

Pets Policy

West Kent Pets Policy

Policy statement

West Kent recognises that our tenants may wish to keep pets for companionship, and to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

This policy is for all our tenants and homeowners (shared owners and leaseholders).

This policy aims to make it clear on

- What pets you can or cannot keep at your property and
- How we expect them and your home to be looked after; ensuring the well-being of the pet and the community you live in.

As a pet owner you are responsible for making sure your pet's behaviour does not cause a nuisance to others or breach any legislation.



Permission for new tenants or new pets for existing tenants

We will give permission to keep a pet if the property is suitable, you are looking after your home and you are able to take on the responsibilities of looking after the pet. We will also take into consideration whether your tenancy has been breached in any way, for instance, rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or not looking after your property.

We will ask you to sign a pets contract for your pet. If you want to keep a dog it will have to be micro-chipped, West Kent may be able to provide this free of charge. We recommend that a cat is both neutered and micro-chipped. Breeding of any pet will not be allowed.

We will usually give consent to changes you might need to make to your property to accommodate your pet, such as a cat flap, as long as you agree to remove and make good the changes if you move away and the changes do not affect fire safety. You cannot have a cat flap if your door opens onto hallways in flats.

Existing tenants – over five years tenancy with us at same home

You will not need to seek permission for pets you already own, however we still expect you to look after your pet according to this policy.

Number of pets allowed

If you live in a **flat** or **bedsit**, or one **bedroom property** we will allow you to have one dog and one cat, or two cats and no dog. Your dog will have to wear a collar and be on a lead at all times in any communal area and you must make sure that any fouling caused by your pet is cleaned up straight away.

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If you live in a two bed or larger **house** or **bungalow** you can have two dogs and one cat, or one dog and two cats. Your dog will have to wear a collar outside and you will need a secure garden, which will be your responsibility to maintain.

Accommodation where pets are not permitted

General needs

- Flats in blocks over two storeys high.

Emerald

- Sheltered schemes where the flats are contained within a building and the flats do not have direct access to a private garden.
- Extra Care schemes that provide accommodation for tenants with a care need and all the flats and communal facilities are contained within one building without direct access to a private garden.

Temporary accommodation

- Houses and hostels where there are shared facilities.

Exemption will be given within temporary and Emerald schemes for tenants who need an assistance dog. We will grant permission in general needs blocks of flats dependent on location. If permission is not given we will offer advice and support on possible rehousing.

The West Kent Pets Policy will not apply where there is a local lettings plan in place for the estate you live on which has a clause to restrict or not allow pets.

Pets you don't need permission for

You do not need permission to keep a reasonable number of caged house birds and small caged animals like hamsters, rabbits. However breeding is not permitted.

Farm animals and birds of prey

When appropriate, we will give permission to keep a limited number of chickens (but not cockerels) or birds of prey. Permission will be dependent on the size of the garden, location of the property, storage of food and bedding and any licensing requirements. In general, we will not give permission for outdoor farm animals in built up areas or where keeping them is likely to impact on others.

Animals we will not give permission for

We do not allow tenants to keep wild animals, livestock or farm animals (except as set out above in relation to chickens and birds of prey), endangered species or any dogs identified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any subsequent legislation.

In addition, animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, which includes venomous snakes, certain types of spider and various breeds of monkey, are not permitted in West Kent properties.

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West Kent will also have regard to any other legislation that may be applicable to the keeping of any pet before granting permission.

If someone complains about your pet

If we receive complaints of nuisance behaviour about a pet or other animal living at any property, whether permanently or temporarily, we will record it as an anti-social behaviour complaint. We will first ask you to resolve any problems yourself. If you don't, we will consider withdrawing permission to keep the pet and take enforcement action to resolve the issue as a breach of tenancy conditions.

Dog owners can now face prosecution if their dog attacks a person in their own home or in any public place. This includes any attack on assistance dogs.

West Kent will liaise with the local authority dog wardens and animal welfare organisations to ensure the best possible advice, information and expertise are readily available to help you look after your pet.

The following is a short guide to what we consider to be nuisance behaviour:

- Fouling staircases, walkways, courtyards, any communal areas or dwellings including your own property. You are responsible for cleaning up any mess immediately.
- Injuring or frightening anyone into thinking they might be injured.
- Being out of control or a danger to other residents.
- Failing to keep a pet on a lead in all communal areas.
- Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others.
- Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issued by the relevant authority.

West Kent may also take action if we find you are not keeping your home and surrounding areas in good condition.

Appendix – Some things to consider about keeping a pet

Legal obligations

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes owners responsible for ensuring their animals' welfare needs are met.

These include the need:

- For a suitable environment (place to live)
- For a suitable diet
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- To be housed with or apart from other animals (if applicable)
- To be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

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The law also increases the minimum age a person can buy an animal to 16.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal or does not provide for its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

Can you afford it?

Looking after a dog or cat can involve a significant financial commitment, including food, equipment, vet bills and medicine. It has been estimated in recent years that the average annual spend can be around £1,183 on a pet dog and £1,028 on a cat. Allowing for an average lifespan of six to 18 years, the total cost of pet ownership adds up.

Looking after your pet and home

You should also consider how you will exercise your pet, what happens if you are unwell, holiday arrangements, and things like extra cleaning in your home.

More information

We recommend seeking advice on pet care from the RSPCA www.rspca.org.uk

For more information on the Animal Welfare Act 2006 visit:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-welfare-act-2006-it-s-your-duty-to-care