

Stoke-on-Trent Housing Society Limited

Pet Policy

Policy Number:	TBC
Policy Owner/Author:	Sue Davies - Director
Approved by:	Stoke on Trent Housing Society Board
Approved Date:	24 th March 2026
Next Review Date:	March 2029
Equalities Impact Assessment Completed:	Yes – 28/01/26
Link to other policies:	Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
Consultation Information:	Staff, Resident Group

1.0 Purpose of This Policy

1.1 Stoke on Trent Housing Society recognises that pets can be a critical support to residents and assist in their general health and wellbeing. This policy sets out how tenants may keep pets in Stoke on Trent Housing Society's properties while ensuring:

- responsible pet ownership and animal welfare,
- health and safety of other residents, their visitors, staff and contractors
- protection of the property and communal areas, and
- compliance with all relevant laws, including dangerous-dog, prohibited-breed regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

1.2 It clearly outlines where permission to keep a pet will and will not be required, and the instances where permission will not be granted and those instances when it may be withdrawn.

1.3 It applies to all tenants, leaseholders, employees, contractors, and anyone living in or visiting a Stoke on Trent Housing Society property.

1.4 Consultation on this policy has taken place with Stoke on Trent Housing Society's Resident Group and staff.

2.0 General Principles

2.1 All tenants and leaseholders may keep a reasonable (max 2) number of small domestic pets that can be kept in cages/or tanks, without asking permission, e.g. guinea pigs, birds. Fish (no limit on numbers) can also be kept in a reasonable sized indoor tank which must have a lid if heated.

2.2 All tenants and leaseholders living in a non-communal setting (houses and maisonette type properties) may keep dogs / cats (in any combination up to a maximum of two) without seeking permission from Stoke on Trent Housing Society, unless the animal is prohibited (see section 3) or is considered a dangerous/XL bully type dog (see section 4).

2.3 In communal living settings, the Society will consult residents of each scheme to seek feedback on their views regarding dogs, cats, or any other pets that require regular access through communal areas. As this decision may have a significant impact on residents, a strong level of consensus will be required. Permission will only be considered where 60% or more of responding residents indicate support. Residents who do not respond to the consultation will be treated as neutral and will not be counted for or against the proposal.

2.4 Consultation will be undertaken at the implementation of this policy and reviewed periodically thereafter. Notwithstanding the outcome of any consultation, permission may be refused where the Society considers the design, layout, or nature of the scheme to be unsuitable.

2.5 In communal living settings where tenants have agreed this policy, tenants and leaseholders must still first seek permission from Stoke on Trent Housing Society to own a dog, cat or any other pet that requires access through communal areas on a regular basis. Whilst we will not reasonably withhold permission, it is important for us to understand where these pets are kept, so we can manage our communal areas and facilities. Permission may be refused if there is a history of tenancy breaches, or if the pet may pose a risk to neighbours or the property. There will be a limit of one dog or one cat per household.

2.6 Where cats are permitted, they must be neutered to reduce the risk of nuisance or disruption to neighbouring residents.

2.7 Dogs and cats are not permitted in the Society's high-rise schemes, namely Dickson House, Hammond House and Northwood Court. This restriction is due to the increased health and safety risks and the potential impact on neighbouring residents associated with high-density living, including the use of shared facilities such as lifts and communal access areas.

2.8 The only exception to this prohibition is for assistance dogs. Assistance dogs will be permitted in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Residents are required to notify the Society in advance so that any reasonable management or safety arrangements can be considered.

3.0 Prohibited Animals

3.1 The following animals are not permitted:

- Any species prohibited under national or local animal legislation
- Dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 unless exempt as explained in section 4.
- Farm animals/livestock
- Venomous/ dangerous reptiles
- Wild or non-domesticated species

3.2 Breeding pets or animals or any associated activity is not permitted and is considered a breach of tenancy.

4.0 Dangerous Dogs & XL Bully Type Dogs

4.1 Tenants must comply fully with all UK laws relating to dangerous dogs, prohibited breeds, or controlled breeds, including licensing, registration, microchipping, mandatory insurance, muzzle requirements, neutering requirements, and any movement restrictions.

4.2 Where an XL Bully (or any breed covered by dangerous-dog legislation) is legally owned under exemption:

- The tenant must provide proof of exemption and insurance before permission is considered.
- The dog must:
 - be neutered by required legal deadlines
 - be microchipped
 - be kept on a lead and always muzzled in communal or public areas
 - never be left unattended in communal spaces

4.3 A certificate of exemption does not necessarily mean Stoke on Trent Housing Society will give consent for the dog to be kept at one of its properties. Consideration will be given to this on a case-by-case basis, in line with our tenancy agreement and this policy.

4.4 We reserve the right to revoke permission of ownership if the dog becomes dangerous and / or if they are a nuisance to neighbours and / or causing anti-social behaviour. Tenancy enforcement action will be taken as appropriate.

4.5 Where we receive a report of a resident not complying with the Dangerous Dogs Act, we will ask the owner for proof the dog has a certificate of exemption. If a resident does not have a certificate of exemption, or the owner is otherwise not complying with the restrictions under the Dangerous Dogs Act, we will contact the police.

4.6 Where we believe a dog meets the definition of a Dangerous Dog, but the owner states otherwise, we will request proof to assure this is the case. If proof is not provided, we will report to the police and the local authority for a determination.

4.7 The tenant must agree to:

- Keep the dog secured inside the property and prevent escape through doors or gardens.
- Ensure no nuisance, aggression, or intimidation occurs towards neighbours, staff, or contractors.
- Provide a safe, private area for the dog within the home.
- Allow the landlord to review the pet's behaviour if concerns are raised.

Accept that permission may be withdrawn if:

- the dog is involved in incidents of aggression,
- legal exemption conditions are breached,
- the dog poses a risk to residents, or
- the tenant breaches the tenancy agreement.

5.0 Pet Owner Responsibilities

5.1 All pet owners must:

- Ensure that all dogs and cats are microchipped in accordance with the *Microchipping of Cats and Dogs (England) Regulations 2023*.
- Ensure pets do not cause noise, odour, or behavioural nuisance.
- Prevent fouling in communal areas and dispose of waste properly.
- Ensure adequate exercise, food, water, and veterinary care.
- Prevent property damage, including communal parts of the building and neighbouring properties: repair costs may be recharged to the tenant.
- Not leaving pets unattended for excessive periods.
- Ensure their home is suitable for a pet e.g., if the pet will occasionally enter a back garden, the area must be suitable with no means of escape for the pet to other properties or outside areas outside of the boundary of the tenant's home.
- Be responsible for having appropriate pet insurance in place.
- Allow visits by Stoke on Trent Housing Society staff or contractors to take place in a room free from pets.
- In situations where a tenant is temporarily looking after a pet for a friend or family member, all the above requirements apply. They also apply to visitors of tenants' homes.
- Cat or dog flaps (or similar devices) must not be installed without our prior consent as these can compromise the fire safety of a property. They are not permitted on doors that open onto shared areas or doors that form part of the fire protection within a building.
- Notify Stoke on Trent Housing Society of any change in pet ownership or death.
- Deceased pets must be buried or disposed of in a responsible and safe manner and cannot be buried in communal gardens or within the confines of our tenant's homes.

5.3 The Society encourages the neutering of all pets. Breeding of pets or any associated activities is not permitted and will be treated as a breach of tenancy.

5.4 Stoke on Trent Housing Society will not be responsible in any way for loss, damage or accident caused by any pet.

6.0 Communal Areas

6.1 Pets must always remain within the confines of our customers' homes. However, in situations where a pet needs to go outside (for example, when a dog requires walking), it must be properly restrained using a lead or harness, and a muzzle if needed:

- Pets must always be accompanied by their owner when outside.
- Pets must not roam freely in corridors, stairwells, gardens, or shared spaces.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead and under control.
- XL Bully and legally restricted breeds must be always muzzled in communal areas as required by law.

6.2 Pets are not expected to foul in our communal areas. However, in the event this happens and is unavoidable, the pet owner is responsible for the immediate removal (and if necessary, cleaning) of any fouling and / or waste. Failure to do this would result in a recharge.

6.3 Communal Garden areas and open spaces are treated in the same way as stairwells, and corridors. If pets are required to transport through these areas, then they must be restrained accordingly and accompanied by their owners.

6.4 Communal gardens and open spaces are not places for pet recreation nor fouling and customers are not to use these areas for that.

7.0 Assistance Dogs

7.1 Registered assistance dogs (e.g., guide dogs, hearing dogs, support dogs trained by accredited organisations) are generally exempt from pet restrictions.

7.2 Tenants must still notify the landlord for records and building-safety reasons.

7.3 Assistance dogs are **not** exempt from dangerous dog legislation if the dog is a prohibited breed.

7.4 Untrained pets, therapy animals, or emotional support animals do not have the same legal protections as Assistance dogs.

8.0 Breaches of Policy

8.1 We will work with households to address pet-related issues. This may include referrals to specialist animal welfare organisations for advice and guidance.

8.2 Where a pet owner fails to engage with us, or if the level of nuisance, cruelty or neglect is significant, we will take more serious action. This may include making a referral to the local authority and/or police, demanding the rehoming of the animal, or in some cases seeking possession of the property or taking injunctive proceedings.

8.3 Where a decision has been made to rehome an animal, we will allow this to take place within what we consider a reasonable time limit.

8.4 We will report all incidents of pets being out of control (or a danger to anyone) to the Police. We will also consider tenancy enforcement proceedings.

8.5 We will report any complaint of animal cruelty to the RSPCA. We will also consider tenancy enforcement proceedings if appropriate to do so.

8.6 We will investigate all issues relating to nuisance or anti-social behaviour in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

8.7 If we consider the nuisance to be serious or persistent then appropriate enforcement action will be taken against the pet owner. This may involve the following:

- Contacting the local Environmental Health Department to act under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (e.g., incidents involving noise, fouling and smells)
- Contacting the RSPCA and / or local authority Dog Warden Service who have responsibility to ensure animal health and welfare.
- Contacting the Police if the pet is believed to be dangerous and/ or covered under the Dangerous Dogs Act.
- Charging customers for repair or replacement where pets have caused damage
- Seeking an injunction to prevent residents from keeping a pet in a particular property or taking pets to specific areas.
- Seeking possession of a resident's home for serious and persistent breaches of their tenancy

8.8 Tenancy enforcement may include us applying for an injunction to prevent the tenant from keeping the dog at their property. If granted, this would in practice mean that the dog could be euthanised.

Although such an order would in theory be within the court's power, dependent on circumstances, we would need to justify that this was a just and convenient order to a judge through evidence.

9.0 Equality and Diversity

9.1 Stoke on Trent Housing Society recognises that certain groups and individuals in society may be disadvantaged because of the discrimination they experience because of age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. We are committed to ensuring that our policies and practices promote equality of opportunity for all.

9.2 Decisions relating to pets will be made objectively and in line with legislation, good practice, and the individual circumstances of residents.

9.3 We recognise that pets can contribute positively to wellbeing, companionship, emotional support, and independent living. We therefore commit to making reasonable adjustments for residents who require assistance animals or pets linked to a disability or health need, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

10.0 Monitoring and Review

10.1 To ensure this Pet Policy remains effective, Stoke on Trent Housing Society will:

- Review it at regular intervals, when significant changes are made to legislation or guidance or when related policies and procedures are amended.
- Present any changes to the Resident Group for comment and the Society Board for approval.