



## Pets Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy is to clearly outline our approach to residents keeping pets. Allowing a tenant to keep a pet is at our discretion as there is no statutory right to keep pets. We want to ensure that when allowing residents to keep pets this is not adversely affecting others, for example by causing a nuisance. We will ensure that cruelty or neglect are dealt with quickly and effectively and outline in which circumstances we may withdraw this permission.

### 2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all Ekaya Housing residents.

### 3. AIMS

This policy will provide reasonable, fair and clear guidance for residents and our staff and refer to the following:

- Terms under which residents will be granted pet permission.
- Instances where permission will not be granted.
- Encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Ensure animal welfare is maintained.
- Meet legislative requirements.
- Set out clear guidelines on how we deal with breaches of this policy and the law.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

Pets include cats, dogs, fish, insects, reptiles, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, caged birds. **Ekaya does not permit any residents to keep pigeons, fowl or livestock.**

We take exotic pets, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates to be snakes, lizards, spiders etc. We do not encourage you to keep this type of pet in an Ekaya property because they usually need specialised care and living conditions.

**Any exotic pet that would require a licence under the dangerous wild animal Act 1976 as amended is not permitted.**

**Permission will not be granted if in the opinion of Ekaya the pet will pose a safety risk to the household or neighbours should it escape.**

**Breeding of animals is not permitted in Ekaya properties.**

All residents must seek permission from Ekaya before any pet is kept as part of their household.

## 5. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

There are a number of pieces of legislation relating to the main laws for keeping animals.

- Protection of Animals Amendment Act 2000– Persons found guilty of cruelty or neglect may be imprisoned and/or fined. They may also be banned from keeping an animal for life.
- Animal Welfare Act 2006 amended on 1st October 2018 – Owners have a legal duty to meet the welfare needs of pets. Welfare needs include a proper diet (including water), somewhere suitable to live, any need to be housed with – or apart from – other animals, allowing animals to express normal behaviour, and protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease. Anyone who is cruel to an animal, or does not provide for its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

The new Regulations that came into force in 2018 are for activities involving animals which changed the previous licensing regime for businesses involved in dog breeding, dog and cat boarding including home boarding, dog day care, the selling of pet animals, and the exhibiting of animals.

- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and as amended in 2024 – Under the Act, it is illegal for a dog to be 'out of control' or to bite or attack someone. The legislation also makes it an offence if a person is worried or afraid (the term is 'reasonable apprehension') that a dog may bite them. The Act specifically made four breeds of dog illegal to own, breed from, abandoned or sold:
  - the Pit Bull terrier,
  - Japanese Tosas,
  - Dog Argentino
  - the Fila Brasileiro.
  - XL Bully
  - Any other breed that is added to the list under the Act
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 - The Act's schedule designates the species covered, such as many primates, carnivores, larger or venomous reptiles, dangerous spiders and scorpions. Keeping such animals without a licence is unlawful and the state is also allowed to specify where and how the animal is to be kept.

## 6. Service Dogs

**Service dogs** are specially trained to provide practical help and physical support to disabled people and those affected by certain conditions. For instance, they serve as seeing-eye dogs for the blind, alert deaf people when necessary, or are there to turn over someone who is having a seizure to ensure physical safety. By definition, service dogs are not regarded as pets and therefore do not come under the general provisions of this policy. Service dogs are specifically trained by an accredited organisation to assist people with a disability.

You still need to apply for permission. When you apply, you will be asked to provide either:

- An [ID book](#)
- A letter or certificate showing that the dog has completed assistance training.

- Medical evidence that a service dog is required for a registered household member.

## **7. Emotional Support Pets**

Emotional support animals help simply by being there. They do not undergo any specific training because their presence is comforting to someone suffering from anxiety, depression, or another mental or physical illness.

You still need to apply for permission. When you apply, you will be asked to provide:

- A referral letter from a recognised professional such as a GP or qualified therapist that an emotional support pet is required for a registered household member.
- Medical evidence of the condition or disability for the applicant (must be a registered household member).

## **8. PET PERMISSIONS**

If you are living in temporary accommodation or supported housing you will not be permitted to have a pet. This is due to the accommodation not being suitable for pets.

If your property is managed by a third party this policy will not apply. Please refer to the managing agent or superior landlord's pet policy.

Permission is only granted if residents have exclusive use of their own private entrance door and a use of a garden.

Residents will have permission to keep one pet in total i.e., one dog or one cat.

We will require all dogs that are kept in our properties to be microchipped, vaccinated annually and neutered.

However, on schemes where there is a mix of internal and external communal areas even though the properties have private entrances, pets will be excluded on such schemes. The exception to this rule is for Service Dogs and Emotional Support Pets.

You must have Ekaya's written permission in advance before

- you get a pet in all type of properties (except small pets, such as hamsters, gerbils and goldfish)
- Want more than one cat or dog and you live in a house or bungalow with a private garden.
- If you are pet sitting
- Want to install dog or cat flaps - we need to check the flaps will not affect the door's fire safety.

8.1 If you have a dog or a cat you must adhere to the following:

- All dogs (including service and emotional support dogs) must wear a collar and ID tag to comply with current legislation and be kept on a lead in communal areas at all times.
- You must not mistreat the animal.
- If you have a private garden, you must ensure that there is adequate fencing. You are responsible for keeping your dog under control and in your garden.

Your neighbours are not responsible for keeping your dog out of their gardens.

- Dog owners must act responsibly and make sure they regularly clean up any dog faeces from their gardens.
- Do not allow your dog to foul any communal areas, pathways or grass verges.
- Keep your dog on a lead.
- Never leave your dog alone if it causes a nuisance by barking. It is unfair to your neighbours and your pet if it is continually barking.
- They do not cause a nuisance to other residents.
- They do not cause a risk to other residents' health or safety.
- They do not cause a risk to Ekaya staff or their contractors.

8.2 Other provisions of pet ownership are:

- The breeding and sale of animals is not permitted from our properties.
- Permission for the installation of a dog or cat flap at the property must be agreed with Ekaya prior to any work commencing. Should you leave the property you must remove the flap and return the door to how it was before.
- Pets must not cause a nuisance or prevent any maintenance work being carried out by Ekaya staff or their contractors. We may ask for your pet to be put in another room or outside in the garden.
- Pets must not pose a health or safety risk to other residents', Ekaya staff or their contractors. The rules specified in this policy apply to pets kept on the premises or visiting the premises.
- If pets cause damage to your homes, we'll charge you in line with our Recharge Policy.

## **9. GROUNDS FOR REFUSAL**

- If you live in a property which has communal entrance doors and corridors, you would not as a general rule be allowed to keep a cat or dog.
- Residents will not be permitted to keep pets where there are previous convictions for cruelty to animals.
- Animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 or Animals which are not allowed.
- Dogs that are specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 as amended 2024.
- Any animal considered unsuitable by Ekaya.

## **10. RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND THEIR WELFARE**

The Association will encourage residents to take into account what animal would fit in with their lifestyle and be realistic about their physical abilities, time commitments and the cost of upkeep when considering pet ownership.

Applicants must demonstrate in their application that they are able to spend the required time with the pet to ensure its wellbeing. A dog for example should not be left unattended for more than four hours according to the RSCPA and PDSA. Permission can be refused and revoked if pets are being left alone for long periods.

The Animal Welfare Act places a duty of care onto residents for their animals to ensure their needs are met. Residents may face prosecution if they do not.

If a resident or member of staff witnesses or suspects any cruelty or neglect this needs

to be reported to the RSPCA. If this is reported by a third party, then they need to be encouraged to contact the RSPCA themselves.

## **11. DEALING WITH TENANCY BREACHES**

If any of the conditions within the Pet Restrictions are broken or we receive complaints regarding noise nuisance, fouling, damage, any other nuisance or concern for welfare of the animal(s), appropriate action will be taken as detailed below.

We will investigate any issues raised in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy. Where a complaint is upheld following investigation, the tenant will be given the opportunity to rectify the situation, and undertake remedial action as agreed.

We will aim to ensure that residents receive advice and support on pet management issues necessary to help them keep their pet and resolve any problems to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

However, we reserve the right to withdraw its permission and require the removal of a pet where remedial action fails to resolve an issue and no other solution is available. In such cases, the tenant must make arrangements for the pet's permanent removal from the property within two weeks of the permission being withdrawn.

Legal action, in the form of an Injunction requiring a tenant to stop or start certain actions or for the removal of the animal, would only be taken as a last resort where a tenant refused to cooperate to address concerns in relation to a pet; or where a problem could not be managed, and no other course of action was available.

If pets are found to have been left behind in a property when a tenancy has ended, we will contact the appropriate authorities to arrange for their safe removal and care and any associated costs recharged to the outgoing tenant.

If it has been found that a tenant has neglected a pet's welfare, or mistreated or caused unnecessary suffering to a pet, then we will notify the appropriate authorities. Where this is brought to our attention by a third party, then they will also be advised to report it to the appropriate authorities. In such cases, permission to keep a pet in one of our properties will be withdrawn and not granted again.

If more than one pet is being kept at an Ekaya property, we will ask you to remove the pet/s that you do not have permission for.

## **12. APPLICATION PROCESS**

Any requests to keep pets must be made in writing to Ekaya by completing an application form. If you require support in completing the application form, contact Ekaya and we will arrange for your Housing Officer to visit you to assist with the application.

Requests for permission will require a description and photo, along with details of the species and age of the animal. For dogs, the breed and microchip number (plus confirmation) should also be included.

Permission is not an automatic right, and we reserve the right to refuse permission. We will confirm our decision in writing within 10 working days unless there is a specific challenge or further investigation is required. Where permission has been granted in

writing, it can be withdrawn at any time if it is deemed that the terms of the permission have been broken.

### **13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Ekaya will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people in line with our Equality and Diversity Strategy. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and will take positive action where appropriate.

In accordance with legislation, in providing housing accommodation and related services, Ekaya will act in a manner which encourages equal opportunities and observe equal opportunity requirements.

Ekaya will not refuse a resident permission to keep a Service dog, but for monitoring purposes will record and hold this information on file. Residents who have Service dogs must notify Ekaya that they are keeping such a pet and in these circumstances the Tenant remains responsible for the behaviour and welfare of the animal.

### **14. APPEALS**

Any resident wishing to appeal about any aspect of the Pet Policy can lodge a formal complaint in accordance with Ekaya's Complaints Policy.

### **15. RESPONSIBILITY**

The Head of Service is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

### **16. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Ekaya will review this policy to address legislative, regulatory, best practice, or operational issues. The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner subject to changes in legislation.

### **17. POLICY APPROVAL**

<b>Approval Date:</b>	<b>February 2024</b>
<b>Approved By:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Performance Committee</b>
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	<b>Head of Service</b>
<b>Policy Author:</b>	<b>Housing Services Manager</b>
<b>Consultation Completed:</b>	<b>January 2024</b>
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2027</b>