

Pets policy

1. Introduction

Research shows that animals that are well cared for and responsibly kept can be a positive attribute as pet ownership often satisfies the need for companionship, daily routine and exercise. Pet ownership can enhance the owner's mental and physical health and encourage exercise.

Whilst pets can have a positive impact on their environment, irresponsibly owned pets can be the cause of much misery and suffering to the animals themselves, to those who live around them and to those who own and manage the properties in which they live.

In 2020, SHS reviewed with residents, whether to allow cats and dogs in our housing for older people homes. This was subject to a vote with the majority of residents voting against this. SHS is committed to keeping this decision under review on a regular basis.

2. Policy aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To promote responsible pet ownership across our homes in recognition of the benefits this may have for a household's health and wellbeing
- To ensure effective enforcement is in place to manage any issues concerning nuisance or safety arising from pet ownership.

3. Permission to keep a pet

Registered guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf are permitted. Residents living within our general needs homes who have use of their own garden can also keep the following pets in addition to a registered guide dog / hearing dog with our consent:

- One dog
- One cat
- A small number of small mammals and/or caged animals.

SHS will make a decision on a case-by-case basis, according to the circumstances of the household and nature of the property. This includes households who are moving into a SHS home via a transfer, decant or mutual exchange.

Assistance dogs, including guide dogs, are permitted in all circumstances. The owner of the assistance dog is responsible for ensuring that their dog is properly trained.

4. Pets that are not permitted

Under no circumstances are residents permitted to keep the following as pets:

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- Animals listed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (including large mammals, carnivores, larger or venomous reptiles, dangerous spiders and scorpions)
 - Any endangered species
 - Any hybrid between a domestic and a wild animal
 - Bees
 - Dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (i.e. Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, or Fila Brasileiro)
 - Guard dogs
 - Livestock (including poultry, horses, sheep etc).

We retain the right to withdraw permission to keep a pet where the pet has caused nuisance or we believe the owner to be showing signs of animal cruelty or neglect.

5. Responsibilities for pet owners

We expect all pet owners to behave responsibly by upholding the following standards:

- All pets must be kept in proper care, including a proper diet; protection from pain, suffering, injury or disease; the ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and a suitable environment to live with or apart from other animals; and are not left unattended for a significant amount of time
- All pets must be kept under proper control and not cause a nuisance to other households. This includes dogs being kept on a lead in communal areas, not entering play areas and being under control when SHS employees or contractors attend a property
- No fouling in communal areas. Where fouling has occurred, the responsible owners must clean up immediately
- Owners must actively seek to prevent unpleasant odours being emitted from their property due to their pet(s)
- Animals must not damage any SHS property, including communal parts of the building and neighbouring properties. Owners may be recharged for any repairs which are needed as a result of such damage
- All dogs over the age of eight weeks must be microchipped and wear a collar and tag in public
- Animals must not be kept for the purposes of breeding or sale
- Owners must not hoard animals in their property
- Owners must have suitable arrangements in place for looking after their pet during prolonged periods of absence
- Cat or dog flaps must not be installed without our prior consent as these can compromise the fire safety of a property
- Dead pets must be buried or disposed of in a responsible and safe manner.

6. Nuisance from animals / pets

We will work with residents to address any pet-related issues; this may include referrals to specialist animal welfare organisations for information, advice and guidance.

Where a pet owner fails to engage with us to address any concerns, or if the level of nuisance, cruelty or neglect is significant, we will take more serious action. This may include making a referral to the local authority and / or police, demanding the rehoming of the animal, or in some cases seeking possession of the property. Where a decision has been made to rehome an animal we will allow this to take place within a reasonable timeframe.

We consider nuisance to include (but is not limited to) the following activities:

- Fouling in communal areas
- Excessive noise due to the volume and duration, irrespective of the time of day
- Attacks on people or other animals
- Causing a person to believe they might be injured due to an out-of-control pet
- Failing to keep a dog on a lead in communal areas
- Animal hoarding.

Residents are expected to uphold the same standards for any animals, which are visiting their property.

We will investigate all issues relating to nuisance or anti-social behaviour in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

7. Pets in our Housing for Older People homes

Registered guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf are permitted. All other dogs and cats are not permitted in our housing for older people homes. This decision is reviewed approximately every two years with residents to ensure we are upholding the wishes of the majority of residents.

Residents must seek approval from their Community Housing Officer or from the Housing with Care Manager to keep *any* pet. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis according to factors such as:

- the resident's capacity to care for the pet
- the nature of arrangements for taking care of the pet in the event of a change of circumstance, such as hospital stay, move to other accommodation or a decline in health or wellbeing
- any potential impact the animal may have on other residents or the environment within the scheme.

Pet-related issues will be monitored, enforcement will be used to handle persistent or serious incidents. We will investigate all issues relating to nuisance or anti-social behaviour in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

8. Monitoring and continuous improvement

This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure that it continues to be relevant and to take account of good practice developments.