



Keeping Pets Policy

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Policy	KEEPING PETS POLICY			Tenancy Services
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1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out HCHA's approach to tenants keeping pets in their homes. It explains when permission is required, how requests will be considered, the responsibilities of pet owners, and how pet-related nuisance, damage or animal welfare concerns will be addressed.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. As the number of properties, types, and locations of HCHA housing has changed over the years, as well as due to changing expectations and good practice, we have reviewed our policy for the keeping of pets in HCHA homes.
- 2.2. A pet is a tame animal, fish, insect or bird kept as a companion. This policy is primarily aimed at allowing dogs and cats to be kept in HCHA properties that are suitable for keeping such pets.
- 2.3. We are aware that any change in policy can have a positive or negative impact on current tenants regarding any pets they may already have. To ease the introduction of changes to rules in keeping pets we will implement the following measures as the policy is introduced:
 - At the introduction of this policy tenants who already have existing pets without written permission can use the form at Appendix 1 to apply for retrospective permission, providing the animal is being kept in accordance with this policy and are not causing any problems within the property, the communal areas or to others in the locality of the property.
 - Where the tenant is keeping an excess number of animals or is keeping a pet in a property which is not considered suitable for that type of pet under this revised policy, we may grant limited permission to keep the current pets. If granted, this permission will be limited to the lifespan of the pets.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. We recognise the benefit of tenants keeping pets. Research shows that pets that are well cared for and responsibly kept are positive for individuals and the community, by improving health and wellbeing and reducing social isolation.
- 3.2. However, while pets can have a very positive impact, irresponsibly owned pets can be the cause of much misery and suffering to the animals themselves and to those who live around them.
- 3.3. Generally the Association will allow its tenants to keep pets where the property type is suitable, the Tenancy Agreement is complied with, and the animal's welfare will be assured.

4. Permission to keep a pet

- 4.1. Tenants must obtain written permission from the Association if they wish to keep a pet, using the form at Appendix 1. This form should be used by all tenants, including those who already have a pet.
- 4.2. Trained assistance dogs, including guide dogs and those to assist the deaf are allowed in all circumstances. We will require evidence from the relevant agency to support the application and be satisfied that the property is suitable for keeping a dog. Where the property is not usually suitable for keeping a dog, a transfer to an appropriate property may be offered. In exceptional circumstances a tenant may be given permission to keep a support dog in a property which would not usually be suitable for keeping dogs.
- 4.3. We will not grant permission for households 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 wild animal
 - Dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act (XL Bully, Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, or Fila Brasileiro) and in compliance with any changes to legislation.
 - Guard dogs
 - Livestock (including poultry, horses and cattle)
- 4.4. We retain the right to withdraw permission to keep a pet where the pet has caused nuisance, or we believe the owner is showing signs of animal cruelty or neglect.
- 4.5. We recognise that not all HCHA properties are suitable for keeping pets such as cats or dogs, and the type of property you live in will be a factor in granting permission. For new tenants, this is also applicable at the allocation stage of granting a tenancy. We will only grant permission for keeping a cat or a dog if the property has its own access to a private garden, such as a house or bungalow. Properties with communal access, hallways, stairs and gardens are not suitable. In addition, tenants of the Association's supported furnished accommodation are not permitted to keep any pets other than small animals.
- 4.6. Whilst we acknowledge that the clarity in 4.5 above is useful, HCHA properties are varied, such as some flats having a direct access to the outside but with no private garden. This means that permissions for some properties will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, as well as take into account the views and circumstances of each of our tenants. When considering such applications we will always give a full explanation of the reason for our decision.
- 4.7. In all cases where properties are considered to be suitable for pets, this is for a maximum of 2 pets (cats and dogs) per property.

- 4.8. Permission will only be granted for the specified pet(s) at the tenant's current address. The tenant must ask for permission if they move to another property or wish to keep more animals.
- 4.9. Tenants may keep more than two smaller animals such as rodents, birds, reptiles or fish, but we will only give permission to keep a reasonable number of pets. The number of animals, the type of animal and the type of accommodation needed for the small pet, the size of the property and the number of people living in the property will all be taken into account when considering permissions.
- 4.10. Permission will not be granted to run a business or any activity which involves breeding or selling animals, or any business which is likely to create a nuisance due to the number of animals being taken to a property.

5. Responsibilities for pet owners

- 5.1. Residents are responsible for the health and welfare of their pets as detailed under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2006. We expect all pet owners to:
- Care for their pets responsibly. This includes giving pets a healthy diet, not subjecting them to abuse, providing a suitable home for the type of pet (with or apart from other animals), and not leaving pets unattended for significant amounts of time.
 - Keep pets under control and supervised, and not cause a nuisance to other households. This includes dogs being kept on a lead in external communal areas and being under control when HCHA colleagues or contractors attend a property.
 - Clean up any fouling in communal areas immediately.
 - Make a conscious effort to stop unpleasant smells being released from their home due to their pet(s).
 - Ensure dogs older than eight weeks are microchipped and wear a collar and tag in public.
 - Have suitable care arrangements in place for their pet if they are going to be absent for long periods.
 - If a pet dies, bury or dispose of its body in a responsible and safe way.
- 5.2. Residents should not attempt to install cat or dog flaps without our prior consent as these can compromise the fire safety of the property. Permission will usually be refused, but where it is granted, this will be subject to conditions such as the making good or even replacement of the door when it is no longer required or if the tenant leaves. Remedial works carried out by the Association will be recharged.

6. The permission process

- 6.1. All prospective tenants, applicants and new tenants will be advised as to whether the property is suitable for dogs or cats.
- 6.2. To request permission, tenants should complete the form at Appendix 1. The form has space to add specifics about pets, which tenants may not yet know at the requestion permission stage. The flowchart at Appendix 2, included with the permission form, serves as a guideline for whether permission may be granted or refused. We need to know if pets are being kept in the property and resident contact details in

case of an emergency, such as a flood or fire. We also need to know who will take responsibility for the pet(s) if the tenant and/or family members are unexpectedly away from home, such as an admission to hospital.

6.3. A response to a completed application will be given within 10 days, unless further information is needed, in which case this will be requested.

6.4. Verbal permission to keep a pet will not be given, and HCHA employees must not ignore the unauthorised keeping of animals.

7. Pet-related tenancy issues

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

7.2. Where a pet owner fails to engage with these 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 and/or the RSPCA, requiring the rehoming of the animal, or in some cases seeking possession of the property. Where a decision is made to rehome an animal, we will allow this to take place within a reasonable timeframe but no later than 30 days from request to rehome a pet. We will consider more time if requested.

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

7.4. Damage to property and associated repairs will also be recharged to the tenant, and in severe cases of damage, legal action for possession of the property may be pursued.

8. Visiting pets

8.1. Tenants are responsible for visitors to their property, and should not permit people to visit with pets, or to temporarily take care of any pets, if their property is not suitable for being given permission to keep pets. Pets will not be permitted in communal facilities such as tenant lounges and community spaces. The exception to this is visitors who have a recognised support dog from an approved agency such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, Support Dogs or Dogs for the Disabled.

8.2. Any pets visiting the property (where animals could be permitted) must not cause a nuisance while they are at the property even if it is from a visiting pet.

9. Abandoned pets

9.1. It is the tenant's responsibility to rehome their pet responsibly if they are no longer able to care for it.

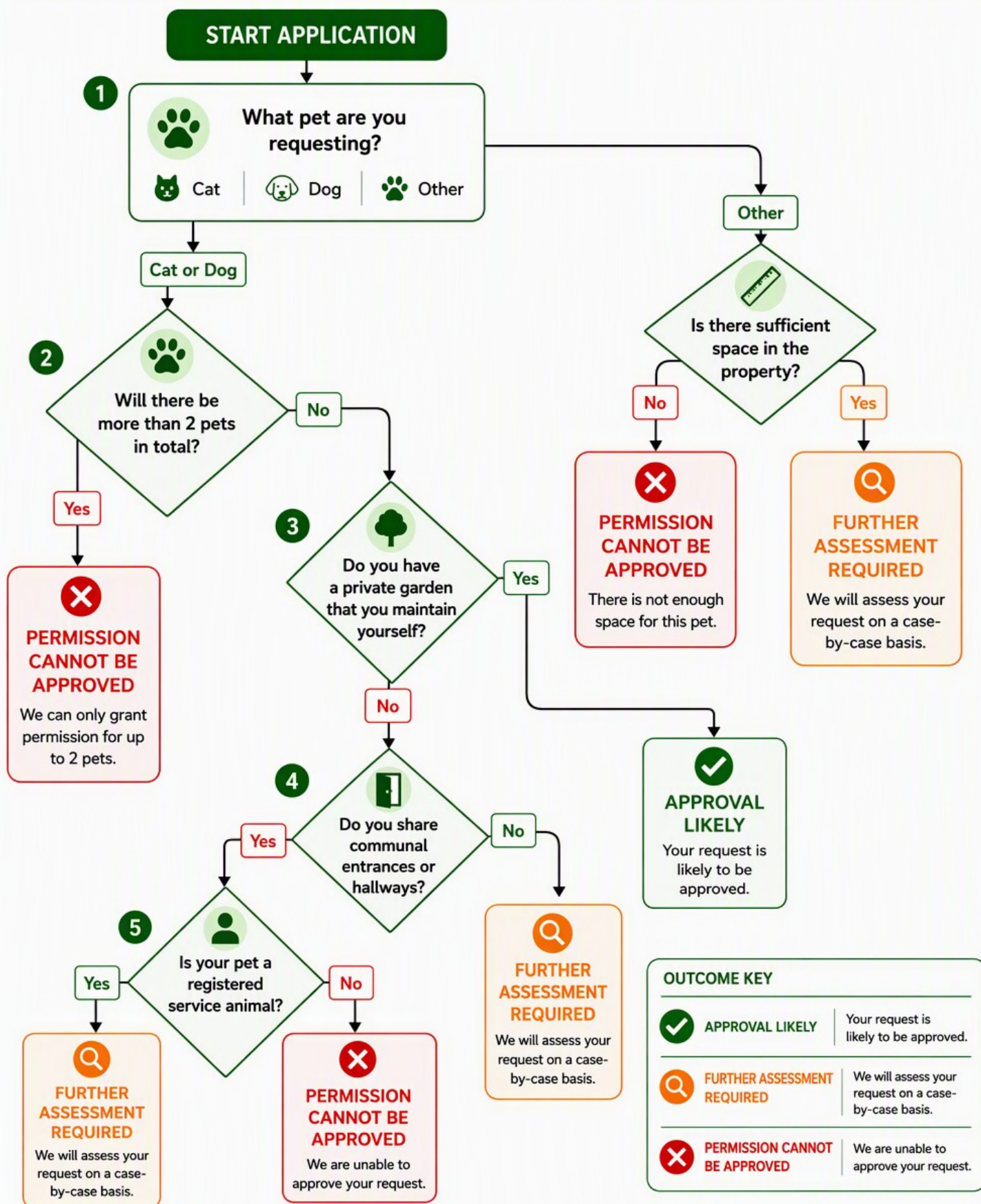
10. Monitoring and review

10.1. We will monitor pet-related issues in line with the responsibilities and enforcement criteria set out in this policy and will review the policy 3-yearly or sooner following significant legislative or regulatory changes or good practice requirements.

10.2. We will consult with tenants for implementation of and revisions of this policy.

PET PERMISSION ASSESSMENT GUIDE

A simple guide to help you understand how we assess pet permission requests.



This flowchart provides guidance only. All pet requests are assessed individually in accordance with HCHA's Tenancy Agreement and Pet Policy. Permission must be obtained in writing before acquiring a pet.