



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

North Stars Approach to Keeping Pets

Owning a pet is very important to many people who live in our properties. This guide provides useful information on our approach to keeping a pet, whether you are a new tenant, an established tenant thinking about getting a pet or you have had a pet for some time.

Keeping a Pet

We recognise the benefits of keeping a pet. Pets provide companionship, comfort and love. Research has shown that pets help to reduce stress; help to prevent heart diseases and lower blood pressure, help to fight depression but above all, pets add joy and health.

North Star is positive about residents keeping pets, not just cats and dogs. Pets come in all shapes and sizes. If you are thinking about getting a pet, the first thing to do is let us know. Your housing officer or support worker is the best person to speak to.

Very occasionally we may turn a pet away. This will be in exceptional circumstances and we will always discuss this with you.

Responsible Pet Ownership

When managed responsibly pet ownership should not cause any inconvenience to other residents.

There are now laws to make sure if you keep a pet, you care for it properly. This means making sure the pet has a suitable place to live, is given the right food to eat and is protected from pain, suffering injury and disease.

Any tenant neglecting or abusing their pet will be reported to the RSPCA.

Our policy is not rigid regarding the number of pets that a resident may keep within their home. In some instances, it may be appropriate to just have one pet.

North Star encourages and supports responsible pet ownership amongst its residents.

We are sensitive some residents may dislike/fear animals or may be allergic to them and we therefore ask residents with pets the following:

- Keep dogs on a lead in communal areas and not to leave them barking all day as this causes a nuisance for other residents or neighbours
- Not to allow pets to wander in corridors or hallways
- Pets should be house trained and must not be permitted to foul in communal areas at any time. If an incident of fouling occurs the owner must clean up immediately

- Friends or relatives may come to visit and bring their pets with them. Visiting pets are welcome but are expected to keep to the same rules
- The owner of the pet must comply with the main terms of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which are:
- “A proper diet, protection from pain, suffering, injury or disease, the ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns, a suitable environment to live with or apart from other animals”

Before deciding to keep a pet, you should ask the following questions:

- How committed are you to owning and caring for a pet for the rest of its life?
- Can you provide suitable care for your pet in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006?
- Does the pet fit with your lifestyle and family circumstances?
- Is your accommodation suitable for a pet?
- How much is it going to cost?
- Can you afford a pet? There will be ongoing costs for food and bedding but what about unexpected costs such as vets’ bills? Pet insurance can help with this
- Your pet should be microchipped. This is now a legal requirement for all dogs over eight weeks and there is a cost involved
- What will happen to your pet if you are away from home or on holiday? Have you thought about a responsible person to care for them?
- Could your choice of pet cause a nuisance to your neighbours? Is it worth having a chat with them before you make your final decision?

We recommend seeking advice on pet care from the RSPCA www.rspca.org.uk or The Dogs Trust www.dogstrust.org.uk

What is Nuisance Behaviour by a Pet?

The welfare of the pets that live with our residents is important to us and we expect responsible pet owners to ensure their pet does not cause a nuisance or disturbance to others.

While most pets are well behaved, all owners have a responsibility to ensure their pet does not cause a nuisance to others.

Often, it is not the type of pet that will cause a nuisance to neighbours but the way its owner cares and controls it. Pets kept in unhygienic conditions can cause a smell nuisance to neighbours. Dogs left to bark for long periods may be a noise nuisance to people living nearby.

This is not an exhaustive list but here are some examples of behaviour that we treat as nuisance:

- Roaming and unattended animals such as dogs.
- Dogs fouling in communal areas/gardens and not being cleaned up immediately.
- Excessive noise such as dogs barking all the time (this is a welfare concern as the dog may not be happy).

- Too many animals kept in a property.
- Unpleasant odours from pets.
- Aggressive animals.

What can we do about nuisance pets?

In the majority of cases, we will try to resolve the issue informally after hearing both sides of the story. Where possible we apply a pragmatic and person-centred approach. If this does not work, we can take a more formal approach. This can include:

- Involving charitable organisations such as the RSPCA where there is a welfare concern.
- Arrange for a professional mediator to become involved.
- Involve statutory organisations such as the Local Authority.
- Restrict the number of animals kept in a property if this is likely to resolve the problem.
- Take other legal action.

What to do if you suspect an animal is being neglected?

If you suspect that someone is guilty of cruelty or neglect towards an animal, then you should report this to the RSPCA. You should telephone the 24-hour National Cruelty and Advice Line on 0300 1234 9999. The RSPCA will ask you a series of questions and it promises to keep your details confidential.

There is a range of organisations that can provide advice about pet welfare including information on the Animal Welfare Act and answer questions including your vets and the **RSPCA**.

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