

<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	Pet Policy
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<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	December 2010
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## **PETS POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy sets out the rules and conditions for keeping pets in housing properties belonging to Darlington Borough Council. The purpose of this is to set out reasonable requirements for the keeping of common household pets in order to provide a decent, safe and clean area for current and prospective tenants, Council employees and the public, and to preserve the physical condition of housing properties.

This policy covers the following:

- What pets can be kept and in what circumstances
- Information we give to tenants about responsible pet ownership
- The action the Council will take where pets are not kept in reasonable conditions or cause nuisance to neighbours.

### **2. Applicants for Housing**

Applicants for housing are asked to tell us on their application form if they have any pets and how many. This will not affect their application unless they plan to keep a pet for which permission will not be given. The bid for accommodation will be accepted but will not be confirmed until an agreement has been made in relation to the re-homing of the pet(s).

### **3. Tenancy Agreement**

Housing Services sets out the basic rules regarding the keeping of pets in its Tenancy Agreement. If a tenant has their own garden and does not share an access or hallway, they may keep such small domestic pets as we consider to be reasonable.

A tenant must nominate at least one person and/or an organisation (such as an animal welfare charity) to be responsible for their pet should the resident become ill or die.

### **4. What Pets can be kept**

A tenant does not need our permission to keep the following pets:

- Up to 2 dogs or 2 cats or a dog and cat
- Rabbits, rodents or similar small animals and birds
- Tanked fish
- Non-venomous insects and reptiles

If a tenant does not have their own garden and/or they share an access (this includes sheltered housing scheme flats) they will only be allowed to keep the following pets:

- Tanked fish
- Small caged birds
- A rodent
- A rabbit
- Non-venomous insects
- Small non-venomous reptiles

If a tenant requires a pet for assistance, service or support e.g. a registered guide or hearing dog) these may be kept in sheltered housing scheme bungalows and in accommodation where access and gardens are shared.

Permission will not be granted for the following animals to be kept:

- Farm animals – for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, ducks
- Animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – e.g. certain types of venomous snakes and spiders and various breeds of monkey
- Dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 – for example, a Pit Bull Terrier or a Japanese Tosa.
- A dog or a cat where the household already has 2 dogs or 2 cats or a dog and a cat

Permission will not be given where there is an ongoing problem with pet ownership in the household or there has been a problem in the past.

## **5. Leaseholders**

The policy applied to current leaseholders, in relation to the keeping of pets is as follows:

‘No birds or dogs or other animals other than a domestic pet shall be kept in the flat’.

In the future any new leaseholder who does not have their own garden and/or they share an access, will be subject to the same rules that apply to any tenant.

## **6. Restriction of Pets**

We have the right to limit the number of pets that a tenant may keep or to request that the pets are removed altogether. A tenant must not allow any of their pets to cause annoyance, nuisance or to damage the property.

Dogs must wear a collar and identification tag or be micro-chipped for identification purposes.

## **7. Neglect of the Property**

In order to keep their property clean and safe a tenant must not allow their pet to foul or urinate in their property or garden/yard and not clean this up immediately.

## **8. Nuisance Animals**

The tenant is expected to make sure that their pet(s) do not cause a nuisance, the following are examples of nuisance behaviour however this is not a complete list:

- Roaming and unattended pets
- Pets fouling and/or urinating in shared areas and in owners gardens when this is cleared up immediately
- Pets fouling and/or urinating in neighbours gardens
- Excessive noise e.g. dogs barking
- Over population of pets within a household
- Unpleasant odours from pets
- Aggressive animals

In the majority of cases Housing Services will aim to resolve complaints about nuisance pets informally and by agreement. In some cases this will not be possible and the following actions will be considered:

- Arranging for a professional mediator to become involved
- Withdrawing permission to keep a pet(s)
- Making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract
- Involving (statutory) organisations such as the Police or the Council's Dog Warden
- Involving (voluntary) organisations such as the RSPCA and the Dogs Trust
- Serving an injunction to make the owner start or stop doing certain actions or to remove the pet(s)
- Serving notice to end the tenancy if suitable

## **9. Dealing with Cruelty and Neglect**

The owner has a duty of care to take responsibility for the health and welfare of their animal (including flea and worm treatment). Where a member of staff witnesses cruelty or neglect they will report this to the RSPCA. Where cruelty or neglect is reported to Housing Services 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 the cruelty or neglect will also be encouraged to report the matter directly to the RSPCA. The RSPCA will deal directly with the Police if they feel their involvement is needed.

## **10. Tenant Participation**

We have consulted tenants on this policy and they will be contacted to approve any significant changes to the policy. The first consultation took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

## **11. Health and Safety**

The policy is aimed at promoting a safe environment within the Council's housing stock and local area.

## **12. Policy Review**

The policy was implemented on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009 and will be reviewed annually.