

Policy



Pets Policy and Procedure

June 2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nottingham City Council Housing Services (NCCHS) accepts that keeping pets can offer significant benefits to their owners and encourages responsible pet ownership. Irresponsible ownership can cause nuisance to other tenants and the wider community, so it is necessary to have some rules to ensure that neighbours of pet owners are not adversely affected.
- 1.2 This policy is intended to outline the conditions under which tenants may keep animals in accommodation managed by us. It builds on clause(s) of the NCC Tenancy Agreement, which at the time of the policy are Clauses 3.15 and 3.16. This policy is taken to apply to any amendment or variation of those clauses.
- 1.3 This policy is not exhaustive, and the relevant staff member or manager may use discretion in certain cases in determining whether or not to give permission for a tenant to have a pet and whether or not to ask for a pet to be re-homed as a result of nuisance or other issues.

2. Legislation

- 2.1 This has been produced in line with the legislation outlined in Appendix 3 of this policy.

3. Policy

- 3.1 NCCHS defines a pet as any domesticated or tamed animal that is kept as a companion and cared for responsibly.
- 3.2 If you want to keep a pet in an NCCHS property you must:
- Ensure that it is a pet as defined in Appendix 1 of this policy; and
 - Seek written permission from NCCHS

NCCHS will deal with requests to keep pets as fairly as possible and will take into consideration any problems or restrictions that may exist on an estate or in a block, balancing those with the needs and circumstances of the tenant.

- 3.3 The decision to allow a tenant to keep a pet will be based on:
1. the type of pet; and
 2. property type; and
 3. individual circumstances of the tenant(s); and
 4. tenancy conduct of the tenant to date, particularly any issues of antisocial behaviour

Where possible, the relevant staff member will arrange to visit the property before a decision is made to assess suitability. Tenants must allow access in line with their tenancy terms when requested, in order for this assessment to be made. A failure to allow access or an inspection, may mean that permission requests are refused.

- 3.4 Assistance dogs will always be permitted. Assistance dogs include guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people, or dogs for disabled people. Emotional Support Animals will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.5 We retain the right to refuse, withdraw or offer a property in circumstances where we deem that allowing an animal into a property would have an adverse effect on the housing management function of the landlord.
- 3.6 The type of pets which may be kept (visitors' pets are not included) in our properties is listed in appendix 1. In exceptional circumstances, these guidelines may be amended by the relevant manager from time-to-time.
- 3.7 Tenants must make good any damage to our property caused by a pet(s).
- 3.8 In all instances where a pet or pets constitute a nuisance, annoyance, damage to property (including communal areas) or pose a risk to tenants, members of the public or NCC staff, we may request the tenant to remove the pet. We will enforce this request through legal action if necessary, including but not limited to Injunction proceedings. This applies whether a tenant has previously been given permission to keep a pet or not. This also applies where the welfare of the pet(s) is considered to be at risk.
- 3.9 The tenant is responsible for the health, care, maintenance and welfare of their pets. This requires proper day-to-day management and care of the pet, including when a tenant is not at home. If a tenant has any questions about the care of a pet, they should contact their vet or one of the organisations listed in our useful contact lists provided in appendix 2. Routine healthcare must include regular control of parasites (fleas and worms), vaccinations and neutering where appropriate.
- 3.10 The tenant is responsible for the control of their pets and any pets visiting their property. The tenant has an obligation to ensure that their pets and any pets visiting their property do not cause a nuisance to others.
- 3.11 Breeding and sale of any animals is prohibited in NCHS properties under any circumstances.

3.12 No pet should be left in an NCHS property when the tenant 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.

3.13 If a cat or cats are allowed free access, the tenant must take steps to ensure that they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours. A litter tray should always be provided and maintained.

3.14 Where anti-social behaviour has been caused by a tenant(s) and/or the visitor(s) pet, permission to keep a pet will be withheld or withdrawn and the tenant will be required to re-home the pet. Legal action may be taken to enforce this if necessary.

4. Specific guidelines

4.1 **Exotic pets** – permission will be refused for exotic pets such as snakes, reptiles, or spiders if:

- The pet requires a license, and the tenant does not hold one
- The pet poses a safety risk to the household or neighbours should it escape

4.2 **Tenants in flats and maisonettes** – permission will only be granted in certain circumstances as detailed in 4.3 and in line with the terms and conditions of tenancy. Where permission is refused, animals will not be allowed in communal areas or in flats including on a temporary basis i.e., minding an animal for someone else.

4.3 Permission may be granted in the certain circumstances as set out below:

- **Small animals** – permission may be granted to keep pets that are housed in cages, bowls or tanks inside the home and do not need to be outside of the property. If the tenant has their own private garden, permission may be given for them to keep small pets in hutches such as rabbits or guinea pigs.
- **Cats** – permission may be granted to keep cats in houses but not in flats or maisonettes unless there are exceptional circumstances
- **Dogs** – permission may be granted to keep dogs in houses and flats or maisonettes that are on the ground floor and have access to a private garden. Permission will not be given to keep a dog in a flat or maisonette above ground floor or without access to a private garden.
- **Dangerous dogs** – Permission will not be given in any circumstances to keep any dog listed as dangerous as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Please see Appendix 3. This is to protect the health and safety of any tenants or NCC employees who may come into contact with them.

In all cases in this section, if the pets cause a nuisance, are not adequately cared for, paid for, or there is any breach of this policy, the tenant will be required to re-home the pet.

If a tenant is in doubt about whether the type of pet is suitable, they can contact their Tenancy and Estate Management team for further advice.

4.4 Permission will not normally be granted if you already have either 2 dogs or 2 cats in the house, or a dog and a cat.

4.5 Before granting permission to keep a pet(s) we will take into account the following factors:

- Whether the tenant has breached the tenancy agreement with regard to a pet(s), or other related nuisance in the past and the relevant Manager agrees it would be unwise to grant permission
- Whether the accommodation is unsuitable. The home may be too small for the size of pet or access to the house may be shared with other tenants.
- How many pets you already have, and in the case of a dog, the breed, size and temperament
- The location of the property and its proximity to other properties
- The number of people occupying the property
- The advice, guidance or opinion of other agencies who may have an interest or involvement with the property, area or tenants.

4.6 Permission will be withdrawn to have an animal in the property should we receive reports of roaming and unattended animals, excessive animal noise, neglect or fouling or any other inappropriate activity or breach of tenancy.

4.7 Where permission has been given to keep a cat, tenants will also need to get permission from us to install cat flaps to external doors.

4.8 If a tenant wishes to construct outside accommodation other than a hutch and exercise pen for small mammals, they must get written permission from us. The application must include plans of the proposed construction and detail the species to be kept.

4.9 Certain pets must not be kept on balconies or in communal walkways. This includes dogs and cats and any animal that would need to be tethered or chained up. There is a danger of pets falling, being strangled, neglected or suffering from extremes in weather

conditions. Caged animals may be kept on balconies for short periods of time in warmer weather but must be provided with suitable shelter and regularly monitored. Also, in the case of parrots and any other 'vocal' birds, you must not leave these animals on balconies for long periods of time or at unsociable hours as this may be construed as noise nuisance.

4.10 Animal Faeces in tenant(s) gardens should be picked up on a daily basis and should not be allowed to accumulate. Dog faeces in public areas should be picked up immediately and disposed of. Any suitable plastic bag can be used, or special bags can be purchased from various pet shops, supermarkets and veterinary surgeries. Dispose of faeces in a suitable waste bin or take the bag home. If this is not possible, as a last resort double-wrap the faeces in two plastic bags and dispose of it in a litter bin.

4.11 When NCCHS discovers that a tenant is keeping a pet without permission a letter, together with a copy of this policy and procedure will be sent giving the tenant 28 days to either remove the pet or request permission retrospectively. Failure to complete this request may result in the tenant being asked to re-home the pet.

4.12 It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animal. If we receive a report of animal cruelty from a tenant, details will be passed on immediately to the RSPCA (0300 1234999).

5. Animals left in properties at death of the tenant

5.1 If one of our sole tenants has passed away and there is nobody else living in the household and there are animals left in the property, then the responsible officer needs to contact the Next of Kin who become responsible for the welfare of the animals.

5.2 We do not accept liability for any animals remaining in the property. The option for Next of Kins to waiver their liability and try to discharge this to NCCHS will not be accepted. Should the Next of Kin not want to take the animals then the Next of Kin needs to make arrangements to contact a rehoming centre/charity to resolve the situation.

5.3 If there is no Next of Kin the responsible officer should contact the rehoming centres or charities to resolve.

5.4 Anyone who removes an animal from the property becomes responsible for their welfare.

5.5 In extreme circumstances where rehoming centres or charities have no space then there are specific rules around the next steps and all responsible officers should adhere to the relevant legislation and steps required.

6. Appeals

Appeals against the decision to keep a pet should be made to the relevant housing manager. They will provide a written decision, taking all factors into account, within 28 working days of receiving the appeal.

Appendix 1

Suitable pets

Suitable animals that will be considered for permission by NCCHS are as follows:

- Birds
- Cats
- Dogs – except those listed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (see below unsuitable pets)
- Fish – except fish tanks over 4ft in length
- Domestic rodents e.g., hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice and guinea pigs
- Rabbits
- Reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates – for certain reptiles and amphibians, tenants must have a license, and this will need to be checked when assessing permission. The Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 also lists certain reptiles and amphibians as dangerous and therefore this should be consulted before granting permission.

Unsuitable animals to keep as pets

The following animals will be refused permission by NCCHS:

- Livestock – horses, donkeys, goats, ponies, pigs, cattle, ducks, geese, chickens
- Dogs listed in Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 – Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro and any XL Bully Dog without a certificate of exemption (as of Feb 2024). Up to date information can be obtained from the website of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at www.defra.gov.uk
- Animals listed in the Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – includes but not limited to:
 - Wolfdogs
 - Bengal cats
 - Some primates – e.g., gorillas, chimpanzees, orang-utans, bonobos, gibbons
 - Wild carnivores - e.g., bears, wolves, wildcats, wild dogs, foxes
 - Larger and/or venomous reptiles – e.g., alligator, crocodile, venomous snakes, large/venomous lizards
 - Dangerous spiders
 - Scorpions

A list of animals requiring a license under this Act can be obtained from the DEFRA website at www.defra.gov.uk

- Animals such as Rats, mice, gerbils, and hamsters (this is not an exhaustive list). If the number is unmanageable and unsuitable for either the environment in which they live, or the accommodation provided
- Rabbits and guinea pigs that are intended to be kept inside the home, unless kept in a cage suitable for their welfare
- Endangered species, such as certain birds of prey

Appendix 2 – Useful contacts for advice and assistance

RSPCA

This is a charity which investigates complaints of cruelty and neglect. They run animal hospitals and clinics for low-income households. They run centres which house dogs looking for new homes and provide general animal care and welfare advice. They can also provide financial assistance for neutering animals.

Contact numbers:

General information	0300 123 0346
Cruelty and advice line (8am-8pm)	0300 123 4999
Website	www.rspca.org.uk

Dogs Trust

This is a welfare charity providing advice on all aspects of dog ownership. It runs 15 centres across the UK for dogs looking for new homes. It campaigns on animal welfare issues and runs education programmes. It subsidises neutering and provides free micro-chipping in certain areas.

If you become a member of the Dogs Trust you are entitled to unlimited access to Vetfone, which is a 24-hour emergency advice service open all year. You also receive free third-party insurance of up to £1,000,000 cover per claim if your dog causes damage or injury to another person, their property or pet.

Telephone number	0207 837 0006
Website	www.dogstrust.org.uk

Cats Protection

This is a charity that provides advice on cat care. It runs a rescue service and a rehoming service. It may provide financial assistance with neutering cats.

Contact details

General information	03000 12 12 12
Website	www.cats.org.uk

PDSA

This is a charity that runs animal clinics to provide veterinary care for sick animals owned by low-income households.

PDSA vet care services are available to pet owners who receive either Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and live within a defined catchment area around each PDSA hospital or practice.

All popular domestic animals are treated such as dogs, cats and those described as 'small furries.' You will be asked to make a donation towards any treatment your pet receives.

Eligible pet owners must register their pet with PDSA before they are in need of any treatment, and this is limited to one named pet only.

Telephone 0800 917 2509

Website www.pdsa.org.uk

Cat Chat

This is a web-based charity providing rehoming services to unwanted and abandoned cats.

Email (all enquiries) cat.advice@catchat.org

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

Holds a list of registered veterinary surgeons. This can be found on their website.

Telephone 0207 222 2001

Website www.rcvs.org.uk or
www.any-uk-vet.co.uk

The Cinnamon Trust

This is a national charity for the elderly, terminally ill and their pets, providing peace of mind and practical help for people and their pets.

The charity has over 15,000 community service volunteers who will provide practical help with any aspect of day care where this poses a problem, for example, dog walking for housebound owners.

Telephone (General) 01736 757 900

Telephone (Volunteering) 01736 758 707

Website www.cinnamon.org.uk

Equation- Refs for Pets

Refs for Pets is a fostering service for animals when survivors are in refuge or temporary accommodation.

Website: <https://equation.org.uk/product/refs-for-pets-information/>

Castlefield Kennels

Boarding kennels and cattery- Derbyshire. NCC approved kennels. They also take small animals.

Tel 0115 932 2763

Appendix 3 – legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006

Places a duty of care on any person keeping an animal to ensure that they look after it properly. Pet owners must ensure their pet has:

- A proper diet (food and water)
- Protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- A suitable environment to live in with or apart from other animals

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Created criminal offences to protect people from injury, or fear of injury by dogs. It sets out the types of dogs the prohibitions apply to (namely those bred for the purposes of fighting) and makes it an offence to breed, sell, exchange, offer, advertise for sale, give away, allow to be in a public place when un-muzzled or not on a lead, any of the breeds of dog listed in the legislation.

This legislation also creates a criminal offence of allowing any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place or where it is not allowed. A dog can be regarded as dangerously out of control on any occasion where it causes fear or apprehension to a person that it may injure them.

Control of Dogs Order 1992

States that all dogs should wear a collar or tag showing the owners address and telephone number.

Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

Lists the various animals classed as 'dangerous wild animals' and gives the local authority powers to seize any animal being kept on a property which are unlicensed.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

States that dog fouling is illegal and that all owners have a responsibility to prevent their animals from fouling the land. Owners found guilty of their dogs' fouling in public places can be subject to a level 3 fine.