and, if necessary complete works and recover costs from the occupier
- coordinating actions with water companies to manage rat infestations in defective drainage systems.

SNG will comply with any enforcement notice served on them by the Local Authority. SNG will attempt to carry out the required work within the statutory timescales in the notice and keep customers informed.

## **6. Contact and complaints**

Customers can contact us by our on-line contact form, or by phone or email. Details are on our website at [sng.org.uk](http://sng.org.uk).

Any customer who is dissatisfied with how we have managed their case is able to submit a complaint using our Complaints process. Once our Complaints process has been exhausted, and if they remain dissatisfied, then they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, who can consider if we have acted appropriately.

## **7. Compliance**

We will record all customer contacts and progress updates on our housing management systems. This includes details of vulnerabilities and any reasonable adjustments that have been agreed under our Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustments Policy. This will allow us to review the services we provide and help us identify whether there are any wider steps that we can take to improve our services.

SNG will hold contracts with approved pest control contractors, who will ensure the health and safety of our buildings and customers with regards to pest control processes. We will review the performance of our pest control contractors and seek assurance that they are accredited and comply with legislation and guidance.

Information on pest investigations and treatment will be collected by the approved pest control contractor and monitored by the Contract Manager. This will include the following:

- Visit dates
- Pests found
- Treatments/baits used and their location
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health data
- Recommendations to maintain the site as a pest free environment
- Regular meetings to review the performance of the contract, including the cost of works.

Data relating to pest infestations including reports, contractor records, or communications will be handled in accordance with SNG's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

Where an Environmental Health Department has served notice on SNG to carry out pest control treatments, this work will be monitored and reported under the same process as other statutory notices.

## **8. Sustainability**

At Sovereign Network Group, we recognise the critical importance of sustainability in our operations and services. We are committed to embracing sustainable practices that contribute to environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability.

Examples of sustainability specific to this policy include use of eco-friendly pest control measures such as using non-toxic deterrents and avoiding pesticides harmful to pollinators where possible.

We will also engage with customers and communities to promote awareness and education about preventing pests. By integrating these practices into our operations, we aim to create lasting value for our business, our customers, and the broader community, aligning with our long-term commitment to sustainable development.

## 9. Responsibilities

| Role                                 | Responsibility  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Customer and Neighbourhoods Director | Accountable for the delivery of this policy   |
| Regional Director of Localities      | Responsible for the effective implementation and ongoing delivery of this policy  |
| Locality Managers                    | Responsible for the monitoring cases to ensure that the correct advice, support and actions are being taken by Officers and that they are appropriately trained |
| Operational Managers and Officers    | Responsible for case management and for providing information and support to customers  |
| Contact Team                         | Responsible for recording reports of pest infestations from customers   |
| All Staff                            | Responsible for identifying and reporting issues within our neighbourhoods  |
| Customers                            | Responsible for looking after their homes and neighbourhoods and reporting any concerns to SNG  |

## 10. Equality, diversity and inclusion

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any protected characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010.

At Sovereign Network Group (SNG), our commitment is to make sure that no individual or group experiences unfair, discriminatory, or prejudicial treatment in recruitment, pay or promotions, housing, or any other service we provide, such as lettings, tenancy advice, repairs, or income collection.

SNG strives to be an open, inclusive, and diverse organisation where everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. As an organisation, we value the diversity and talents of all individuals and the richness that brings to our culture.

We understand the varying needs of our customers and communities and promote equality of opportunity in employment and service provision. We deliver appropriate, accessible, and flexible services, being tolerant, understanding, and non-judgmental of others or their lifestyle choices. We stand up to and challenge prejudice, discrimination, and harassment in all its forms.

## **11. Related documents**

- SNG Tenancy Agreements
- SNG Lease Agreements
- Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy
- Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Pets Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Hoarding and Problematic Clutter Guidance/Policy
- Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

## **12. Legislation and regulation**

SNG is committed to ensuring compliance with all applicable legislation. To achieve this, we will take reasonable measures, including regularly reviewing our policies and procedures and updating them as necessary to reflect any changes in the legal landscape.

The legislation listed in this policy is not intended to cover all legislation applicable to this policy. To comply with clause 1.1 of the Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability Standard, which requires adherence to all relevant law, SNG will take reasonable measures to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation by reviewing policies and procedures and amending them as appropriate. Any queries relating to the applicable legislation should be directed to the policy owner.

- Public Health Act 1936 & 1961
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Section 82, Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Common Law Nuisance and Private Nuisance
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Regulatory Code 3.4.1
- The Complaint Handling Code
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Wild Mammal Protection Act 1996

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- The Habitats Regulations 2017
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986
- Regulatory of Social Housing Framework for both the Homes and Neighbourhood and Community Standards
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System under Housing Act 2004
- Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

### **13. Review**

This document will be reviewed every 2 years, or sooner if significant changes occur in the relevant legal or operational landscape.