

Dealing with pests in your home

This factsheet considers what steps you can take to deal with pests and vermin if you are renting your home.

Pests and vermin in your home can cause health and safety problems and make your home unfit to live in. Pests include rats, mice, cockroaches, wasps, ants, fleas, bedbugs, dust mites, silverfish and squirrels.

Prevention

Any home can have a problem with pests or vermin. Follow three simple rules to reduce the chances of infestation:

- don't let them in - block up holes in the brickwork, roof, skirting boards
- don't feed them - keep your home clean, especially kitchen surfaces
- don't make them comfy - remove old furniture or other rubbish in your garden

Landlord's duties

It can be your landlord's responsibility to deal with a pest or vermin infestation if it's caused by conditions in your rented home.

Your landlord may have to make sure your home is fit to live in. See the factsheet 'Is your home fit to live in?' in the [Repairs & safety section](#) to check if you're covered and what you can do.

If you rent a furnished property from a private landlord, it must be fit to live in when your tenancy starts. If the problem was there when you moved in, your landlord must deal with it.

Check your tenancy agreement. It may say the landlord must make sure your home is 'fit to live in' or 'in a good condition'. In this case your landlord should have to deal with the pests.

If your landlord does nothing you may decide to deal with the problem yourself. You could then take your landlord to court to claim compensation.

Pest control services

Your council's environmental health team may provide a pest control and identification service. Make sure the pest is dead and is in a sealed container if you send or give it to the council.

Most councils charge for their pest control and pest identification services. Charges may be reduced for those on benefits or a low income.

You could also contact a business that provides a pest control service. They will charge a fee.

Risk to health

You can complain to the council about serious health or safety hazards in your home. Councils use the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess if your home has hazards that could put the health or safety of you or your family at risk. Pests and vermin can cause health problems.

Contact your council's environmental health team. They should visit to inspect your home quickly if it is likely that there is a serious risk of harm. Otherwise you might have to wait longer for an inspection.

Hazards in your home are rated according to how likely it is that someone will be badly affected by them. If the problem is serious the council can order your landlord to carry out to take steps to deal with the infestation.

DIY and advice

Your landlord or the council may be responsible for taking steps to deal with pests and vermin. But if they can't or won't help, you might be able to deal with the infestation yourself. The [British Pest Control Association](#) website provides useful tips on how to deal with pests and vermin.

Eviction warning

If you live in privately rented housing, your landlord might start eviction proceedings if you complain about pests. This is called 'revenge' or 'retaliatory' eviction. You must weigh up this risk. There is some protection against revenge evictions. For more information see the factsheet 'Section 21: restrictions' in the [Possession and eviction](#) section.

Further advice

You can get further advice from england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice, local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on **0808 800 4444** for advice and information on your options.*

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



Note
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