

Responsible Pet Ownership Policy

Originator:	Policy and Strategy Team
Approval Date:	August 2024
Review date:	August 2027

1	Introduction
1.1	One Vision Housing (OVH) strives to be the best landlord and to make homes and communities as safe as possible for its customers.
1.2	To achieve this aim OVH needs to balance the wishes of many customers who want to keep pets, with the principles of animal welfare and our commitment to promoting safe communities.
1.3	The Policy sets out the process for requesting permission, how decisions will be reached and what terms and conditions may be attached to the consent given by OVH.
1.4	Scope of Policy
1.4.1	The Policy applies to all social and affordable properties owned and managed by OVH. The Policy does not apply to OVH leaseholders, market rent tenants or shared owners.
1.5	Legal compliance
1.5.1	OVH’s relationship with their customers is underpinned by the tenancy agreement. This sets out the rights of both parties and forms a legal contract in accordance with the Housing Act 1988 (as amended).
1.5.2	Some tenancy agreements give rights to customers living in certain property types to have a pet. The terms of the individual tenancy agreement and any current, or future legislation will always take precedence over this Policy, which sets out OVH’s general approach to responsible pet ownership.
1.5.3	Operation of the Policy demonstrates a commitment to making fair and consistent decisions in response to customer requests to keep pets and supports the principles of The Animal Welfare Act 2006.
1.5.4	The Equality Act 2010 defines who should be considered as disabled and requires OVH to take account of disabled persons’ needs even if this means treating disabled people more favourably. As such, OVH will consider circumstances in which a customer may have medical reasons for keeping an animal.

1.5.5	Where an ‘assistance dog’ is required for customers to live independently and the property is unsuitable, then priority for re-housing will be assessed in accordance with the Allocations Policies as relevant in each area.
1.5.6	<p>Operation of this Policy also takes into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (as amended in 1997) • The Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 • The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 • The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 • Animal Welfare Act, 2006
1.5.7	Section 3.4 addresses the approach of OVH where pets or animals cause nuisance and annoyance and should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
1.6	<p>The application of this Policy ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, responsibility of the Regulator for Social Housing as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to the housing and landlord services they provide, registered providers must take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants
1.7	Access and Communication
1.7.1	OVH is committed to ensuring that its services are accessible to everyone. We will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for OVH or use its services.
1.7.2	Working with our customers we have established a Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments Policy to ensure we make best use of every customer interaction to meet customers’ needs in our service delivery and ensure this information is kept up to date.
1.8	Equality, Diversity and Human Rights
1.8.1	OVH is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identity / Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation and Religion and / or Belief, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity.
1.8.2	OVH also recognises that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.
1.8.3	OVH will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

1.9	<p>The Policy should be read in conjunction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse and Harassment Policy
2	Statement of Intent
2.1	<p>OVH will consider all requests from customers to grant permission to keep a pet at their home. Permission for small animals that can be kept in self containers (i.e. fish, hamsters) will not be required, however, OVH will require tenants to seek a permission to keep medium to large pets e.g. cats, dogs.</p>
2.2	<p>Decisions will be taken giving due regard to the terms of the individual’s tenancy agreement, the type of property, the individual’s circumstances and the appropriateness of the request depending upon the type of pet.</p>
2.3	<p>OVH will utilise this Policy as a basis for making clear, fair and consistent decisions whilst recognising the diverse needs of customers and the many varieties of property type and layout.</p>
2.4	<p>OVH will ensure it meets its legal and regulatory requirements in regard to granting permission for its tenants to keep pets.</p>
2.5	<p>OVH will endeavour to promote animal welfare principles with existing and proposed pet owners.</p>
3	Policy
3.1	Permission
3.1.1	<p>Decisions on pet / animal ownership will be taken by the Neighbourhood Services Officer and a written response will be provided to customers requesting permission within 10 working days.</p>
3.1.2	<p>Where consent is granted, this will be subject to terms and conditions which are aimed to minimise the likelihood of problems arising and to promote the welfare of the pet / animal.</p>
3.1.3	<p>Applications for permission to keep pets or animals will need to be signed by the tenant or in the case of joint tenancies, both tenants.</p>
3.1.4	<p>OVH will not grant permission to keep larger pets in Retirement Living Schemes except for exceptional circumstances e.g. ‘assistance’ dogs or where the request is for small pets that are kept in contained areas e.g. small cages / glass tanks or similar.</p>
3.2	Factors to be taken into account
3.2.1	<p>OVH aims to act fairly and reasonably in relation to requests from customers to keep pets / animals and therefore the decision-making process should be consistent. In order to facilitate this, officers will consider the following factors when making their decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the property

- Whether the property is accessed via a communal internal area
- Whether the property has a communal or individual garden
- The size of the outside space
- Whether the property is a part of a scheme, for example, a sheltered scheme
- Whether the property is a house, bungalow or flat
- Whether the property is part of a block, for example low-rise or high-rise block
- The location of the property
- Whether the property is adjoined to another property
- The nature of the pet or animal to be kept
- The personal circumstances of the tenant
- Any other relevant circumstances (e.g. circumstances of neighbouring properties / tenants)

3.2.2 Each case will be considered on its merits however, it is extremely unlikely that OVH will grant permission for:

- Any large animal (unsuitable to be kept indoors)
- Any animals that have to be kept outdoors (including caged birds, pigeons or similar)
- Any requests for multiple animals to be kept at the premises
- Any wild animals
- Any banned animals e.g. those classed as being dangerous dogs (unless exempted by a court order)
- Any animals that are a danger due to being poisonous or venomous
- Any animals classed as livestock (e.g. any traditional farmyard animals)
- Any request where there is a likelihood of animals creating a statutory nuisance e.g. through noise
- Any breeding or commercial activity associated with pet or animal ownership

3.2.3 OVH will not grant any new permissions for tenants to keep pets in high rise accommodation but will consider applications for other accommodation with communal entrances on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 Existing pet owners

3.3.1 Where OVH tenants have existing pets prior to the publication of this Policy and they do not have express written permission to keep them, OVH may allow them to remain on a discretionary basis, provided:

- No complaints have been received
- No damage to OVH's property has been caused as a result of the keeping of the pet or animal
- No concerns as to the animal's welfare exist and the suitability of the animal or pet to the type of accommodation.

3.4 Enforcement issues

3.4.1 In some circumstances pets / animals can cause nuisance to others. Where this happens, OVH's Neighbourhood Team will sign-post customers to organisations that can help.

3.4.2	<p>Non exhaustive examples of the kinds of issues where OVH may get involved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pet roaming in communal areas and/or unattended • Excessive noise, for example, dogs barking • Pets fouling • Aggressive pets • Too many pets in a property affecting property condition or garden
3.4.3	<p>OVH may also get involved or make referrals to other agencies including the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) where there are concerns about the animal's welfare, examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where animals have been abandoned • Where animals are under-fed • Where animals are experiencing neglect or cruelty • Where animals are kept in unsanitary conditions
3.4.4	<p>Following the provision of verbal warnings, if problems persist or tenants fail to comply with instructions issued by OVH, it may on a case-by-case basis consider further actions including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuing warning letters • Withdrawal of permission to have a pet / keep animals • Issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts • Referrals to the Police / Environmental Health • Tenancy enforcement actions / other legal remedies including civil actions, e.g. civil injunction proceedings and / or service of a notice seeking possession
3.4.5	<p>Where clear evidence exists, that pets have caused damage to the property, OVH may consider recharging their owners for remedial works.</p>
3.4.6	<p>Where pets are abandoned in properties, OVH will work with RSPCA or other similar organisations to find suitable, professionally run, temporary homes for them depending on the nature of the pet and its physical condition.</p>
3.4.7	<p>If in the course of carrying out normal landlord functions e.g. repairs and maintenance or annual gas safety checks, it is necessary to engage the services of professional bodies to control pets safely, OVH reserves the right to recharge tenants for this service.</p>
3.4.8	<p>In such circumstances where owners cannot control their pets to allow safe access to properties, OVH will withdraw any previous permissions to keep pets and may take tenancy enforcement actions where the keeping of the pet constitutes a tenancy breach on anti-social behaviour grounds.</p>
4	Implementation
4.1	<p>All OVH staff have responsibility to be aware of the OVH Responsible Pet Ownership Policy in order to direct any customer enquiries that may arise.</p>

5	Performance	
5.1	There are no additional performance requirements as a result of the operation of this Policy.	
6	Consultation	
6.1	All OVH staff have been consulted in the development of this Policy. Customer representatives via the Tenant Policy Review Group have also been consulted on this Policy	
7	Review	
7.1	This Policy will be reviewed every three years (from the date it is approved) by the Registered Providers' Executive Management Team to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of OVH or changes to OVH business practices.	
8	Equality Impact Assessment	
8.1	Was a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	No
8.2	When was EIA conducted and by who?	An EIA Relevance Test was undertaken by the Policy and Strategy Manager and the Quality and Inclusion Officer in July 2024
8.3	Results of EIA	<p>The EIA Relevance Test did not identify any adverse impacts for any groups with protected characteristics as a result of the operation of this Policy.</p> <p>There were potential differential impacts for those with disabilities although these are adequately thought to be mitigated through 'reasonable adjustments' and a case-by-case approach to permissions.</p>
9	Scheme of Delegation	
9.1	Responsible committee for approving and monitoring implementation of the Policy and any amendments to it	EMT
9.2	Responsible officer for formulating Policy and reporting to committee on its effective implementation	Director of Housing and Customer Services
9.3	Responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring implementation of procedures	Director of Housing and Customer Services

Date of revision:	Reason for revision:	Consultation record:	Record of amendments:
05/11/2019	In line with the Review Schedule	See Section 6 above	There are no significant changes to the Policy in this review
18 th May 2021	In line with the Review Schedule	See Section 6 above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change due to the new Government's White Paper at Section 2.1- Inclusion that tenants will not require permission to keep small pets in their properties • Change at 2.5- Removal of the statement that OVH will provide or signpost customers to relevant information • Change at 3.1.4- Inclusion that permission to keep small pets will not be required in the Retirement Living Scheme • Change at 3.4.1- Removal of the statement that OVH will give advice or signpost customers to organisations that can help • Change at 3.4.6- Included the statement 'OVH will work with RSCPCA or other similar organisations'
20 th August 2024	In line with the Review Schedule	See Section 6 above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised wording from relevant Consumer Standards has been included at 1.6 • The EIA Information at Section 8 has been updated