

ANIMAL AND PETS POLICY



Background and objectives

Alliance Homes recognises the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring to our customers and the wider community. The policy reflects this and is designed to ensure that all our customers, irrespective of tenure, are free to make their own choices, without the need to gain formal permission from Alliance Homes should they wish to keep a pet, whilst being bound by conditions of pet ownership. The policy will specify the responsibilities that pet owners have and the possible consequences of not meeting expectations or breaching set conditions.

1. Policy detail

1.1. The tenancy agreement and lease conditions

Alliance Homes is not prescriptive about the type or number of pets that a household can have. However, the tenancy agreement or lease outlines the responsibilities of pet owners and what the consequences could be if there is nuisance, annoyance or disturbance caused by pets. Alliance Homes will not unreasonably withhold permission to keep a pet and no application process will apply.

1.2. Legal responsibilities of pet owners

In addition to the terms of the tenancy agreement or lease our customers have legal responsibilities they need to consider when looking to house an animal. Their pets must be kept in accordance with the RSPCA's basic welfare needs (the five freedoms) as introduced by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. For dog owners there is an additional requirement for the animal to be microchipped and this will also apply to cats from 10 June 2024 and we will expect our customers to ensure that all legal requirements are met.

1.3. Responsibilities of pet owners

1.3.1. To their pets

Our customers will be expected to properly manage the day-to-day care of their pet. That is their pet should have:

- Adequate food and water
- A safe home environment
- Protection against pain and harm
- Opportunities to behave naturally, i.e., playing/walking.
- Housing with, or apart from, other animals as befits the type of pet that they are.

Alliance Homes will take the welfare of the pets into account when deciding if our customers are to be asked to remove an animal from the property, together with the removal of our implied consent for the individual or household to keep a pet. All decisions would be taken in conjunction with specialist advice

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from the RSPCA. If our customers have any questions about the care of their pet, they should contact their vet or local RSPCA centre.

1.3.2. To their neighbours and the wider community

Tenants need to be mindful of the effects that pet ownership can have on people living as immediate neighbours. Section 3, conditions 6. (Nuisance) and 7. (Pets and other animals) of Alliance Homes' tenancy agreement clearly explains that tenants are responsible for the actions and any nuisance caused by their pets or their visitor's pets.

Customers who access their property through a communal door e.g. flats and age restricted schemes will need to make sure that their pets are not left to roam freely, they are kept on a lead at all times and they are not allowed to foul in communal hallways, landings, stairwells or gardens.

Where fouling does occur, it must be cleaned up immediately afterwards and disposed of appropriately.

1.3.3. To our staff

Our customers have a responsibility to ensure that any pet they have does not cause a problem or pose a threat to any member of our staff, either in their own home or in the community around their home.

1.3.4. To Alliance Homes

Our customers need to ensure that by having a pet in their home this does not cause any additional damage or unreasonable wear and tear to their home or to the communal areas around it.

The number and type of animals kept should be proportionate to the property size.

Our customers must make adequate arrangements for providing care for their pets when they are away from home and notify Alliance Homes if a temporary absence is for an extended period.

1.3.5. Acceptable types of pets

Alliance Homes is not prescriptive about the type of pets our customers can keep in their home and gardens. However, we expect them to use reasonable judgement and ensure the pets they have are cared for appropriately and do not cause noise nuisance or damage to property. Alliance Homes will take proportionate tenancy enforcement action up to and including the removal of unsuitable animals.

Alliance Homes acknowledges that poultry (chickens, ducks, geese) and livestock (pigs, sheep, goats, horses) are considered pets by some people. However, we expect our customers to consider their responsibilities under their tenancy conditions, as cited above. Moreover, they must abide by any restrictive covenants associated with the property and consider the suitability of keeping such animals, given the potential effect to their home environment, neighbours, and the wider community. The keeping of cockerels is not permitted due to the noise nuisance likely to be caused.

Dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 as amended in 2014 (excluding those that have gone through the legal exemption process and are adhering to the strict requirements of these schemes EG: XL Bully breeds where customers who own this breed will have to make application for legal exemption

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by 31 January 2024 and if successful register with Alliance Homes that they are keeping these dogs in an Alliance Homes property) and any animal listed in the Schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, or The Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations may not be kept in an Alliance Homes property under any circumstances.

The keeping of any animal listed in either of these pieces of legislation (or any legislation which may replace the existing) will be classed as a criminal offence and investigated by the police. If a criminal offence is proven through an act or omission that is unlawful Alliance Homes will consider this a severe act of anti-social behavior and enforcement action against the tenancy will be taken. This is to protect the health and safety of any residents living in the local community and employees of Alliance Homes, who may encounter the animals. Owners who have been granted legal exemption will be required to register with Alliance Homes so that visiting employees of Alliance Homes are advised beforehand.

1.3.6. Consequent action if conditions for keeping a pet are broken.

Any allegations of nuisance caused by pets, or neglect to pets themselves will be investigated by Alliance Homes. In doing so we will uphold the conditions set out in the tenancy agreement. Any investigation we conduct could also include working with other relevant agencies e.g. RSPCA, Police or the local authority.

Failure to comply with the Animals and Pets policy could result in Alliance Homes taking enforcement action to resolve any persistent problems caused by pet ownership. The action will be proportionate and may include any of the following options:

- pet acceptable behaviour contracts.
- the explicit withdrawal of permission to keep a pet.
- enforcement action against a tenancy.
- removal of the animal.

If permission to keep an animal is withdrawn the customer will be notified in writing. Withdrawal will be for a minimum of 1 year and subject to review unless we are advised of an alternative period by the courts or through any other relevant agency.

If permission for our tenant to keep pets is withdrawn, but the tenant continues to keep pets within their home then Alliance Homes will work with the relevant agencies and take enforcement action. This action could, in exceptional circumstances, include Alliance Homes applying to the County Court to regain possession of a tenant's home or (Alliance Homes along with the other agencies) obtaining an injunction preventing the tenant from owning any pets or having any pets within their home.

If during the pre-tenancy or the reference process stage, we ascertain that a new tenant has previously been involved with animal/pet anti-social behavior at their current or previous property then Alliance Homes will investigate further and consider retracting our implied permission to keep animals at the start of their tenancy.

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2. Monitoring, consultation, and review

- 2.1. We monitor our performance in delivering the objectives of this policy by reporting to our leadership teams a range of measures including the number of animal and pet related complaints received.
- 2.2. The Tenancy Services Manager is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.
- 2.3. Customers, colleagues, and service users may be involved in giving feedback on this policy, leading to amendments where appropriate.
- 2.4. This policy will be reviewed within three years of its approval date.

3. Equality and diversity

- 3.1. This policy is subject to a periodic Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 3.2. The purpose of such an assessment is to consider the effect of the policy regarding the recognised protected characteristics of equality and ensure that it does not unfairly impact any individual or group. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy and Single Equality Scheme. Remedial action will be undertaken if a detrimental effect is identified.
- 3.3. The EIA also requires the policy author to consider whether the policy is likely to negatively impact on a person's Human Rights.
- 3.4. This policy and any other related Alliance Homes publications can be provided in other formats for those with visual, literacy or language difficulties.

4. Associated documents

- Lettings Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy

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5. Version control and approval dates

Approval stage	Date completed
Equality Impact Assessment completed	20 th November 2023
EIA reviewed by Equality & Diversity Manager	21 st November 2023
SLT review / approval	11 th January 2024
Board or Committee approval	N/A
Next review date	31 st January 2027

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

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Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment must be conducted alongside the review of an existing policy or the creation of a new one.

1. Name the Strategy, Policy, Procedure or Function (SPPF) being assessed and name of author.

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2. Aims of the SPPF being assessed.

- *Whose need is it designed to meet?*
- *Are there any measurable elements such as time limits or age limits?*

Alliance Homes recognises the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring to our customers and the wider community. The policy reflects this and is designed to ensure that all our customers are free to make their own lifestyle choices, without the requirement to seek permission from Alliance Homes. They are nevertheless bound by conditions of pet ownership. The policy will specify the responsibilities that pet owners have and the possible consequences of not meeting expectations or breaching set conditions.

3. Who has been consulted in developing the SPPF?

- *Make reference or links to consultation/evidence documents*

Alliance Homes' Feedback Panel were given the opportunity to review a draft of the policy and made comments and suggestions as to possible amendments. A response to specific queries was sent and appropriate amendments agreed.

Comments and suggestions have also been sought from tenancy officers and managers within the Tenancy Services team and colleagues in other operational teams.

4. Does the SPPF promote equality of opportunity?

The policy promotes equality of opportunity across the protected characteristics as follows:

All Alliance Homes customers across all protected characteristics should be able to benefit from the companionship and welfare afforded by keeping a pet.

5. Identify potential impact on each of the diversity "groups" by considering the following questions (the list is not exhaustive but an indication of the sort of questions assessors should think about):

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- *Might some groups find it harder to access the service?*
- *Do some groups have particular needs that are not well met by the current SPPF?*
- *What evidence do you have for your judgement (e.g. monitoring data, information from consultation/research/feedback)?*
- *Have staff/residents raised concerns/complaints?*
- *Is there local or national research to suggest there could be a problem?*

Protected Characteristic	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Information source/s **	Comments/evidence
Race	X				
Disability	X				
Gender	X				
Transgender	X				
Sexual orientation	X				
Religion or belief	X				
Age			X		Past tenancy management practices have required residents of age restricted (sheltered) schemes to gain permission to keep a pet whereas this is not a requirement in general needs accommodation. This policy ends potentially discriminatory practices against residents of such schemes over 60 years of age.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	X				
Pregnancy and Maternity	X				
Rural issue			X		There may be a perception that we have less visible presence in more outlying parts of the district which may make irresponsible or inappropriate animal or pet ownership (poultry and livestock) more likely. We seek to clarify our expectations that our customers should consider the suitability of keeping such animals, given the probable affects to their home environment, neighbours, and the wider community.

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Social mobility	X				
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Was there a negative impact identified in question 5? If yes go to question 6. if not go to question 7.

6. If “negative impact” identified in table (4) above is it?

Legal -

YES	NO
HIGH	LOW

What is the level of impact? -

If it is not legal and/or high impact – (i.e.: if you have highlighted NO to legal and HIGH to impact, then the document should be referred to Head of HR)

7. If positive impact has been identified in table 4 above, how can it be improved upon or maximised, either in this SPPF or others?

Provide information on our website or the portal regarding responsible pet ownership and animal welfare, in conjunction with guidance given by tenancy officers as part of their tenancy management function.

8. Full EIA (or if you decide full EIA is not necessary but some changes should be considered)

- Are there changes you could introduce which would make this SPPF work better for this group of people?
- Is further research or consultation required?

9. Does this proposal have any potential Human Rights implications?

If yes, please describe (if necessary, please refer to the Alliance Homes Group Human Rights Policy)

There are no Human Rights implications.