

Keeping Pets Policy

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Board Approval Required	No	Date approved	N/A
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Summary

Housing 21 is a pet friendly organisation. We believe that keeping pets can positively promote the wellbeing of our residents.

It is an individual resident's choice to own a pet and Housing 21 will give permission, 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 with the Court Service Agreement.

Where an agreement is given for pet ownership, the 'Keeping Pets' Policy and Procedure is based on how Housing 21 will support responsible pet ownership and the conditions of pet ownership.

Policy

Housing 21 is a pet-friendly organisation and we recognise the positive impacts of having a pet on our residents' wellbeing. We welcome the responsible ownership of any pet within reason, taking in to account the health, safety and security of all residents, employees, as well as the welfare of the animal.

It is important that the needs and wishes of other residents at the 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 Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care Manager and appropriate line management will ensure the policy is implemented effectively.

Procedure

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, the type of scheme, accommodation, the needs of the pet, and the wishes and needs of all residents. We will make a considered judgement on whether we feel a resident is able to exercise responsible pet ownership.

- 1.2 Where irresponsible pet ownership is identified, Housing 21, where appropriate, will support the resident to take corrective measures, and unless it can be demonstrated that acceptable conditions are being met the resident will be required to home the animal elsewhere. 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.
- 1.3 Assistance dogs and pets as adaptive aids are permitted on all Housing 21 schemes.

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 Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care Manager, taking the needs and wishes of the resident into account alongside the factors noted in 1.1.
- 2.2 The wish to have a pet should be disclosed on all applications for Housing 21 accommodation. A decision to provide a tenancy will be based on the information provided.
- 2.3 Where a Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care Manager provides conditional permission, details of the pet should be added to the 'Add a Pet' page on 1st touch. This can be found by clicking on the resident's flat number on the main screen, choosing tenancy management from the drop-down box and then clicking on 'Add a Pet'. All details should be filled in and then the resident should check and sign the information. Once complete a copy will be sent to the local managers email and a copy should be printed and given to the resident.

- 2.4 In the case of leasehold properties, details of the lease relating to pet ownership must be checked and take precedence over this policy.
- 2.5 Under no circumstances will permission be granted where a pet poses a potential risk or threat to other residents, employees or visitors to the scheme, or in the event that the pet would be detrimental to the health of other residents.
- 2.6 Housing 21 will always refuse permission for animals that are restricted by law, for example under the [Dangerous Dogs Act](#) and the [Wildlife & Countryside Act](#).

3. The Type of Accommodation and Physical Layout of the Court

- 3.1 The layout and type of accommodation is considered, to ensure everyone enjoys their home, and health and safety is upheld, taking into account risks associated with shared entrances and peoples' ability to control and care for an animal.
- 3.2 Housing 21 reserves the right to refuse permission to keep a pet where it is considered that the pet is wholly unsuitable for the environment, (this includes the resident's ability to care for the animal, the accommodation and the scheme).
- 3.3 On 'Category 1' schemes where residents have their own front door leading directly outside, or where there is minimal communal access with a small block of flats, Housing 21 will not usually withhold permission to own a pet unless it poses a significant risk.
- 3.4 On 'Category 2' schemes, which includes Extra Care schemes where each property is accessed from one main front door, and residents' front doors always lead out to communal corridors, permission will only be granted after paying specific attention to the resident's support needs, their ability to care for the animal, the issues of access and related risks to the environment.

4. Where are Pets Allowed on Court?

- 4.1 Pets are permitted in social communal areas such as communal lounges, communal laundry areas, communal bathrooms and guest rooms, subject to the residents of the scheme agreeing, via our Choice and Consensus Policy. Due regard and consideration must be given to all viewpoints, including where religious beliefs may impact on residents' views on keeping pets.

- 4.2 Pets are permitted in communal areas outside, as long as they are managed properly by both residents and visitors to the Court. 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 or an extendable lead is required. However, if it is demonstrated a dog is not under control at any point, the Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care Manager will work with the owner to remedy the situation and insist they follow the local agreement.

5. The Responsibilities of Pet Owners

- 5.1 To 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.
- 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.
- 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) – refer to 'Accessing a Residents Home' Policy and Procedure.

- 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 Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care 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. This duty extends to ensuring an animal's welfare needs are met by ensuring:
- 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 Dog owners legally must ensure that their dogs from the age of eight weeks are microchipped, 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 microchipped - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). Owners can be fined £500 if this is not adhered to. If a resident cannot afford to have their dog microchipped, the Blue Cross and Dogs Trust will do this for free.

6. Visitors bringing Pets onto the scheme

- 6.1 Day visitors will be permitted to bring dogs 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 dogs.
- 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 dog or it is a nuisance the owner will be asked to remove the animal immediately, and the dog will not be permitted back onto the scheme.

7. Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care 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.
- 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.

8 Responsibilities of the Operations Manager / Extra Care Manager (or other line management role)

- 8.1 Responsible for supporting the Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care 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 Court Manager / Housing Manager / Housing and Care 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 small 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 www.apbc.org.uk or the Association of Pet Dog Trainers www.apdt.co.uk. 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 such as www.petsastherapy.org. 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. It is recommended that Court Managers/Housing and Care Managers provide support and assistance. There are also organisations such as the Animal Samaritans: www.animalsamaritans.org.uk and the Pet Bereavement Support Service www.bluecross.org.uk 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.

Other policies referenced:

- Pet Declaration Form: accessed via First Touch
- Choice and Consensus Policy
- Accessing Residents' Homes Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy

The official version of this document will be maintained on the intranet (Wilma). Before referring to any printed copies, please ensure they are up-to-date.