



Pets Policy & Procedure

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1. Introduction

1.1 Nottingham City Homes (NCH) accepts that keeping pets offers significant benefits to their owners and encourages responsible pet ownership. Irresponsible ownership can cause nuisance to other tenants and the wider community so it is necessary to have some rules to ensure that neighbours of pet owners are not adversely affected.

1.2 This policy is intended to outline the conditions under which tenants may keep animals in accommodation managed by NCH. It builds on clause(s) 3.14 and 3.15 of the NCH Secure Tenancy Agreement.

1.3 This policy is not exhaustive and Tenancy and Estate Managers may use discretion in certain cases.

1.4 This policy is based on the document 'Guidelines on Pet Management for Social Housing Providers' published by the Pet Advisory Committee and endorsed by the British Veterinary Association, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and Chartered Institute of Housing.

2. Legislation

2.1 NCH Pets policy has been produced in line with the legislation outlined in this section.

2.2 Animal Welfare Act 2006

Places a duty of care on any person keeping an animal to ensure that they look after it properly. Pet owners must ensure their pet has:

- A proper diet (food and water)
- Protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- A suitable environment to live in with or apart from other animals

2.3 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Created criminal offences to protect people from injury, or fear of injury by dogs. It sets out the types of dogs the prohibitions apply to (namely those bred for the purposes of fighting) and makes it an offence to breed, sell, exchange, offer, advertise for sale, give away, allow to be in a public place when un-muzzled or not on a lead, any of the breeds of dog listed in the legislation.

This legislation also creates a criminal offence of allowing any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place or where it is not allowed. A dog can be regarded as

dangerously out of control on any occasion where it causes fear or apprehension to a person that is may injure them.

2.4 Control of Dogs Order 1992

States that all dogs should wear a collar or tag showing the owners address and telephone number.

2.5 Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

Lists the various animals classed as 'dangerous wild animals' and gives the local authority powers to seize any animal being kept on a property which are unlicensed.

2.6 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

States that dog fouling is illegal and that all owners have a responsibility to prevent their animals from fouling the land. Owners found guilty of their dogs' fouling in public places can be subject to a level 3 fine.

2.7 Dog Fouling of the Land Act 1996

Makes it an offence not to clean up dog faeces from designated public areas, parks and footpaths.

3. Policy

3.1 NCH defines a pet as any domesticated or tamed animal that is kept as a companion and cared for responsibly.

3.2 If you want to keep a pet in an NCH property you must seek permission from NCH by completing the Pet Application Form (please see appendix 1). A pet application form must be completed for each new pet. NCH will deal with requests to keep pets as fairly as possible and will take into consideration any problems or restrictions that may exist on an estate or a block.

3.3 The decision to allow a tenant to keep a pet will be based on the type of pet, property type and individual circumstances. Where possible, the Housing Patch Manager will arrange to visit the property before a decision is made to assess suitability.

3.4 Assistance dogs will always be permitted in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Assistance dogs include guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people, or dogs for disabled people.

- 3.5 NCH retains the right to refuse, withdraw or offer a property in circumstances where we deem that allowing an animal in to a property would have an adverse effect on the housing management function.
- 3.6 The type of pets which may be kept (visitors' pets are not included) in NCH properties is listed in appendix 2. In exceptional circumstances, these guidelines may be changed by the Regional Housing Manager.
- 3.7 Dogs should be microchipped or tattooed. Cats should be neutered.
- 3.8 Tenants must make good any damage to NCH property caused by a pet(s).
- 3.9 In all instances where a pet or pets constitute a nuisance, annoyance or health risk to tenants, members of the public or NCH staff, NCH may request the tenant to remove the pet and will enforce this request through legal action if necessary. This applies whether the tenant has previously been given permission to keep a pet or not. This also applies where the welfare of the pet or pets is considered to be at risk.
- 3.10 The tenant is responsible for the health and welfare of their pets. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 this is called a duty of care. This requires proper day to day management and care of the pet. If a tenant has any questions about the care of a pet, they should contact their vet or one of the organisations listed in our useful contact lists provided in appendix 3. Routine healthcare must include regular control of parasites (fleas and worms), vaccinations and neutering where appropriate.
- 3.11 The tenant is responsible for the control of their pets and any pets visiting their property. The tenant has an obligation to ensure that their pets and any pets visiting their property do not cause a nuisance to others.
- 3.12 Breeding and sale of any animals is prohibited in NCH properties under any circumstances.
- 3.13 No pet should be left in an NCH property when the tenant is away unless clear arrangements have been made to provide adequate care. In general this will require the pet to be boarded elsewhere but close supervision by a neighbour may be adequate for some animals.
- 3.14 If a cat or cats are allowed free access, the tenant must take steps to ensure that they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours. A litter tray should always be provided and maintained.

3.15 Where anti-social behaviour has been caused by a tenant(s) and/or the visitor(s) pet, permission to keep a pet will be withheld or withdrawn.

3.16 All prospective new tenants will be given a leaflet explaining NCH policy concerning pets when they view a property that they may wish to move to. This gives them the opportunity not to accept the property if they want to keep a pet and it is unlikely that they will be given permission to do so.

3.17 If a new tenant has an existing pet they will need to complete the Pet Application Form at sign-up.

4. Specific guidelines

4.1 **Tenants in houses** – permission may be given for any pet we consider to be suitable. Please see appendix 2 for details of what we consider to be suitable and unsuitable.

4.2 **Exotic pets** – permission will be refused for exotic pets such as snakes, reptiles or spiders if:

- The pet requires a license and the tenant does not hold one
- The pet poses a safety risk to the household or neighbours should it escape

4.3 **Tenants in flats and maisonettes** – permission will only be granted in certain circumstances as detailed in 4.3. Where permission is not granted animals will not be allowed in communal areas or in flats including on a temporary basis i.e. minding an animal for someone else.

4.4 Permission may be granted in the following circumstances:

- **Small animals** – permission may be granted to keep pets that are housed in cages, bowls or tanks inside the home and do not need to be outside of the property. If the tenant has their own private garden, permission may be given for them to keep small pets in hutches such as rabbits or guinea pigs.
- **Cats** – permission may be granted to keep cats in houses but not in flats or maisonettes
- **Dogs** – permission may be granted to keep dogs in houses and flats or maisonettes that are on the ground floor and have access to a private garden. Permission will not be given to keep a dog in a flat or maisonette above ground floor or without access to a private garden.
- Permission will not be given in any circumstances to keep any dog listed as dangerous as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. This includes the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro. Permission will not be

given to keep any animal listed in the Schedule of Wild Animals Act 1976. This is to protect the health and safety of any tenants or NCH employees who may come into contact with the.

If a tenant is in doubt about whether the type of pet is suitable they can contact their local housing office for further advice.

4.5 Permission will not normally be granted if you already have either 2 dogs or 2 cats in the house, or a dog and a cat.

4.6 Before granting permission to keep a pet(s) NCH will take into account the following factors:

- Whether the tenant has breached the tenancy agreement with regard to a pet(s), or other related nuisance in the past and the Housing Patch Manager and Tenancy and Estate Manager agree it would be unwise to grant permission
- Whether the accommodation is unsuitable. The home may be too small for the size of pet or access to the house may be shared with other tenants.
- How many pets you already have, and in the case of a dog, the breed, size and temperament
- The location of the property and its proximity to other properties
- The number of people occupying the property
- The advice, guidance or opinion of other agencies who may have an interest or involvement with the property, area or tenants.

4.7 If a tenant is given permission to have a pet(s) this will be on the basis that they:

- Will not allow it to cause nuisance
- Will provide the name of their vet and evidence from them that the pet is regularly treated if required. This can include an up-to-date vaccination card and evidence those other treatments such as de-fleaing and worming has been administered, as this will reduce the risk of disease and parasites spreading.
- Should ensure the animal has been neutered or spayed to prevent it from breeding
- Dogs only – should ensure that it is microchipped or tattooed

4.8 Permission will be withdrawn to have an animal in the property should we receive reports of roaming and unattended animals, excessive animal noise, neglect or fouling.

4.9 Upon the death of permitted pet(s), written permission is required again if the tenant wishes to have new pet(s).

- 4.10 Where permission has been given to keep a cat, tenants will also need to get permission from NCH to install cat flaps to external doors.
- 4.11 If you wish to construct outside accommodation other than a hutch and exercise pen for small mammals, you must get written permission from NCH. The application must include plans of the proposed construction and detail the species to be kept.
- 4.12 Certain pets must not be kept on balconies or in communal walkways. This includes dogs and cats and any animal that would need to be tethered or chained up. There is a danger of pets falling, being strangled, neglected or suffering from extremes in weather conditions. Caged animals may be kept on balconies for short periods of time in warmer weather but must be provided with suitable shelter and regularly monitored. Also, in the case of parrots and any other 'vocal' birds, you must not leave these animals on balconies for long periods of time or at unsociable hours as this may be construed as noise nuisance.

4.13 Dog fouling

Dog faeces in tenant(s) gardens should be picked up on a daily basis and should not be allowed to accumulate. Dog faeces in public areas should be picked up immediately and disposed of. Any suitable plastic bag can be used, or special bags can be purchased from various pet shops, supermarkets and veterinary surgeries. Dispose of faeces in a suitable waste bin or take the bag home. If this is not possible, as a last resort double-wrap the faeces in two plastic bags and dispose of it in a litter bin.

4.14 Pets kept without permission

When NCH discovers that a tenant is keeping a pet without consent, a letter, together with a copy of this policy and procedure will be sent giving the tenant 28 days to either remove the pet or complete and submit a pet application form retrospectively.

4.15 Animal Cruelty

It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animal. If we receive a report of animal cruelty from a tenant details will be passed on immediately to the RSPCA (0300 1234999).

5. Procedure

5.1 The application to request a pet should be sent to the Local Housing Office for the attention of the Housing Patch Manager. Please see appendix 1 for an application template.

5.2 The application must be submitted in writing. However, the Housing Patch Manager can provide assistance to any tenant who needs help to submit the application.

5.3 The Housing Patch Manager will provide a copy of the Pets Policy and an application form with covering letter to the tenant within 10 working days of the tenant making the request.

5.4 The decision to keep a pet will be authorised by a Tenancy and Estate Manager (TEM). The tenant will be informed of the decision within 10 working days.

5.5 Granting permission to keep a pet

The following considerations need to be made by the TEM

- What type of pet is the tenant requesting permission for? In general all pets must not cause a noise nuisance or nuisance to neighbours. They must be properly looked after and not mistreated.
- Does the property have sole access to a garden or is it shared? The presence of a pet in a shared garden may make the property difficult to let in the future.
- Does the household already have pets? If yes, how many?
- Is the pet listed on the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or Schedule of Wild Animals Act 1976?
- Is a license required to keep this pet?
- Is there potential for noise nuisance
- What effects are there to neighbours if the pet escapes?
- Is the property suitable?

5.6 If permission is granted, details of the Pet must be inputted onto Northgate. A picture and description of the pet should also be taken and scanned into Serengeti.

5.7 Appeals

Appeals against the decision to keep a pet should be made to the Regional Housing Manager. The Regional Housing Manager will provide a written decision, taking all factors into account, within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.

5.8 Complaints about pets

In the first instance, NCH would expect that the person making the complaint has already approached their neighbour/pet owner about the nuisance the animal is causing.

All complaints about pets will be dealt with in accordance with NCH Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

5.9 Unauthorised pets

Following a report or complaint of an unauthorised pet in an NCH property, we will:

- Arrange a visit to the alleged perpetrator to investigate the report/complaint
- If after investigation, we feel that the pet's welfare is in question, or it is causing unnecessary nuisance to neighbours, we will provide information on who to contact e.g. behaviour counsellor or vet
- If the owner is not willing to fix the situation then advice on rehoming agencies will be given. Please see appendix 3 for useful contacts. NCH will provide assistance where appropriate to help the owner rehome their pet
- Send the tenant a letter confirming the situation and the likelihood of legal action if they do not comply with your requests. Legal action will include an injunction to keep the animal(s) away from the property.

5.10 The Housing Patch Manager will seek to enforce the Pets Policy in consultation with Nottingham City Council (NCC), Environmental Health and the Dog Warden Service where appropriate. Measures will be taken to assess and resolve each case.

5.11 Legal action will only be taken as a last resort if the tenant has not responded effectively to address the issues or the nuisance is persistent. This may eventually include eviction where necessary.

5.12 Pets left behind following eviction of a tenant

Any pets left behind by the tenant are regarded as 'property' by law, in the same way as any other items left behind by a tenant. NCH is responsible for removing any animals left behind in the property. The HPM will make arrangements for their care and should attempt to recharge the tenant for all costs incurred.

5.13 If the HPM suspects that the tenant being evicted will not make suitable arrangements for any pet they have, the RSPCA should be contacted as soon as possible. The RSPCA may be able to be present at the eviction if adequate notice is provided. In situations where tenant cannot or will not make suitable arrangements for the animals the RSPCA will endeavour to get the tenant to sign ownership over to them and will

accept all resulting costs. Where animals are not signed over to the RSPCA, the Society will help with capture and transportation at no cost, but will only provide further help if they receive a written undertaking from NCH or the owner accepting full responsibility for all boarding and veterinary costs. In these situations, the HPM should seek advice from the Tenancy and Estate Manager.

5.14 Pets left behind following tenancy termination

If the tenant has departed and left animals in the property, the HPM should contact the RSPCA who will attend to the immediate welfare needs of the animal.

5.15 Pets left behind following abandonment

If NCH genuinely believes that the tenant has abandoned the property and any pets kept within it, with no intention to return, the HPM should contact the RSPCA. In these situations they may be a case for further action under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960.



Application to keep a pet

Your details

Your name:

Address:

Telephone number:

Email:

Address where the pet(s) will be kept if different from the above address

Type of accommodation where the pet(s) will be kept e.g. house, flat, ground floor flat

Does the property have direct access to its own garden? Yes/No

Does the property have direct access to a shared garden or open space? Yes/No

Have you or any member of your household ever been denied permission to keep a pet in the past? Yes/No

Have you or any member of your household ever been prosecuted for any offence against an animal? Yes/No

If answered yes to either of the last two questions, please provide further details:

Details of the Pet or Pets you wish to keep

Dog or Cat

Number of dogs or cats you wish to keep:

Dogs only – please state the breed or type:

For female dogs or cats, please state if you have done anything to prevent breeding:

Other Pets

Number and type of pet or pets you wish to keep:

***Can you meet the welfare needs of the pet or pets by providing suitable accommodation and any specialist equipment they may need?** Yes/No

Any comments:

*Please see The Animal Welfare Act 2006 at www.defra.gov.uk

Declaration

I confirm I have read and fully understanding the Nottingham City Homes Pets Policy leaflet and understand my responsibilities as stated in my tenancy agreement.

I understand that I am fully responsible for the care, welfare and behaviour of my pets and will ensure that they do not cause a nuisance or distress to my neighbours and others.

I understand that Nottingham City Homes has the right to withdraw permission to keep a pet and that irresponsible pet owners will not be allowed to keep any pets in council property and may be reported to the RSPCA.

Print full name:

Signature:

Date:

Please return your completed form to your local housing office. The address for this can be found at:

http://www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/customer_care/housing_offices/default.aspx

Appendix 2

Suitable pets

Suitable animals that will be considered for permission by NCH are as follows:

- Birds
- Cats
- Dogs – except those listed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (see below unsuitable pets)
- Fish – except fish tanks over 4ft in length
- Domestic rodents e.g. hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice and guinea pigs
- Rabbits
- Reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates – for certain reptiles and amphibians, tenants must have a license and this will need to be checked when assessing permission. The Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 also lists certain reptiles and amphibians as dangerous and therefore this should be consulted before granting permission.

Unsuitable animals to keep as pets

The following animals will be refused permission by NCH:

- Livestock – horses, donkeys, goats, ponies, pigs, cattle, ducks, geese, chickens
 - Dogs listed in Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 – Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, and Fila Brasileiro. Up to date information can be obtained from the website of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at www.defra.gov.uk or we can send you further details
 - Animals listed in the Schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – includes but not limited to:
 - Wolfdogs
 - Bengal cats
 - Some primates – e.g. gorillas, chimpanzees, orang-utans, bonobos, gibbons
 - Wild carnivores - e.g. bears, wolves, wildcats, wild dogs, foxes
 - Larger and/or venomous reptiles – e.g. alligator, crocodile, venomous snakes, large/venomous lizards
 - Dangerous spiders
 - Scorpions
- A list of animals requiring a license under this Act can be obtained from the DEFRA website at www.defra.gov.uk or we can send you further details
- Rats, mice, gerbils, and hamsters if the number is unmanageable and unsuitable for either the environment in which they live or the accommodation provided

- Rabbits and guinea pigs that are intended to be kept inside the home, unless kept in a cage suitable for their welfare
- Endangered species, such as certain birds of prey

Appendix 3 – Useful contacts for advice and assistance

RSPCA

This is a charity which investigates complaints of cruelty and neglect. They run animal hospitals and clinics for low income households. They run centres which house dogs looking for new homes and provide general animal care and welfare advice. They can also provide financial assistance for neutering animals.

Contact numbers:

General information	0870 3335 999
24 hour cruelty and advice line	0870 5555 999
Website	www.rspca.org.uk

Dogs Trust

This is a welfare charity providing advice on all aspects of dog ownership. It runs 15 centres across the UK for dogs looking for new homes. It campaigns on animal welfare issues and runs education programmes. It subsidises neutering and provides free micro-chipping in certain areas.

If you become a member of the Dogs Trust you are entitled to unlimited access to Vetfone, which is a 24 hour emergency advice service open all year. You also receive free third party insurance of up to £1,000,000 cover per claim if your dog causes damage or injury to another person, their property or pet.

Telephone number	0207 837 0006
Website	www.dogstrust.org.uk

Nottingham Dog Control Service

This service offers assistance relating to stray dogs, dog fouling, dogs on school grounds or general advice.

Telephone number	0115 915 2020
Website	www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/23658/Dog-Warden-Service

Cats Protection

This is a charity that provides advice on cat care. It runs a rescue service and a rehoming service. It may provide financial assistance with neutering cats.

Contact details

General information	08702 099 099
Cat neutering	03000 12 12 12

Email (cat neutering only) neutering@cats.org.uk

Website www.cats.org.uk

PDSA

This is a charity that runs animal clinics to provide veterinary care for sick animals owned by low income households.

PDSA vet care services are available to pet owners who receive either Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and live within a defined catchment area around each PDSA hospital or practice.

All popular domestic animals are treated such as dogs, cats and those described as 'small furrries.' You will be asked to make a donation towards any treatment your pet receives.

Eligible pet owners must register their pet with PDSA before they are in need of any treatment and this is limited to one named pet only.

Telephone 01952 290 999

Website www.pdsa.org.uk

Cat Chat

This is a web based charity providing rehoming services to unwanted and abandoned cats.

Email (all enquiries) cat.advice@catchat.org

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

Holds a list of registered veterinary surgeons. This can be found on their website.

Telephone 0207 222 2001

Website www.rcvs.org.uk or www.any-uk-vet.co.uk

The Cinnamon Trust

This is a national charity for the elderly, terminally ill and their pets, providing peace of mind and practical help for people and their pets.

The charity has over 15,000 community service volunteers who will provide practical help with any aspect of day care where this poses a problem, for example, dog walking for housebound owners.

Telephone 01736 757 900

Email (for volunteering) volunteer@cinnamon.org.uk

Email (all enquiries) admin@cinnamon.org.uk