

# Pet & Animal Procedure

<b>Procedure ref:</b>	Tenancy Management
<b>Procedure author/holder</b>	Regional Manager Neighbourhoods (North)
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## 1 Introduction

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We recognise that pet ownership is a rewarding experience, bringing companionship, good health, and social benefits to a growing number of people. Well-behaved looked after pets are welcomed within most communities. To encourage these positive benefits, we will allow responsible pet ownership where it is reasonable to do so.

This procedure applies across all our tenures with the aim of providing clear, firm, and reasonable guidelines that allow a flexible approach to managing pet ownership in our customers' homes. This procedure will seek to fulfil the following objectives:

- Promote responsible pet ownership
- Safeguard animal welfare
- Ensure fair and equal treatment
- Reflect the views of our customers
- Achieve good practice standards
- Take appropriate action

### **Animal welfare**

A key concern of this procedure is the welfare of any animal housed in a LiveWest customer's home. Our pet champions will help us make sure we are promoting positive pet ownership. Most pet owners will provide a loving home for their pets and will not need to be reminded of their duty of care towards their animals and face prosecution if they fail to observe it.

We will make information available for pet-owning customers about how the Animal Welfare Act 2006 affects them, and we will work with other agencies to support those who ignore their responsibilities

### **Costs**

With the pressure on rising costs customers are advised to make sure they are aware of the increased cost of keeping a pet and factor in costs such as food, insurance, veterinary costs, and boarding costs. There are several websites providing helpful advice such as

<https://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/looking-after-your-pet/puppies-dogs/the-cost-of-owning-a-dog>

## **Type of pet**

We recommend that customers research the type of pet that will suit their budget and lifestyle; this is particularly important when considering dog ownership as some breeds of dogs need a high-level exercise and may not be suitable to keep in homes without a garden; this could result in difficulties for the customer and impact on neighbours. There are several websites that provide helpful advice such as <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/looking-after-your-pet/puppies-dogs/how-much-exercise-does-your-dog-need>

## **2 Key roles and responsibilities**

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### **Customers are responsible for:**

- Making sure they register their pets and agree to the terms of our consent.
- Neighbourhood Coordinators (NC) and Customer Service Advisors (CSA) are responsible for:
  - Receiving and processing requests for consent to keep a pet
  - Referring discretionary decisions to Housing Officers
- Housing Officers (HO) are responsible for:
  - Discussing with the customer and making decisions where consent is required and there is discretion such as keeping a dog or a cat in a flat
  - Providing NC/CSA with outcome from decisions and request the appropriate action
- Letting's advisors are responsible for:
  - Pet rules in CBL (Choice Based Lettings) adverts
  - Requests at lettings stage
  - Referring to HO for discretionary decisions

Pets Champions are a group of colleagues that have an interest/ knowledge in animal welfare. They are available to help where consent is required and in cases of concern.

## **3 Definitions**

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### **Normal Domestic Pets**

For the purpose of this procedure, we consider the following to be domestic pets that require our consent:

- Dog
- Cat
- Rabbits

### **Unusual pets**

These pets require our consent:

- Outdoor aviary birds or fowl
- Reptiles
- Amphibians.

### **Small Domestic pets**

These pets do not need consent or to be registered with us:

- Fish
- Small-caged animals
- Caged birds
- Insects

**Assistance dogs** such as guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs for the deaf or dogs for the disabled.

**Animal hoarding** involves keeping a higher than usual number of animals as pets without having the ability to properly house or care for them. Our consent is based on a reasonable number of pets (Including small pets), and we retain the right to restrict numbers where concerns are raised. See our separate protocol on hoarding.

### **Non permitted animals**

We will not permit certain types of animals these are:

- Farm animals for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, donkeys
- Animals which should be licensed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 - a list of animals requiring a license under the Act can be obtained at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/2465/schedule/made>
- Dogs of a type specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Up-to-date information can be obtained from the DEFRA website at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

## **4 Procedures**

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### **Pet requests**

Customers should register with us when they wish to keep a pet by completing our Pet Registration form which will enable them to identify if consent is needed. Customers can self-register their pets through our online customer portal or by contacting our Customer Service Team. Although we ask that customers register their intentions to keep a pet prior to obtaining the pet the registration can be completed retrospectively in cases where consent would be granted.

When a pet is registered, we can provide documentation confirming our consent.

Whether the customer requires consent to keep a pet in their home, initially depends on their tenure with us and what is written in the occupancy agreement, for example:

- If the property has its own private entrance, consent is not usually required to keep normal domestic pets – this means, there is an assumed consent
- If the property is within a scheme with communal gardens/entrance, our consent must be sought in writing before keeping a pet
- If the property is a supported housing short term let, pets are usually not allowed, and advice should be obtained locally from the local team.

### **Assumed consent**

Customers who have their own private entrance and are not part of a scheme such as sheltered housing do not usually need consent from us to keep a reasonable number of normal domestic pets, this is usually no more than three dogs, cats or mixed of the two. However, we do request that customers register their pet with us by completing our online Pet Registration form. This should be saved on the customer's tenancy file.

If the customer wants to keep outdoor aviary birds, hens, or a pigeon loft, the HO should visit the customer and consent will depend on the property location, size of garden and likelihood of nuisance where consent is granted numbers will be restricted to no more than 6 birds

### **Required consent**

Customers do not require our consent to keep a reasonable number of small-caged animals/birds and fish and do not need to register these pets. Supported Housing customers should seek advice from their Housing Officer before acquiring any pet.

Customers who live in properties with communal gardens/ entrances should ask for our consent before keeping a pet at their home. You should not unreasonably withhold it and in reaching a decision you should check:

- Are there any restrictions contained within Deeds of covenant, Lease, License or Tenancy Agreement?
- Are there any existing restrictions that apply to a whole block with mixed tenures, such as leasehold and general rented?
- Are there any existing restrictions agreed with current residents?
- Are there any existing issues with pets at the property or neighbourhood?

If yes to any of the above, you should advise the customer that we do not provide the reasons why.

If no to all the above, then consider the following:

- The type of pet and type of property. The table below summarises which type of pet we might permit in which property and whether formal consent is required
- The number of existing pets at the property
- Tenancy conduct relating to nuisance, ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour), pets or animal welfare
- The number of people occupying the property
- Whether there are existing issues with pets at the property or neighbourhood

If there are no concerns or issues with any of the above, make your decision and advise the customer accordingly. Save the Pet Registration form on the customer's tenancy file.

If you are not consenting to the request, you should advise the customer along with the reasons and the right to a review of this decision. If the customer requests an independent review of the decision, it must be carried out by one of our Pet Champions.

## Discretionary

If the pet is in a 'discretionary' box in the table, advise the customer that the decision needs to be passed to a HO. You should send the HO the completed Pet Registration form and ask them to discuss and visit the customer, if necessary, to decide.

The HO should consider whether the needs of the pet can be met especially where the customer is seeking consent for cats or dogs, if the property does not have a private garden or private access. You should ask the customer to demonstrate how they will exercise their pet and where it will carry out its lavatory functions. We may consider some properties unsuitable for a certain size or type of animal.

The HO can seek advice from one of our Pet Champions when unsure. Our Pet Champions have an interest and knowledge of animal welfare and will support you to find the best decision.

You should advise the customer of the decision and if applicable save the Pet Registration form to the tenancy file.

## Pets, property, and consent

Small pets- consent/registration not required

- Domestic Bird
- Fish
- Small rodents
- Insects (spiders)

	Property in Supported housing scheme	Property with communal gardens/entrance	Property with own entrance from street
<b>Cat</b>	Not permitted	Discretionary	Permitted
<b>Dog</b>	Not permitted	Discretionary	Permitted
<b>Rabbit</b>	Not permitted	Discretionary	Permitted
<b>Reptiles</b>	Not permitted	Discretionary	Discretionary
<b>Pigeon loft/coup</b>	Not permitted	Not permitted	Discretionary
<b>Aviary</b>	Not permitted	Not permitted	Discretionary
<b>Hens</b>	Not permitted	Not permitted	Discretionary

Note: Pigeon loft/ coup and aviary: consent will be dependent on property location and type, size of garden and likelihood of nuisance where consent is granted numbers will be limited to no more than 6 birds

Note: We will consent to the keeping of rabbits or hens unless they are prejudicial to health or a nuisance. This may be inferred where there is no private garden.

Note: We consent to small fish tanks and vivarium in flats however they must not be large enough to cause any structural damage.

Requests for additional pets will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Housing Officer taking into consideration the type and number of additional pets, size of property, welfare, health, hygiene, and safety of other pets within the household

### **Terms of tenancy when consent is granted**

- Only normal domestic pets are permitted, provided they are micro-chipped and vaccinated, as required by law.
- We may add conditions to our consent.
- We may withhold or withdraw consent for any pet if it could or, cause a nuisance, a health hazard or other danger to people in the neighbourhood.
- We may withhold or withdraw consent if we believe the property is unsuitable for the number or species of animals the customers are keeping. If the customer fails to take steps to remove any animals after we have asked them to do so, we may take legal steps to force removal of them or end the tenancy.
- Animals are not allowed to be kept in or on any shared entrances, staircases, passageways, or balconies.
- The home must not be used to breed any animals for sale.
- Customers are responsible for ensuring that their pet does not cause a nuisance or annoyance in the property or near the home.
- Dogs must be kept on leads in communal areas.
- We may ask that pets are kept in another room when an employee or contractor visits the customer's home.
- Customers must act responsibly in making sure that they clear up after their pet.
- Where consent has been given to keep a cat, customers will also need to get consent to install cat flaps to external doors
- Customers should make sure that faeces are promptly cleared up from garden areas and that there is no environmental nuisance caused to others.
- We will not give consent to keep a pet if there has been previous action taken for neglect or we are concerned regarding the management of the tenancy.
- Customers must make sure that their pet is cared for in their absence and their daily care needs are met.
- Where we incur a cost for cleaning up or repairing damage due to their pet's/s behaviour, we will recharge this to the pet owner; we recommend pet owners have adequate insurance to cover any damage caused.

### **Pets in Schemes (non-supported)**

We may ask for a referee who is willing to take responsibility for the pet should the customer's circumstances change or there is an issue and we have asked them to rehome the pet.

This may be particularly useful in older persons housing as the customer may spend time away from their home or be taken into hospital unexpectedly.

We may place limits on the number of pets within a scheme if there are local concerns regarding the number of pets.

### **Exceptional Circumstances - Assistance dogs and Therapy Pets**

Assistance dogs are exempt from the terms of this procedure as they are considered as working dogs under legislation. Where customers or applicants for housing have a diagnosed mental health condition and there is supporting evidence from a specialist or mental health professional, we will consider recommendations for a customer/ applicant to have or keep an existing pet. This may include a cat or dog in a property with shared access and no private garden.

We do however retain the right to refuse or withdraw an offer of accommodation where we consider that allowing an animal into a property would have an adverse effect on our Housing Management function.

### **Withdrawal of consent**

Our consent to keep a pet will be withdrawn should we receive reports of roaming and unattended animals, excessive animal noise, neglect, or fouling.

On the death of a permitted pet, if the customer wishes to have a new pet, they should register the new pet with us and request consent where applicable.

We may report any customer believed to be neglecting or abusing any pet in their care to the Police or RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and we may provide these organisations with any evidence that we hold.

We will seek support from Local Authorities and police on a case-by-case basis, where pets are causing a nuisance or deemed dangerous.

We will investigate all reports made about pets in line with our Neighbourhood Management policies. If the report relates to nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we will respond in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Where a report is made about the management or behaviour of a pet, we will investigate and decide the most appropriate way forward. We may ask the customer to re-home the pet.

Where a customer is in breach of their tenancy due to the actions/behaviours of their pet, we will initially attempt to resolve matters through negotiation. If this is not successful, we may withdraw our consent and we may ask the customer to re-home their pet within a reasonable timeframe.

### **Partnerships**

In some cases, as a landlord, we will not always be the organisation with the responsibility or powers to deal with allegation(s) that are made. In these circumstances we will adopt a partnership approach and work proactively with other professional organisations, such as the Police or Local Authority and share information in line with our Privacy Policy. We may refer complainants or witnesses to other organisations as appropriate, whilst always being clear about our responsibilities and capabilities.

Where we have an interest, but another organisation is leading, we may decide not to act until the outcome of their investigation is known.

## 5 Performance monitoring

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This procedure will be reviewed every three years and updated to reflect any legislative or regulatory changes.

## 6 Record keeping

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Pet registration forms should be saved to the relevant tenancy file in line with our data retention policy.

## 7 Linked/associated policies and other references

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### Policies

- Tenancy management
- Neighbourhood management
- Anti-social behaviour & Hate Crime
- Data protection

### Policies:

- Tenancy Management
- Neighbourhood Management
- Anti Social Behaviour & Hate Crime
- Data Protection

### Other

- Pet registration form
- Advice to customers on Animal Welfare Act (TBC)

## 8 Version Control

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Version No	Date of update	By Whom?	Comments
2	2 August 2022	Regional Manager Neighbourhoods	Reviewed version of Pets Procedure updated in line with customer portal and best practice learning from complaints.