

Housing Services

Pets on Premises Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (the Council) recognise that pets can provide their owners with companionship, as well as having a positive impact on both their mental and physical health. This policy explains the Council's approach to allowing tenants to keep pets in their home and serves as a reminder of their responsibilities in accordance with their agreed Tenancy Conditions.
- 1.2 As stated in their Tenancy Conditions, tenants are responsible for the behaviour of any visitors they allow into their property and communal areas. Likewise, the Council expects tenants to take responsibility for any pets that accompany their visitors.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all General Need tenants regardless of the type of property they live in. Leaseholders and tenants in private rented accommodation are advised to check their individual lease and tenancy agreements regarding rules for keeping pets.

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to support reasonable and responsible pet ownership that avoids anti-social behaviour.
- 2.2 To remind tenants of their responsibilities to others, including neighbours and their visitors, in accordance with their Tenancy Conditions.
- 2.3 Promoting considered and responsible pet ownership using proportionate, consistent, and reasonable enforcement as specified in this policy.

3. Permission to keep a pet

- 3.1 Tenants are allowed to keep some domestic animals in their home, without needing the Council's permission to do so. Domestic animals which do not require the Council's permissions are:
 - Cats
 - Fish (in an aquarium no larger than 3ft long x 1ft wide x 1ft high)
 - Rabbits
 - Guinea Pigs
 - Chinchillas
 - Hamsters
 - Mice and Rats
 - Caged birds

- 3.2 If a tenant wishes to keep any other type of animal, reptile, or bird they must obtain the Council's written permission.
- 3.3 If a tenant wishes to keep a dog, then they must obtain the Council's written permission.
- 3.4 If a tenant wishes to keep any breed of dog listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, they will need to provide the Council with a copy of their certificate of exemption and adhere to the terms and conditions that apply with this.
- 3.5 If a tenant already has a dog or cat but is considering getting another, then they must obtain the Council's written permission first.
- 3.6 Tenants wishing to keep pigeons or any other birds in an outside aviary, must obtain the Council's written permission.
- 3.7 Permission will be decided on a case-by-case basis according to the circumstances of the household and property type. When dealing with requests the Council will consider
- The type of animal and their needs.
 - Any potential for disturbance, nuisance, or distress to other residents.
 - The number and type of pets already in the property.
 - The size and type of accommodation.
 - Whether there has been any history of complaints or previous failure to look after a pet responsibly.
- 3.8 When applying for permission, tenants must include information which demonstrates their commitment to being a responsible pet owner. This includes, but is not limited to, making sure both dogs and cats are microchipped; that their cat(s)/dog(s) will be neutered; and never breeding or selling animals from their home.
- 3.9 Before making a decision the Council may seek further information and guidance from others such as, but not limited to, a vet, Animal welfare groups, references from a previous landlord or letting agent, together with contact details of their veterinary practice; and a nominated person who will care for their pet(s) in case of an emergency.
- 3.10 Tenants that have an assistance dog such as a guide or hearing dog must let the Council know. All assistance dogs must be professionally trained and microchipped.

- 3.11 Tenants may ask permission to keep pets for wellbeing reasons, including therapy dogs. However, this must be supported by written evidence from a qualified professional of the benefits that the animal has for their wellbeing. If the Council grant permission, in such cases, this may still be withdrawn at any time if the pet causes a nuisance or the owner is unable to care for it properly.
- 3.12 Anyone intending to look after another person's pet, in their own property, for more than one day, must seek the Council's permission.
- 3.13 Farm animals, livestock, animals listed in the schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, or any endangered species are not permitted under any circumstances.
- 3.14 The Council will not give permission for tenants to install cat or dog flaps if the fitting affects the fire integrity of the door.

4. Pet owner responsibilities

- 4.1 The Council expect tenants to look after their pets in line with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and provide their basic needs which include.
- A suitable environment.
 - A suitable diet.
 - The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
 - Being protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.
- 4.2 Tenants must ensure their pet has routine healthcare checks which includes vaccinations, and the control of fleas and worms.
- 4.3 Dogs must be microchipped and always wear a collar and ID tag when they are in public places.
- 4.4 All dogs must be kept on a lead when they are in communal areas of Council estates and must not enter children's play areas. In addition, dogs that are listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, will need to be muzzled at all times when outside of the home.
- 4.5 All cats over 20 weeks of age must be microchipped, and this includes indoor cats.
- 4.6 The Council encourages pet owners to take out pet insurance. This helps meet the costs of any medical treatment and should cover third party liability, should the tenant's animal cause any injury or damage to another person, animal, or property.

- 4.7 Pet owners are not only responsible for the way they care for their pet, but they must also manage their pet's behaviour, so they do not cause a nuisance to others. This includes for example
- Allowing dogs to bark excessively.
 - Allowing animals to foul in communal areas, including gardens, stairwells, and balconies, without clearing up after them.
 - Allowing dogs to behave in an aggressive manner.
- 4.8 Animals must not damage any part of Council owned properties, both inside and out.
- 4.9 Tenants must ensure their pets do not escape their property. If they have a garden or balcony, they must inspect the boundaries regularly to ensure there are no means of escape and conduct any necessary repairs or proofing works.

5. Withdrawing permission

- 5.1 If tenants fail to comply with their responsibilities under this policy, or tenancy agreement, or the Council suspects cruelty or neglect of their pets, the Council will take action to resolve this in any of the following ways:
- Requiring a signed responsible pet ownership agreement
 - Warning letters
 - Involving other agencies, such as the police, the RSPCA, Animal Welfare or Environmental Health
 - Applying for an injunction requiring the owner to take, or stop, certain actions
 - Withdrawing permission to keep an animal
 - Taking action to end a tenancy - if all other measures have failed.

6. Equality Impact

- 6.1 Applying this policy consistently and sensitively will ensure that all tenants and their household members in Council owned homes who have protected characteristics and/or are deemed vulnerable for other reasons receive services that are based on a recognition of their vulnerability. The Council will make all appropriate adjustments to the services they receive in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts on them and to ensure they receive fair and equal treatment from the Council as their landlord.