

Policy & Guidance On Keeping Pets In Your South Lakes Housing Home



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Doc owner	Fioan Harrison Tenancy Manager	Approved by	
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Introduction

South Lakes Housing policy on pet ownership says: 'South Lakes Housing recognises the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring. However, controls must be in place to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours'.

This leaflet provides useful information whether you are a new resident, an established resident thinking about getting a pet or you have had a pet for some time. It will also be helpful for residents who are having problems with a neighbour's pet.

1. Can I keep a pet in my South Lakes Housing home?

You are normally allowed to keep pets in your South Lakes Housing home, as long as they are well cared for and responsibly kept. However, there are exceptions, and your home must be suitable for their needs.

2. Do I need permission to keep a pet?

You do not need permission to keep a pet in your home under most circumstances. However, you will need to request permission if you live in a flat or certain type of sheltered housing.

3. What types of South Lakes Housing home are unsuitable for pets?

Some properties are not suitable for keeping certain types of animals. If you wish to keep a cat or dog in a flat or property with a communal entrance, you will be asked to register your pet

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voluntarily or if a complaint has been received about its behaviour. You should keep rabbits and guinea pigs in gardens, so a property without a private garden is not suitable. Communal gardens are not suitable for keeping pets.

Some sheltered housing schemes are not allowed pets (list attached). If you live in sheltered housing where you can have pets, you will be asked to register it with the Independent Living team.

4. What types of animals are allowed?

If your home is suitable, you may keep most domestic animals including cats, dogs, rabbits, rodents, fish, caged birds such as budgies and parrots, and reptiles such as lizards. Where appropriate you should keep pets securely where they cannot escape, and make sure all animals have enough room for exercise. Guide dogs and other support dogs will always be allowed.

5. What types of animals are not allowed?

You must not keep any animal which is illegal. There are four breeds of dangerous dogs which are illegal – pit bull terriers, Japanese tosas, the Dogo Argentinos and the Fila Brasileiros. Cross breeds of these dogs are also illegal. If you keep any of these dogs, you could be prosecuted. Dogs of other breeds, such as rotweillers, are dangerous dogs if they have ever attacked a person in public. Keeping these is also illegal. You must not keep any wild animals, such as crocodiles, big cats, wolves etc. You must not keep any other animal which may be dangerous, such as a venomous snake or a venomous spider.

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Other animals which you must not keep in your home include livestock and horses. To keep other animals, such as poultry/pigeons, you should seek the advice of your Tenancy Management Officer.

6. How many pets can I keep?

If you would like to keep more than one cat or dog, you should contact South Lakes Housing to gain permission. A decision will be made on a case by case basis. The type and size of your current accommodation will be taken into consideration. Previous complaints will also be considered when making the decision.

You may keep more small animals such as rabbits, gerbils, mice, guinea pigs, fish, birds and reptiles as long as they are kept in tanks / cages which are big enough for them. All animals should have enough room for exercise.

7. Can I breed animals in my South Lakes Housing home?

South Lakes Housing homes are unsuitable for commercial breeding. All pets should be neutered to help reduce the number of unwanted animals. Small animals such as guinea pigs and gerbils can breed very quickly, so it is important to have them neutered early, or only keep pairs of the same sex.

8. Visitors to your property

Staff working for South Lakes Housing should be shown a reasonable duty of care when visiting your property and you are responsible for ensuring your pets do not cause a nuisance. Staff may request that pets are kept in a separate room whilst a visit is

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being carried out. In addition, any visitors with pets (especially in sheltered housing) will be expected to keep them under control at all times.

9. What if I break any of these rules?

The tenancy agreement states in regard to animals the tenant's obligations are:

To obtain the written consent of the Association, before keeping a dog, cat or any other animal in a flat, maisonette, or in sheltered housing. Such consent will not be unreasonably withheld.

To keep under control any animals being kept at the Premises and take all reasonable steps to prevent such pets causing nuisance, annoyance or disturbance.

To ensure that your pets do not foul or cause damage to the Premises, your neighbour's property, anything belonging to the Association or anything the Association is responsible for, such as communal areas.

If you break any of the rules in this policy, or if you do not keep your animals in a responsible manner, we will be able to take action against you for breaching your tenancy agreement. This could include eviction from your home.

10. Your Responsibilities

Most pet owners are responsible, and care for their animals properly. It is important that anybody considering keeping a pet should realise what their responsibilities will be. When you get permission to keep a pet, you are agreeing to keep them in a responsible manner.

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11. Responsible Pet Ownership

Before deciding to keep a pet you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the pet fit your lifestyle and family circumstances? - Are you out a lot of the time, do you have young children in the household?
- Is your accommodation suitable? - Do you have easy access to garden areas, do you live near a busy road, is a flat suitable for the type of pet you are proposing to keep?
- How much is it going to cost? - Some items you can budget for, for example the initial cost of the pet, equipment and ongoing costs such as food and bedding. What about unexpected costs such as vet bills?
- Are you going to choose to insure and/or microchip your pet? - Both are advisable but both have cost implications.
- What will happen to the pet if you are away from home, for example, on holiday?
- Health issues - is there a local vet who can care for your animal? - This is particularly important if you have a more unusual or exotic pet. Are regular vaccinations required?
- Population control- if you are planning to keep a dog or cat are you planning to have it neutered? This is encouraged by animal charities to reduce the number of unwanted pets. Small rodents such as hamsters can have 14 - 20 babies in a litter so you can have a population explosion on your hands if you don't keep males and females apart!
- Is your choice of pet likely to cause a nuisance to your neighbours? Most of us want to live harmoniously with our neighbours - is it worth having a chat with them before you make the final decision?
- If you live in a flat, are you prepared to ensure the communal area is kept clean and free from any pet related mess?

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- Will you be able to keep your property clean and ventilated if you have pets?
- You should be aware that any damage caused by your pets to our property could result in you being recharged for any repair work.
- Often it is not the type of pet that will cause a nuisance to neighbours but the way you plan to care for it and control it. How committed are you? Dogs cannot be allowed to roam freely on communal areas, they must be walked on a lead. Dogs cannot be left barking in the house or garden all day causing a noise nuisance problem. You need to think through these issues before taking on an animal.

12. If you decide to keep a pet

Some things you will need to do are:

- Make sure that animals are well fed and always have access to clean drinking water
- Keep them safe and cared for at an appropriate temperature
- Take pets to the vet whenever they are ill, or need any other attention, eg for fleas
- Give them enough exercise, and keep dogs on leads when walking them in public
- Make proper arrangements for their care if you go away overnight, or for longer
- Keep animals in a places suitable for their needs, eg keep guinea pigs outdoors
- Make sure all animals in tanks or cages have enough room and are not overcrowded
- Clean up any mess that dogs make in public places or in your property
- Keep animals under control at all times
- Take into account the animal's individual needs. For instance, very timid animals may need to be kept away from other animals or from children.

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Some things you must not do are:

- Allow pets to stray, roam, or foul
- Allow them to annoy or frighten anybody else
- Allow animals to cause nuisance to anybody else, eg by making too much noise
- Tether or chain animals
- Allow them to damage anybody's property, including your own home
- Neglect or mistreat the animal in any way. Cruelty to animals is a criminal offence, and you can be prosecuted if you are cruel to your pet.

13. What can I do if I can't afford vets' bills?

There are a number of organisations which can help you with the cost of pet care.

The RSPCA can give a discount on the cost of neutering for people who are on benefits. You can phone them on 01539 736036 for the Westmorland Branch in Kendal and they will explain what you need to do. Cats Protection (03000 12 12 12) can help with the cost of neutering cats.

The PDSA will provide pet care for people on benefits or on low incomes, but they can't provide neutering or preventative measures (such as vaccinations or worming). To find out if you are eligible for help, phone them on 0800 7312502.

14. What if I can't look after my pet any more?

You must find another home for your pet if it becomes too difficult for you to look after it properly. If you can't find a friend or neighbour who would like to keep it, you can contact the RSPCA. There are also a number of other organisations who will take animals for re-homing.

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The RSPCA will not take any dog which has ever bitten or attacked a person.

15. What should I do if my dog attacks a person?

If a dog attacks a person in public, it is legally classed as a Dangerous Dog, and it is illegal to keep it. You will need have the dog put down.

If a dog attacks a person in private, you must not keep it in your home. You must have the dog put down. Animals which may be dangerous are not allowed in South Lakes Housing homes and we can take action against you if continue to keep it. This could include eviction from your home.

16. Problem with other people's animals

What constitutes nuisance behaviour by a pet?

This is not an exhaustive list, but here are some examples of behaviour that South Lakes Housing would treat as a nuisance:

- Roaming and unattended animals
- Pets fouling in communal areas and in owners' gardens and this not being cleared up immediately
- Pets fouling in neighbours gardens
- Excessive noise
- Over-population of animals within a household
- Unpleasant odours from pets
- Aggressive animals

Remember you are responsible for your pet and their behaviour at all times. If your pet is causing a problem to a neighbour the most helpful thing you can do is to try and see things from their point of view. How would you feel if you lived next door to a dog which barks incessantly,

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or your children come in from playing in the communal area with dog excrement on their shoes? If a neighbour approaches you with a problem then try to sort it out amicably.

17. What to do if you are having problems with a neighbour's pet

If you feel you can, then approach the owner and see if you can sort out the matter informally. Here are some tips:

- Take early action - don't wait until the situation is unbearable and your patience has been exhausted before approaching the owner
- Try not to jump to conclusions- listen to the other person's response and don't make unfounded allegations
- Try to remain calm - do not shout or make abusive remarks and do not retaliate
- If you feel at risk or threatened then walk away

If you are not confident about approaching the owner then speak to your Housing Officer.

18. What action SLH can take concerning nuisance pets

In the vast majority of cases we will try to resolve the issue informally after hearing both sides of the story. If this does not work then there are a number of more formal approaches we can take. We may: -

- Arrange for a professional mediator to become involved
- If the issue affects a number of residents we may be able to work with you to set up an 'Estate Agreement'. This is basically a set of rules developed by residents which describes what is acceptable behaviour for their area. Responsible pet ownership could form part of this Agreement

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- Withdraw permission for the animal
- Restrict the number of animals kept at a property if this is likely to resolve the problem
- Make responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract - this is a formal contract signed by the person causing the problem, South Lakes Housing and in some cases a third party such as the police
- Involve statutory organisations such as the Police or the Local Authority environmental health department
- Involve voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA
- Serve an injunction to oblige the owner to start or stop undertaking certain actions or to remove the animal
- Terminate the tenancy where tenancy conditions are breached

19. What should I do if I think my neighbour is neglecting or being cruel to their pets?

If you suspect that a neighbour is guilty of cruelty or neglect towards an animal then you should report this to the RSPCA. You should telephone the 24 hour National Cruelty and Advice Line on 0870 5555 999. The RSPCA will ask you a series of questions, they promise to keep your details confidential.

SHELTERED HOUSING

PETS ALLOWED AT:

Binford Croft
 Castle Walk
 Cross Lane
 Ellerside/Fell Close
 Gallowbarrow
 Gladstone House
 Soutergate/Mill Dam

PETS NOT ALLOWED AT:

Birthwaite
 Edgecombe Court
 West Ing
 Yewbarrow Lodge

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Tyson Square/Neville Street

If you are thinking of keeping a pet in Sheltered Housing please feel free to discuss this with your Scheme Manager or your Housing Officer.

Useful contacts

RSPCA
National Cruelty and Advice Line 24 hr 0800 1234 999
RSPCA Headquarters, Wilberforce Way
Southwater, Horsham, RH13 9RS
www.rspca.org.uk

Cats Protection
Helpline 03000 121212
www.cats.org.uk

Dogs Trust
Enquiries 020 78370006
www.dogstrust.org.uk

PDSA
Enquiries 0800 9172502 Eligibility for help with vets' bills 0800 731 2502 www.pdsa.org.uk

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Further information

If you require further information please contact a housing officer at our main office listed below.

Registered office address:

Bridge Mills Business Centre
 Stramongate
 KENDAL
 Cumbria
 LA9 7BD
 Tel: 0300 303 8540
 Email: customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk

Central Tel: 0300 303 8540



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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