

## Pet Policy

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Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy or saving it on shared/ individual drives. All policies and supporting resources can be found under 'Policy and Procedures' on the intranet. Printed and saved versions may quickly go out of date- contact [policy@homegroup.org.uk](mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk) for support and advice

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This policy has been developed to ensure Home Group provide a clearer and more consistent framework for responding to requests from customers wanting to keep pets in our rented, supported and leasehold/shared ownership properties. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our approach is fair and transparent and considers the needs of all customers, the wider community and Home Group's responsibilities.

We acknowledge the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring to customers, particularly in relation to improved physical and mental health. The positive outcomes of responsible pet ownership are recognised in national policy, including the Renters Rights' Act 2025 which encourages landlords to accept pet ownership requests where possible, and not to use blanket ban approaches on pet ownership.

We ensure the comfort, safety and wellbeing of all customers and protect communal areas and the wider neighbourhoods from possible issues relating to pet ownership. It is our responsibility to consider individual circumstances, property types/tenures and the potential effects, on a case-by-case basis.

We are committed to adopting best practices as guided by legislative and regulatory frameworks, to ensure a positive living environment for all customers, while supporting responsible pet ownership.

Our approach reflects our [Customer Promise](#) to provide safe, high-quality services, treat customers with fairness and respect, and be transparent and accountable in everything we do.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all customers living in properties owned or managed by Home Group, as well as all colleagues involved in tenancy or lease management. This applies to all customers in rented, supported, leasehold or shared ownership homes.

It covers all forms of pet ownership including, but not limited to, dogs, cats, small mammals and birds, whether kept indoors or outdoors. This policy applies to existing customers requesting pets, and customers applying for a Home Group home, who already have a pet. It also sets out the guidelines for visitors wishing to bring pets onto our premises.

Colleagues should read this policy alongside our related compliance notes, procedures and processes. It links closely with other key Home Group policies, including our Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour policy, Property Management policy, Tenure policy and Person-Centred Service Delivery Policy.

## 3. Regulation and Legislation

Home Group comply with the relevant guidance, legislative and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to:

### England

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Renters' Rights Act 2025
- The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Amendment Act 2025

### Scotland

- Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006
- Welfare of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2025

### United Kingdom

- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- Microchipping of Dogs Regulations 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Pet owners must comply with these laws, as well as any local restrictions regarding pet ownership, microchipping, licensing and responsible animal care.

All regulations and legislations will be monitored, to ensure up to date information and legal requirements.

## 4. Our Policy

Customers must apply for permission to own or keep any pet in a Home Group property, as part of the conditions of their tenancy or lease. We will not unreasonably withhold consent. If a new customer, moving into a Home Group property already has a pet, permission must still be requested as part of the application process.

Customers are responsible for the health, welfare and safety of any pets in their home. It is a legal requirement of all pet owners to ensure their pet has access to a proper diet, water, protection from pain and suffering, and a suitable environment to live in.

A pet must not be left unattended in the property for long periods of time. Customers should make suitable arrangements to provide appropriate care when they are away from home for longer periods of time. For example, dogs and cats must be boarded elsewhere or under the supervision of another individual. Supervision by a neighbour, friend or family members may be adequate for some animals, for example fish, hamsters etc.

Customers are liable for any damage caused by their pet, and any pet belonging to children under the age of 16, is legally the responsibility of the parent/adult.

Dogs must be on leads in communal areas, as well as other animals that may require a lead. This is to protect the communal grounds, the community and so as not to cause upset or disturbance to other customers or visitors in the area.

### 4.1 Tenancy and Lease agreements

All of Home Group's standard tenancy agreements contain a section on pets. Tenancy agreements in England do not specify the number of pets allowed, so this will be decided on an individual basis for each customer.

In Scotland, the Scottish Secure tenancy allows for customers to keep one domestic pet, providing customers keep to the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement and prior permission is granted. Customers should always check the terms of their agreement.

Customers in leasehold and shared ownership properties should refer to their lease agreement.

### 4.2 Persona Homes

Shared Ownership properties within Persona Homes must request and receive permission to own a pet. Shared owners that have a fully enclosed garden can keep up to two pets with permission, for example, a dog and a cat. Customers living in other type of property, for example a flat with/without communal areas, may keep other caged or confined domestic pets. Any requests to keep dogs and/or cats will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

All domestic pets should be properly confined and controlled to ensure they do not cause a nuisance to other customers. Customers keeping any domestic pet which caused a nuisance to others will be required to remove it from the development within 28 days and not allow it to return or be replaced. Failure to do so will result in legal action.

For further information on the terms and conditions within Persona Homes, see [Keeping a pet as a shared owner](#)

### **4.3 Supported housing**

The principles and considerations within this policy apply to our supported services, but additional considerations may be made depending on the type of accommodation and nature of the services.

In our supported services many of the license agreements will permit supported customers to keep pets with the approval of the relevant manager. Customers need written consent to have pets in their rooms, or elsewhere on the premises. This consent can be revoked if the pet interferes with the peace and comfort of other customers in the vicinity or it is being mistreated.

Colleagues and customers need to consider a range of factors before deciding about the suitability of keeping pets in any supported service. Colleagues will also need to be able to demonstrate fairness, equality, consistency and be able to justify their decisions.

#### **4.3.1 Independent living**

These services involve customers living in their own home and receiving care and/or support that promotes their independence.

The principles and considerations within this policy apply to our independent living services, but additional considerations may be made depending on the type of accommodation and the suitability of keeping a pet.

### **4.4 Permissions and restrictions**

#### **4.4.1 Existing customers**

Customers need to get permission from Home Group before getting a pet. Customers can make a request to have a pet by completing a pet permission request form. We consider each request on a case-by-case basis, considering the property type and type / number of pets being requested.

When a request is received from a customer to keep/own a pet, Home Group will respond to the request and make a decision within 28 calendar days. In England, this time frame may be extended in cases where further information is needed, by no more than a further 7 calendar days. If a permission request is granted, conditions may be set. If a permission request is denied, we write to the customer detailing the reasons for the refusal and offering information on how to appeal.

Where customers care for an animal on a temporary basis, or this becomes a long-term arrangement, for example dog-sitting a family or friends' dog, customers must follow the same process as owning a pet, by requesting permission and following the same conditions.

#### **4.4.2 New customers – existing pets**

New customers must include any existing pets within their application, so this may be considered during the application and allocations process. We ask customers to let us know if you have a pet as soon as possible, whether they are purchasing or renting.

Where possible, Home Group ensure consistency across tenure types, especially in areas where we may have a mixed tenure block of flats.

For more information on allocations, see [Home Group | Find a home](#) or see our [Allocations policy](#).

#### 4.4.3 Restrictions

We will not grant permission for customers to keep the following as pets:

- Any animal that is an endangered species, i.e. red squirrel, cicada, turtle dove
- Any animal considered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (this includes but is not limited to, large mammals, venomous reptiles, dangerous spiders)
- Bees/Wasps

We retain the right to withdraw permission to keep a pet. Failure to comply with tenancy, licence or lease conditions in connection with keeping a pet may result in permission being withdrawn and/or tenancy/lease enforcement action.

Some properties or schemes (for example in supported housing) may have additional restrictions due to health and safety or communal living considerations.

If we are aware that there have been previous issues with owning any animal, we will take this into consideration in our decision.

##### 4.4.3.1 Dangerous dogs

We will not permit any dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, unless these were already owned before the regulation and the appropriate licenses and certificates are available. A dog is considered dangerous under the Act if it is “dangerously out of control” in a public place or private property.

If a customer already owns one of those breeds, they must:

- Register the animal with their local council
- Ensure the animal is microchipped and contact details are kept up to date
- Always muzzle and leash in public areas
- Provide proof of training
- Maintain 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability insurance
- Avoid public off-leash areas

##### 4.4.3.2 Exotic animals

Some exotic animals are considered as pets within the UK, such as a bearded dragon, gecko, parrot or tarantula. Colleagues must always check whether an animal falls under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, is legal within the UK, needs a local license or if there are specific rules around owning an exotic animal when considering a request to keep an exotic pet. Where a customer does not have the required licence to own the animal, or the animal is deemed too dangerous for the property and surrounding area, we would refuse permission in these circumstances.

#### 4.4.4 Assistance Animals

An assistance animal is an animal, usually a dog, that is used to assist an individual with a disability in their day-to-day life. Assistance animals may perform specific tasks, provide physical support, alerts to medical conditions, or offer other disability related assistance.

In the context of this policy, a disability is as defined in the Equality Act 2010; a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term adverse effect of a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Each request will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Home Group may refuse a request only where there is clear evidence that allowing an assistance animals would cause an unreasonable and disproportionate impact on the health, safety or enjoyment of other customers.

Any refusal would need to be linked to a clear assessment that the reasonable adjustment is unreasonable or cannot be accommodated. This must be in line with our [Person-Centred Delivery Policy](#) and our approach to reasonable adjustments.

#### 4.4.5 Emotional support animals

An emotional support animal is an animal that provides comfort, reassurance or benefit to an individual with mental health condition or disability, through its presence rather than through the performance of trained tasks.

Under UK law, emotional support animals are not automatically recognised as assistance animals. However, where a customer has a disability covered by the Equality Act 2010 and the presence of an emotional support animal is necessary, Home Group has a duty to consider the request as normal.

We encourage customers to tell us about the reasonable adjustments they need. We work out whether a requested adjustment is reasonable by considering if it is likely to be effective in reducing risks or disadvantages the customer may face. We will always do our best to meet a customer's needs.

All information provided in support of an assistance or emotional support animal request will be handled sensitively in accordance with our Data Protection policy. Medical or sensitive personal information will be processed with confidentiality and used only for assessing the request.

For more information on reasonable adjustments, see [Person centred service delivery policy](#)

For more information on data protection, see [Home Group | Our Data Protection Officer](#) or [Data protection policy summary statement](#)

#### 4.4.6 Livestock

Livestock is not permitted to be kept in Home Group properties, including within gardens, balconies or communal land, without written permission. Requests to keep livestock will be assessed based on a customer's tenure and conditions set out within the tenancy or lease agreements. Consent cannot be unreasonably withheld, but we may be able to refuse consent for livestock on the basis it could cause nuisance.

In relation to horses, these can either be considered livestock, or pets, depending on the intended use. Caring for a horse requires substantial land. Planning permission and researching regional zoning laws is often required. We will not apply rules in a way that unlawfully discriminates against someone on keeping an animal.

Providing approval to keep any animal will be based on any reasonable adjustments that could be made, the suitability of the tenure or property/land a customer resides on, and any legal restrictions or requirements that are in place.

If a customer owns a dog, and live in an area that has livestock, the dogs must not cause a disturbance or nuisance to any livestock, per The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Amendment Act 2025.

##### 4.4.6.1 Livestock - Commercial purposes

The individual terms of the tenancy or lease a customer has will determine whether livestock for commercial purposes is permitted. Some tenancies and leases will not allow the running of a business of any kind and there may be a clause in the agreement stating the property has to be used as a private residence. Restrictions on the use of a property may also be in place in certain areas.

##### 4.4.6.2 Birds/Poultry

It is a legal requirement for anyone in Great Britain who keeps birds to register with the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#). Customers do not need to register parrots or Passeriformes (such as

budgies, cockatiels and finches), if they are both fully housed in a dwelling and have no access to the open air. If birds are taken outdoors at any time, they must be registered.

Birds/poultry are not permitted to be kept in Home Group properties, including within gardens, balconies or communal land, without written permission. Requests to keep birds or poultry will be assessed based on a customer's tenure and conditions set out within the tenancy or lease agreements. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld, but we may refuse permission where we have concerns about nuisance to other members of the community.

## **4.5 Health and safety**

It is important to ensure that pet ownership does not compromise the safety of Home Group properties or other customers, or the condition or integrity of our properties.

### **4.5.1 Heavy tanks and aquariums**

Customers who have been granted permission to keep aquariums, vivariums or other heavy tanks must be mindful of the potential risk associated with their weight and placement. Overly large or heavy tanks may exceed the load-bearing capacity of floors, potentially causing structural damage to the property. Conditions should be applied in such circumstances requiring that:

- The total weight (including water, stand and contents) of any tank does not exceed safe limits.
- Any installation must be approved prior to setup.
- Wherever possible, tanks must be positioned away from areas where leaks could cause damage.

### **4.5.2 Leaks and water damage**

Leaks from aquariums, pet baths or other water sources can sometimes lead to significant water damage, affecting the property and potentially a neighbouring property. To prevent this:

- Customers should ensure any leaks are addressed promptly, and any damage to the property is reported immediately.
- Customers should routinely carry out checks on tanks to ensure working condition.

### **4.5.3 Structural damage and improper installations**

When attaching shelves, climbing structures or other fixtures for pets, this must be done with care. Incorrectly installed items can cause damage to walls, floors and ceilings and may pose a safety risk. Customers should be advised to:

- Use appropriate fixings and follow manufacturer guidance for all installations.
- Remove all fixtures and make good any damage before the end of a tenancy/lease.

Customers are required to seek written permission from Home Group under our Property Alterations procedures before drilling or attaching anything to the property structure.

For more information on making alterations to the property, see [Home Group | Making changes to your property](#)

Breaches of these requirements, where damage is caused, may result in recharges for repairs or in more serious cases, enforcement action. We encourage customers to review their tenancy/lease agreements and speak with us if they have any questions about pet-related installations or maintenance.

### **4.5.4 Cosmetic damage/other damage caused by pets**

Cosmetic damage refers to superficial harm to the property that affects its appearance but not its structural integrity or function. Common examples of pet-related cosmetic damage include but are not limited to;

- Scratches or scuff marks on doors, skirting boards and windowsills.
- Electric sockets/wire damage.
- Damage to built-in-wardrobes.
- Damage to garden areas.
- Chewed or damaged woodwork, such as door frames or bannisters.

Customers may be recharged for any structural damage or cosmetic damage to the property. Customers may be given an opportunity to rectify any damage within a reasonable timeframe. Failure to pay recharge costs may result in further action in line our tenancy/lease or arrears agreements.

For further information on recharges, see [Home Group | Rechargeable repairs](#)

#### **4.5.5 Health and safety of customers**

The wellbeing and safety of all customers is important to us when considering permissions to keep pets. When considering approval, we will also consider the potential health risks, particularly where neighbouring customers may have allergies or sensitivities to animals – especially in a communal building.

Allergic reactions can occur due to exposure to pet dander, fur or saliva, that can affect customers in shared spaces, such as corridors, lifts and other communal areas. Pets may inadvertently spread allergens through ventilation systems or shared facilities.

Prior to granting approval, affected neighbouring customers in shared accommodation or small communal buildings where colleagues know there are allergies may be notified first and consulted. Approval may include restrictions on the type, breed and location of the pet within a building to minimise exposure to allergens.

Colleagues would not routinely check with neighbouring customers for routine pet requests, however if there are known issues or allergies, this may be the case.

We may periodically review the health and safety implications, and pet approval may be revoked if significant health risks arise.

#### **4.5.6 Pet health and safety**

It is essential that pets are regularly treated for fleas and worms to safeguard both their wellbeing and the living environment. Untreated pets can lead to infestations, posing health risks to both people and animals, as well as potentially causing damage or nuisance within the property. If an issue arises, we may request evidence that appropriate flea and worming treatments have been administered. This helps ensure a safe, hygienic setting for all customers and maintains the integrity of our homes.

### **4.6 Property alteration requests**

Requests for alterations to a property to accommodate pets are dealt with under our Property Alterations Procedures. Permission to carry out alterations, including, for example installation of a dog / cat flap or installation of permanent outdoor accommodation, is subject to works not compromising to safety of the building. For example, permission for to install a cat / dog flap will be refused if the door is a fire door, as this could compromise the safety of the building.

There is more information on our website about property alterations - [Home Group | Making changes to your property](#)

### **4.7 Visitors with pets**

The control of pets, or any pet visiting the property, is the responsibility of the customer. This will be managed under the nuisance clause of the customers tenancy or lease agreement.

## 4.8 Alternative options to owning a pet

Where we refuse or revoke permission for a pet, we support customers to explore alternative options where appropriate, such as;

- Voluntary work at the local RSPCA/SSPCA or other animal welfare charity.
- Visits by an organisation that provides pets for therapy.
- Sponsor an animal in a zoo or wildlife reserve.
- Provide a voluntary service to the local community – such as dog walking.

## 4.9 Anti-social behaviour and complaints

A pet's behaviour is the responsibility of the customer, regardless of the owner. Home Group will investigate all complaints made about pets in line with our policies and if the complaint related to nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we investigate in line with our Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour policy. We communicate effectively with customers to address any pet-related issues or concerns.

Pet-related nuisance includes but is not limited to;

- Excessive noise or barking that will cause a disturbance,
- Dangerously uncontrolled behaviour,
- Any animal causing damage to Home Group property (Customers are responsible for any damage caused to any Home Group property or another customer's personal property.)

We take action where required to enforce the terms and conditions of tenancy and lease agreements if pet-related nuisance remains unresolved.

We report any concerns of animal cruelty or mistreatment to the police or relevant animal support charity (such as the RSPCA). We report concerns about stray animals to the relevant local authority.

Information and advice on caring for a pet can be found on the RSPCA website - [Pet Advice & Tips | RSPCA - RSPCA - rspca.org.uk](#)

### 4.9.1 Supporting customers with disputes

We are committed to ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for all customers and the wider community. In instances where a pet is reported to cause disturbances or nuisances, Home Group will work collaboratively with all parties to address the concern. Resolution measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitated discussion or mediation between parties
- Implementation of reasonable restrictions or requirements regarding pet behaviour
- Guidance on appropriate steps to resolve together

We monitor any disputes or reports via our Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour policy and supporting procedures, to ensure effective resolution.

For more information on Anti-Social Behaviour, see [Home Group | Anti-social behaviour and nuisance noise](#) or see our policy [Tackling anti-social behaviour policy](#)

## 4.10 Right of appeal

Customers and homeowners have the right to appeal our decision where we refuse to grant permission to keep a pet. The case will be reviewed and feedback on the outcome will be provided within 10 days.

Complaints should not be used to appeal against a decision we have made. The appeals route should be used in these circumstances.

In Scotland **only**, a customer may appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal again and the period of days in which this should be submitted differs depending on the circumstances. For more information visit the site [here](#).

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 outlines that if a customer is unhappy with a decision made by a landlord, they can approach the new PRS Ombudsman (Private Rented Sector Database and Ombudsman Scheme), however it is important to note that this **does not** apply to social housing, therefore Home Group are **not** bound by this governing body.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### 5.1 Customer responsibilities

- Apply for permission before taking ownership of a pet and adhere to all conditions set out.
- Follow the responsibilities set out and enforced under their tenancy/lease agreement.
- Inform the landlord of any changes in pet ownership or circumstances.

### 5.2 Housing Management

- Process and record pet permission applications promptly and fairly.
- Respond to pet permission requests within 28 calendar days.
- Provide advice and support on responsible pet ownership.
- Conduct checks during routine inspections and respond to concerns or complaints.

### 5.3 Leadership and Management

- Hear appeals against decisions declining permission to keep a pet
- Review and update the policy where necessary.
- Support staff and customers in understanding and applying the policy.
- Monitor compliance and address concerns appropriately.

## 6. Monitoring and reporting

Compliance with the policy will be monitored through property or estate inspections, resident feedback or complaints, and incident reports. Customers and staff are encouraged to report any concerns to the housing officer or relevant housing management. All reports will be treated and investigated in line with our procedures.

## 7. Key definitions

Word / phrase	Definition
Assistance animal	A dog or other animal that provides emotional support, comfort, or companionship to an individual with a disability, often through the performance of trained tasks.
Dangerous dogs	A dog is considered dangerous under the Dangerous Dogs Act if it is "dangerously out of control" in a public place or private property.
Emotional support animal	An animal that provides comfort, reassurance or benefit to an individual with mental health condition or disability, through its presence rather than through the performance of trained tasks.

Endangered species	An animal that is at serious risk of extinction.
Exotic animals	The term exotic is relative and can vary based on geographical location. In the UK, an exotic animal is one not native to the UK and would not ordinarily be a domesticated animal.
Livestock	Animals that are raised in an agricultural setting to provide labour and produce diversified products for human consumption, such as meat, eggs and milk. (for example, pigs, chickens, cattle etc.)
Pet	A pet means an animal kept by a person for personal interest, companionship, ornamental purposes or any combination of these. - Definition taken from Renters Rights' Act 2025 and Housing Scotland Act 2025. (i.e. dog, cat, hamster, fish)
Tenure	Tenure refers to the conditions or terms under which properties are occupied.

## 8. Version history

Version Number	Effective Date	Amendment made by (job title)	Version approved by (job title)	Description of Changes
1.0	05/06/2026	Policy Business Partner	Regional Director	New policy created. Parts of information extracted from a previous policy compliance note.