



Gravesend Churches Housing Association

Guidance on Keeping Pets

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Responsible Officer:	Felicity Dunmall, Housing Services Manager
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Signed off by:	Name: Steve Harriott, Chair Date: 20 th May 2020

1. Our Intentions

GCHA recognises that pet ownership can be very beneficial for the wellbeing of our residents, improving mental health, reducing loneliness and can help maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

This policy is for all our tenants to allow pets in all our properties whilst ensuring the wellbeing of every animal and the surrounding community.

This policy aims to make it clear what pets you can or cannot keep at your property and how we expect them and your home to be looked after.

2. Permission for New Tenants or New Pets for Existing Tenants

- We will give permission to keep a pet if the property is suitable and you are able to take on the responsibilities of looking after the pet.
- We will also take into consideration whether your tenancy has been breached in any way, for instance, rent arrears, no access, anti-social behaviour or not looking after your property.
- We will ask you to sign a pet's contract if you want to keep a dog or cat and confirm that they have been neutered and microchipped.
- We will usually give consent to changes you might need to make to your property to accommodate your pet, such as a cat flap, as long as you agree to remove and make good the changes if you move away and the changes do not affect fire safety.
- You cannot have a cat flap if your door opens onto a communal hallway in a block of flats.
- Permission for breeding or selling animals will not be allowed in any GCHA property.

3. Existing Tenants

If you already have a pet that we are not aware of, we expect you to let us know and sign a pet contract and expect you to look after your pet according to this policy.

4. Pet Ownership Rules for Dogs and Cats

- All cats and dogs will have to be neutered and microchipped.
- All dogs have to wear a collar with ID tag and be on a lead in any communal area.
- Dog fouling needs to be cleaned straight away and disposed of appropriately.
- You are responsible for ensuring your garden is secure.

5. Assistance Dogs

We will make reasonable adjustments to enable tenants to have an assistance dog on a case by case basis.

6. Pets you Do Not Need Permission For

- You do not need permission to keep a reasonable number of caged house birds and small caged animals like hamsters, rabbits etc.
- Breeding and selling is not permitted.
- Any food stored outside for your pet has to be in a sealed container to reduce vermin.

7. Farm Animals and Birds of Prey

In general, we will not give permission for outdoor farm animals or birds of prey in built up areas or where keeping them is likely to impact on others.

8. Animals We Will Not Give Permission For

- Wild animals.
- Endangered species or any dogs identified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any subsequent legislation.

9. Nuisance From Pets

- If any animal living in a property is causing nuisance behaviour, we will record it as an anti-social behaviour complaint. We will ask you to quickly resolve any problems yourself. If you do not, we will consider withdrawing permission to keep the pet and start enforcement action for breach of tenancy following the pet policy procedure and anti-social behaviour policy.
- The following are some examples of what we consider to be nuisance behaviour:
 - Fouling any communal area or dwelling and failure to pick it up immediately;
 - Injuring or frightening anyone into thinking they might be injured;
 - An animal out of control or a danger to other residents;
 - Failing to keep a pet on a lead in all communal areas;
 - Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others;
 - Breeding or selling of animals;
 - Allowing an animal to cause damage to GCHA property;
 - Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issues by the relevant authority; and
 - Keeping more pets in a household than is deemed appropriate for the size and type of accommodation.

10. Legal Obligations to Consider about Keeping a Pet

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes owners responsible for ensuring their animals welfare needs are met including:

- a suitable environment (place to live);
- a suitable diet;
- to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease; and
- minimum age of pet ownership is 16 years.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal or does not provide for its welfare needs may be banned from owning animals, and or fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

11. Can You Afford a Pet?

Looking after a dog or cat can involve a significant financial commitment, including food, equipment, vet bills and medicine.

12. Looking After Your Pet

You should also consider how you will exercise your pet, what happens if you are unwell or are no longer able to look after it, holiday arrangements.

For further information on the Animal Welfare Act and other advice about keeping pets go to www.rspca.org.uk