

# BED BUGS PROTOCOL



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

## **1. Introduction**

This protocol deals with the discovery of bed bugs in University managed accommodation. Its intention is to inform residents about bed bugs and how we investigate and treat bed bugs and prevent the spread of these pests. Responding to concerns of bed bugs involves a joined-up approach between our Estates and Accommodation teams and can involve consultation and support from an external pest controller.

The University is not responsible for any property loss or damages as a result of the presence or treatment of bed bugs (and other pests), but aims to provide a quick response and management of these situations and in most cases, will cover the cost of the inspection and treatment. Failure to follow the bed bug protocol may result in additional charges to resident students. If a student is struggling financially and will incur additional cost because of bed bugs, they may be able to access support via the Student Funding Service in Student Services.

## **2. What are bed bugs?**

Bed bugs are small, oval, wingless insects that generally appear a red/brown colour. At adult stage, they are the approximate size of an apple seed. Like mosquitoes, they feed on blood, but unlike mosquitoes, they do not transmit disease. They can cause significant itchiness, anxiety, and sleeplessness. Bed bugs can easily spread by crawling between locations or by 'hitchhiking' sometimes long distances on people, luggage or furniture.

Despite the name, bed bugs are not necessarily only found in beds. During the day, they will hide in crevices, bed frames, mattresses and springs, behind electrical outlet covers and picture frames, inside drawers of furniture, within pleats of curtains or blinds, in clothes discarded on the floor, and in other spaces where they are not easily detected and there is little disturbance.

Whilst they are quite distinctive, they are small and mostly come out at night, so the first sign of bed bugs is often bite marks which appear in clusters or a line along with blood marks left behind on bedding. They may shed skin which looks like the bugs themselves.

## **3. Precautionary Steps**

While there are some precautionary measures, it is not necessarily possible to prevent bed bugs. To minimise the chances of bed bugs, we suggest the following precautions/actions:

- reduce clutter and vacuum frequently to create less places for bed bugs to hide;

- regularly wash and heat dry your bed sheets and any clothing, particularly if they have been on the floor and clean out laundry hampers/ baskets between washes;
- never leave your clothing laying on the floor or bed, or any location of possible infestation;
- use hangers or hooks capable of keeping all clothing distant from the floor or bed;
- don't bring items found on the street into Halls. Even if things look clean, it doesn't mean they are and inspect any second-hand items thoroughly;
- be aware of the signs of bedbugs when travelling and inspect luggage when unpacking.

#### 4. Suspected Bed Bugs

If you suspect you have bed bugs, please inform a member of the housekeeping team or the Accommodation Service. Outside of office hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm), please notify Security (0208 240 4335) or your Resident Mentor, who will then inform these teams.

A member of the Estates team will inspect your room during standard hours to see if they can find any signs of bed bugs. Please remember that bites may come from other insects and this is particularly the case in summer when windows are left open, especially if your room is near trees. Please note that by reporting a suspicion of bed bugs, you are deemed to have consented to the Estates team entering your room as per clause 11 in your University Licence Agreement

If the staff member suspects bed bugs are present, they will call in an external pest control contractor. Attendance is usually within 24 – 48 hours of suspected bed bugs being reported. Upon reporting bed bugs please:

- do not clean or tidy your room or belongings until guidance is provided by Estates or a pest controller;
- do not relocate to any other room until your room can be inspected. This is essential to stop the spread of bed bugs if they are found to be in your room and belongings;
- do not let anybody else in to your room, except estates staff or pest controllers;
- do not enter anybody else's bedroom;
- do wait for advice from Estates or the pest controller on washing your clothes and bedding and cleaning your possessions.

Where the pest controller suspects bed bugs may be present, they may wish to install simple glue card monitors which will be checked a few days later.

## 5. **Confirmed bed bugs**

Where the presence of bed bugs is confirmed, pest control will spray fumigate your room. The chemicals used will cause you no harm but you should not enter your room for 5 hours after the spraying is completed.

Please ensure that you are at your room when the pest controller arrives as they will be able to provide you with clear advice about washing your clothes and bedding and how to deal with your possessions. For instance, books can generally be stored in airtight bags but may need to be treated by the pest company. Electronics should be unaffected, but any fabric cases will need to be cleaned.

The pest controller may suggest in some cases that they need to inspect surrounding rooms. In most cases, they will provide a second fumigation spray up to 14 days after the first one.

If bed bugs are confirmed, students must:

- notify the Accommodation Service if you have recently been into any other student bedroom, or if any other student has come into your room so spreading of bed bugs can try to be prevented;
- notify the Accommodation Service of any allergies or medical conditions that could be aggravated by the treatment process.

Having a confirmed case of bed bugs can understandably cause concern, however bed bugs are common and treatable. Students can access support via the Wellbeing Service in Student Services for welfare support if required.

## 6. **Stay in halls or move out - Student Advice**

'Stay put' is the advice from all reputable pest control companies while the room is being treated otherwise you may spread the infestation to another location and return the bed bugs when you return back to your room which will extend the time taken to resolve the issue.

You are not permitted to sleep elsewhere in halls and whilst it is not recommended, if you do decide to sleep elsewhere such as returning to a family home, there is a good chance of transporting bed bugs with you. Despite advice, if you choose to sleep somewhere else, you should avoid taking unnecessary belongings and ensure that you only take things with you that you have checked and cleaned thoroughly. However, the risk cannot be completely eliminated and along with the distress that this can cause, getting rid of bed bugs from another location can be a time-consuming and costly exercise which you would be responsible for.

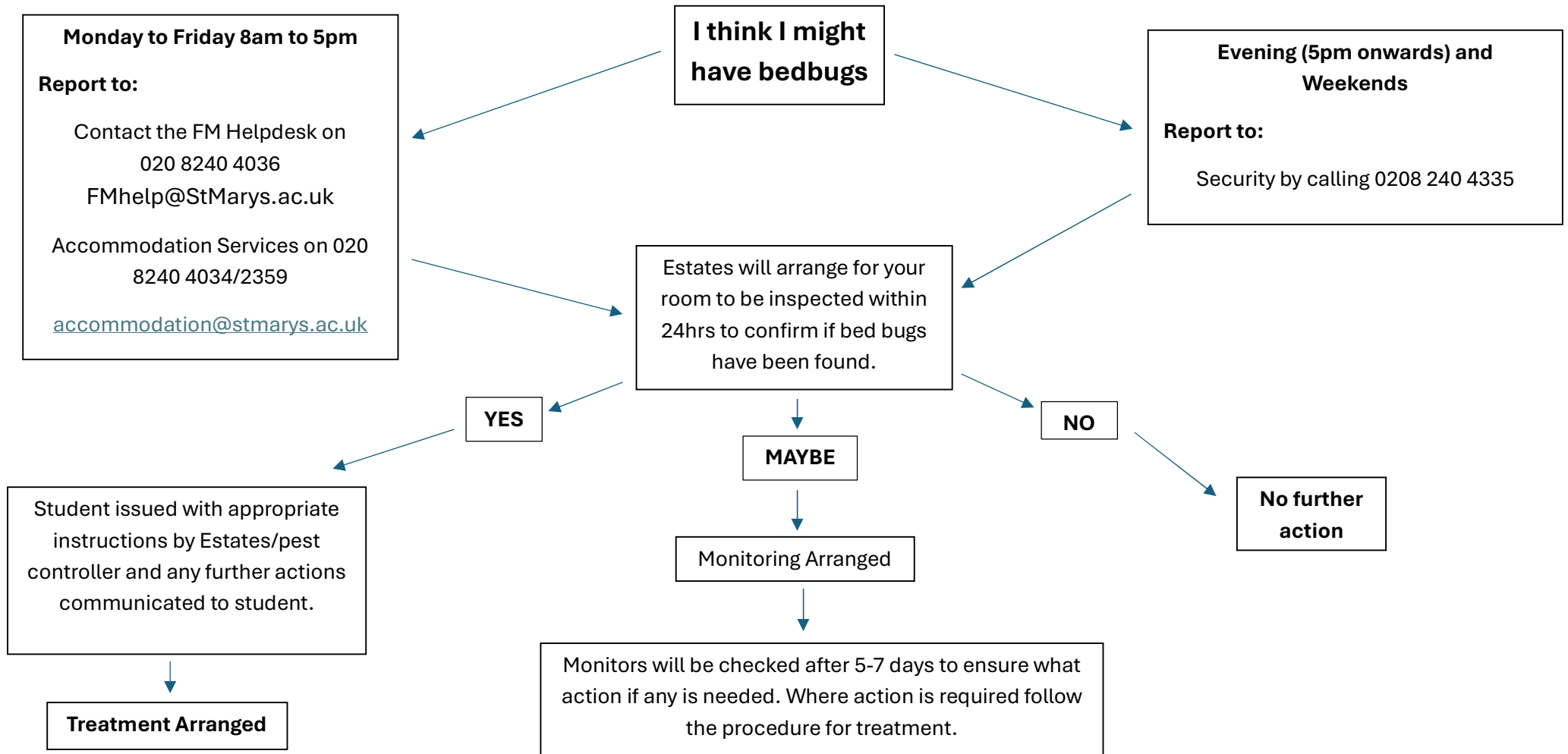
## **7. Post treatment**

We appreciate this can be distressing for you but we follow the advice of expert pest controllers. Unless specifically advised to do so by an external pest controller, we do not replace mattresses or other furniture. This is because the fumigation should have exterminated the bugs and, in any event, bed bugs are not confined to mattresses and hide in bed frames, cracks, furniture, and walls.

Director of Estates and Campus Services

March 2026

## Appendix A - Bed Bug Protocol Flow Chart



## Version control

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