



# Family Housing Association



(Birkenhead & Wirral) Ltd

## Pet Policy

### **Aim**

The Association recognises that keeping pets can greatly enhance the quality of life for many tenants. This aim of this policy is to ensure that our tenants can keep pets, where this is appropriate to the type of accommodation they live in, but to ensure that their neighbours' enjoyment of their home is not affected.

### **Pets that can be kept without obtaining permission**

Certain pets are very unlikely to cause problems for neighbours and therefore can be kept without obtaining permission from the Association. They are:

- ◆ Coldwater or Tropical fish, kept in a tank inside a property.
- ◆ Non-poisonous reptiles or spiders kept permanently in a tank inside a property.
- ◆ Domestic rodents, such as hamsters, mice, gerbils, rats & guinea pigs.
- ◆ Guide dogs for registered blind residents.

### **Obtaining permission from the Association**

For all other pets, residents must obtain permission from the Association before bringing the pet home. The Association will grant permission provided that the Chief Executive (or in his absence the Housing Manager) are satisfied that the pet will not be allowed to cause a nuisance through:

- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Smell
- ◆ Hygiene
- ◆ Intimidation

Before the Association grants permission, the tenant will be required to sign an agreement detailing what the Association expects of them in relation to their pet. The agreement will also make it clear that the Association can withdraw the permission at any time should the tenant's pet become a nuisance. Failure of the tenant to comply with their agreement could result in enforcement action that could include eviction from the property.

### **Appropriate Accommodation for Pets**

The Association has a variety of accommodation including houses and flats. Some properties have gardens, others yards and some have shared gardens. Where a property has exclusive use of a garden or yard it would normally be appropriate for the tenant to keep a cat or dog.

Where a property shares a garden, care must be taken to safeguard the enjoyment of the gardens for all the residents. Where permission is granted for a tenant to keep a cat or dog where they share gardens, the agreement that the tenant will be required to sign will include restrictions to prevent fouling of gardens and nuisance from animals roaming freely.

Another significant factor when deciding whether a tenant can keep a dog in a flat is the size of the dog and lifestyle of the tenant. Where a dog would be likely to be left alone in the flat for long periods, permission would not normally be granted, as the dog would be likely to cause a noise nuisance.

### **Keeping pets without permission**

Where the Association learns that a tenant has been keeping a pet without permission, the Association will:

- ◆ Write to the tenant informing them that they must obtain permission to keep the pet.
- ◆ Send the appropriate declaration for the tenant to sign and return.
- ◆ Inform the tenant whether the Association is granting permission for them to keep the pet.
- ◆ If permission is not granted the tenant may be offered the opportunity to transfer to a suitable property or to re-home their pet.

### **Damage Caused by Pets**

Tenants keeping pets must make good any damage caused by their pets. Most damage caused by pets is due to lack of supervision or control of the pet.

### **Number of Pets**

Where the Association grants permission for a tenant to keep a pet, this permission relates specifically to the animal applied for. If the tenant wants to replace a pet that has died, or keep an additional pet, a further application must be made.

### **Keeping Dogs**

Dogs can be very rewarding pets, but they also have the potential to be the most disruptive to neighbours due to noise, intimidating behaviour, smell and hygiene.

When keeping dogs, residents must ensure that:

- ◆ The dog always wears a collar and name tag.
- ◆ Dogs are always kept on a lead when in communal areas.
- ◆ They do not allow their dogs to use communal areas as toilets.
- ◆ They pick up any dog fouling in public places, in accordance with the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005.
- ◆ Any dog waste is placed in a sealed plastic bag before being placed in a bin.
- ◆ They are not left unattended on balconies.
- ◆ They do not keep dogs listed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

## **Keeping Cats**

Cats can be great companions for residents but if they are allowed to roam free they can create a real neighbourhood nuisance. When keeping cats, tenants must ensure that:

- ◆ They are neutered.
- ◆ They maintain a clean litter tray inside their property.
- ◆ They do not keep litter trays in communal areas, such as hallways, stairwells, landings or gardens.
- ◆ Any cat waste is placed in a sealed plastic bag before being placed in a bin.
- ◆ If they are allowed free access outside, tenants must take steps to ensure they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours.
- ◆ The Association can require cats that do cause a nuisance outside to be kept indoors at all times.

## **Breeding**

Breeding of any animals on Association property is not permitted. Pets must not be offered for sale from Association property.

## **Health and Welfare**

Tenants are responsible for the health and welfare of their pets. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, this is called a duty of care. This requires proper day-to-day management and care of the pet. Routine healthcare must include regular control of parasites (fleas & worms), vaccinations and neutering where appropriate. When applying to keep a pet, tenants must provide details of their vet. Where the Association is concerned regarding the welfare of a pet it may involve external organisations such as the Police, RSPCA or local authority.

## **Outside Accommodation**

If a tenant wishes to construct outside accommodation, they must first apply for permission from the Association. Where tenants want to create ponds in gardens, they must first apply for permission from the Association. In both cases the tenant should provide details including the size, type of construction and the animals that would be kept.

## **Leaving Pets when Tenant is away**

No pets should be left in a property whilst the tenant is away, unless clear arrangements have been made to provide adequate care. Dogs would normally be expected to be boarded elsewhere, whereas smaller pets may be cared for by close supervision by a neighbour, including visits at least daily. It is illegal to leave a pet alone for a significant length of time.