

Pet Policy

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Change control details:

Record any changes to this document in the table below to provide a documentation audit trail.

Date	Version	Reason for changes
May 2018	V2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covers all forms of housing provided by SHC• Clarity on issues such as maximum number of pets• Clearer guidelines on permission to allow pets into communal lounges• Need for residents to complete a more detailed pet registration form• Need for care homes to follow SHC infection control policy and HPA infection control guidelines in https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214929/Care-home-resource-18-February-2013.pdf.
May 2021	V3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated to include the Assured Tenancy Agreement 2019• Updated to include the Licence, Respite Agreement or Care Home Agreement• links to the relevant rebranded forms

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Pets: Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) has been awarded a [RSPCA Gold & Platinum Footprint Award](#) which promotes good practice in animal welfare by local authorities and housing providers. Pet ownership can bring a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment to residents, enhancing their well-being and the quality of life. Research shows that pets that are well cared for, and responsibly kept, can be a positive attribute to the community.
- 1.3 This **Pet Policy**, along with our [Pet Procedure](#), outlines when, and how, residents can keep pets in SHC homes. We encourage responsible pet ownership as a way of improving animal welfare and minimising nuisance to the community.
- 1.4 However if pets are kept in our homes without permission, or residents do not meet the conditions set out in this policy and procedure, they may not be able to keep their pet and in serious cases may risk losing their home.

2. Which kinds of housing does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
- sheltered housing
 - care homes
 - leaseholders
 - Independent Living Accommodation
 - residential Scheme Managers.
- 2.2 This policy refers to 'residents' which will cover all the people living in these kinds of housing provided by SHC. It applies to any animals who accompany visitors to SHC housing. Residents are responsible for the behaviour of their visitors' pets.

3. The purpose of this policy

- 3.1 This policy, alongside our [Pet Procedure](#) covers:
- how to assess an owner's ability to care for their pet(s)
 - which pets may, and may not, be kept by residents
 - how many pets can be kept in each home
 - owners' responsibilities
 - pets in communal lounges and other communal areas
 - what action SHC will take if pets cause a nuisance
 - what action SHC will take if we are concerned about an animal's welfare.
- 3.2 This policy (as well as information provided to residents) emphasises the need for pet owners living in our homes to be responsible for making sure their pet's behaviour does not cause a nuisance to others, or breach any legislation.

4. Consultation

4.1 SHC has developed this policy in consultation with our staff who work in our sheltered homes and leasehold schemes. Staff emphasised the need to make sure that the arrangements at each scheme, (e.g. allowing pets in communal areas) reflects the needs and wishes of the residents living there.

5. Legislation and good practice

5.1 This policy has drawn on <http://www.scas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/guidelinesforhousingproviders2010.pdf>

5.2 The relevant legislation covering animal welfare and the keeping of pets includes:

- **Animal Welfare Act 2006:** This Act places a duty of care on pet owners to provide for their animal's basic needs. These include the need for a suitable environment; a suitable diet; to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; and to be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease.
- **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 s.3:** This Act makes it an offence for any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. 'Dangerously out of control' is defined as behaviour that could injure someone. This Act makes it an offence to keep a Pit Bull Terrier, a Japanese Tosa, a Dogo Argentino or a Fila Brasileiro without a Certificate of Exemption. These dogs must also be muzzled on a lead and in the charge of someone over 16.
- **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005:** Under this Act, failure to clean up after a dog is an offence subject to a level 3 fine. Many local authority environmental health department officials issue on-the-spot penalty notices to deal with dog fouling.

5.4 More information about the legislation relating to animal welfare and keeping pets can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-welfare-legislation-protecting-pets>.

6. Getting permission to keep a pet

6.1 SHC will only permit residents to keep pets if they comply with the conditions set out in this policy.

6.2 SHC will only allow new, or existing, residents to keep a pet if they obtain our written permission in advance. In signing the [Pet Registration Form](#) the pet owner will be agreeing to abide by SHC's conditions for keeping a pet.

6.3 The existing pets in SHC homes must also be registered with us using this **Pet Registration Form**.

Sheltered housing and Independent Living Agreement

6.4 The SHC [Assured Tenancy Agreement \(2019\)](#) states that:

3.3 D *You must not allow animals or pets to cause damage to the property or communal areas. If damage is caused by a pet you will be recharged for the cost of the work.*

5.3 Pets and other animals

- A. *We have a pet friendly policy and support responsible pet ownership. If you wish to keep a pet you must obtain our written permission and sign an undertaking to abide by our pet policy. We will not usually permit more than 2 cats or dogs per household.*
- B. *If a pet causes a nuisance, annoyance or damage then we may withdraw permission for you to keep the animal and ask you to rehome them.*
- C. *Permission may also be withdrawn where it is obvious that an animal is being neglected or abused.*

Care homes

- 6.5 Please consult the care home resident's Licence, Respite Agreement or Care Home Agreement to see what it states about the keeping of pets.

Leaseholders

- 6.6 Each leasehold agreement will state whether the leaseholder of that property may apply to SHC for permission to keep pet(s). So SHC staff should refer to the individual lease. The **Leaseholder Handbook** stresses the need for leaseholders to ask for written permission to keep a pet (subject to their lease) which '*...can be withdrawn if the pet becomes a nuisance.*'

Assessments

- 6.7 SHC will assess each application to keep a pet(s) individually. SHC will normally give permission for an agreed number of pets (as set out in Section 10). A resident may be allowed to keep a **maximum of two dogs or two cats (or one of each)**. Residents may be allowed a limited number of smaller domestic animals including caged birds, fish or reptiles (see 7.2 for a list of animals which will not be permitted).
- 6.8 If the resident who wishes to keep pet(s) lives in a care home, a [risk assessment](#) will first need to be carried out by the Care Home Manager (CHM). Care homes are expected to follow their **Infection Control Policy** and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) [Guidelines on infection control](#). In certain circumstances, [risk assessments](#) may need to be carried out in other kinds of SHC housing.

7. When permission will not be given

- 7.1 SHC will not give permission to a resident if we believe that:
- The owner is not able to care for their pet(s) adequately
 - A risk assessment shows that keeping this pet could represent a risk to either the resident or fellow residents
 - An 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 in the home exceeds the guidance below (see Section 10)
 - There have previously been problems with the owner managing their pet(s).
- 7.2 Residents **will not** be given permission to keep the following pets in any circumstances:
- Any dangerous wild animal as detailed in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
 - Any specific breed of dog restricted by law and detailed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 such as the Pitbull terrier and Japanese Tosas, **unless** the dog is placed on the Index of Exempted Dogs and as long as the owner of the dog continues to meet the conditions required to remain on the Index of Exempted Dogs
 - Any species prohibited by trade, import or export as detailed by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976
 - All venomous (poisonous) insect and spiders
 - All large, poisonous or constricting snakes or lizards
 - Large breeds of dogs, for example (but not restricted to) Great Danes, Dalmatians and Alsatians.
- 7.3 If SHC refuses permission to keep a pet, we will contact the resident to explain why.
- 7.4 Appeals against decisions by staff to deny permission for pet(s) or to end permission to keep a pet should be made through an appeals process. The resident will be asked to write to the Regional Manager and explain why SHC should give them permission to keep the pet(s).

8. Pets in communal lounges and other communal areas

Pets in communal lounges

- 8.1 The issue of pets in communal lounges has been controversial at many of our 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. This **Pet Policy** and our **Procedure** is aimed at balancing the needs of all our residents.
- 8.2 The residents at each SHC sheltered scheme, or care home, will usually be the people to decide if they wish to allow well

behaved pets in communal lounges. The Scheme Manager (SM) or Care Home Manager (CHM) will arrange for a secret ballot to be held which will enable each resident to record their choice as being either 'yes' or 'no', and the reason why. Please consult our **Pet Procedure** for further information on the process, including how to use the [Pet Voting slip](#).

- 8.3 If a sheltered scheme or care home does agree to allow well behaved pets in communal lounges, then there will be a publicised set of rules that the pets will be expected to abide by. For example, not being allowed on chairs and unable to come into the communal lounge during scheme meetings and activities (except assistance animals and guide dogs).

Pets in communal areas

- 8.4 Pets must be kept on short leads in corridors and entrance areas and are not allowed in any area where food is stored, prepared, cooked or served. Animals may be allowed off the lead in gardens, provided that they do not cause nuisance or damage or restrict other residents' enjoyment of the gardens.
- 8.5 Pet owners must immediately clear up any faeces deposited by their pets in the communal areas, as well as in their homes.

9. Unauthorised pets

- 9.1 If any resident is found to have a pet which has not been registered with SHC: their SM, Leasehold Manager or CHM will provide them with a [Pet Registration Form](#). The resident will be given 14 days to complete, and submit, this form retrospectively.
- 9.2 If residents are keeping pets without permission, consideration should be given to whether SHC would have given permission. If yes, then provided the conditions for keeping a pet are accepted retrospective permission can be given.
- 9.3 Staff should consult the **Pet Procedure** for further information on how to proceed if residents do not arrange for any unauthorised pets to be rehomed.

10. Number of pets

- 10.1 This section of the policy outlines the maximum number of pets any SHC resident may apply for permission to keep in their home.

Dogs and cats

- 10.2 Residents will only be allowed a **maximum of two cats or two dogs, or one of each**, in an SHC home.

Crates, tanks and cages of small animals

- 10.3 SHC will only allow small animals such as rodents, reptiles, birds or fish if they are kept in cages or tanks. We will not give permission for any more than two such containers, with only a

reasonable number of animals in each container. The number of animals in each container must not cause them any suffering. The Scheme Manager should consult the guidance from the [RSPCA about pet welfare](#) if needed.

- 10.4 If these animals are let out of the containers at any time they must be returned to the containers when access is required to the home by SHC. Examples include a contractor visiting to carry out a repair or the SM or CHM undertaking pull cord checks or other health & safety checks.
- 10.5 Residents must ensure that their pet(s) do not defecate within the property and be responsible for thoroughly cleaning any accidents which occur.

11. **Pet infestations**

- 11.1 SHC expects residents to care properly for their pets. If any pet is found to be infested (e.g. with fleas) then the owner will be expected to treat the affected animal(s) immediately. The owner will also be liable to pay for any cleaning work or treatment which is needed in their home and any affected communal areas.
- 11.2 When a pet owning resident vacates an SHC property they will be responsible for ensuring that the home is clean, free from pet smells and any infestation. Residents should also make sure that any fixtures and fittings (e.g. carpets) are also clean and have not been damaged by their pet(s).

12. **Animal nuisance**

- 12.1 Animal nuisance is likely to constitute a breach of SHC tenancy, licence or leasehold agreements. The **Pet Procedure** sets out examples of animal nuisance e.g. pets fouling in individual flats without being cleared up. This Procedure also sets out how SHC will work to resolve issues relating to animal nuisance.

13. **Animal welfare**

- 13.1 If any member of staff witnesses, or other residents report to us, or we have good reason to suspect, cruelty to or neglect of an animal, SHC will report this to the RSPCA. Wherever possible we will support the pet owner to overcome any problems they are experiencing, but SHC will not tolerate cruelty to, or neglect of, animals.

14. **Equality and Diversity**

- 14.1 SHC will treat all its residents equally and we seek to ensure that this policy does not discriminate against them on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief, disability, illness or age.

14.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out to assess the impact of this policy and related procedure on all our tenants.

15. Guide dogs and other assistance animals

15.1 SHC will support and assist residents who require guide dogs and other assistance animals. We will comply with [Equality Act 2010](#) and work with the resident's health advisers to ensure that any appropriate adaptations are made to their home.

15.2 SHC is committed to providing a welcoming and accessible environment at our offices for residents, or other visitors, accompanied by their guide dog or other assistance animal. Any resident with a disability who needs a guide dog or other assistance animal, will be supported by SHC under our **Equality and Diversity Policy** and **Procedure** as well as the Equality Act.