

Keeping Pets Policy

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Summary & Policy Aim

Housing 21 is a pet-friendly organisation and we recognise the positive impact of having a pet on our residents' wellbeing. It is an individual resident's choice to own a pet and we welcome the responsible ownership of pets, taking into account the health, safety and security of all residents, employees and visitors, as well as the welfare of the animal. Housing 21 will give permission for pet ownership, within guidelines. Where this affects communal areas, this is aligned to our Choice and Consensus Policy where a local agreement will be made. This local agreement will be documented within the Court Service Agreement.

It is important that the needs and wishes of other residents at a scheme are considered and our policy aims to adopt a fair set of principles used to decide whether pet ownership is appropriate on a case-by-case basis. This includes, amongst other things, providing appropriate accommodation suitable for the type of animal, the welfare of the animal and

ensuring that harm, nuisance or annoyance is not caused to other residents, visitors or employees.

This policy affects all residents and visitors to Housing 21 schemes. The Local Manager and appropriate line management will ensure the policy is implemented effectively.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Housing 21 aspires to embed diversity and inclusion within all our organisational activities to enable these principles to become part of our everyday processes. More can be found at:

[We want everyone to feel welcome at Housing 21: residents, employees and visitors](#)

1. Keeping a pet

1.1 Housing 21 believes that people have the right to choose how they live in their own homes and that this principle does not change with age. It is recognised that owning a pet can bring great comfort, happiness and increased wellbeing. Housing 21 therefore supports responsible pet ownership where it is appropriate. Appropriateness will depend upon the type and number of animals (a limit of 2 pets; this does not include our residents who already have more than 2 pets), the type of scheme, accommodation, the needs of the pet, and the wishes and needs of all residents. Pets will be considered for all property types. We will make a considered judgement on whether we feel a resident can exercise responsible pet ownership. A case-by-case approach will be taken where residents already have pets before moving into our accommodation. Pets will be refused where there has been historic neglect or nuisance.

List of permitted pets allowed:

Dog

Cat

Domestic Bird

Rabbit

Small rodent (hamster, gerbil, guinea pig, mouse)

Fish in home aquarium

Small reptile or amphibian in a vivarium or tank

Insects or arachnids kept in a terrarium or tank

This list is not exhaustive, and permission must be sought for any pet not listed. All pets must be kept in suitably sized housing and kept clean and hygienic.

1.2 Where irresponsible pet ownership is identified, Housing 21, where appropriate, will support the resident to take corrective measures to include signposting to animal welfare organisations, and unless it can be demonstrated that acceptable conditions are being met as a last resort, the resident will be required to home the animal elsewhere. Depending on the specific circumstance, residents will be given two months to rehome their pet. Housing 21 will implement the conditions of this policy through tenancy enforcement if required and persistent non-adherence by a resident may result in their home being at risk. Housing 21 will, however offer support to residents, and escalation will only happen after this and proportionate steps have failed.

1.3 Assistance dogs are permitted on all Housing 21 schemes.

1.4 Policy will be published on the website policy hub [A list of policies for Housing 21 residents](#)

2. Does a resident require permission to have a pet?

2.1 All residents must request permission before bringing a pet into their home, and all requests will be assessed by the Local Manager, taking the needs and wishes of the resident into account alongside the factors noted in 1.1. Suitability of the property type must also be considered. The pet declaration form is to be completed via Aareon, accessible during the sign-up process or separately if needed. This contains emergency contacts, vets info etc. Residents can expect a written reply within 28 days of application. If a response is not received, the resident is then able to contact the Housing Manager or Line Manager for clarity

2.2 In the case of leasehold properties, details of the lease relating to pet ownership must be checked and take precedence over this policy.

3. Refusal for keeping a pet

3.1 Housing 21 is a pet-friendly organisation, but there are circumstances where pet ownership is not appropriate. Permission will not be granted where a pet poses a potential risk or threat to other residents, employees or visitors to the scheme.

3.2 Housing 21 can grant permission for dogs prohibited under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, provided they are registered on the index of exempted dogs. Owners must have a certificate of exemption and follow rules which can be found on the Government's website. Housing 21 will always refuse permission for keeping of any animals listed under the schedule to the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#). Permission will not be granted for livestock or captive-bred Schedule 4 birds.

3.3 The physical layout of the scheme and property will be considered when determining if the type and number of pets requested is appropriate.

3.4 Permission to keep a pet may be refused if a resident is deemed to be unable to care for the animal appropriately.

4. Where are pets allowed on court

4.1 Pets are permitted in indoor social communal areas subject to residents agreeing via our Choice and Consensus Policy. Due regard and consideration must be given to all viewpoints. Individual Court Service Agreements should document which communal areas pets may or may not be permitted in. Resident health considerations should be considered in making decisions.

4.2 Pets are permitted in communal areas outside, as long as they are under the control of their owner. Where a resident owns a dog, it is the resident's responsibility to keep the dog under control when it is in the communal areas of the scheme including in corridors, gardens and car parks. A scheme, through its residents, may decide on the specific details of this as part of the Choice and Consensus Policy, with the decision recorded in the Court Service Agreement. Some schemes may decide dogs, for example, must be on a short lead when in the communal areas; other Courts may agree a lead is not necessary. However, if it is demonstrated a dog is not under control at any point, the Local Manager will work with the owner to remedy the situation and insist they follow the local agreement. Extendable leads are not recommended due to the risk of trips and falls.

5. The responsibility of pet owners

5.1 Ensure that no pet fouls any internal or external parts of the building or grounds, and if this does occur, to clean it up, remove and properly dispose of immediately.

5.2 Pets must be kept clean, with any identified bad smells being dealt with immediately, including the regular changing of cat litter.

5.3 Pet bedding or clothing must not be washed in the communal washing machines.

5.4 Pets must be kept free of fleas, ticks, or any other infestation which could be a health risk to residents, employees or visitors and may impact on the condition of the property.

5.5 Pet owners may be liable for the costs of any cleaning which may subsequently be necessary due to any of the above.

5.6 No pet is to be left in a flat unattended for extended periods of time. For dogs, it is generally recommended that they are not left on their own for more than four hours at a time, although each dog is individual and residents may want to seek advice from their vet.

5.7 All pet owners must provide details of people able to care for the pet in the event of the resident's absence (known as temporary pet carer). The resident's listed temporary pet carer will make arrangements to ensure the welfare needs of the pet are met at short notice if the resident is unable to care for the pet or is absent from the accommodation (planned or unplanned).

5.8 Housing 21 reserves the right to enter a resident's accommodation if a pet is left unattended (or an appropriate agency if required). A pet should not be left unattended if a resident is away unless clear care arrangements are in place. Before entry, all reasonable steps will be taken to contact the resident and the emergency contact first, and a record of entry will be kept.

5.9 If the pet owner can no longer properly care for their pet on a long-term or permanent basis, they must make arrangements for re-homing. The Local Manager may assist with this.

5.10 The pet owner must ensure that the pet is not a nuisance or threat to any other resident, colleague or visitor to the scheme, and that complaints of nuisance are addressed and prevented from re-occurring.

5.11 If the pet displays threatening behaviour or nuisance, an Anti-Social Behaviour case may be opened. This will introduce tools that either insist that the resident controls the pet's behaviour, or the potential removal of the pet.

5.12 The resident's home may also be at risk as a last resort in matters of an extremely serious nature and/or the resident's refusal to address the issues.

5.13 The pet owner must do all that is reasonable to ensure the welfare of their animals under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This duty extends to ensuring an animal's welfare needs are met by providing:

- a suitable environment (place to live)
- a suitable diet
- normal behaviour patterns
- appropriate housing with other animals
- protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease

5.14 Cat and dog owners must ensure that their pets are microchipped by law, that the web-based data provider is kept up to date with their current address and that they wear an ID tag with the owner's name and address on when outside of the home. More information can be found here: [Get your dog or cat microchipped - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-or-cat-microchipped).

5.15 A pet owner may be liable for costs associated with repairing damage to communal property caused by a pet.

5.16 It is a legal requirement to ensure that any pet dog wears a name tag displaying the owners name and address while outside the home. Inclusion of a telephone number is also recommended.

5.17 Pets must not be kept on any balconies in the property.

5.18 Pet hoarding is not acceptable, and action will be taken. Where hoarding is a concern, the Housing Manager will discuss with our safeguarding lead for guidance on assessment.

5.19 Pets are required to be appropriately vaccinated, and Housing 21 reserves the right to request a copy of the relevant vaccination records if required

5.20 Breeding of pets is prohibited

6. Visitors bringing pets onto a scheme

6.1 Visitors will be permitted to bring pets onto schemes when they visit, under the Choice and Consensus Policy. However, residents' consensus is required to take them into communal areas or the guest room unless they are assistance pets.

6.2 Residents are responsible for the behaviour of pets brought onto the scheme by their visitors.

6.3 If anyone is threatened by a pet or it is a nuisance the owner will be asked to remove the animal immediately, and the pet will not be permitted back onto the scheme.

7. Local Manager responsibilities

7.1 Responsible for ensuring all residents are aware of their rights and responsibilities relating to this policy, and where it overlaps with the Choice and Consensus Policy.

7.2 Responsible for assessing applications for permission to have a pet. Pets must be recorded via the Aereon form and all details collected.

7.3 Responsible for monitoring pet owners' needs relating to caring for their pet, to help prevent any deterioration of the pet's welfare.

7.4 Responsible for offering and providing reasonable support, including signposting to appropriate agencies, to ensure the welfare of the pet is upheld.

7.5 Responsible for dealing with complaints related to pets in a proportionate manner, with escalation to opening an anti-social behaviour case if required and following the Anti-social Behaviour Policy.

7.6 Responsible for processing all data in line with the Data Protection Policy

7.7 Housing 21 does not permit scheme pets. Any animal present within a scheme remains the responsibility of its owner or the organisation providing it. Housing 21 is not responsible for the care, welfare, supervision, veterinary treatment, loss, injury, illness or death of any pet. Staff must not assume responsibility for pets as part of their employment duties unless specifically authorised through an approved animal-assisted activity or service arrangement.

8. Line Manager responsibilities

8.1 Responsible for supporting the Local Manager with implementing the policy and ensuring the correct procedures are followed.

8.2 Responsible for managing any disputes/challenges to decisions relating to granting permission.

8.3 Responsible for reviewing any anti-social behaviour cases and supporting the Local Manager to resolve any case relating to pet ownership.

9. Further Guidance

9.1 There are volunteer dog-walking charities such as the Cinnamon Trust which may be able to help where a resident is no longer able to exercise their dog. Alternatively, a friend or relative may be able to help exercise the dog. There are many local pet walking services also available for a fee.

9.2 Where a pet has fallen ill, and the owner cannot afford to pay for treatment they may be able to obtain veterinary treatment for the pet through organisations such as the PDSA (People's Dispensary for Sick Animals).

9.3 Where a dog has become aggressive and is constantly barking, the local vet may be able to provide advice and/or give information on pet behaviour classes run by local organisations. If this fails employees should advise the resident to contact the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors ([APBC – Animal Behaviour Experts UK](#)) or the Association of Pet Dog Trainers ([The Association of Pet Dog Trainers](#)). It should be noted though that if a dog shows any signs of aggression or presents a risk to either its owner, other residents or employees it should not remain on scheme.

9.4 Employees should facilitate the access to local animal welfare help. Housing 21 will always aim to use such services to their maximum to prevent a resident losing their pet.

9.5 If a resident cannot keep a pet themselves then there may be a local 'Pets as Therapy' group which will bring animals into the scheme for visits: [Pets As Therapy](#). In addition employees can ask their local vet for advice and information on local animal welfare groups.

9.6 Employees should always be aware that the death of a pet can be extremely distressing. Local Managers should provide support and assistance. There are also organisations such as the: [Animal Samaritans](#) and the Pet Bereavement Support Service [Blue Cross](#) who can offer support at this time.

9.7 If a resident falls ill and is admitted to hospital and there are no relatives able to take the pet, then employees are advised to contact [The Cinnamon Trust](#) for advice. This organisation could also help with advice if a pet is left behind following the death of a resident. Cats Protection also offer advice and guidance about making preparations for pets in the event of the owner's death.

9.8 Problems with owners keeping pets in unsanitary conditions can be taken up with the RSPCA who will provide advice as to the approach to take or become involved themselves. In addition, the Local Authority Dog Warden can provide advice.

9.9 We will review this policy following the commencement of the Renters' Rights Act to ensure compliance,

There will be information packs available from Dogs Trust for:

Birds

Cats

Dogs

Fish

Reptiles

Small Animals

Complaints process:

[Contact Housing 21 about feedback, complaints, compliments or repairs](#)

Other policies referenced:

- Choice and Consensus Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy