

Pets Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 This policy is relevant to all animals kept by tenants, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and other invertebrates, hereafter referred to as 'pets'.

1.2 Spitalfields Housing Association (SHA) recognises the benefits to tenants of keeping pets. Generally SHA will allow its tenants to keep pets where the property type is suitable, the Tenancy Agreement is complied with and the pet's welfare will be assured. All applications will be processed on a case-by-case basis.

1.3 Under your SHA Tenancy Agreement, tenants, relatives and visitors must not keep any pet at the property unless they have written permission to do so from SHA. SHA may consider compliance with this policy during routine tenancy visits and property inspections. This document gives further details about keeping pets in SHA properties for new and existing tenants.

1.4 SHA may take action against tenants where they do not have written permission to keep a pet, or there is a breach of the tenancy, such as tenants allowing pets to cause nuisance. This includes, but is not limited to, noise nuisance, fouling, damage to property (internally and externally), causing injury to others through biting, and anything else deemed a nuisance. Consideration will be given to some pets' natural behaviour to vocalise of which there are no recommended means of control.

1.5 This policy has been developed from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Science and Policy teams guidance. For additional advice and guidance on how to best look after specific animal types can be found on the RSPCA's website - see: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets>

1.6 In applying this policy, the landlord will consider special circumstances, where these can be demonstrated.

1.7 To make an application, you must fill in the **'Application form: Permission to keep a pet'** online form via: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/A71P4SQy8y>

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2.0 Conditions of having a pet

2.1 SHA promotes responsible pet ownership. There are certain conditions that tenants will be required to demonstrate if they wish to have a pet at their property.

2.2 Tenants wishing to have a pet must be able to demonstrate to the housing officer, on request, that they have the means to pay for the day-to-day upkeep of an animal. Pets can be expensive to look after and insure, and SHA recommends tenants consider these costs before submitting an application.

2.3 Before a request for a pet can be approved, the tenant must be able to demonstrate to SHA that the property is suitable to house that type of animal. Tenants may be asked to consider fencing, flooring, and outdoor access before permission is granted. The property must not be damaged by the pet. Any damages made by the pet will be investigated and recouped by SHA.

2.4 Anyone who is responsible for an animal, even on a temporary basis, is required under The Animal Welfare Act 2006 to care for them properly. Regular Pet Welfare checks are strongly recommended. This means taking reasonable steps to ensure that their pet's welfare needs are met. These needs include:

- The need for a suitable environment.
- The need for a suitable diet.
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals.
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

2.5 Pets must not be left unsupervised in the property for long periods of time, the duration of which is dependent on animal type. Not only could this cause distress to the pet, cause more chances of property damage, but it could also cause disturbance to neighbours. If tenants are in full-time employment or have full-time commitments, they may be asked to demonstrate how their pet will receive appropriate care. All pets, irrespective of species, need to be checked on a daily basis and tenants should ensure a process is in place if they are away from the property.

2.6 Routine healthcare needs to include regular preventative control of parasites such as fleas and worms, vaccinations and neutering, where appropriate for the animal. Properties also need to be regularly treated to help prevent fleas. Tenants may be asked to provide details of a vet and/ or evidence that the pet is regularly treated.

2.7 Animals can have specific needs for example in terms of environment, space and

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nutrition. Tenants must take this, and their own individual circumstances into account when considering ownership. It may be difficult to meet the individual pets' needs, in which case ownership is discouraged.

2.8 Pets (excluding cats) must never be left unsupervised in any internal or external communal areas, on any pathways and or any SHA-managed land or properties.

2.9 Any fouling should be removed, and the area cleaned.

2.10 Due to higher populations in blocks of flats, tenants living in such premises may be advised that the needs of certain types of pets are harder to meet and therefore careful consideration is required before acquiring a pet.

2.11 Dogs must remain on leads whilst in any internal or external communal area.

2.12 Tenants must provide suitable care for their pets, and ensure they are looked after. All permission is conditional on the tenant making every effort to prevent their pets from straying, causing damage to property or facility, causing injury or disturbance, or breeding in any property owned or managed by SHA.

2.13 The breeding of animals for a tenants' business, hobby or any other reason will not be allowed by SHA.

2.14 It is a legal requirement to microchip cats and dogs, and keep contact details up to date. It is advised that tenants microchip all pets (eg. guinea pigs, ferrets and rabbits), where appropriate.

2.15 All tenants granted permission to have a pet at their property will be required to carry out a Pet Welfare check. This document will help ensure appropriate standards are maintained, and may be requested during routine property inspections. In addition, contact details of a family member or friend who can be contacted in the case of an emergency will be required. Pet Welfare checks should be sent to SHA when carried out. Under the Control of Dogs Order 1992, all dogs must have a collar with the name and address of the owner, to be worn in public.

2.16 Any modification to the property (for example, installing cat flaps, reinforcing fencing, building outdoor sheds) must have prior landlord permission (from SHA). Some structural modifications may also require permission from the local authority planning team.

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2.17 Any tenant moving property, whether through eviction, absconding or abandonment, must take any pets with them before moving out. Failure to do so could result in costs being recharged to the tenant and the police or RSPCA being informed. If the tenant plans to be away from the property for a period of time (e.g. overnight), they must make arrangements for the care of their pets, including meeting all their welfare needs, and checking on their pets at least daily.

2.18 Under no circumstances must pets be tethered. Tethering is fastening a pet (usually a dog) to a stationary anchor point, such as a stake or post, to restrict its movement to a specific area. Tethering can lead to injuries and restricts the ability of animals to behave normally. Should evidence of this be brought to the attention of SHA, we will pass information to the relevant authorities or the RSPCA.

2.19 Pets must never be left in a hot car or vehicle, as temperatures can quickly become fatal. Opening windows or parking in shade does not make it safe, and dogs are at high risk of heatstroke.

2.20 All pets must be kept safely secured in a separate room, cage, or other appropriate enclosure during visits by officers, contractors, inspectors, or other authorised representatives. Residents are responsible for ensuring that pets do not present a risk, cause disruption, or restrict access to any areas required for the visit.

If pets are not properly secured, the visit may be unable to proceed, and additional charges may apply for any missed or aborted appointments.

3.0 Permission process

3.1 Any tenant requesting to keep any pets at their property must complete a **pets permission form** and hand it to their housing officer, who will consider the request based on the content of this procedure - **see point 1.7 for digital form**.

3.2 Where a tenant requests to keep a pet, the housing officer may need to consider where the animal will be kept, any structure that may need to be built, for example, cat flaps (including planning and building regulations), and the impact of annoyance; for example fouling, noise nuisance, damage to property (internally and externally), causing injury to others through biting, to neighbours and neighbouring property.

3.3 Regular Pet Welfare checks will assist the housing officer to assess the welfare of the pet being maintained, and the property is not being damaged. It will also highlight

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a tenant's ability to care for the animal and/or who will provide assistance to do so. This information should be sent to SHA when carried out.

3.4 Permission will not be unreasonably withheld. Where permission is granted, a letter will be sent informing the tenant of the conditions.

3.5 An agreement to abide by the conditions of permission will need to be signed by the tenant.

3.6 Where permission is refused, a letter will be sent outlining the reasons for this decision. Examples of reasons why permission may be refused are referred to in section 4.0. This list is not exhaustive.

3.7 Where SHA becomes aware that a tenant has a pet but does not have the required consent, the tenant will be advised to submit a retrospective request for permission. The request will be processed in the same manner as a current request. It is advised not to purchase a pet without permission first.

3.8 In the case where a pet with landlord's consent passes away, a further request would be required for any replacement or additional pets.

3.9 Permission will only be granted for the number of pets where an assessment indicates that the size of the property is adequate for the type of pet intended for.

3.10 SHA aims to process your application within 10 working days and will provide a decision within 20 working days, unless additional information is required. Please email admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk or call 020 7392 5400 if you have any questions following your application.

3.11 Applicants may appeal a decision by submitting a written request to SHA. Where an application has been unsuccessful on three occasions, no further applications will be accepted for a period of six months. If adaptations or changes are recommended prior to making an application, applicants should contact a member of staff for guidance.

To make an application, you must fill in the **'Application form: Permission to keep a pet'** online form via: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/A71P4SQy8y>

4.0 Special circumstances

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4.1 Disabled individuals with assistance dogs are not required to apply, in accordance with Equality Act 2010; however, owners are advised to notify SHA about any assistance dogs so that household records are updated. It is advisable to carry some form of verification when out in public with your dog. Your dog must be trained to assist with a specific disability and should be well-behaved at all times in public settings.

4.2 Where assistance dogs have disabilities themselves, the same welfare considerations for the animal apply. Dangerous dog legislation apply, regardless of whether they are assistance dogs.

4.3 Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 will apply to all requests for permission. Under the Act it is an offence to possess any dog of the type known as Pit Bull Terrier, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro, XL Bully and Japanese Tosa unless they have secured exemption from the prohibition via a court order. This means that a court was satisfied that the dog posed no risk to public safety and has been placed on the Index of Exempted Dogs (IED). The owner must meet the conditions of exemption as follows:

- the dog must be neutered and microchipped;
- the owner/keeper must take out (and renew each year) third party insurance for the dog;
- the dog must only be taken out in public by someone over the age of 16, kept on a lead and muzzled when in public;
- the dog must not be bred from, gifted or otherwise disposed of and
- registration on the Index of Exempted Dogs (IED)

This list is subject to change by legislation; any changes to the list will apply to this policy.

4.4 Tenants applying for permission for pets recognised under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (as amended) will not be approved. This list is subject to change by legislation; any changes to the list will apply to this policy. The UK Metropolitan Police may be informed of any illegal animals in an SHA property.

4.5 If a pet has ever caused serious injury to a person, or if it is dangerous in any other way, for example, venomous snakes, permission will be refused. If permission has already been granted, and an incident occurs or further information is disclosed, this permission will be revoked. This includes, but is not limited to, all animals listed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, and any dog found to be dangerously out of control in a public place under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

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4.6 Non-domestic animals, for example, primates, livestock, poultry, horses and wild animals are not deemed suitable animals to keep in a SHA property or garden. Permission for such animals will be refused. It is at the discretion of the landlord to potentially allow the keeping of poultry and some species of livestock if the tenant can show their experience of keeping those animals, that there is space at the property and the welfare of the animals can be assured.

4.7 If a tenant or a resident living at the property has any convictions or past history of abandonment, cruelty, neglect or mistreatment of animals, or convictions for any offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or has been disqualified from keeping animals due to a conviction, permission will be refused.

5.0 Visitors, fostering and burials

5.1 Any pets visiting the property must not cause a nuisance; the tenant will be liable for any nuisance or damage caused at a property. The landlord may disallow pets from visiting the property, or refuse or revoke any permission for pets to visit the property, where nuisance or damage has occurred.

5.2 Requests to foster or temporarily look after pets on behalf of others, eg. for animal charities or relatives, will follow the same process as other requests for permission.

5.3 Should the tenant wish to bury a deceased pet in the garden of an SHA property, the tenant must:

- Obtain the landlord's permission and, if granted:
- Ensure the deceased pet is buried deep enough (at least 3ft) to prevent other animals digging it up
- Bury the deceased pet away from a water course
- Check that the deceased pet did not die of infectious disease.

5.4 If a pet dies of infectious disease, the tenant must ensure that it is cremated.

6.0 Breaches

6.1 SHA may report stray animals to Tower Hamlets Council Animal Warden Service or Environmental Health department, the RSPCA, UK Metropolitan Police and other relevant agencies.

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Link to Tower Hamlets Council Animal Warden Service:

https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/environment_and_waste/animal_welfare/animal_warden_service/animal_warden_service.aspx

6.2 If any of the conditions stated in this document are broken, appropriate action may be taken by SHA.

6.3 SHA will investigate issues, including noise and hygiene nuisances, raised according to the residents Tenancy and/or the Anti-Social Behaviour policy as appropriate.

6.4 Reports of cruelty, neglect or impact on health and welfare of any animal in the care of a tenant will be reported to the relevant authorities.

6.5 SHA reserves the right to withdraw permission and require the removal of a pet where the conditions of this Policy are breached. In such a case, pets must be removed from the property, either returned to the original owner, or rehomed.

6.6 Legal action, such as applying for an injunction or eviction will be considered where a tenant refuses to co-operate to address concerns.

7.0 Supporting legislation and guidance

A number of pieces of legislation and guidance have informed this procedure including:

- Animal Welfare Act 2006;
- Control of Dogs Order 1992;
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991;
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Housing Act 1988 (as amended 1996);
- Offences Against the Person Act 1861;
- Practical Guidelines on Pet Management for Housing Providers;
- Section 34 and 35 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009;
- The Microchipping of Cats and Dogs (England) Regulations 2023;
- UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)

8.0 Review of policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if there are any significant changes to legislation.

Any information collected will be processed in accordance with the UK Data Protection.

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Responsibility

The Housing Officer will carry out the initial checks, after which a determination will be made in consultation with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the relevant Scrutiny Panel.

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We welcome the views of customers in improving the services we provide. Customers can give feedback through our online feedback form via the SHA website:

www.spitalfieldsha.co.uk

We refer to the resident, tenant or customer meaning a person residing in an SHA managed property.