



Places to live. Space to grow.

Pets Policy

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1 Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out under what circumstances, and what type of pet, you can and cannot keep in West Kent properties, and how we expect them and your home to be looked after. It is a generic policy that covers all sizes, categories and types of West Kent accommodation.
- 1.2 It also outlines what actions we may take if they feel there is any cause for concern, or a breach of tenancy or lease, where it may be necessary for any previous permissions given to be revoked, which may result in the need for a pet/s to be rehomed
- 1.3 This policy will not apply where there is a Local Lettings Plan in place for the estate/area you live which has a clause, that restricts or does not allow pets. If there is a plan in place, this will be explained to you at the start of your tenancy/lease or when you buy a Shared Ownership home.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We recognise that pet ownership can be very beneficial for the wellbeing of our residents, improving mental health, reducing loneliness and helping maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.
- 2.2 This policy is for our tenants, and homeowners (shared owners and leaseholders) to allow pets that are appropriate for the type and size of home that they live in, therefore ensuring the welfare of every animal and preventing any nuisance to surrounding households and the community

3 Permissions, new and existing residents, shared owners and leaseholders

- 3.1 A conversation is held with new tenants/shared owners/leaseholders and a copy of the policy, and a pets permission application provided at sign up. Some local authorities also ask their applicants to complete a Pet Declaration form prior to any offer of accommodation being made. An applicant may be overlooked for a particular property if their pet would be in breach of this policy due to the size and type of accommodation they are being considered for.
- 3.2 You must apply for permission to have a dog or a cat, you can do this by completing a form on our portal/website, at www.westkent.org.uk, contacting our Customer Services Team on 01732 749400 or at Help@mywkha.org.uk, or emailing the Housing Team at MyTenancy@wkha.org.uk.
- 3.3 We will not unreasonably withhold permission for a pet, and will grant permission if the property is suitable and the pet/s you are applying to house, are suitable for the type and size of home in which you live/ or are planning to move to. We will also consider if you are able to take on the responsibilities of looking after the pet/s.
- 3.4 Before we grant permission, we will consider whether your tenancy/lease and home are being managed well. We may refuse permission if your tenancy/lease has been breached in any way due to anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, poor property/garden condition, or

no access for statutory and regulatory safety checks or necessary works. We may visit your home to complete a property inspection before permission is granted.

- 3.5 If any changes need to be made to the home to accommodate your pet, you will need to submit an improvement request and obtain permission prior to making any changes.
- 3.6 Permission will not be given for cat flaps in flat doors where they open onto communal areas as this compromises the fire retardancy of the door and their protection of the homes.
- 3.7 Pets are not permitted within communal hallways, unless they are on a short, fixed lead, and only to pass through when they are being taken in or out of the building. This includes Emerald (over55), Extra Care and KEHFA schemes. They are not permitted within any communal areas such as lounges/communal seating areas/restaurants/activities rooms or gardens. Certified Assistance dogs will be the only exception to this.
- 3.8 If you transfer to another West Kent home, you must make sure that the home is suitable for your pet, before you sign a new tenancy/lease agreement. You must then make a new application to keep the pet at your new home.
- 3.9 Permission for a pet is not transferrable from one pet to another. If a pet passes away or you no longer have the pet, permission must be sought for any new pet before taking ownership.
- 3.10 In some circumstances, we may, for a short period of time permit more pets than the policy states for the type/size of your home. Permission will be for a specific pet only, and if that pet passes away, we may not give permission for a new pet.
- 3.11 Permission for breeding or selling animals will not be allowed in any West Kent home.

4 Temporary accommodation

- 4.1 We recognise that a number of applicants who the Local Authority have accepted a homeless duty for, may have a pet when they are nominated for Temporary Accommodation. To ensure that they are treated fairly, and not prevented from having access to a safe home, we will consider granting permission on a case-by-case basis. This will be in agreement with the relevant Local Authority who holds the responsibility for the homeless duty to that person.
- 4.2 Any resident living within temporary accommodation will not be able to take ownership of any pets after they have commenced their tenancy/license without applying for permission.
- 4.3 Permissions for dogs/cats will only be granted according to the number and size criteria listed in the policy for a general need one bedroom flat.
- 4.4 Any resident within temporary accommodation who purchases/takes ownership of dogs/cats without our permission, will have to rehome them, or may be at risk of not being able to move on into a permanent home, when one becomes available.

5 Supported accommodation

- 5.1 Permission for pets within any supported accommodation schemes will only be considered following an assessment between us and the support provider to ensure the resident has the ability to be a responsible pet owner.

6 Assistance dogs

- 6.1 We will make reasonable adjustments to enable residents to have an assistance dog on a case-by-case basis and will only provide permission if it is appropriate to do so. We may request further evidence and documentation and seek advice from professional agencies, prior to permission being granted.

7 Pet ownership for dogs and cats

- 7.1 All cats and dogs must be neutered and microchipped, and you must be able to evidence this, you will have to sign a pet's contract to confirm that this has been done.
- 7.2 All pets should be up to date on essential vaccines as per veterinarian recommendations. Dogs and cats must have regular preventative treatments against parasites such as fleas, ticks and worms, and you must be able to provide evidence of this.
- 7.3 All dogs and cats must wear a collar with an ID tag.
- 7.4 Dogs must remain on a short, fixed lead at all times when passing through communal areas.
- 7.5 Dogs are not permitted to be exercised or toileted or left in communal gardens (including any of our schemes). If you have mobility issues that affect your ability to exercise or toilet your dog, then you must make arrangements for someone to do this on your behalf.
- 7.6 Any dog fouling or mess that occurs within a communal area when coming into or leaving the building, must be cleaned up straight away and not left for someone else to do.
- 7.7 If you live in a property with its own garden, you are responsible for ensuring that your garden is secure, including any boundary fences.
- 7.8 You must make sure that your home/garden's condition does not deteriorate because of your pet or their actions.
- 7.9 As a responsible pet owner, you must ensure that your pet's needs can still be met if you experience a change in circumstances, health or mobility.
- 7.10 Property types and allowances for cats and dogs

Property Type	Property Size	Number of Pets
General Needs	One bed	One dog and one cat
	Two beds +	Up to two dogs and one cat, or one dog and two cats

General Needs flats in a block	One bed	One small* dog and one house cat, or two-house cats and no dog
	Two beds	Up to two small* dogs and one house cat, or one small* dog and two-house cats
Emerald properties (over 55's) including schemes	Any size	One small* dog or one house cat, or two-house cats and no dog
KEFHA Schemes	One bed	One dog and one house cat or two-house cats and no dog
	Two beds	Up to two small* dogs and one house cat, or one small* dog and two-house cats
Temporary Accommodation	Any size	One small* dog or one cat or two-house cats and no dog

* A small dog should be no bigger than 24 lbs or 10kg in weight such as Yorkshire Terrier or French Bulldog breeds).

8 Banned breeds

8.1 We do not allow residents to own any dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. These breeds include, Pit Bull Terrier, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro, Japanese Tosa, XL Bully breeds (except for residents who owned them and have been given permission before 31st December 2023 and have a valid exemption certificate). Residents are not allowed to:

- (i) Temporarily look after banned breeds,
- (ii) Allow visitors to bring banned breeds into their homes.

9 Pets you do not need permission for

9.1 You do not need permission to keep a reasonable number of caged house birds, pigeons, or small caged animals like hamsters, rabbits, or small reptiles etc. We will decide what is reasonable number based on the size, type, suitability and condition of the home, your safety and animal welfare.

9.2 It is your responsibility to ensure any pets remain in then relevant enclosures and cannot escape.

9.3 Breeding and selling of caged animals, such as rabbits and birds is not permitted. We may refuse permission to keep the pets if there are breaches of your tenancy agreement, such as arrears, poor property condition or anti-social behaviour. Any food stored outside for your pets has to be in a sealed, airtight container to prevent attracting vermin.

10 Farm animals, birds of prey, captive birds held in an outside enclosure (i.e. pigeons)

- 10.1 When appropriate, we will give permission to keep a limited number of chickens (but not cockerels) birds of prey, or pigeons. Permission will be dependent on the size of the garden, location of the property, storage of food and bedding and 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.
- 10.2 Following a change in legislation, there are new registration requirements for bird keepers in Great Britain, which came into effect on 1 October 2024. From this date anyone keeping poultry or any other captive birds that have access to the open air (i.e. have an outside aviary or enclosure) must register them with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), regardless of the number they have. This includes chickens even if they are kept as pets.
- 10.3 The registration process can be completed quickly and easily online, residents can register by going to the GOV.UK website. Residents who do not have access to the internet, can request a poultry registration form to return by post or apply over the phone by calling APHA on 03000 200 3001.

11 Exotic breeds

- 11.1 We may give permission for exotic breeds, if it is legal for them to be kept as a pet within the UK. If they are not invasive or dangerous, if you have the relevant license for them, and can provide an appropriate living environment.

12 Animals we will not give permission for

- Wild animals - however if you are volunteering for a wildlife trust we will consider each request individually.
- Livestock or farm animals (except as set out above in relation to chickens and birds of prey)
- Animals not permitted as pets within the UK

13 Anti-social behaviour/tenancy breach

- 13.1 If we receive reports that any animal living in a property (including assistance dogs) is causing nuisance behaviour, or is not being looked after appropriately, we will record it as an anti-social behaviour complaint/tenancy breach. We will ask you to quickly resolve any problems identified yourself. If you do not, we will consider withdrawing permission to keep the pet and start enforcement action for breach of tenancy/lease according to our policies and procedures.
- 13.2 If we withdraw permission for your pet/s we ask that it is rehomed within 28 days. If you fail to do so, we may take enforcement action against your tenancy/lease, which may include the serving of a Notice of Seeking Possession, or an application being made to the County Court for an Injunction Order. If an Injunction is granted, it will detail certain

conditions that you must adhere to. If you fail to do so it may result in your pet/s having to be rehomed/removed. We will recharge you the cost of any legal action we take.

13.3 The following are some examples of what we consider to be nuisance behaviour:

- Fouling staircase, walkways, courtyards or any communal area or dwelling including your own home.
- Dog owners not keeping their pet under control, which may result in someone being injured, or frightening them into thinking they may be injured.
- 'Animal Hoarding', which involves keeping a higher than usual number of pets without the ability to care effectively for them causing animal neglect.
- An animal out of control or a danger to other residents
- Failing to keep a pet on a lead in all communal areas
- Exercising or toileting your pet within communal gardens.
- Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others
- Breeding or selling of animals
- Allowing an animal to cause damage to West Kent property
- Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issues by the relevant authority.

13.4 Dog owners can be prosecuted if their dog attacks a person in their own home or any public space. This includes any attack by assistance dogs.

13.5 If any member of our staff, or contractors acting on our behalf, are bitten while carrying out their duties, an incident report will be logged, and the matter investigated in line with our processes of tenancy/lease breaches or antisocial behaviour, a report should also be made to police by the affected party.

13.6 We 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.

14 Reporting

14.1 Information on pet requests and permissions granted will be stored on our systems. The effectiveness of this policy will be identified by:

- Number of requests received/permissions granted (if any home is identified as having a pet without permission, an application for retrospective permission must be submitted).

- Reduction in issues of anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches involving animals, that may impact tenancy sustainment and require legal interventions.

15 Communication

- 15.1 This policy will be published on our website, and we can provide a paper copy on request. Our website also provides information on how to report any pet welfare or pet nuisance concerns to us for investigation.

16 Related policies and legislation

16.1 Policies

Tenancy Policy

Community Safety Policy

Housing Options Policy

16.2 Legislation

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Animal Welfare Act

The Housing Act 1985

Renters' Rights Bill 2024

The Avian Influenza (Preventative Measures) England 2006, amended April 2024