

Pets and Assistance Animals Policy – HO061

1. What is the purpose of the Policy?

This policy sets out bpha's approach to requests for permission to keep a pet or animal companion and explains when permission is required. We recognise that animals can help reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing. Some customers may also require an assistance animal.

2. Who does the Policy apply to?

This policy applies to current and prospective customers of bpha.

3. What are the main Policy principles?

We will:

- Be fair and consistent when considering requests from customers for permission to keep a pet/animal companion.
- Not withhold permission for a pet/animal companion without a valid reason.
- Provide customers with clear guidance on animal ownership, how to apply for permission and why permission may not be granted or existing permission revoked.
- Provide a fair approach to balance the benefits of having a pet/animal companion with the potential that an animal may have a negative impact on other residents.
- Adhere to the current Government legislation as specified in the Dangerous Dogs act 1991 and the guidance on XL Bully Dogs at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs>.

4. When is permission for a pet/animal companion needed?

Permission is not needed for the following animals:

- Small caged animals, such as hamsters, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, and rabbits.
- Small caged birds, such as finches, budgies, and canaries (excluding chickens and cockerels).

Permission is required for all other pets and animals.

We will decide customer requests to keep an animal after reviewing the tenancy agreement, contract, or lease, along with any management agreement or lease for the block.

For mixed-tenure blocks, we will review both the tenancy agreement and the lease.

If a lease or management agreement does not allow animals, we may be unable to grant permission because we must comply with the managing agent's pet policy.

We will always seek to grant permission where possible. If we cannot, we will explain why.

Permission will not be granted for the following animals:

- Livestock such as sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, cockerels, pigeons
- Poisonous or venomous creatures
- Wild animals as defined under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 such as some venomous snakes or certain types of spiders.
- Dogs as specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, including animals granted a certificate of exemption under the Act. This Act is now updated by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Dangerous dogs include Pitbull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.
- XL Bully Dogs which were banned in the UK in February 2024
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs#keeping_an_XL
- Any other animal that is not listed above, but may be unsuitable for the property, block of flats or independent living scheme.

Permission will also not be granted if we have previously taken legal action against a customer for breach of the Responsible Animal Ownership rules in Section 7.

5. How can I obtain permission for a pet/animal companion?

Customers will be asked to complete a Pet Permission Request Form. Permission will be considered once a completed form, and any required documents have been submitted to bpha.

Permission will be granted if the following conditions are met:

- The customer has a satisfactory tenancy record with no breaches.
- The animal is suitable for the size of the property, with enough space in the home and/or garden. We will ask the customer to confirm how many animals they are applying for.
- Keeping the animal does not prevent the property from being used for its main purpose.
- Neither the customer nor anyone in their household has been found guilty of animal cruelty or neglect, or has a history of poor animal ownership.
- The animal does not pose a risk to residents.
- The animal is, or will be, microchipped where appropriate. Dogs must be microchipped by law.
- The Responsible Animal Ownership requirements in Section 7 are met.
- The animal is neutered or will be neutered by a qualified vet when it reaches the appropriate age.
- Any XL Bully dog owned before 2024 and covered by an exemption certificate must be muzzled and kept in a separate room when bpha staff or contractors visit the property.

We will reply to any requests for permission to keep a pet/animal companion within 5 working days and meet any other statutory timescales for response.

6. Do I need permission for an Assistance Animal?

No – permission is not required for an assistance animal, but we ask customers to let us know when they get an assistance animal by contacting our Customer Communication Centre on [0330 100 0272](tel:03301000272) or info@bpha.org.uk. We will ensure your query is handled by the right team.

The definition of an assistance animal is an animal that mitigates a disability for a person with a disability, as defined in the Equality Act 2010. They are highly trained by an accredited organisation and the owner will have had specialist training in the safe and effective use of their assistance animal. Assistance animals are not pets but provide additional support or assistance to a person with a disability or support need.

An emergency care plan for the welfare of an assistance animal should be available in the event the owner is absent from home and is unable to have their assistance animal with them.

7. What is responsible animal ownership?

Customers are responsible for their animals' welfare. We are not responsible for an animal's welfare while it is living in a bpha property or after it has been removed. If we receive concerns about an animal's welfare, we will refer them to relevant organisations, such as the RSPCA.

Animal owners must ensure the animal:

- Receives regular treatment to avoid infestation from fleas and other insects.
- Does not cause threat or harm to anyone including other residents, employees, volunteers, or contractors working for or on behalf of bpha
- Does not cause a nuisance or foul in communal areas
- Is kept under control at all times
- Does not cause unpleasant odour for neighbouring homes or damage your home.

Owners should:

- Immediately clear up after their animal and dispose of mess appropriately
- Not breed or sell animals from the property
- Not keep animals for any commercial purposes.

Permission will be withdrawn or restricted if:

- Any of the conditions above are not met.
- We receive justified evidence-based complaints about an animal a customer is responsible for
- An animal is mistreated.

If permission is withdrawn, we will ask for the pet/animal companion to be rehomed within a specified timescale. If this is not done, then we will take legal action and apply to court for an injunction to have the animal removed and ban future pet/animal ownership in a bpha home.

Further legal action could be taken and action against a tenancy/lease as appropriate, up to and including possession action.

In some cases where there has not been responsible animal ownership, customers may be asked sign an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement which restricts the number of pets/animals in the home. A breach of this agreement could result in bpha seeking an injunction to have the animals removed.

8. How can you appeal or ask for a review of bpha's decision on your request to keep a pet/animal companion?

If you wish to appeal a decision/ ask for review about our decision to grant permission for a pet/animal companion, please contact the Customer Communications Centre on [0330 100 0272](tel:0330 100 0272) or info@bpha.org.uk. We will ensure your query is handled by the right team.

Any reviews/appeals will be considered by the relevant Head of Service, and a response will be given in writing in 15 working days.

9. How can I get advice, support and assistance?

For general queries and advice please contact our Customer Communication Centre on [0330 100 0272](tel:0330 100 0272) or info@bpha.org.uk.

10. What legislation and regulatory requirements is bpha required to consider?

A range of legislation supports this policy including:

- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Anti- Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- XL Bully Ban 2024
- Renters' Rights Act 2025.

This Policy supports the delivery of the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Consumer Standards – Tenancy Standard and Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

11. How will this policy be monitored and reviewed.

We will keep records on any permission requests refused to ensure consistency across our developments and neighbourhoods.

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if there is a change of legislation or regulation.

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Policy Number	Approved by	Date Approved	Policy Owner
HO061	Executive Leadership Team	June 2026	Head of Housing Operations

