

## Pets Policy – Kent Excellent Homes for All schemes

### 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 living in Kent Excellent Homes For All schemes.

This policy aims to make clear:

- what pets you can or cannot keep in your home; and
- how we expect them and your home to be looked after, ensuring the wellbeing of the pet and respecting 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.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for ensuring that all necessary treatments are given to your pet(s) at relevant intervals, including flea treatment to prevent any infestations within your home or in communal areas. If your home or a communal area becomes infested as a result of your pet, we will appoint professional contractors to fumigate the affected area and you will be charged. This will also apply if fleas are identified within the apartment after you have left the property.

### Permission for keeping a pet

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 responsible pet owner contract.

If you want to keep a dog it will have to be micro-chipped and 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, as long as you agree to remove and make good the changes if you move away and the changes do not affect fire safety. We will not give permission for cat flaps to be installed on any front doors or patio doors.

### **Number of pets allowed**

The number of pets we will give permission for depends on the size of your flat, the size of the pet(s) and your ability to look after the pet(s). It would be reasonable to consider up to two dogs or three cats. Please speak to a member of staff in the first instance.

Your dog will have to wear a collar with an ID tag. You should only use communal areas when taking your dog outside and it must be kept on a short lead at all times.

Apart from the above, pets are not allowed in any of the communal areas such as the lounge, restaurant, sub-lounge, activities room and communal gardens etc. The only exception will be for 'assistance dogs'.

You must make sure that any fouling caused by your pet is cleaned up straight away and professionally cleaned if necessary. If West Kent deems that professional cleaning is required in a communal area or within your home, we will employ a professional contractor and you will be charged for any work necessary.

### **Assistance dogs**

If you need an assistance dog all reasonable adjustments to this policy will be made.

## **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.

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 pet nuisance:

- Fouling in communal areas (internal and external). Any damage caused within your apartment or in a communal area that has been caused by fouling. 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 short 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.

## 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.



Anyone who is cruel to an animal or does not provide for its welfare needs may be banned from owning animals and 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. Pet insurance is also recommended. Before buying a pet, please make sure you consider whether the costs will be affordable to you.

## Looking after your pet and home

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