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## 1. Purpose and scope

We recognise pets can bring their owners significant benefits in terms of companionship as well as a positive impact on mental and physical wellbeing. This policy explains our approach to residents who keep pets, and reminds residents of their responsibilities, including those under the terms of their tenancy agreement or lease.

This policy applies to residents, who are also responsible for their household and visitors. The tenancy and leases have different permission requirements<sup>1</sup> for tenants, shared owners, and leaseholders, however most of the principles apply regardless of tenure.

In this policy, we have also included reminders for residents regarding interactions with animals which are not pets but which may also be found in or around our buildings.

## 2. Basic guidance principles

Owning a pet is a big responsibility. Before obtaining a pet, residents should consider:

- The type and size of home they live in.
- The size of garden (if any) and the pets exercise needs
- The type of animal that would be most suitable for their family and lifestyle.
- Arrangements for caring for the pet while no one is at home
- Dealing with pet waste
- The costs of having a pet, including food, vaccinations, veterinary care and insurance, end of life care
- The history and background of the proposed pet
- Their own experience of keeping pets and how any new pet will interact with other animals and other people

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<sup>1</sup> Some types of licence or tenancy agreement may specifically prohibit keeping a pet



- That nuisance or anti-social behaviour connected to an animal may lead to action for a breach of the tenancy or lease agreement

### 3. Permission to keep a pet

3.1 Some buildings may have different facilities in place such as additional shared areas which may not be suitable for pets. This may for example include residents in sheltered accommodation which have additional communal living areas. Even where there is no specific clause in the tenancy or lease for a building, we reserve the right to ask residents to discuss and sign a pet agreement to ensure they are aware of, and able to comply with, all requirements and specific restrictions for their building.

3.2 Under the terms of the Lewisham Council Secure tenancy agreement, tenants are allowed to keep domestic animals in their home and do not need our permission to do so. Domestic animals are defined in this agreement as:

- Dogs (excluding any dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991)
- Cats
- Fish
- Rabbits
- Guinea Pigs
- Hamsters
- Caged birds

3.3 If a tenant wishes to keep any other type of animal, reptile, or bird they must obtain our written permission. Requests should be in writing and sent to the Housing Management or Independent Living team for their consideration.

3.4 Permission will be decided on a case-by-case basis according to the circumstances of the household and property type. When dealing with requests we will consider

- The type of animal and their needs.
- Any potential for disturbance, nuisance, or distress to other residents.
- The number and type of pets already in the property.
- The size and type of accommodation.
- Whether there has been any history of complaints or previous failure to look after a pet responsibly.

We may take advice and seek guidance from other professionals before making a decision. This may include, for example, Lewisham Council's Animal Welfare team, Animal welfare charities, vets, or specialist voluntary organisations.

3.5 Under no circumstances will any resident be given permission to keep:

- Farm animals or livestock
- Animals banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976. This includes some venomous reptiles, rodents, spiders, and monkeys.

3.6 Shared owners - Under the terms of their lease, where a resident has purchased their property/share of their property through the shared ownership scheme, a Shared owner is only permitted to keep a pet with our written permission. In line with the principles above, this will not be unreasonably withheld.



## 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 We expect residents to look after their pets in line with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and provide their basic needs which include.
- A suitable environment.
  - A suitable diet.
  - The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
  - Being protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.
- 4.2 Residents must ensure their pet has routine healthcare checks which includes vaccinations, and the control of fleas and worms.
- 4.3 All dogs over 8 weeks old must be microchipped. The microchip must be fitted by a trained professional or vet. (**Note:** Battersea Dogs and Cats Home and Blue Cross centres offer this service for free). Dogs must always wear a collar and ID tag when they are in public places. All dogs must be kept on a lead when they are in communal areas of our estates.
- 4.4 From 10 June 2024 all cats are required to be microchipped.
- 4.5 We encourage pet owners to take out pet insurance. This helps meet the costs of any medical treatment and should cover third party liability, should your animal cause any injury or damage to another person, animal, or property.
- 4.6 Pet owners are not only responsible for the way they care for their pet, but they must also manage their pet's behaviour, so they do not cause a nuisance to other residents. Tenants and leaseholders are responsible for the behaviour of their own pets, and pets belonging to anyone else living in or visiting their home. This applies to both inside the home and any communal areas.
- 4.7 Residents must ensure their pets do not escape their property. If they have a garden or balcony, they must inspect the boundaries regularly to ensure there are no means of escape and carry out any necessary repairs or proofing works e.g., fencing/netting.
- 4.8 Except for caged pets and those who use a litter tray, pets must not be allowed to foul inside the property. Owners are responsible for removing and disposing of faeces from any gardens or balconies appropriately and in a timely manner. Pets must not foul in a communal area and where this happens, owners must clear this up immediately.
- 4.9 Residents are required to keep their home in a reasonable condition and free from infestation. Pet owners are required to treat their home if their pet has fleas. If Lewisham Homes need to pay for any specialist cleaning or pest control treatment, the resident will be recharged for this.
- 4.10 Residents should ensure any food sources they put out for their pets are cleared away so as not to attract vermin inside or outside of the property. Residents are reminded that they should not feed wild animals including but not limited to foxes, squirrels, or pigeons, either within the boundaries of their home or the communal areas.
- 4.11 Residents must not allow pets to cause a nuisance. This includes for example:



- Allowing dogs to bark excessively.
  - Allowing animals to foul in communal areas without clearing up after them.
  - Allowing dogs to behave in an aggressive manner.
- 4.12 Residents must not, under any circumstances leave their pet for an unreasonable amount of time without making alternative arrangements for their care. This includes not leaving dogs unsupervised in gardens and/or balconies for long periods of time.
- 4.13 If pets cause any damage the tenant or leaseholder will be expected to put this right. If they do not, we reserve the right to carry out any work and recharge them for the cost.
- 4.14 Residents must not breed animals. We strongly encourage residents to neuter/spay their pets to prevent unwanted pregnancies. They must not offer any animal for sale from their home without our written consent.
- 4.15 Occasionally tenants may be required to move out of their home on a temporary basis so remedial works can be carried. In these cases, they should make alternative caring arrangements for their pets. See also the Temporary Relocation (decanting) policy.
- 4.16 Where we are aware of an animal inside a property which we believe to have been abandoned or left unattended for an unreasonable period, we will contact partner agencies such as the police and a local animal welfare group to make suitable arrangements for the removal and care for the animal for one month.

We will take reasonable steps to contact the owner to collect the animal within this time. If the owner does not collect the animal after one month, we will arrange for the animal to be rehomed. In line with our Rechargeable costs policy, we reserve the right to recharge incurred costs for the animal's care.

## 5. Withdrawn permission and enforcement action

- 5.1 If residents do not comply with their responsibilities under this policy, or any lease or tenancy agreement or we suspect cruelty or neglect of their pets, we will take action to resolve this through our Anti-social behaviour procedure. The types of actions we may take include:
- Requiring a signed responsible pet ownership agreement
  - Warning letters
  - Involving statutory and voluntary agencies, such as the police, Lewisham Council's Animal Welfare team, Environmental Health, the RSPCA.
  - Applying for an injunction requiring the owner to take, or stop, certain actions
  - Withdrawing permission to keep an animal
  - Taking action to end a tenancy - if all other measures have failed.
- 5.2 Your home may be at risk where the tenancy or the lease agreement is breached.

## 6. Monitoring and controls

- 6.1 This policy will be implemented through an accompanying Pets procedure where we will guide staff regarding fair and consistent application and decision making.



- 6.2 Breaches of this policy will be dealt with through our ASB procedures. Cases will be monitored in accordance with the ASB procedure.
- 6.3 Lessons learned from resident requests and complaints will be considered in the future development and review of this policy, along with consideration of sector good practice.

## 7. Related documents

Other relevant Housing Service documents include but are not limited to:

- ASB Policy and procedure
- Abandoned goods policy
- Pest Control policy
- Vulnerable Persons policy
- Complaints policy and procedure

## 8. Legislation and regulation

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to the following, as well as any successor legislation or updates:

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Dangerous Dogs Act
- Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015
- Control of Dogs Order 1992
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

## 9. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 9.1 An Equality assessment was conducted as part of the development of this policy. We concluded the reviewed policy to have no adverse impacts for any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.2 We considered that in some circumstances some pets may prove to be a challenge to look after. We concluded that, wherever possible, we would encourage residents to seek our permission and advice, to assist them to consider the impact of owning a pet, including the possible impact on sustaining their tenure. We have added guiding principles to help all residents to consider the impact and consequences of pet ownership.

## 10. Communication and consultation

- 10.1 This policy will be published on our website and internally to staff. We will guide staff on its implementation.
- 10.2 We carried out consultation with residents, to check that the policy was easy to understand, and covered all the key information required.



10.3 Any complaints regarding this policy will be handled under our housing complaints policy and process.

<b>Replaces:</b> Pets policy 2023 (Lewisham Homes) Minor updates to reflect the return of landlord services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council	
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