



HIGHSTONE

Pet Policy

Version:	Version 4 (replaces keeping pets in supported housing)
Date Approved:	7 th June 2023
Review Plan: e.g. annually	Every 3 Years
Review Date:	7 th June 2026
Owner:	Highstone Housing Association
Document Controller:	Managing Director

1. Introduction

Highstone Housing Association (HHA) recognises the benefits of tenants keeping pets. This policy applies to tenants living in our properties regardless of local authority area.

The policy applies to requests for existing, new or replacement pets staying permanently in one of the above properties.

This policy sets out our approach to the keeping of pets and clearly defines the basis on which decisions will be made following requests for permission to keep pets within our properties.

The Pets Policy is designed to ensure that HHA provides a clear and consistent approach in the administration and process of pet permission applications.

Under HHA’s Tenancy Agreement, tenants and anyone living with the tenant or visiting the property must not keep or bring any animal in or near the property unless they have written permission to do so under HHA’s Pets Policy. This policy gives further details about keeping pets in HHA’s homes for new and existing tenants.

This policy has been reviewed using guidance from the RSPCA, ‘Housing - A Good Practice Guidance’ in 2017.

2. Aim Of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide a foundation for a consistent and enforceable approach to pet ownership.

We aim to provide a balance between the benefits to a person that pet ownership can bring and managing our properties and communities to ensure that pet ownership does not infringe on the right of others to the peaceful enjoyment of their home.

3. Property Types and Pets

Shared Accommodation	No pets allowed	
Properties with their own external entrance and a communal garden/outside area.	Able to have a small caged animal such as a hamster (no more than two) or fish tenants will be considered on a case by case basis taking into account the factors detailed below : (the list is not exhaustive	a maximum of 2 cats or dogs in total.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else shares the garden, for example, if there are small children, elderly tenants or vulnerable tenants who may be frightened by the animal. • Whether there is enough open space nearby for any dogs to be exercised outside the communal garden. • Whether there are any other animals in the other properties which share the communal garden, for example, if there are already two dogs, it might not be appropriate to allow any more in that block. • The views of the current tenants and whether there have been cases of animal nuisance in the block 		
<p>Any tenant in supported accommodation should first discuss their plans to acquire such pets with their Housing Officer and if housed within our Supported Accommodation the Support Team Manager, who will seek the approval of the HHA Housing Manager.</p>		
<p>Permission must be obtained before acquiring the pet.</p>		

Properties with a shared / communal entrance or walkway.	Able to have a small caged animal such as a hamster (no more than two) or fish	Cats and Dogs will not be permitted
<p>Any tenant in supported accommodation should first discuss their plans to acquire such pets with their Housing Officer and if housed within our Supported Accommodation the Support Team Manager, who will seek the approval of the HHA Housing Manager.</p> <p>Permission must be obtained before acquiring the pet.</p>		
Properties with own entrance and own private garden area	Able to have a small caged animal such as a hamster (no more than two)	a maximum of 2 cats or dogs in total.
<p>Any tenant in supported accommodation should first discuss their plans to acquire such pets with their Housing Officer and if housed within our Supported Accommodation the Support Team Manager, who will seek the approval of the HHA Housing Manager.</p> <p>Permission must be obtained before acquiring the pet.</p>		

4. Official Service Dogs

Where a client has a specific need or disability which might be assisted by an officially trained service dog then this will be considered as long as it does not contravene any external constraints. HHA will require evidence from the relevant agency to support the application.

Examples of service dogs which are considered include:

- Guide dogs
- Seizure response dogs
- Dogs for the disabled / mobility dogs
- Hearing dogs

5. Granting Permission

Tenants must obtain written permission from HHA if they want to keep an animal or animals. Applications to keep a pet in a HHA property are available on request. The form has four parts.

1. Assessment - Things to Consider before getting a pet
2. Tenants details
3. Description of animal(s) tenants want to keep.
4. Tenants Declaration

All parts of the form must be fully completed to be considered. Any forms that are not completed fully will be rejected. The pet permission form must be used by all tenants, including those who already have a pet.

Where HHA gives permission to keep a pet, we will write to the tenant outlining the conditions attached to the permission.

Permission will be conditional on a number of factors, including the type of pet being kept.

All permission is conditional on the tenant making sure that their pets do not:

- stray or roam
- damage anybody's property, including their own HHA home
- injure, annoy or frighten anybody else
- cause nuisance to anybody else, e.g. by making too much noise or causing a smell
- breed in the property

All permission is also conditional on the tenant:

- making proper arrangements for the animal's care if they go away overnight, or for longer, and providing HHA with details of an emergency contact
- making sure that litter trays are cleaned frequently and pet faeces are cleared frequently from the house and/or garden and no smell is caused by the pets
- making sure that hutches/cages are frequently cleaned and no smell is caused by the pets
- keeping the pets under control at all times, including where visitors such as housing officers, contractors and postal workers come to their property

Additional conditions may be imposed where appropriate; these will not be imposed unreasonably and will be detailed in writing in the permission letter. Conditions may also be imposed after permission has been granted if they are necessary to deal with any issues that have arisen. The tenant should be advised of any additional conditions and the reasons for imposing them in writing. Permission to keep a pet can be withdrawn if a pet is not being kept in accordance with this policy.

HHA strongly encourages tenants to have their pets microchipped where appropriate. This will be a legal requirement for dogs from 2016 and cats from 10th June 2024.

6. Refusing Permission

HHA will not usually give permission to keep a pet in the following circumstances (this list is not exhaustive and permission may also be refused for other reasons not listed).

- Where a tenant would have difficulties taking care of the welfare needs of an animal independently and the support team cannot meet this need through a care and support package
- If the animal the tenant wants to keep is of a type to which Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 applies, including dogs placed on Index of Exempt Dogs.
- If the animal has ever caused injury to a person, or if it is dangerous in any other way, for example, a poisonous snake. This includes all animals prescribed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976. This also includes a dog which has been found to be dangerously out of control in a public place under Section 3 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
- If the tenant wants to keep an animal which is not a domestic animal, such as wild animals, primates, livestock, poultry.

- Requests for exotic pets and reptiles because of the difficulties in meeting their welfare needs.
- If the tenant has any convictions for, or past history of abandonment, cruelty, neglect or mistreatment of animals, or convictions for any offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or has been disqualified from keeping animals or a particular type of animal due to a conviction.
- When the tenant or another member of the household has previously had any tenancy enforcement action taken against them in relation to their previous ownership of pets in a HHA owned property. HHA may consider giving permission to keep pets with additional conditions placed on the tenant in exceptional circumstances.
- If the tenant wants to keep too many animals for the type of property. Tenants should not keep more than two cats or dogs (ie a total of 2 animals). HHA will only give permission to keep a reasonable number of pets.
- If the request is to keep an animal in a property type which is unsuitable for that animal (see section 4)

In all cases, where Highstone Housing Association refuses permission to keep a pet, we will explain the reasons fully to the tenant in writing.

7. Tenant Responsibilities

Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act places a duty of care on pet owners “to ensure they take reasonable steps in all the circumstances to meet the welfare needs of their animals to the extent required by good practice”

HHA have a responsibility to ensure that any tenants requesting permission to own and keep an animal are able to do so independently or have adequate and agreed support in place to ensure the welfare needs of their pets.

If you get permission to keep a pet, you are responsible for:

- making arrangements for your pets’ care if you are away
- keeping your pet under control at all times
- providing us with an emergency contact who can care for your pet
- making sure your property, garden and pet areas are clean and free from animal urine, faeces or smells
- making sure your pet doesn’t annoy or frighten anyone, or damage anybody’s property

8. Recording Information About Pets

Where permission to keep a pet is granted, HHA will take details of all the pets the tenant wants to keep, including their breed and age. HHA will also take details of the vet and an emergency contact.

HHA will need to know if pets are being kept in the property and emergency contact details in case there is an emergency, such as a flood or a fire or the tenant has to go to hospital. Holding

these details will also ensure the HHA is aware of any animals being kept in the property in the event of any eviction procedures being taken.

Details should be held on Omni with scanned copies of the application(s) and updated with any changes as they arise.

9. Tenancy Management Issues

HHA will investigate complaints about breaches of the pets' policy and any issues which arise from regular tenancy visits.

HHA will contact the tenant and any relevant support agencies and advocates to discuss complaints. HHA will visit the property to establish how a pet is being kept, or if a pet is being kept by a tenant without permission.

HHA will take the appropriate action, ranging from informal interventions and mediation to formal tenancy action. This will be clearly documented in writing and explained to the tenant. Verbal permission to keep a pet must not be given, and HHA employees and support teams must not ignore the unauthorised keeping of pets or any nuisance problems.

If HHA believes a tenant is keeping a dog of an illegal type in their property, unless the dog is exempted, this is a criminal offence and we will contact the police immediately. Action can also be taken for breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

If a tenant is keeping a pet without permission, they must apply for retrospective permission using the form applications to keep a pet form.

However, if the tenant lives in an unsuitable property type, action will still be taken regardless of whether the animal is causing a nuisance. In exceptional circumstances, permission may be granted outside the policy on the condition that no further pets are obtained, and the pet will not be replaced when it dies. In these circumstances the decision to grant permission must be authorised in writing by the Housing Manager.

If the tenant is keeping their pet in a way that is causing a nuisance, options include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Writing to the tenant to remind them of their responsibilities and explaining the potential consequences of their actions. The situation should be monitored closely and if there is no improvement formal tenancy action may be taken.
- Providing information from animal welfare charities about how to look after the pet, for example, the RSPCA Learning to Be Left Alone <https://www.rspca.org.uk/webContent/staticImages/Pdfs/LearningToBeLeftAlone.pdf> information leaflet gives advice on how to prevent dogs becoming bored when left alone
- Advising the tenant to seek the help of a certified clinical behaviourist – more information can be found at: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/home>
- Advising the tenant that they must rehome the animal in a responsible manner within a given time period (tenants may need support to rehome a pet)
- Taking action for ASB or breach of the Tenancy Agreement, i.e. warning letters or mediation as appropriate.
- Issuing an injunction

- Proceedings to extend an introductory tenancy or demote a secure one, or possession proceedings for a secure tenancy.
- In cases of neglect or cruelty, HHA can report the matter to the RSPCA or the police.

HHA reserves the right to seek legal costs against the tenant if legal proceedings are required.

10. Equality and Diversity

Actions under this policy will ensure that all customers will be treated fairly, with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender re assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (include colour, nationality and ethnic origins, religion and or belief, sex, sexual orientation, social or economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction. Vulnerabilities of our tenants and their individual circumstances will be taken into account.

Appendix 1 – APPLICATION TO KEEP A PET

Section 1 – Have you considered?

Before making a decision to have a pet, please consider whether you are able to meet the animals long term needs. Please complete this form fully as part of your permission request to have a pet.

Things to consider	Yes / No
Can you provide the correct housing for the pet?	Yes / No
Do you have space and time to exercise the pet(s)? If yes please provide details	Yes / No
Do you know how long the pet is likely to live, and can you commit to this responsibility? If yes please provide details	Yes / No
Can you afford feed and supply everything the pet(s) will need for the rest of its life? If yes please provide details of how	Yes / No
Do you accept as the tenant requesting permission for a pet that you are responsible for the upkeep and behaviour of your pet?	Yes / No
Do you have someone who will look after the pet while you are on holiday? Please give details	Yes / No
Do you have other pets that may not get on with a new pet.	Yes / No
Are you registered with a vet and are you able to get a sick animal there?	Yes / No
Are you prepared to vaccinate the pet(s) annually, microchip and neuter them, can you afford to.	Yes / No
Would you require support to look after and take care of a pet? If yes have please detail who will support you will need	Yes / No

Section 2 – Your Details :

Your Name	
Your Address	

Have you or any member of your household :

- had any convictions, or past history of, cruelty, abandonment, neglect or mistreatment of animals or have been banned from keeping animals? Yes / No

If yes please provide details	
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- Previously left a pet in any property you have lived when you moved out? Yes / No

If yes please provide details	
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- Ever has any tenancy enforcement action taken against you in relation to keeping a pet in any property you have lived? Yes / No

If yes please provide details	
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Section 3 – Pet Details :

Please provide full details of the animals you wish to request permission to have as a pet.

Type of pet:	Colour:
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Breed/type:	Gender :
Name of pet:	Microchipped? Yes / No / N/A Microchip number: Vaccinated? Yes / No
Approximate age of pet:	Neutered? Yes / No
Has the animal ever caused injury to a person? Yes / No	If yes please give details
Vet Details:	
Is this animal a support animal – Yes / No Please provide evidence	
Known health conditions of pet:	
<p>If I am taken unwell or I am away from the property for whatever reason or I am unable to look after my pet or in the event that HHA cannot contact me, I request that the following person is contacted to take responsibility:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Relationship to me:</p> <p>Telephone number:</p> <p>I also give consent for the above person to assist in allowing access to my property in my absence or agree that in any event, HHA may gain access in my absence if they have concerns for the welfare of any animal(s) in my property whether they are able to contact the above named person or not.</p> <p>In the event that the person given as a contact above are themselves not contactable and/or refuse to take responsibility, I agree that HHA may contact the Police, RSPCA or a local animal welfare organisation to remove my pet for its own welfare and I would be responsible for any costs incurred.</p> <p>I confirm I am not disqualified from keeping an animal due to a conviction. I have no convictions for any offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991</p>	

Section 4 - Declaration :

I agree to abide by HHA's policy on keeping pets in their properties. I understand this information will be held by HHA on a secure computer system.	
Tenant Signature :	
Date :	

Document Control

Changes made	Sections	Date	By	Date approved by board
Document aligned with Tenants Handbook	Throughout	18/7/2017	LB	22 nd November 2017
Updated using RSPCA Standard Pets Policy guidance for Housing Associations	Throughout	14/7/2020	LB	15 TH July 2020
Updated to Pet Policy to incorporate general needs properties.	Throughout	22/05/2023	KI	7 th June 2023