

Pets Policy

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all customers, regardless of tenure, who live in properties owned or managed by Sovereign Network Group (SNG) who wish to keep pets in their homes.

It provides a framework for responsible pet ownership, ensuring that tenants and leaseholders adhere to their respective agreements, and any stated lease restrictions or conditions regarding pets, while maintaining harmonious living conditions within the community.

2. Purpose and objectives

This policy aims to:

- ensure that a consistent approach is taken when dealing with requests to keep pets so it is clear when we will allow certain pets and when we will not
- clearly set out the standards we expect of customers who keep pets, in line with their tenancy or lease agreement
- ensure measures are in place to encourage responsible pet ownership, whilst also providing a clear framework to ensure issues associated with pets are dealt with appropriately
- comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory requirements and good practice, in particular adherence to the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and the Renters' Rights Act 2025 which takes effect on 1 May 2026. Key provisions of this legislation are:
 - Tenants have a legal right to request to keep a pet
 - Landlords cannot impose a blanket ban and must consider each request on its own merits. There is a 28-day timescale to respond to requests
 - Landlords can only refuse a request for a good or reasonable justification or if a superior lease agreement prohibits pets
 - Tenants have a right to challenge unreasonable refusals
 - Landlords can require tenants to have a pet damage insurance or pay reasonable costs of the landlord's insurance.

3. Policy statement

SNG is committed to supporting responsible pet ownership while maintaining a fair and consistent approach to managing pet-related matters across our properties. We recognise the positive role pets play in customers' lives as well as the positive impacts on mental and

physical wellbeing. However, we also recognise the potential for nuisance to others if pet owners are not responsible in the way they care and manage their pet's behaviour.

By providing clear guidelines for customers requesting to keep pets and setting expectations for pet care and responsibility, SNG strives to create a balanced approach where pet ownership aligns with tenancy and lease agreements whilst fostering respectful and inclusive communities where both pet owners and non-pet owners feel comfortable and heard.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Pet	A domestic or tamed animal kept for companionship or pleasure.
Banned dogs	The government has banned certain dogs. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pit Bull Terrier• Japanese Tosa• Dogo Argentino• Fila Brasileiro• XL Bully Dogs (in England and Wales) – unless they have a valid certificate of exemption.
Assistance Dogs (or other animals)	Assistance dogs (or other animals) are not considered pets; they're relied upon to help with the owner or family member with day-to-day activities and trained to perform specific tasks. There is no formal register for assistance dogs, however several organisations maintain their own voluntary register.
Therapy animals	A therapy animal provides emotional support and comfort and doesn't perform specific tasks for individuals with disabilities. Therapy dogs are not officially registered but are typically certified.

5. Policy

This policy sets out what we will do and what we expect from our customers in relation to pet ownership:

- our approach to requests to keep pets, the criteria for approval and any restrictions that apply
- the responsibilities of customers for the care and wellbeing of any animal in their home
- our expectations of customers in terms of managing their pet's behaviour
- the position we will take if these expectations or responsibilities are breached

5.1. Our approach to requests to keep pets

We recognise that responsible pet ownership can have positive benefits on health and wellbeing and provide support for individuals with health conditions or sensory impairments. We also understand that cultural attitudes towards pet ownership need to be observed in terms of how customers treat pets depending on their values and beliefs.

This needs to be balanced against the suitability of different property types with the number, size and breed of animal(s) that the customer wishes to accommodate to mitigate any nuisance being caused to others in the neighbourhood.

5.1.1. When permission is or is not required to keep a pet

The tenancy or lease agreement will state if permission is required from SNG to keep a pet. Most of our rented and lease agreements will allow customers to have pets without seeking permission. However, certain properties may have restrictions or conditions that don't allow pets which will be referred to in the tenancy or lease agreement or notified in a separate document. There are other types of accommodation where SNG may not consider that the property is suitable for some animals and in these cases the tenancy or lease agreement will state that permission must be sought prior to keeping a pet.

Where permission is required, any requests to keep pets must be made in writing and will be carefully considered and will not be unreasonably withheld or delayed. We will only give permission if we consider that the pet(s):

- is a normal domestic animal;
- is suitable for the size and type of property;
- will not be in such numbers that they may cause excessive wear and tear to the property or create an unhygienic living environment;
- won't cause a nuisance or annoyance to others; and
- will be well looked after.

Where permission is granted, the customer will be expected to adhere to our Pet Ownership Agreement. Information and guidance about pet ownership is on our website at sng.org.uk.

We reserve the right to withdraw consent at any time if any of the above considerations do become a concern, particularly if the pet does become a nuisance or we believe that there are signs of animal cruelty or neglect.

In rare circumstances we may make exceptions or give retrospective permission to keep a pet, for example:

- where a customer with a pet has moved into a SNG property, temporarily or permanently, due to having to move from their existing home
- where a pet is being kept without our previous knowledge and permission should have been sought, we may give permission retrospectively if we are satisfied that other conditions for keeping a pet have been / can be met.

5.1.2. Assistance Dogs and Therapy Animals

Assistance dogs are not considered pets. They're relied upon to help with daily activities and are trained to help people with disabilities, including sight impairment, hearing difficulties, epilepsy, diabetes, physical mobility and more.

Assistance dogs have important rights under the Equality Act 2010. Customers are not required to seek permission and SNG are not permitted to refuse an assistance dog in any property type.

Therapy animals are different as these are not recognised as service animals, even if they are required for emotional support. Permission would still be required from SNG, if the tenancy or lease agreement states this. In considering the request, SNG would require supporting evidence from a GP or Health Practitioner to confirm that the animal is providing this service to the customer.

5.2. Restrictions that apply

5.2.1. Property unsuitability

There are some types of accommodation where SNG may not consider that the property is suitable for some animals and in these cases the tenancy or lease agreement will state that permission must be sought prior to keeping a pet.

SNG will only refuse a request for a good or reasonable justification, such as:

- High rise flats or homes without gardens. In these cases, animals such as large, active dogs may not be considered suitable, however smaller pets, such as fish or hamsters, would be more suitable
- Housing for multiple occupation, shared accommodation or housing for elderly or vulnerable customers, where the health of the customer or other customers living in the accommodation may be compromised by the type or number of pets. This extends to physical, mental and emotional health conditions and pet allergies
- Where there is a 'no pets' clause in a superior leased agreement which would be legally binding

5.2.2. Supported, Temporary and Keyworker housing

In Supported, Temporary and Keyworker accommodation, requests for pets will be considered on a case-by-case basis, considering the type of property, level of sharing, and welfare of the animal. Pets will not usually be permitted in shared housing but may be allowed in self-contained units.

5.2.3. Health, safety or nuisance concerns

SNG may refuse permission to keep a pet where the animal(s) pose a health and safety risk, or there is a risk of infestation. This may be due to the number or type of pets being requested or where the customer holds inadequate health records for the animal(s). Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis taking into account the suitability of the property and number or type of pets that the customer is requesting permission to keep.

Where there is evidence that the pet has been the cause of nuisance in the property or at a previous address, SNG may refuse permission.

5.2.4. Dangerous and banned animals

This policy assumes that requests for pets refers to normal domestic animals but for the avoidance of doubt, customers are not allowed to keep livestock, farm, wild, exotic, endangered species or any animals that are included in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 under any circumstances.

We won't allow customers to keep certain breeds of dogs outlined in the Dangerous Dog Act 1991. Section 4 (Definitions) lists the breeds affected.

It is a criminal offence to own an XL Bully type dog unless it was registered for exemption before 1 February 2024. Customers who own any of these breeds of dog are required to provide us with a copy of the registration document and adhere to the strict guidelines around this breed, which include it being muzzled and kept on a lead in public areas and in the control of someone aged 16 or older.

5.2.5. Poultry

Customers must check the tenancy or lease agreement and any restrictive covenants prior to seeking permission to keep poultry. They are also required to check with their local council about any rules that may prevent poultry being kept in a domestic home, such as by-laws and planning restrictions.

We will need to see the council's written permission before we can consider giving permission to keep poultry. If the property is suitable, we may give permission to keep up to six birds, excluding cockerels.

5.2.6. Pet related businesses

Animals are not allowed to be kept for commercial breeding purposes. We will also not permit any type of animal hostel or boarding business or any activity that involves the selling of animals from our homes.

5.3. Responsibilities of customers for the care and wellbeing of pets

Responsible pet owners have a duty of care to make sure that any pets they have are suitable for the type of property and that the needs of their pets are adequately provided for. Customers who are pet owners are therefore required to:

- adhere to the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in terms of meeting the care and wellbeing needs of their pets. This includes making sure that any pet has a suitable living environment with room to exercise, is kept securely so it can't escape, and is provided with suitable food and fresh water
- ensure that pets are protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- make proper arrangements to dispose of animal waste and not allow it to build up in the home or in any communal area.

- comply with any statutory or regulatory requirements for the breed, including but not limited to holding an exemption certificate, being muzzled and on a lead in any communal or public areas
- not breed animals in the home or garden
- arrange for their own pet insurance, microchipping and ensure vaccinations are up to date
- ensure the pet is properly cared for should they be absent from the home.

Customers must not install any type of pet flap or exit without prior written permission from SNG. We cannot allow these to be fitted in any fire rated door, window or wall.

In the sad circumstance that the pet dies, it must be buried or disposed of in a responsible and safe manner. Customers cannot bury a deceased pet or animal in a garden or communal land owned by SNG.

5.4. Our expectations of customers in managing their pet's behaviour

Customers are responsible for ensuring that pets in the household or belonging to visitors do not cause a nuisance to neighbours, including excessive noise, damage or disturbance.

We expect our customers to ensure that:

- pets do not cause a nuisance to neighbours or in the neighbourhood, particularly from excessive barking which is considered to be anti-social behaviour
- pets are under control, muzzled if appropriate, and secured in another room when our staff or contractors are visiting. We reserve the right to refuse to attend or complete works if customers don't comply with this request
- dogs are kept on a lead (and muzzled if this is required by any local or national regulations) in communal areas and only use these areas to access or leave the property. Dogs are not allowed to enter children's play areas
- pets are not allowed to foul in public or communal areas. Any animal waste must be cleared and appropriately disposed of immediately
- pets do not cause damage to the home or any property belonging to SNG or neighbours or create an unhygienic living environment. Customers may be required to pay for the reasonable costs of cleaning or repair to SNG's property if this is necessary due to the actions of the animal
- garden boundaries are kept secure to stop pets escaping

- pets are not left unsupervised and are appropriately cared for should the customer be absent from the home for any substantial period of time
- pets are rehoused if they are no longer able to look after them
- rehouse pets if they have bred
- alternative arrangements are made for pets should SNG have to temporarily move customers from their home

5.4.1. At the end of tenancy

At the end of the tenancy or lease we encourage customers to treat the property for fleas or infestations if a pet has been kept there.

Where we are taking possession of the property, the customer is responsible for arranging a suitable home for their pet ahead of the eviction.

Customers must not leave any animal in the property after the tenancy has ended. Should an animal be left, it would be considered to be abandoned. SNG will serve a tort notice and work with other agencies to remove the animal. Any costs associated may be recharged.

5.5. Action we will take if expectations or responsibilities are breached

If we have reason to contact customers about any of the following, we'll expect them to find a solution to the problem:

- the condition of the property (including garden and shared areas)
- the welfare of their pet(s)
- justified complaints from neighbours
- aggressive behaviour or actual harm caused by the pet(s)

If the customer doesn't find an appropriate solution and the problem continues, we may require them to remove / rehome their pet(s).

Where the nuisance or breach of tenancy / lease is serious or persistent, SNG may take enforcement action which may include injunction proceedings to remove the pet or in exceptional cases to seek possession of the property. This includes any situation where a pet causes an injury to a member of SNG staff or contractors.

Other agencies also have legal powers to deal with concerns about animal welfare or nuisance. Customers are advised to contact the appropriate agency initially and then inform SNG, as follows:

- aggressive animals, animals used in illegal activities or owners using animals to intimidate people: should be reported to the Police
- stray dogs or excessive barking: should be reported to the Local Authority
- injured or abandoned animals, welfare concerns for domestic animals: should be reported to the RSPCA.

6. Contact and Complaints

Customers can contact us by completing our on-line contact form on our website, or by phone or email. Details are on our website at sng.org.uk.

Any customer who is dissatisfied with how we have managed their case is able to submit a complaint using our Complaints process. Once our Complaints process has been exhausted, and if they remain dissatisfied, then they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, who can consider if we have acted appropriately.

7. Compliance

All staff involved in reviewing requests for pets at SNG are required to read, understand and comply with this policy. Understanding will be confirmed upon induction and reinforced through annual policy refreshers. Managers will monitor compliance and promptly address any instances of non-adherence.

We will monitor the impact of this policy to ensure appropriate and consistent application.

8. Sustainability

At Sovereign Network Group, we recognise the critical importance of sustainability in our operations and services. We are committed to embracing sustainable practices that contribute to environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability.

Examples of sustainability specific to this policy may include community engagement, customer empowerment and risk mitigation. By integrating these practices into our operations, we aim to create lasting value for our business, our customers, and the broader community, aligning with our long-term commitment to sustainable development.

9. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Regional Director Localities (Customer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and review of the policy - Communication, implementation and operational compliance - Cascading the policy
Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication, implementation and operational compliance - Cascading the policy
Responsible Managers	Monitor and review all cases and ensure requests have a consistent approach.
Responsible Officers	Reviewing requests and reporting concerns to the Line Manager.

10. Equality, diversity and inclusion

Sovereign Network Group is committed to the fair, respectful and equal treatment of its customers, employees and applicants.

We will apply this policy consistently, fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on the protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, determined in the Equality Act 2010.

We'll make sure our services and workplaces are as inclusive and accessible as possible and take seriously any concerns that we've not acted in a fair way, dealing with them as quickly as we can.

We are committed to helping customers to access information about their homes and services in a way that suits individual needs. We will also consider any reasonable adjustment requests in line with our Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

11.Related documents

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Neighbourhood Management Policy

12.Legislation and regulation

SNG is committed to ensuring compliance with all applicable legislation. To achieve this, we will take reasonable measures, including regularly reviewing our policies and procedures and updating them as necessary to reflect any changes in the legal landscape.

The legislation listed in this policy is not intended to cover all legislation applicable to this policy. To comply with clause 1.1 of the Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability Standard, which requires adherence to all relevant law, SNG will take reasonable measures to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation by reviewing policies and procedures and amending them as appropriate. Any queries relating to the applicable legislation should be directed to the policy owner.

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- Control of Dogs Act 1992
- Equality Act 2010
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- SNG Tenancy Agreement
- Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Framework
- Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015

13. Review

This document will be reviewed every 2 years, or sooner if significant changes occur in the relevant legal or operational landscape.