

PET POLICY

Introduction

Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) are proud of our pet-friendly policy. We support responsible pet ownership, and provided that the criteria in this policy are met residents may keep a pet. We also welcome assistance dogs, provided that their needs can be accommodated.

This policy covers:

- what pets may and may not be kept;
- owners' responsibilities;
- pets in communal lounges;
- what action SHC will take if pets cause a nuisance;
- what action SHC will take if we are concerned about an animal's welfare.

If new or existing tenants wish to keep a pet, they must obtain our written permission and sign an undertaking to abide by our pet policy. This policy applies to residents' pets, and any animals accompanying visitors. Residents are responsible for the behaviour of their visitors' animals.

What Pets Can Be Kept

We will assess each application individually. We will normally give permission for small domestic animals, caged birds and animals, and fish or reptile tanks. We will not give permission if:

- the owner is not able to care for their pet(s) adequately;
- the animal is aggressive and/or noisy and likely to disturb or threaten residents or staff;
- an animal is too large to be appropriately accommodated in the tenancy or room;
- the number of pets exceeds the guidance below;
- there have previously been problems with the owner managing their pet(s).

If an applicant wishes to bring a dog to their new home with SHC, they must bring the dog to their viewing appointment. The Scheme Manager will assess whether the dog is suitable. If they have concerns about the dog's behaviour or the ability of the owner to care for the dog appropriately, they may advise the applicant that they must choose between accepting the tenancy or keeping their dog.

Number of Pets

We will not normally allow more than two animals such as cats or dogs per household. Where animals such as rodents, reptiles, birds or fish are kept in cages or tanks, it may be acceptable to keep two such containers.

Responsible Pet Ownership

All animals should be fully vaccinated, free of fleas and other parasites and regularly wormed (where applicable). We encourage owners to take out pet insurance, and to neuter animals such as cats, dogs and other mammals. We can provide information to pet owners about services offering discounted neutering services. We recommend that cats and dogs are micro-chipped, and again can provide information about local services.

Pet owners must make arrangements for someone else to exercise, feed and care for their pets if the owner is unwell or absent. The Scheme Manager will not care for residents' pets.

We will provide information about organisations such as the Cinnamon Trust, Dogs Trust, Cats Protection League, RPSA and Raystede, which can provide information and support to pet owners.

Pet Breeding

We do not allow any commercial pet breeding at any SHC properties.

Communal Areas

Pets must be kept on short leads in corridors and entrance areas, and are not allowed in kitchen areas. Animals may be off the lead in gardens, provided that they do not cause nuisance or damage, or restrict other residents' enjoyment of the gardens.

The issue of pets in communal lounges has been controversial at many sheltered housing schemes. Some pet owners are very attached to their pet, and wish to have its companionship at social events. Other residents may dislike or fear animals, or may be allergic to them.

Residents at each sheltered housing scheme or home should decide whether they wish to allow well behaved pets in communal lounges. Residents should first decide whether they wish to decide on a simple majority, or whether they wish to set a higher majority threshold. The Scheme Manager will then organise a ballot so that all residents can vote.

We encourage residents to be sensitive to each others' views, and to consider if they might allow pets to attend some social events, so that residents who feel strongly either way are not excluded from the communal lounge.

Pets causing nuisance (see below) will not be allowed in communal areas regardless of how residents have voted on allowing pets to attend social events.

Animal Nuisance

Animal nuisance is likely to constitute a breach of tenancy or licence conditions. Animal nuisance includes but is not limited to:

- roaming or unattended animals;

- pets fouling in communal areas without the mess being cleared immediately and completely;
- pets fouling in neighbouring gardens;
- excessive noise;
- unpleasant odours;
- pest infestation;
- aggressive or boisterous behaviour.

We will try to resolve any difficulties with the pet owner (or resident where it is their visitor's animal causing a problem). Persistent problems are likely to lead to us withdrawing permission for the animal to be kept, and may also result in tenancy action. This could include an Acceptable Behaviour Contract, a demoted tenancy or in extreme cases possession proceedings.

If a pet causes damage either within the owner's flat or elsewhere in the building or garden, the owner (or the resident whose visitor's pet caused the damage) will be responsible for the costs or remedying the damage.

Animal Welfare

If we witness, or have good reason to suspect, cruelty to or neglect of an animal, we will report this to the RSPCA. Wherever possible we will support the pet owner to overcome any problems, but we will not tolerate cruelty to or neglect of animals.