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Policy Statement

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POLICY STATEMENT

NCHA recognises that pet ownership can bring a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment to customers. We acknowledge that, especially in the case of vulnerable customers, owning a pet can enhance mental health, general emotional wellbeing and improve a customer's quality of life.

We support and encourage responsible pet ownership in our accommodation as set out in this policy provided the criteria for their care is met. Subject to the accommodation being suitable for a pet, we will not impose unreasonable restrictions on customers applying for permission to have a pet although pet ownership is an agreed concession and not a right.

We expect customers to adhere to the terms of their tenancy, lease or other occupancy agreement and the terms of this policy in relation to the keeping of pets at their property where permission has been granted through the completion of a pet owning contract.

We are committed to maintaining a quality environment for all our customers and take any complaints of pet nuisance seriously. We will seek to achieve a quick resolution using relevant legal remedies and/or by taking action through the tenancy or licence agreement or terms of the lease.

We are sensitive to the requirements of customers who are registered blind or deaf or have other disabilities and who may need support from trained assistance animals and will provide a welcoming environment at all NCHA premises and offices for assistance dogs accompanying their handlers. Any particular requirements that customers with disabilities may have will be met in accordance with our Diversity and Inclusion policy and our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This policy outlines NCHAs approach to pet ownership and applies to customers living in NCHA accommodation including Affordable Social Housing, Care & Support, ILOPs, Supported Housing, Shared Ownership, Leasehold and Rent to Buy Homes. Tenancies or leases managed by NCHA on behalf of another landlord will be subject to the landlords own policies on pet ownership.
- 1.2 This policy aims to:
- Ensure a consistent approach to pet ownership enabling customers to enjoy the benefits of owning pets.
 - Provide a balance ensuring pet ownership does not impact on the right of others to enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods.
 - Provide information for customers on pet ownership and how to apply for permission.

2. Responsibilities and risk

Your Community Co-ordinator

Customer Contact Advisors

Your Community Manager

Your Homes Manager

We recognise that if pets are not accommodated, cared for and controlled in a responsible manner they may cause nuisance and disturbance and potentially pose a risk to people, other animals and the customer's tenancy.

3. Policy details and guidance

- 3.1 We will ensure that information about pet ownership and permission required is available to all customers and made clear to new customers during the viewing and sign up process at each particular scheme, project or property.
- 3.1.2 Customers should refer to the list of designated pet friendly and non pet friendly accommodation in the appendices before requesting permission to keep a pet.
- 3.2 **Permissions**
- 3.2.1 Applicants seeking NCHA housing are asked to indicate on their application form if they intend to keep a pet. This will not prejudice their application unless they plan to keep a pet for which permission cannot be granted. If this is the case then this matter must be resolved before an offer of accommodation is made. We will offer pet-friendly accommodation to the customer wherever possible.
- 3.2.2 Customers should complete a pet application form seeking permission before getting a pet or assistance dog to allow us to keep a record of animals which are being kept at the property. In the event of the pet being rehomed, sold or upon the death of permitted pet(s), permission is required again if the customer wishes to have a new pet(s). Assistance dogs would automatically be granted permission upon completion of relevant checks.
- 3.2.3 In most cases, permission to keep a pet as detailed below will normally be granted if the accommodation is a house, maisonette, bungalow or a flat with its own entrance and access to an

outside area. In these cases, permission will not be unreasonably refused. Pets may be considered in other accommodation as outlined in 3.5 below.

3.2.4 We will normally grant permission for the following list of pets:

- Small birds that live in cages and only fly free inside the property
- Cats - where there are no more than 2 cats
- Dogs - except those listed in 3.2.4 and where there are no more than 2 dogs
- Fish – except fish tanks over 4ft in length
- Domestic rodents e.g. hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice and guinea pigs which must be kept in suitable cages
- Rabbits
- Reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates – except those where a licence is required to own them

We reserve the right to refuse permission for larger tropical reptile cages, tanks and terrariums which require significant additional heating which can potentially contribute to an electrical or fire safety risk.

3.2.5 We are not able to grant permission for the following list of animals:

- Weapon dogs and dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (amended 2023). The following types of dog are defined under the Act as a dangerous dog: Pit Bull Terrier, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro, Japanese Tosa and XL Bully. Any cross breeds of these four breeds are also not permitted. Up to date information on banned breeds can be obtained from the DEFRA website.
- Animals which should be licensed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 eg certain types of venomous snake or spiders and various breeds of monkeys. A full list of animals requiring a license under the Act can be obtained from the DEFRA website.
- Pigeons - without consulting with neighbours and without membership of the Racing Pigeon Association. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.
- Farm animals – for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, donkeys, ducks or similar types of animals. Permission may be granted to keep chickens at a house provided they have appropriate facilities, care and welfare needs. Chicken feed must be stored securely as chicken feed can attract rats which are prejudicial to health. Permission for cockerels will not be granted.
- Another dog or cat where the household already has 2 dogs or 2 cats or a dog and a cat.
- Where there is an ongoing problem with pet ownership in the household or there has been a significant, unresolved problem in the past, permission to keep an animal will be refused

3.3 Key conditions for keeping a pet

3.3.1 The following conditions for keeping pets are often set out in occupancy agreements. Where the occupancy agreement does not include information about pets these policy conditions will be set out clearly in the pet permission letter:

- Customers must not keep a pet without prior consent from NCHA or where appropriate, the managing agents or external service provider.
- Pets must be kept under control at all times.
- If an animal fouls any area it should be cleared up immediately by the owner and the area around cleaned and dried.
- Pets must not cause nuisance or danger to persons or other animals.

- Running a business such as breeding animals or operating a boarding kennels from one of our properties is not permitted.
- Any customer with a XL Bully breed of dog, that owned the dog prior to 01 February 2024 , and had permission from NCHA to keep the dog, must fully comply with the 2023 amendments to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Have a valid Certificate of Exemption and ensure it is muzzled and on a lead in public.

3.3.2 All dogs (including assistance dogs) must wear a collar and ID tag to comply with current legislation and be kept on a lead in communal areas at all times.

3.3.3 Dogs, cats and any animal that would need to be tethered or chained up must not be kept on balconies or in communal walkway to avoid risks of pets falling, strangulation, neglect or suffering from extremes in weather conditions. It is advised that caged animals kept on balconies for short periods of time during warmer weather should have suitable shelter and are regularly monitored. Parrots and any other 'vocal' bird must not be left on balconies for long periods of time or at unsociable hours as this may be construed as noise nuisance.

3.4 **Assistance or emotional support and wellbeing animals**

3.4.1 We will support and assist customers who require guide dogs and other assistance animals. We will comply with Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Disability Act 2005 and work with appropriate organisations to ensure proper arrangements are made.

3.4.2 Where an animal is requested to provide emotional support to assist health and wellbeing we will request confirmation of this need from the appropriate medical practitioner.

3.4.3 Customers who are registered blind and make use of trained assistance dogs are exempt by legislation from the obligation to remove their dog's faeces from communal areas and gardens. This also applies to customers whose disability prevents them from being aware of, or removing their animal's faeces. Customers who are registered deaf remain responsible for removing dog faeces from communal areas or gardens. In practice, however, the situation will rarely occur, as assistance dogs are trained to an extremely high standard of behaviour and assistance dog handlers tend to make responsible dog owners.

3.4.4 Registered blind, deaf and disabled customers who make use of trained assistance dogs are not subject to estate regulations or dog control orders excluding dogs from specific land on the estate.

3.4.5 If a dog is dangerously out of control and attacks an assistance dog this may constitute an aggravated offence under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991 (as amended 2023).

3.5 **Decision making**

3.5.1 In all cases we reserve the right to make a local decision based on:

- The needs of the building
- Layout, size and construction of the building
- The management needs of the building
- The needs of the local environment

- The impact on the quiet enjoyment of other customers at a particular scheme, property or project
- 3.5.2 We will not grant permission to have cat or dog flaps installed even when permission to keep a pet has been granted due to fire safety and the potential impact on the security and structure of doors.
- 3.5.2 The list of designated pet friendly and non pet friendly accommodation will be reviewed annually by the Your Communities Manager to ensure any new schemes or projects owned or managed by NCHA are included and revised lists will be published online.
- 3.5.3 The Your Community Manager will review the list of non pet friendly accommodation as and when required in consultation with customers to overcome barriers that our properties or management may present to owning a pet. Reviews may consider significant increases in pet permission applications or suggestions to adapt management of pets in communal areas to support pet ownership.
- 3.6 Permission refused**
- 3.6.1 Where permission to keep a pet is refused we will clearly set out the reasons for refusing permission in writing. We recognise that refusing permission to keep a pet can have an emotional impact on the customer so it is important that this message is conveyed sensitively.
- 3.7 Nuisance and anti-social behaviour**
- 3.7.1 We will take appropriate action whenever complaints are received that a pet is causing nuisance and disturbance in line with NCHAs anti-social behaviour case management procedures. The case may also be referred to the local authority, the police or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA).
- 3.7.2 NCHA staff should not enter a property where they feel they may be at risk of intimidation or injury by a pet.
- 3.7.3 We take the view that all and any of the following may constitute pet nuisance - this list is not exhaustive:
- Fouling of gardens, internal and external communal areas, where animal faeces or urine are not cleaned up immediately
 - Loud or persistent noise or barking that disturbs other customers
 - Dogs not being kept under proper control including dogs not being on a lead in communal areas
 - Dogs acting dangerously out of control in a public place or on private property
 - Pets that roam and cause nuisance to neighbours or escape from their owners
 - Pets being kept in unhygienic conditions, where this may pose a health risk to themselves and other customers
 - Over-population of pets within a household
 - Unpleasant odours caused by pets or by owners not caring for or cleaning up after their pets
 - Customers keeping windows or communal entrance doors open so that a pet may be allowed in and out
 - People who use pets to menace, intimidate or attack people or other animals, particularly those who use weapon dogs, are undertaking severe anti-social behaviour and in many cases,

criminal activity which will be dealt with in accordance with procedures in the Anti-Social Behaviour policy and in partnership with other agencies such as the Police.

3.7.4 Customers must repair any damage caused by pets to NCHA's property, fixtures and fittings.

3.8 Potential action

3.8.1 In pet nuisance cases, we aim to resolve the situation informally and by agreement with the people involved. Where an agreement cannot be reached, the following options may be considered:

- Arranging for a mediator to become involved
- Making responsible pet ownership part of a Good Neighbour Agreement or Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)
- Withdrawing permission to keep a pet
- Restricting the number of pets
- Involving statutory organisations such as the Police or the Local Authority
- We will work with local authorities and the Police to use the appropriate powers outlined in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) to deal with any dog-related incidents
- Involving voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA
- Obtaining an Injunction to oblige a pet owner to do something or to refrain from doing something. NCHA may ask the Court to make an Order requiring the owner to remove the pet.
- Terminating the tenancy and taking possession proceedings where tenancy conditions are breached.

3.9 Pet cruelty or neglect

3.9.1 Customers are responsible for the health and welfare of their pets and have a duty of care under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. If customers have any questions about the care of their pet they should contact their vet or another organisation such as the RSPCA.

3.9.2 We will report any incidents of cruelty or neglect which we are made aware of to the RSPCA for investigation.

3.10 Safety of NCHA staff, contractors, volunteers or permitted visitors

3.10.1 Pets can be disturbed by strangers coming into their home and where appropriate, customers will be advised to keep the pet in another room during a visit to reduce any stress the pet may suffer

3.10.2 Customers with assistance dogs will not be asked to remove animals to another room as these are working dogs. Staff will not attempt to pet the dog or distract it from its duties. In the rare event that an assistance dog does misbehave staff should request the handler to control the dog.

4. Supporting documentation and key legislation

4.1 Forms

Pet Application Form – please contact info@ncha.org to request this form.

4.2 Guidance

None

- 4.3 Legislation
- [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#) – customers with disabilities
 - [Equality Act 2010](#) – applies to disabled customers who use assistance dogs
 - [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) - places a duty of care on any person keeping an animal to ensure that they look after it properly
 - [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#) (as amended 2023) - sets out the types of dogs the prohibitions apply to
 - [Control of Dogs Order 1992](#) - all dogs must wear a collar and identity tag in a public place enabling the owner / keeper to be contacted
 - [Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005](#) - dog fouling is illegal and all owners have a responsibility to prevent their animals from fouling the land
 - [Dog Fouling of the Land Act 1996](#) - it is an offence not to clean up dog faeces from designated public areas, parks and footpaths
 - [The Allotments Act 1950](#) - Users of land have a right to keep chickens and rabbits as long as it is not for a business, causing a nuisance or prejudicial to health.
 - [Abandonment of Animals Act](#) – it is a criminal offence to abandon an animal or permit it to be abandoned
- 4.4. Related policies
ASB and Hate Incident Policy
- 5. Monitoring and reporting**
N/A
- 6. Definitions**
N/A
- 7. Equality and diversity**
- 7.1 This procedure has been written in line with NCHAs Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equality Statement.
- 7.2 This policy is supported by an Equality Impact Assessment
- 8. Appendices**
None
- 9. Policy approval**
- 9.1 This policy has been approved prior to issue by the Director of Homes and Wellbeing or if applicable by NCHAs Board or Customer Committee.