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1. **Headline messages**

- **We want residents to own and enjoy pets in their homes and agree pets have a significant positive impact on their owner's physical and mental health. But we also want residents to be responsible pet owners.**
- **Residents are permitted to own a range of small pets including fish, caged birds, and up to two cats and dogs.**
- **In most instances residents do not need to request permission in advance , but do need to notify us when they get a dog.**
- **There will be instances where it is not permitted for a resident to own a pet, e.g. where L&Q is not the freeholder or it is agency managed. Residents must check whether this applies to their situation in advance of getting a pet or risk being told to rehouse it. If you are not sure, you should contact us.**
- **Permission can be withdrawn if a resident breaches other aspects of this policy.**
- **Residents should be aware that we will take enforcement action where pets cause a nuisance, or are mistreated, or not cared for properly.**

2. **Aims of the policy**

This policy sets out our approach to managing pet ownership and the standards we expect of pet owners. Our policy aims for a consistent, and fair approach to pet ownership and outlines our approach to dealing with any nuisance caused by residents and their pets as well as any related issues like reports of maltreatment. Our policy reflects our commitments to our residents in our Customer Promise.

3. **Scope**

This policy applies to all households living in homes owned or managed by L&Q including, general needs, market rent, intermediate market rent, London living rent, leasehold, and shared ownership. There may be some exceptions where residents are living in homes where L&Q is not the freeholder or it is agency managed, and there is a specific ban on pets in the agreement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and our Complaints Policy.

This policy is relevant to all L&Q colleagues, particularly those working in the customer service centre, the lettings team, housing management, and caretakers.

4. **Policy approach**

We recognise the importance pets have for owners in terms of companionship as well as the positive impacts on mental and physical well-being. This has become even more relevant following Covid related lockdowns and the resulting changes to working patterns.

4.1 Permission and notification

Households have our permission to keep the following pets:

- Up to two dogs, and/or
- Up to two cats
- A reasonable number of small mammals and/or caged animals

Except where L&Q are not the freeholder and there are preventative clauses in the lease in which case additional permission will need to be sought.

This needs to be balanced with the potential for nuisance to other residents if pet owners are not responsible in the way they care for their pet and manage their pet's behaviour.

Your existing tenancy agreement or lease should set out if you are allowed to keep a pet in your property. In general, where your lease or tenancy agreement states you can only keep a pet with our permission, or that you cannot keep a pet, we will not be enforcing this clause, unless there are breaches of other parts of the policy, e.g. pets causing nuisance. However, if the lease contains a prohibition on keeping pets, then while we would not seek to enforce this (as long as there is no nuisance), it is possible that a third party may complain or object, which could lead to the resident being asked to rehouse the pet.

In some blocks, where we do not own the freehold, we are bound by the rules of the freeholder and what is in our agreement with them. If you live in such a block or if you're unsure what's in your agreement, you should ask us to check for you, before you get a pet, or risk being told to rehouse it.

Residents in shared accommodation (e.g. shared living facilities, kitchens, bathroom), will need to seek permission in advance.

We retain the right to withdraw permission where the pet has caused nuisance, or we believe the owner to be showing signs of animal cruelty or neglect.

Residents must notify us when they get a dog and complete the Pet Dog Registration Form. They must confirm the following:

- The breed of the dog
- That the dog is neutered
- That the dog is microchipped
- That they understand and will comply with all aspects of our "Pet owner responsibilities" (refer 4.3)

Failure to comply with the above, can lead to the resident being asked to rehouse the dog.

Residents who get an assistance dog, do not need to complete the Registration form, as they are deemed auxiliary aids rather than pets.

4.2 Banned animals

Under no circumstances are households permitted to keep the following as pets:

- Animals listed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (including large mammals, carnivores, larger or venomous reptiles, dangerous spiders and scorpions)
- Any endangered species
- Any hybrid between a domestic and a wild animal
- Bees

- Dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (i.e. Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, or Fila Brasileiro, and from 31 January 2024 XL Bully dogs) - with the exception of dogs registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs. In these cases, although the dog is a banned breed, the dog will have undergone an assessment to determine that it is safe, and the owner will be legally bound to comply with certain conditions. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/control-dog-public/banned-dogs>.
- Owners must follow government guidelines when keeping a dog listed under the Dangerous Dogs Acts. This includes the requirement to keep aware of current and new legislative changes.
- Guard dogs
- Livestock (including horses and cattle)

Receiving a report about an Dangerous Dog

Where we receive a report of a resident not complying with the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 by having a certificate of exemption, we will ask the owner for proof the dog has a certificate of exemption. Where a certificate is not held we would advise a resident to seek a certificate immediately and show proof they are pursuing this action.

Following a report to us about a dog which may be listed under the Dangerous Dog Act, we will contact the resident identified as owning the dog to make clear our policy. If a resident does not have a certificate, or the owner is otherwise not complying with the restrictions under the Dangerous Dogs Act, we will encourage the reporter to contact the police and provide us a crime reference number. We may otherwise contact the police ourselves dependent on circumstances, as the resident may be committing a criminal offence.

Where we believe a dog meets the definition of an Dangerous Dog, but the owner states otherwise, we will request proof to assure this is the case.

Enforcement action will be undertaken, in dealing with any breaches of the above unless the dog has been exempted from the prohibition and the terms of the exemption are fully complied with, including being registered on the Index of Exempted dogs. (please refer to the 'Enforcement' section of this policy)

4.3 Pet owner responsibilities

We expect all pet owners to behave responsibly by upholding the following standards:

- All pets must be cared for responsibly, and in line with Section 9 (2) of the Animal Welfare Act 2006:
(2) For the purposes of this Act, an animal's needs shall be taken to include—
 - (a) its need for a suitable environment,
 - (b) its need for a suitable diet,
 - (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
 - (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
 - (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.
 - (f) its need to be flea and wormed
- All pets must be kept under proper control and not cause a nuisance to other households. This includes dogs being kept on a lead in communal areas and not entering play areas
- All dogs must be secured in a separate room, where they have no access to L&Q employees or contractors whilst they attend a property. Staff will not enter a property if they feel it is unsafe to do so or this request cannot be complied with at the time of the visit.

- Dog owners need to be mindful of other residents who may have allergies or are nervous around dogs. For example, where relevant, try to take the stairs to your home, rather than the elevator, and avoid enclosed communal spaces.
- No fouling in communal areas or balconies. Where fouling has occurred, the responsible owners must clean up immediately.
- Owners must actively seek to prevent unpleasant odours being emitted from their property due to their pet(s).
- If a pet is excessively noisy and becoming a nuisance, we reserve the right to take enforcement action and request for the pet to be re-homed.
- Animals must not damage any L&Q property, including communal parts of the building and neighbouring properties. Owners may be recharged for any repairs which are needed as a result of such damage.
- All dogs over the age of eight weeks must be microchipped and wear a collar and tag in public.
- Animals must not be kept for the purposes of breeding or sale.
- Owners must have suitable arrangements in place for looking after their pet during periods of absence. For example, if you go away for a weekend or a holiday you should either place your pet in a cattery or kennels, or arrange for someone to visit daily.
- Cat or dog flaps (or similar devices) must not be installed without our prior consent as these can compromise the fire safety of a property. And they are not permitted on doors that open onto shared areas. If a resident has installed a flap, they will be asked to remove it at their own expense.
- In situations where a resident is temporarily looking after a pet for a friend or family member, all the above requirements apply. They also apply if you have friends or family visiting your home with their pet.

If your pet sadly passes away, it must be buried or disposed of in a responsible and safe manner and cannot be buried in communal gardens.

In addition, we suggest that pet owners consider taking out pet insurance to help meet costs should their pet need medical attention.

4.4 Training and resources

We would strongly encourage residents to arrange for dog obedience training and attending a course that teaches responsible pet ownership. The Battersea Cats and Dog's Home website has a range of support information which we encourage residents to access (links are available on our website):

- Dogs - <https://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice/dog-advice> including dog training classes <https://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice/dog-advice/how-train-your-dog-battersea-way>
- Cats - <https://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice/cat-advice>

Other resources include:

- Mayhew Animal Welfare Charity: <https://advice.themayhew.org/>
- The Dog's Trust: <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/>

4.5 Nuisance

We will work with households to address pet-related issues or any circumstances affecting the owner which have led to such issues. This may include referrals to specialist animal welfare organisations for information, advice, and guidance.

Where a pet owner fails to engage with such efforts, or if the level of nuisance, cruelty or neglect is significant, we will take more serious action. This may include making a referral to the local authority and/or police, demanding the rehoming of the animal, or in some cases seeking possession of the property or taking injunctive proceedings. Where a decision has been made to rehome an animal, we will allow this to take place within what we consider a reasonable timeframe.

It is illegal for a pet owner to allow their dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes any incidents where injury occurs or there is a fear that an injury might occur. We will report all such incidents to the police and this may result in sanctions or criminal prosecution.

We will report any complaint of animal cruelty to the RSPCA and will report any stray animals to the relevant local authority.

We will investigate all issues relating to nuisance or anti-social behaviour in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

4.6 Enforcement

If we consider the nuisance to be serious or persistent then appropriate enforcement action can be taken against the pet owner. This may involve the following:

- Contacting the local Environmental Health Department to take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (e.g. incidents involving noise, fouling and smells); Contacting the local authority Dog Warden Service who have responsibility to ensure animal health and welfare;
- Contacting the Police if the pet is believed to be dangerous and/ or covered under the Dangerous Dogs Act;
- Contacting the RSPCA or RSPB if the pet is being ill-treated or suffering.
- Charging residents where pets have caused damage to L&Q property;
- Seeking an injunction to prevent residents from keeping a pet in a particular property or taking pets to specific areas;
- Seeking possession of a resident's home for serious and persistent breaches of their tenancy or lease.

Taking enforcement action

Where we receive reports of dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act (i.e. XL Bully dogs) but not related to a breach of the Dangerous Dogs Act (i.e. Anti-Social Behaviour, breach of tenancy) we will attempt to work with residents through referring them to external support (i.e. RSPCA) to address the issue, in line with our Pets Policy.

If this is not successful or appropriate, and police action isn't possible, , we would not be able to ask or demand residents re-home their dog. This is due to the prohibition on rehoming dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act. Instead, we may consider applying for an injunction to prevent the resident from keeping the dog at their property. If granted, this would in practice mean that the dog would be euthanised.

Although such an order would in theory be within the court's power, dependent on circumstances we would need to justify that this was a just and convenient order to a judge through evidence.

Appendices

1. Assurance

To assess the extent to which this policy is being complied with, the following will be undertaken:

- Six monthly reviews of the number of complaints being made regarding pets and the number of anti-social behaviour cases.
- Two six monthly surveys of front-line colleagues on their experiences (for the first year of implementation).
- A resident survey (12 months post policy implementation) of what benefits pets have brought to their lives.

2. Legislation and Regulation

The following legislation and regulations are applicable:

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Control of Dogs Order 1992
- Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015
- Equality Act 2010

Policy controls sheet

Date of approval: 1st April 2023

Approved by: Laura Hallett, Head of Housing

Effective date: 25 August 2021

Review date: 07 July 2024

Author: Policy and Assurance Team, Strategy and Planning

Policy owned by: Director, Housing Management

Associated documents: Complaints Policy, ASB Policy, Keeping Pets Guidance and Pet Dog Registration form.

Complete the following table. The most recent update should be first with previous updates following:

Main changes	Key points
L&Q's policy has been updated in accordance with the Government's announcement relating to the XL Bully breed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• L&Q's policy has been updated in accordance with the Government announcement to add XL Bully breed to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act. XL Bully has been added to the list of banned dogs to the banned dogs register from January 2024• Added requirement for dogs to be kept on the lead and muzzled when in public.• Added legislation around an offence to breed, sell, advertise, exchange, gift, rehome, abandon, or allow XL Bully dogs to stray.• Added L&Q's approach to receiving a report about a dangerous dog• Updated L&Q's approach to taking enforcement action
Reviewed by: M Griffiths, Housing Quality Assurance Approved by: Laura Hallett, Head of Housing, 5th January 2024	

Main changes	Key points
L&Q and THT's policy have been aligned and reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• L&Q's policy has been reviewed to ensure that all information is accurate and up to date• Lines have been added to L&Q's policy from with minor amendments to the aligned policy• Removed reference to nuisance in Policy Approach• Added exceptions to include 'additional permissions' for cases where L&Q are not the freeholder and there are preventative clauses in the lease.• Amendment – removed 'poultry' from banned animals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added requirement for pets to be defleaed and wormed under 'Pet Owner Responsibilities'. Amended to 'we will take enforcement action and will request that the pet is rehomed' rather than to consult a surgeon under 'Pet Owner Responsibilities'
Reviewed by: M Griffiths, Housing Quality Assurance Approved by: Laura Hallett, Head of Housing, 1st April 2023	

Main change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point 4.3 amended to highlight responsibility for owners to ensure pets are kept secured when L&Q employees or contractors attend a property Text has been removed which relates to 'microchipping' as this is no longer applicable 	Key points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All pets must be secured in a separate room where they have no access to L&Q employees or contractors whilst they attend a property. Staff will not enter a property if they feel it is unsafe to do so. Note that it is likely that the Government will extend this requirement to cats in 2021.
Reviewed by: Mariana Griffiths, Quality Assurance Approved by: Laura Hallett, Head of Service	

Main change Clarification at 4.1 that we will not be enforcing clauses that specify permission is required or that no pets are allowed, unless there is non-compliance with other aspects of the policy.
Reviewed by: T Powell, Policy and Assurance

Main change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That residents have permission to keep up to two dogs. 	Key points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents are permitted to own up to two dogs, as well as cats and other small pets Residents do not need to seek permission unless they want more pets than the policy permits Permission can be withdrawn if the pet or owner's behaviour causes a nuisance or where there are issues of irresponsible pet ownership In some cases, residents will be prevented from owning pets, e.g. where L&Q is not the freeholder or it is agency managed. It is resident's responsibility to check in advance if this applies to their situation.
Reviewed by: T Powell, Policy and Assurance Approved by: Gerri Scott, Director of Customer Services	