

Procedure

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Halton
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Introduction

This procedure outlines Halton Housing's approach to customers keeping pets. Halton 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.

The aims of this procedure are:

- To provide a clear and consistent approach to pet ownership.
- To provide equality that ensures pet ownership does not disadvantage other customers to enjoy their homes peacefully.
- To outline what action Halton Housing will take where pets are kept inappropriately or cause a nuisance to neighbours.

The objectives of this procedure are:

- To provide a clear understanding of Halton Housing's fair approach to keeping pets in its properties.
- To provide a clear guidance on how to apply for permission and how permission may be declined or revoked.
- To inform customers on what type of pets can be kept in different properties.
- To provide customers with information on responsible pets ownership, pets welfare, and expected pet behaviour.

Scope

Halton Housing sets out the basic rules regarding the keeping of animals in its Tenancy Agreement, as follows:

Extract from Halton Housing Tenancy Agreement - Section 3.1 Pets and animals

- 3.16.1 *You can keep domestic pets in your home, subject to the following conditions.*
- 3.16.2 *Pets must not be kept in a way or in a number that causes a risk to the health or safety of anyone or a nuisance to neighbours. You must not keep more than one cat or one dog or one caged bird, unless you get our prior written consent.*
- 3.16.3 *You cannot keep or bring into your home or any shared area:*
- *A dangerous wild animal (as defined by the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976); or*
 - *A dangerous dog, as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.*
- 3.16.4 *If your home has a shared entrance or a shared garden or yard, you cannot keep a dog or a cat in your home without our prior written consent. If you live in a flat, you cannot keep a pet unless you get our prior written permission.*

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- 3.16.5 *If an animal causes a nuisance or annoyance or you do not comply with sections 3.16.2 to 3.16.4 above, we can require you to remove the animal from your home or impose any other condition to prevent the animal from causing nuisance or annoyance. You must comply with our requirements in this respect.*
- 3.16.6 *You are responsible for any damage caused to your home or shared areas by any animal that is kept at your home or which visits your home. You will be charged for any costs that we incur as a result of such damage.*
- 3.16.7 *You cannot keep pigeons or livestock (other than domestic pets as set out above) without our prior written consent.*

Responsibility

The Tenancy Services Manager has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of this procedure.

The day to day responsibility for ensuring compliance lies with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team (general needs), the Tenancy Support Team and the Amethyst Living Team (extra care and sheltered schemes).

Service Standards

- This procedure applies to customers living in Halton Housing properties.
- Assisted dogs fall outside of the scope of this procedure and permission to keep such animals will automatically be granted.
- Customers should request permission to keep pets in all circumstances.
- Halton Housing will issue the customer with a standard agreement which the customer signs and provides them with information concerning pet ownership.
- Permission will:
 - normally be granted for small domestic animals and birds
 - **not normally** be granted for farm animals – for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, & ducks
 - **not** be granted for the following reasons: -
 - Animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – examples of animals registered under the Act are certain types of venomous snake, certain types of spider and various breeds of monkey
 - Dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

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- A dog or cat where the household already had 2 dogs or 2 cats or a dog and a cat
 - Permission to replace a pet will be based on evidence of the owner's previous responsible pet ownership.
 - Halton Housing reserves the right to revise the tenancy and / or lease where the number of dog's resident in shared accommodation becomes a nuisance. A balance must be maintained so as not to flood the building with pets, and in the process infringing other customers from peaceful enjoyment of their homes.
 - Halton Housing may refuse permission if there is another on-going breach of tenancy at the property, such as anti-social behaviour, property condition, garden condition etc, especially if it is believed that the granting of permission will further add to the breach.
 - In these cases, the housing services team will fully explain the reasons for refusal – these will be confirmed in writing. Should the customer in question resolve the tenancy breaches for which permission was initially refused, then the customer can make a fresh application to keep a pet. This application will then be considered in line with this procedure.
 - Halton Housing recognises that a number of customers already have pets prior to this procedure being introduced. In these circumstances, we will only look to enforce the pet procedure once any complaints are received regarding nuisance.

Procedure Description

- Applicants for housing are asked to indicate on their application form if they intend to keep a pet. This will not prejudice their application unless they plan to keep a pet for which permission will not be granted. If this is the case then this matter must be resolved before an offer of accommodation is made.
 - At sign up stage the issue of pets and adherence to the procedure will be reiterated and the permissions form signed. (*See appendix 1*).
 - Customers, in communal accommodation, wishing to get a pet after taking up the tenancy, must seek permission to keep a pet by completing the pet application form (*See Appendix 1*).
 - It is the customers' responsibility to ensure they meet the welfare of their pets and adhere to good pet ownership practice. Halton Housing will use leaflets from the Dogs Trust and other appropriate animal charities which gives general advice on pet ownership including neutering, vaccinations, insurance etc. and on their responsibilities as pet owners. (*see Appendix 2*)
 - The main legal responsibility for pet owners is the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which requires owners to have a positive duty of care, and outlaws neglecting of an animals' basic need, such as access to adequate nutrition and veterinary care. It outlaws the following:
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- causing a protected animal to suffer unnecessarily
 - unreasonably allowing an animal in that person's care to suffer from somebody else
 - mutilating an animal
 - administers a poison to an animal (or permits to be administered)
 - animal fighting
 - A range of behaviours can cause nuisance to neighbours, the following are examples of this:
 - Roaming and unattended animals
 - Pets fouling in communal areas and in owners' gardens and this not being cleared immediately
 - Pets fouling in neighbour's gardens
 - Excessive noise
 - Over-population of animals within a household
 - Unpleasant odours from pets
 - Aggressive animals
 - When Halton Housing receives complaints about pets or pet ownership the Tenancy Enforcement Officer will contact the pet owner to investigate and discuss the concerns.
 - Halton Housing will aim to resolve the situation informally and by agreement. However, in some instances this is not possible, and the following actions will be considered. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list:
 - Arranging for a professional mediator to become involved
 - Withdrawing permission to keep an animal
 - Restricting the number of animals
 - Making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)
 - Involving statutory organisations such as the Police or the Local Authority
 - Involving voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA
 - Serving an injunction to oblige the owner to start or stop undertaking certain actions or to remove the animal
 - Terminating the tenancy where tenancy conditions are considered to have been seriously breached.
 - Where a member of staff witnesses cruelty or neglect, they will report this to the RSPCA. Where cruelty or neglect is reported to Halton Housing by a third party, they will also report this to the RSPCA making it clear that they have not witnessed this themselves. The person reporting this to Halton Housing will also be encouraged to contact the RSPCA.
 - Records on pet ownership will be kept within Halton Housing and appropriate staff will have access to this information, should it be required.
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Performance Measures / Monitoring

Not applicable

Consultation Arrangements

In producing this procedure colleagues in Housing Options, Tenancy Services and Supported Housing Teams have been consulted and the draft procedure was shared with Customer Forum.

Benchmark Analysis

Pet policies and procedures from similar organisations in the local area have been considered in the formation of this procedure. These include One Vision Housing and One Housing.

Link to Procedure

Other documents linked to the procedure are as follows;

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Housing Act 1985 and 1988

Control of Dogs Order 1992

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Animal Welfare Act 2006

Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 and 1991

Dogs Act 1871

Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

Metropolitan Police Act 1839 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847

Offences against the Person Act 1861

Charges Procedure (supported housing)

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Appendices

Appendix 1



Permission To Keep
A Pet Form

Appendix 2



factsheetresponsible
dogownership12.pdf