

Housing Services

Keeping pets in your council home



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Introduction

We allow you to keep pets where you have the facilities to look after them properly. However, irresponsible pet ownership can cause suffering to animals and nuisance to neighbours. So we must include rules to control pet ownership in the tenancy agreement.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006

There are now laws to make sure that if you keep a pet you care for it properly. This means making sure the pet has a suitable place to live, is given the right food to eat and is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. To find out more visit www.defra.gov.uk or ask at Housing Services Reception.

Any tenant neglecting or abusing their pet will be reported to the RSPCA.

What your tenancy agreement says about keeping pets

Keeping animals

- If you live in a house, bungalow or ground-floor flat with access to your own garden you can keep one dog or cat, or one of each, without asking our permission, on the terms set out below.
- If you live in any other type of property, you must get our permission to keep a pet.
- If you ask our permission to keep more than one dog or cat (or one of each) we will judge each request on its own merits. This means we will consider such things as the type of home you live in and the size of your garden, as well as the breed, size and number of pets you want to keep.
- If you live in one of our sheltered housing schemes, you are not allowed to keep any cat or dog, unless it is a registered guide or hearing dog or you live in one of the self-contained bungalows in these schemes.
- You are not allowed to keep in your home, garden or any shared communal area any animals (including cats, dogs, farm livestock, reptiles, insects or birds) that, in our opinion, may cause nuisance or disturbance to anyone in the local area, including our employees and contractors.
- You must get our written permission to keep livestock such as horses, donkeys, goats, pigs, ducks, geese, chickens or any other reptiles in your home or on any land owned by us.
- You must not allow any animals that you keep to foul any shared areas of your property or on roads, footpaths or play areas in the local areas. You must remove and dispose of any pet droppings hygienically.
- You must not keep any animal that is prohibited by law (Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976) on safety grounds.
- Whether or not you have our written permission to keep an animal, you must make sure that no animal you keep causes a nuisance or annoyance to others or damages our property.

Please also refer to the Tenants Handbook and tenancy agreement conditions for secure and introductory tenancies and non secure tenancies.

Factors we consider when you ask permission to keep a pet or pets

- The type of property you live in and the facilities available to you.
- The size of your garden or whether you have suitable open space nearby.
- The breed, size, number and temperament of the pets you are asking permission to keep.
- Whether the pet(s) will have special needs. • In flats:
 - * Whether the number of pets you want to keep is appropriate to the size of the flat and the facilities available. (We usually grant permission to keep dogs and cats in flats only if they have direct access to an outdoor space.)
 - * Whether you can promise that your pet(s) will get enough exercise, with good access to a safe and suitable exercise area outside the home.
- We nearly always limit the number of dogs to one.
- We nearly always limit the number of cats to two.
- No exotic animals or farm animals should normally be kept.

Also:

In all cases where we grant permission to keep a pet, this is on condition that the owner looks after it properly. In the case of cats and dogs this includes worming and regular flea treatment as advised by a vet.

Keeping dogs (please see our leaflet “Keeping dogs in your council home”)

Usually we only allow dogs to be kept in accommodation with direct access to an outside space.

- We encourage you to have your dog permanently identified by microchip or tattoo.
- You must not allow your dog to breed.
- In most cases we will allow you to replace your dog as long as your home is suitable.
- Anyone mistreating or neglecting their dog will be refused permission to keep ANY pet and will be reported to the RSPCA.
- You must keep your dog under control at all times and make sure it does not cause a nuisance or distress to others.

You must never:

- keep any breed of dog banned under the 1991 Dangerous Dogs Act or any other UK legislation;
- breed or board dogs on our property;
- keep dogs on balconies or in communal walkways;
- chain or tether dogs on any council-owned land;
- leave your dog alone or unattended overnight or for long periods of time.

Keeping cats

Usually we only allow cats to be kept in accommodation with direct access to an outside space.

- We encourage you to have your cat permanently identified.
- You must not let your cat breed.
- In most cases you may replace your cat as long as your home is suitable. Anyone mistreating or neglecting their cat will be refused permission to keep ANY pet and will be reported to the RSPCA.
- You must keep your cats under control at all times and make sure they cause no nuisance or distress to others.

You must never:

- breed or board cats in our property;
- keep cats on balconies or in communal walkways.

Keeping small mammals

- In the case of very small animals such as rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters, you must limit them to manageable numbers, and make sure they are suitable for their living conditions.
- In the case of rabbits and guinea pigs, you should normally keep them outside the home. You must have access to an outside space where you can put a secure exercise run away from prolonged direct sunlight and safe from predators.
- You must avoid letting your pets breed by keeping same-sex or neutered animals.
- You must keep their home free from excess droppings.

Keeping caged birds

- You can keep small caged birds in the home provided their cage is large enough to allow them to spread their wings fully in any direction and they have enough space to perch.
- Ideally you should also let them exercise outside the cage, provided they can't escape.
- You must keep their home free from excess droppings. **Keeping aviary birds outside**
- You must show you have adequate outside facilities for the birds and that you can look after them properly.
- You must show how you will prevent potential nuisance to people living nearby, for example early morning noise, or rodent infestation.

Keeping reptiles and spiders

We don't encourage you to keep these types of animal in a council home because they need specialised care and living conditions.

- If you wish to keep a reptile or spider in the home you must show that you know how to meet the care and welfare needs of the animal, including providing a suitable environment.

Keeping chickens or other fowl and other livestock

We don't encourage you to keep this sort of livestock at a council home, as few council properties are suitable. • If you wish to keep livestock, you must show you have appropriate facilities and know how to meet all care and welfare needs and that the animals will not cause nuisance or distress to other people living nearby.

- We will limit the number of chickens or fowl you keep.
- We will consult the RSPCA about any other livestock.

You must not keep cockerels on council property.

Special circumstances

If unique or exceptional circumstances suggest we should depart from our normal rules, we will consider the application on its merits.

Nuisance and enforcement

If a neighbour's pet causes nuisance to you, or you think it is not being well cared for, you should report your concerns to the Housing Estates Management Section, who specialise in dealing with all types of complaints from tenants. However, if you think a pet is being deliberately mistreated, you should first report your concerns to the RSPCA Animal Cruelty Hotline – FREEPHONE 0870 55 55 999.

Making a complaint

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing. We will tell you the name of the Estates Officer who will be investigating your complaint and let you know how long it will take – in most cases this will be within 21 working days.

The following section sets out the action we will take against any tenant who:

- has not got our permission to keep their pet or pets; or
- has our permission, but does not look after their pet or pets properly; or • has let their pet cause nuisance or distress to people living nearby.

Straying and fouling

If you continually allow your pet or pets to roam and stray unattended, or allow them to foul and do not immediately remove and dispose of the mess, then you will get a written warning that you must put things right immediately. If you fail to do so, we will take formal action against you for breach of your tenancy agreement. This could mean you have to re-home the pet or face possession proceedings to end your tenancy.

Excessive noise

If pets, in particular dogs, cause noise nuisance by barking, howling or scratching, then you must stop them doing so at once. You can get help and advice from a vet, dog warden (in our Environmental Services department) or other appropriate expert. If the problem persists, we will take action for breach of the tenancy agreement and you may have to re-home the pet or face possession proceedings to end your tenancy.

Flea and vermin infestation

All tenants must keep their home clean and tidy so as not to cause a nuisance or endanger health. If you fail to keep your home clean, tidy and free from animal mess, fleas or vermin, you must put things right immediately and seek any help you need. However, if the problem persists, we will take action for breach of the tenancy agreement and you may have to re-home your pet or face possession proceedings to end your tenancy.

Pets that are or could be aggressive

If we think your pet may threaten, frighten or harm other people and stop them going about their business or enjoying their home, you must put things right at once. You should seek advice from a vet, dog warden or other expert. If you cannot keep the animal under control, or where we think a particular type or breed of animal is inappropriate to where you live, we will tell you to re-home the pet or face action for breach of tenancy, which may lead to possession proceedings to end your tenancy.

Other activities that breach the tenancy agreement include:

- allowing pets to wander unattended in communal areas, landings and walkways; •
allowing pets to urinate or foul in communal areas;
- failing to keep dogs on a lead in communal areas.

All tenants who choose to keep pets take full responsibility for their care, welfare and behaviour. You are responsible for ensuring your pet does not cause nuisance to others or break the terms of your tenancy agreement or any other legislation. Anyone who knowingly does not look after their pet properly is committing a criminal offence (The Animal Welfare Act 2006).

Irresponsible pet owners will NOT be allowed to keep pets in council accommodation, will lose any right or permission they may have had in the past and will be reported to the [RSPCA](#). Further information can be found on the [Dogs Trust website](#).

How to apply to keep a pet

You can get a form from Housing Services reception or www.tendringdc.gov.uk/tendringdc/Housing