

**LOCAL HOUSING COMPANIES  
PET POLICY**

<b>Reference:</b>	Version 1	<b>Author:</b>	Sue Needham
<b>Scope:</b>	Loddon Homes Berry Brook Homes	<b>Approved by:</b>	Holly Messenger
<b>Legislation:</b>	Housing Act 1985 Housing Act 1988 Environmental Protection Act 1990 Animal Welfare Act 2006 Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 and 1991 Dogs Act 1871 Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976	<b>Date of approval:</b>	November 2019
<b>Regulatory/ Governance:</b>	The regulator for social housing Tenancy standard Control of Dogs Order 1992 The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015.	<b>Date of next review:</b>	November 2022
<b>Related Policies:</b>	Anti-social behaviour, hate crime and harassment policy Tenancy policy		

## 1. Policy Statement

This policy applies to Loddon Homes and Berry Brook Homes which collectively will be referred to as the Local Housing Companies (the LHC).

The LHC delegates responsibility for the delivery of this policy to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Tenancy Services.

The LHC recognises that keeping pets can offer significant benefits to their owners. However, irresponsible ownership can cause nuisance, affect the quality of life for other residents in an area and affect the welfare of the pet. This will not therefore be tolerated by the LHC. Residents must apply for permission to keep any pet and the LHC will not unreasonably withhold consent. Residents wishing to own a pet must apply to the LHC for permission as part of the conditions of their tenancy or lease.

However, certain properties may prohibit the keeping of pets in the relevant tenancy agreement or lease e.g. flats with no access to a private garden or in the town centre.

The LHC will not grant permission for a resident to keep a pet where there are rent arrears, even if all other criteria have been met.

Although WBC has been delegated responsibility, the LHC will be consulted and sign off the following proposed actions in delivering this policy:

- Enforcement action under the LHC's Anti-social behaviour, hate crime and harassment policy.

In setting out the LHC's approach to responsible pet ownership, reference has been to the RSPCA's Housing: A guide to good practice 2017.

The aims and objectives of this policy are to provide:

- A foundation for a consistent and enforceable approach to pet ownership.
- A balance that ensures pet ownership does not infringe on the rights of others to the peaceful enjoyment of their homes.
- Residents with clear guidance on pet ownership; how to apply for permission and why permission may be revoked.
- Residents with information on what type of animals are acceptable as pets and in what type of property.
- Residents with information relating to acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour in managing pets.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all residents of the LHC irrespective of tenure and therefore includes shared owners and key workers.

## **3. Definitions**

A pet is any domesticated or tamed animal that is kept as a companion and cared for responsibly and includes but is not limited to dogs, cats, rodents, birds, and reptiles. It does not include livestock such as chickens and ponies.

## **4. Roles & responsibilities**

WBC Tenancy Services is responsible for implementing this policy.

The Housing Managers are responsible for providing guidance and support to the Housing Officers in delivering this policy.

The Senior Specialist Housing Manager has overall responsibility to ensure that this policy is implemented in consultation with the Head of Development and Operations at LHC where necessary.

## **5. Legislation**

5.1 The LHC will take into consideration the following when implementing this policy:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 and 1991
- Dogs Act 1871
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

## 6. Application and permission

6.1 Permission will only be considered where a pet application form has been completed for each pet. The LHC will consider requests to keep pets as fairly as possible bearing in mind any issues or restrictions which may exist on any estate or block. Permission may be granted based on the following circumstances:

6.1.1 Small animals: Residents may be given permission to keep small animals that are permanently housed in cages, tanks or bowls inside the home and do not need to be given access to outside the property e.g. birds, fish, mice, hamsters.

If the residents has access to their own private garden then permission may be granted for keeping small pets in hutches such as rabbits and guinea pigs.

6.1.2 Cats: Permission to keep a cat will only be considered if the resident has ground floor accommodation and access to their own private garden. A cat required for support purposes may be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is no exclusive access to a garden.

6.1.3 Exotic pets: Permission to keep such pets as snakes, lizards and spiders will be refused if the pet:

- requires a licence and the resident does not hold one
- poses a safety risk to the household and other residents should it escape.

6.1.4 Dogs: Permission to keep a dog will only be considered if the resident has their own entrance door to their property and the exclusive use of a garden.

The only exception is where the resident requires the use of a service or support dog.

Permission will **not** be given in any circumstances to keep any dog listed as dangerous as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. This includes the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

### 6.2 Property type

In addition to the conditions detailed above, the LHC will not grant permission when a resident does not have adequate space in their home and/or garden for the type of pet they are applying to keep.

### 6.3 Number of pets

Permission will not be granted where an additional pet will affect any existing pet's (s') welfare. Health, safety and hygiene will all be considered. Too many pets of any type and combination in a property has the potential to cause nuisance to neighbours and/or damage to the property.

## 6.4 New tenants

Applicants for a LHC property who already have a pet may be granted permission to keep this subject to the conditions above, particularly having regard to the type of property being offered. However they may not be given permission to keep a pet in the future.

## 7. Identification

It is the law that all dogs must be permanently identified by microchip and these details must be registered. This identification number will be required as part of the pet application. Dogs must also wear a collar and tag.

## 8. Welfare

8.1 Where permission is granted, residents are wholly responsible for the health and welfare of their pets. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, this is called a duty of care. This requires proper day-to-day management and care of the pet. If residents have any questions about the care of their pets they should contact their vet or a suitable accredited animal welfare organisation.

8.2 Routine healthcare must include regular control of parasites (fleas and worms), vaccinations and neutering where appropriate. Owners of cats must ensure they are spayed or neutered. When applying to keep a pet, residents may be asked to provide the name of their vet and evidence from them that their pet is regularly or appropriately treated.

8.3 No pet should be left in the property when the resident is away unless clear arrangements have been made to provide adequate care. In general, this will require the pet to be boarded elsewhere but close supervision by a neighbour may be adequate for some animals.

## 9. Prohibited activity and Anti-social behaviour

9.1 Under no circumstances will permission be given to breed or offer any animal for sale from a LHC property.

9.2 Dogs must not be allowed to defecate in internal or external communal areas, including grassed areas of an estate.

9.3 Dogs must always be kept on a lead when in public or communal areas. They must never be let out on their own.

9.4 If cats are allowed free access outside, then steps must be taken to ensure they do not cause nuisance to neighbours.

9.5 Residents have a duty to look after their pets responsibly and must not allow them to cause a nuisance to their neighbours, any member of their own household or any other member of the public. Residents will also be held responsible for the behaviour of any pets bought into their homes or neighbourhood by their visitors.

9.6 If a pet is found to be causing a nuisance or annoyance, the LHC will manage the incident in line with its Antisocial Behaviour Hate Crime and Harassment Policy and Procedure.

9.6.1 The following are examples of incidents that will be recorded and managed as anti-social behaviour:

- Excessive barking or any other loud noise causing a disturbance.
- Dogs or any other animals being used to intimidate people.
- Pets causing damage to the LHC's property beyond reasonable wear and tear.
- Any other behaviour considered to be causing a nuisance or annoyance.

9.6.2 The LHC will consider taking the following action against residents who allow their pets to cause a nuisance by:

- Issuing the resident with a verbal and written warning.
- Requesting that the resident to have the pet re-housed within 14 days of notification.
- Reporting an incident to the Police.
- Taking legal action to obtain an injunction order.
- Applying for a demotion order.
- As a last resort taking legal action to obtain a possession order.

## **10. Equality & Diversity**

10.1 The LHC recognises the needs of a diverse population and always acts within the scope of its own Equality and Diversity Policy, the Human Rights Act 1998, and Equalities Act 2010. The LHC works closely with its partners to ensure it has a clear understanding of its resident community with clear regularly updated service user profiles. The LHC will record, analyse and monitor information on ethnicity, vulnerability and disability.

## **11. Confidentiality**

11.1 Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential. This includes:

- anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a resident, client, applicant, staff or board member
- sensitive organisational information.

11.2 The LHC's employees will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information where there is a legal basis for processing the information.

## **12. Review**

11.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three yearly basis or more frequently in response to changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, good practice or changes in other relevant the LHC policies.

## **13. Performance**

13.1 Performance in relation to the delivery of the services and activities set out in this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through our established reporting mechanisms to associated boards.

## 14. Appendices

None

APPROVED