Housing: a good practice guide
Community Animal Welfare Footprints
Celebrating good practice

The RSPCA’s Community Animal Welfare Footprints scheme (CAWF) celebrates and promotes good practice in animal welfare services by local authorities, housing providers and local resilience forums in England and Wales.

The scheme focuses on four key footprint areas: stray dogs, contingency planning, animal welfare principles, and the one that inspired this publication – housing.

In 2009 the number of entries increased considerably. Local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) earned bronze, silver and gold footprints for, among other things, clear and positive pets policies, useful information for tenants, clear enforcement, good partnership working, and innovative education work.

Unsurprisingly, in the two years the scheme has been running, we have found many examples of good housing practice with regard to pets. This booklet highlights much of that work and aims to inspire other housing providers to review their current policies and practices with regard to pets.

The Society also hopes that this guidance will encourage other landlords to promote their good work and to seek recognition via the CAWF scheme in 2010.

For more information please visit: www.rspca.org.uk/cawf or e-mail: cawf@rspca.org.uk

CAWF Housing Footprint achievers 2009

**GOLD**
- Fabrick Housing Group
- Sussex Housing and Care
- London Borough of Wandsworth Council

**SILVER**
- Caldmore Area Housing Association Limited
- Five Village Home Association

**BRONZE**
- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Affinity Sutton Housing Association
- Derwent Living
- South Devon Rural Housing Association
- Leeds City Council
- Merthyr Tydfil Housing
- Merlin Housing Society
- Peabody Group
- Southampton City Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- Tendring District Council
- The Wrekin Housing Trust
- West Kent Housing Association
- Waverley Borough Council
A pets policy – why is it so important?

Keeping pets in sheltered, social or council accommodation can pose many challenges for landlords. Yet research shows that animals that are well cared for and responsibly kept can be a positive attribute to any community as pet ownership often satisfies the need for companionship, daily routine and exercise.

Pets can help develop an individual’s social life because people often talk to others with animals. In addition, research indicates that pet owners tend to have lower blood pressure and better health than people without pets.

Some studies have shown the positive effects on children gained through pet ownership. For many older people, an animal can be their only friend. In some countries such as the USA, Canada, Greece and France, the right of elderly people in sheltered accommodation to have pets or maintain contact with animals, is enshrined in law.

While pets can have a very positive impact on their environment, irresponsibly owned pets can be the cause of much misery and suffering to both the animals themselves and those who live around them.

The challenges – ranging from the high-profile intimidation by dogs and animal hoarding to the lower level but equally problematic cat spraying and dog barking – are issues that can be improved by having a clear and well-enforced pets policy.

It is important that the pets policy is, where possible, tied in with larger strategies and policies to ensure that it continues to be followed by tenants and enforced by officers. It can be, and has been most effective when, linked into other aspects of work that local authorities and housing providers are expected to provide.

Social landlords are required under the Housing Act 1996 s.218A, introduced by the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003, to prepare and publish a statement of policies and procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB). Some landlords have decided to include procedures on nuisance caused by animals within this statement.

Similarly, landlords (local authorities in particular) have used local findings from the National Indicators, specifically the perception of ASB and how well residents feel it is being dealt with, to tackle some animal-related problems. This has been a particular focus of landlords that have seen a rise in ASB with dogs.

It is also important that housing providers do not feel alone when dealing with animal-related problems, as many of these issues are best tackled in partnership, whether it is with the local authority, the police or the RSPCA.

This and other issues regarding education and proactive work will be addressed later in this booklet.

A pets policy – the basics

The RSPCA believes that housing providers should not discourage pets where facilities exist for their proper care. However, controls are necessary to prevent irresponsible pet ownership, which can cause suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours. To address this, many housing providers are now including clauses about pet ownership in the tenancy agreement.

The key question that needs to be addressed regarding all written policies is whether the policies or conditions are enforceable and whether they will be enforced by officers. It is also important to ensure that pet owners generally, or owners of specific pets such as dogs, are not vilified through policy – while there may be a need for greater conditions on some pets, they need to be proportionate to the problem and explained clearly to the residents.

The following points should also be covered in a basic pet policy and, where possible, a tenancy agreement.

A clear statement that the owner is responsible for their pets’ welfare by law, as defined under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

You should base this in particular on s.9 and the ‘duty of care’, which makes it an offence for the person responsible to “…not take such steps as are reasonable in all circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which he is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice”. The needs outlined are: a suitable environment; suitable diet; ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; to be housed with or apart from other animals; and to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. You should also point out that codes of practice for certain animals have been produced or are in the process of being produced in both England and Wales.

You will also need to include a clear process for dealing with any welfare or cruelty complaints.

A clear statement that the owner must ensure that the pet does not cause a nuisance and is not used in an anti-social manner.

You will need to include clear details of what is expected from a responsible owner.

In addition, detail a clear process for dealing with nuisance complaints that arise, including, where applicable, the inclusion of other agencies such as the police and the RSPCA.

Clear guidance on which pets are allowed, where they are allowed, where they are not, and how many pets tenants can have.

You should include whether pets are allowed in the accommodation and, if so, how many and of what species. The RSPCA is not able to specify exactly how many animals of what types can be kept as this will depend on the size and style of accommodation. Local authority animal welfare officers, environmental health staff or local veterinary surgeons may be able to provide help and support in defining a policy for the assessment of individual cases and the training of housing staff so that they are able to assess the suitability of accommodation for the keeping of pets.

You may wish to prohibit on safety grounds the keeping of any animals listed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

You will also need to include whether tenants are allowed to replace their pets when the animal dies.
What a tenancy agreement should include

There are a number of footprint-achieving landlords who have produced clear and enforceable tenancy agreements that have been enforced effectively. A tenancy agreement should be completed and signed after the housing provider has supplied the tenant with information on owning a pet, which should include the obligations of the owner and issues to be considered before acquiring a pet, e.g. whether your lifestyle is suitable for the pet, whether the pet is suitable for a family with young children, etc.

In the RSPCA’s opinion a good tenancy agreement should include the following information.

About the owner

**Contact details:** Details of the applicant, with address and contact number, as well as the address where the pet is to be kept, if different.

**Accommodation information:** Type of accommodation where the pet is to be kept and whether it has direct or shared access to a garden. This will help establish a general picture of whether the pet(s) are suitable for the accommodation.

**Pet problem history:** Has the applicant been given permission to keep a pet in the past? Have they ever been prosecuted for any offence against an animal? This will provide important information on whether the tenant is suitable for pet ownership.

About the pet

**Numbers:** Details of how many and what type of animals the tenant is asking to keep. This will reduce potential welfare, noise and environmental health issues related to too many animals in a dwelling. You may wish to include a description or picture of the animal(s).

**Vaccinations:** Confirmation that the pet has an up-to-date vaccination card and that other necessary treatments, such as de-fleaing and worming, have been administered. This should reduce the chance of diseases and parasites spreading.

**Permanent identification:** Is the pet microchipped or tattooed? The benefits of microchipping are detailed on page 10.

**Breeding prevention:** Has the animal been neutered or spayed to prevent it from breeding?

**Obligation:** Confirmation from the owner that they are able to meet the welfare needs of the pet(s) as stated in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (s.9).

**Declaration**

This should state clearly that the owner understands their obligations as a pet owner and tenant and that they will be a responsible owner. The declaration should include confirmation by the tenant that they are aware of the consequences should they fail to meet their obligations.

A model tenancy agreement will be available to download from the ‘good practice’ section of the RSPCA’s website: www.rspca.org.uk/cawf

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**Conditions that tackle indiscriminate breeding and accidental ownership**

- The breeding and sale of animals should be prohibited on premises that you own – both the dwelling and other areas such as garages. This will help reduce the numbers of ‘accidental owners’ – those who acquire pets from friends and neighbours without being aware of the basic welfare needs of the animal. It will also help avoid both the environmental nuisance and health and safety problems for neighbours.

- You may also wish to consider whether to allow home boarding – where dogs are cared for in the homes of paid dogsitters. The RSPCA is not opposed to home boarding but you should consider both the risk of nuisance to neighbours and access to suitable areas for exercise.

**A clear policy on pets left behind**

- If a tenant is taken into care or hospital temporarily, under the National Assistance Act 1948 (s.48: Duty of councils to provide temporary protection for property of persons admitted to hospitals, etc.) the local authority must “...take reasonable steps to prevent or mitigate the loss or damage”. Procedures should include provision for pets in these circumstances.

- All empty properties, especially those recently vacated, should be checked by the landlord for abandoned pets, and procedures should be put in place to ensure that pets are considered when evicting a tenant. Please see ‘A pets policy – other considerations’ on page 14 for more information.

**Clear procedures on common pet-related problems**

- There are some problems that are generally regarded as a low-level nuisance but can make residents’ lives and, in some cases, the animal’s life a misery if they persist. It is important to have clear, enforceable policies to deal with these.

- **Roaming and unattended animals:** For example, owners who repeatedly allow their animals to stray. It is important, particularly if you are a non-local-authority landlord, that you make contact with your local authority dog warden/animal welfare officer to clarify whether they will attend calls regarding a stray dog within the housing premises, e.g. communal garden, playground, etc.

- **Fouling:** There should be proactive enforcement and education to avoid fouling problems.

- **Excessive noise:** If pets, particularly dogs, are causing a noise nuisance, the owners should be recommended to seek help from a veterinary surgeon or local experts such as local dog training clubs or an animal behaviour counsellor. Some local authority dog wardens may also be able to offer assistance and advice. If the noise problem persists, owners should be given the option of rehoming the animal.

- **Animal neglect:** The owner should be asked to rehome the pet and, if necessary, be reported to the RSPCA.

**Provision of pet care information**

- You should provide information on pet ownership, either produced by the landlord or obtained from a recognised source – the RSPCA can provide leaflets, while specialist information is available to download from: www.rspca.org.uk/petcare.

- It is also useful to have a local contacts list available to new residents and pet owners, which includes local vets and animal welfare organisations that may be able to assist and advise residents.
Good practice in action

PEABODY GROUP
Ensuring a consistent approach across housing stock

In 2008 the Peabody Group, which owns 19,000 homes across London, reviewed its housing policy with regard to pets, with the aim of ensuring greater consistency across the estates it manages.

While the group had seen no significant growth in nuisance and welfare issues regarding pets, it wanted to ensure that there was a consistent policy adopted by all housing officers with regard to pets.

Therefore Peabody, with assistance from organisations including the RSPCA, drew up a new policy for staff. The final document included relevant legal and regulatory information, procedures and forms as well as brief guidance on specific issues such as animal hoarding and stray dogs.

As the new policy was only approved in spring 2009, it is too early to gauge its effectiveness across all the Peabody-owned estates. However, it is a good starting point to build on and a useful document to share with other agencies that may assist in animal nuisance and welfare situations, such as the local authority, police and RSPCA.

The group has continued to look at further ways of tackling pet-related issues, including greater access to pet-care information and a possible pilot for a pet registration scheme.

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TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL
Pets policy: a living document

Tendring District Council, like many bronze-achieving housing providers, has got the basics right. In fact, for the last few years it has provided a good template to other housing providers with sound policies and clear information.

However, it took time for Tendring to attain its current standard. The council, which manages over 3,000 properties, thoroughly revised its tenancy agreement with regard to pets in 2002. It appeared effective, so remained unchanged until 2006 when the housing service started seeing a steep rise in cat and dog complaints.

It was quickly identified that the council’s policy at that time did little to address a number of important factors. It also excluded many potentially responsible pet owners due to their accommodation not meeting the council’s conditions.

As a result of a review, a new document was produced that incorporated the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and ensured a more robust and efficient policy to deal with breaches and disputes.

Most importantly, the new document allowed a certain amount of flexibility, which ensures that exceptional circumstances are taken into account when assessing the suitability of a tenant to have a pet on the council’s property.

The review has produced a pets policy and a guidance booklet, both of which are practical, accessible and effective.

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MERLIN HOUSING SOCIETY
Clear guidance leaves no room for doubt

Merlin Housing Society (MHS) has established very clear guidance in its pets policy and a procedural document, that includes useful flowcharts on aspects such as complaint procedures. However, it is the society's Pet Ownership Guide that really stands out as an example of good practice.

The guide was produced to ensure that any resident, old or new, who is thinking of getting a pet knows what is expected of them as a pet owner.

MHS was formed in 2007 to accept the transfer of around 8,000 properties from South Gloucestershire Council. As of 31 December 2008 it owned 6,380 general-needs properties; 1,413 sheltered properties; 48 hostel properties; 39 shared-ownership properties; and 466 leasehold properties.

The 14-page, A5, glossy booklet covers the key points of permission, responsible pet ownership and the law; the tenancy agreement; and nuisance and neglect issues; and gives useful contacts within the animal welfare and veterinary worlds.

The benefit of a booklet like this, coupled with good procedural documents, is that there is a consistency of approach with regard to pets. This comprehensive approach has some flexibility but generally ensures that all residents, regardless of whether they are in sheltered, extra-care or leasehold properties, know where they stand.

This has helped MHS tackle some of the problems that arose in the past, stemming from irresponsible and ignorant pet ownership.

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WALES AND WEST HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Information for residents before acquiring a pet

In 2008 the Wales and West Housing Association (WWHA) was one of only two CANF entrants to achieve the gold footprint for housing.

WWHA provides homes and services to more than 25,000 people and works in 16 local authorities managing more than 9,000 properties.

The association has produced some excellent guides for pet-owning residents. But it is its information leaflet for residents considering getting a pet that most impresses as it poses a number of questions to help tenants seriously consider the impact of a pet and whether it will suit their lifestyle.

This proactive approach to pet ownership has helped WWHA build strong working relationships with a number of leading national animal welfare organisations, as well as Cardiff Dogs Home. It also holds events across South Wales that are designed to promote responsible pet ownership.

During May to October 2008, WWHA ran events, some of which coincided with National Noise Awareness Week, which focused on barking dogs and provided advice on how to tackle the reasons for barking.

The Association has also formed a partnership with Dogs Trust, which has agreed to visit communities and run workshops on responsible pet ownership as well as talking about the benefits of microchipping and neutering. Similar activities have been put on for children in the school holidays.

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A pets policy – going beyond the basic standard

The provision of a good basic pets policy, that is both enforceable and enforced, is essential if there is to be a consistent and effective approach to the issues arising from pets in housing. In order to tackle the root of the problem before it takes hold, however, it is important to put preventative measures in place and to take a more proactive approach.

Registering pets

Pet registration for tenants provides a multitude of benefits for landlords and local residents alike. One of the most effective forms of registration is to require all tenants to request permission to keep a pet, with a policy stipulating that no request will be unreasonably denied. This allows the landlords to ensure that they know which pets live in the majority of the dwellings they manage.

While failing to register their pet may not in itself be grounds for action to be taken against a tenant, it does strengthen the case if there are ASB, nuisance or welfare complaints made about a pet in a dwelling.

Responsible pet owners will find that there is a benefit to registering their pet. If a pet strays nearby, there is a greater chance of it being returned. This is particularly significant for pet dogs, as it can cost owners £50 or more to retrieve them from the local stray-dog kennels.

Registration also has benefits for emergency planning. While animal welfare is not a priority in contingency planning, human welfare and public protection are. By having a registration system in place, the landlords can ensure that staff are protected in emergencies by knowing which animals they may encounter if they need to enter a premises. Residents are also protected as staff can organise the removal of pets if the owner is out, ensuring that the owner doesn’t risk their own safety by returning to an evacuated building, for example.

In itself, registration doesn’t directly tackle many animal-related problems but it can be a useful tool for monitoring and addressing problems, and can certainly reduce the chances of some issues such as hoarding occurring in the first place.

Microchipping and neutering

The RSPCA and many other welfare charities that rehome dogs and cats routinely microchip and neuter them while they are in their care. While neither procedures are cheap options, housing providers should promote them to residents and think about whether, at the very least, they should require new owners of dogs and cats to have them microchipped. The procedure has been used by some landlords in conjunction with registration, particularly for pet dogs. This makes traceability easier, which helps to tackle straying, fouling and other nuisance and ASB issues that arise.

Both these procedures also allow officers to interact with pets and their owners, helping housing providers better understand some of the issues arising for pet-owning tenants. And, as part of a wider plan or policy, microchipping and neutering can help address some of the root causes of welfare and ASB issues.

To microchip, a small chip the size of a grain of rice is inserted between an animal’s shoulder blades. This can be scanned for information on the owner, increasing the chances of the pet being returned to its owner if it is lost or stolen. Microchipping (including registration) can cost from £10–30, although some vets and animal welfare charities can help provide a discounted microchipping service.

Neutering is an effective way of preventing unwanted litters. These can produce further problems down the line with irresponsible and ignorant ‘accidental owners’. In many cases it has been shown to calm aggressive behaviour in animals and reduces the tendency to stray.

While neutering can be costly, some landlords have set up deals with local vets or animal welfare charities to provide a limited number of discounted neutering vouchers.

It is always worth talking to local animal welfare charities, veterinary surgeries and local authority dog and/or animal warden services about helping with raising awareness about these procedures.

Education

The education of both residents and staff plays an important part in tackling some of the key problems arising from pet ownership.

Education can be provided for residents in many forms, from making information available to specific events that include a vet consultation or discounted microchipping. It is always worth making links with local animal welfare charities, which may be able to help raise awareness among the local community.

Housing officers also play a vital role in educating tenants. An effective but often underrated method is face-to-face contact when a complaint is made regarding a pet. RSPCA inspectors often issue warning notices to pet owners who are failing to meet their pet’s needs, not via the post but handed to the owner in person, when problems and solutions are discussed and explained. This ensures that the owner can be in no doubt of their responsibilities and how they could improve the situation. In a recent survey of inspectors, they stated that in 99 per cent of the cases where improvement notices are issued, no further action is needed.

It is important to ensure that housing officers tasked with dealing with animal-related problems are aware of the basic legislation surrounding pets and comfortable around the animals they deal with. Some landlords arranged for behaviourists and dog handlers to provide basic dog handling and behaviour training, which resulted in officers feeling more confident in their enforcement role.

Multi-agency working

At a time of shrinking budgets and increasing workloads, working in partnership with other organisations is essential when tackling some of the issues surrounding pets in housing.

As mentioned on page 6, it is important to liaise with your local authority dog warden and/or animal welfare officer to ensure that dogs straying on housing property will be picked up. Partnership work can help provide training and advice, particularly in the area of animal welfare (see above).

It is also important to build good, local working relationships with safer neighbourhood teams, the local authority and the RSPCA inspectorate. These relationships will help you formally or informally agree in which circumstances other partners need to be involved and what they can provide within their remits.

Such close day-to-day working will provide the housing officers with resources and expertise that they would not otherwise have, greatly improving the effectiveness of work in this area.

Partnership working has proved hugely successful in tackling ASB with dogs, particularly in London where the police, landlords, local authorities and animal welfare organisations have worked together to provide education, advice and enforcement on the issue.

The RSPCA regularly runs Community Animal Action Events (CAAE), often in areas about which the Society has received many welfare complaints. CAAEs aim to bring together landlords, local authorities and other welfare organisations to provide education, advice, free veterinary check-ups, flea and worm treatment, and often microchipping and neutering too. The schemes are run by the RSPCA’s inspectorate and have proved hugely successful in helping residents understand the importance of animal welfare.
**Good practice in action**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH COUNCIL**

Dogg-microchipping scheme for tenants

An incident in 2007 involving an attack on a dog and its owner by two pitbull-type dogs was the catalyst for double-gold-footprint-achieving Wandsworth Council to bring together all its work on issues concerning dangerous dogs and ASB into one strategic document.

Entitled *The Action Plan*, the document sets out the council’s current policy, legislative powers and procedures, together with action already being implemented and proposals for further measures. Most importantly though, it established each department’s and outside agency’s role in tackling particular aspects of dangerous dogs and ASB with dogs.

It was created in consultation with departments and members across the council, including housing. To address irresponsible dog ownership, straying and fouling, it was agreed that all dogs owned by council tenants would be microchipped and registered free of charge by the council.

The microchipping was funded from the council’s Housing Revenue Account, as it was a justifiable measure to tackle crime and ASB on council estates.

This compulsory measure aims to link dogs with their owners more easily, thereby tackling irresponsible dog ownership early on, and to return stray dogs to their owners more quickly.

To date, Wandsworth has microchipped more than 2,000 dogs on its estates and in properties owned by housing associations in the area. It is hoped that this, along with the housing, youth offending and dog warden teams working together on education programmes, will address the welfare and ASB problems associated with dogs in the area.

**AFFINITY SUTTON**

Educating both residents and staff

Affinity Sutton Housing Group reacted swiftly to a growing trend on its estates where some tenants were using dogs irresponsibly, creating welfare, nuisance and ASB issues.

Its response was to draw up clear guidance for dog owners on what was unacceptable behaviour and the owner’s responsibilities, while also offering advice on neutering and microchipping. The group also wrote into its tenancy agreement that tenants had to seek permission before keeping a dog in a dwelling. Further information was circulated to residents via its *Local* newsletter.

Affinity Sutton also organised a dog owners’ event on one of its estates that provided basic dog training, with the help of a dog behaviourist, microchipping by the RSPCA local branch, and an owner/dog look-a-like competition. The event promoted the positive aspects of dog ownership to both pet-owning and non-pet-owning residents alike.

Affinity Sutton is now hoping to share its good practice with other housing providers. Plans are also underway to ensure that housing staff are trained in basic dog handling and behaviour to ensure that its officers feel comfortable when dealing with dog-related complaints.

**SUSSEX HOUSING AND CARE**

Improving pet welfare through partnerships

Sussex Housing and Care (SHC) supports more than 800 elderly residents in its sheltered housing schemes and care homes. In the last 18 months, SHC has developed its pets policy so it is clear and consistent, with a process to ensure an animal’s welfare is upheld.

Like all the successful housing footprint achievers, SHC has a clear and positive written policy, a clear procedure to manage complaints, a ban on business activities involving animals operating from the property, and a contact list of animal welfare organisations for residents.

However, SHC also supplies new and current residents with RSPCA literature on responsible pet ownership and the importance of meeting the owner’s ‘duty of care’, which is defined under s.9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (see page 5). It also issues advice on microchipping and neutering.

When a new pet owner moves into a property they are required to register their pet with the housing manager, signing to say they have read and understood the pets policy. This register includes details of the pets and contact details of their vet.

In 2009 SHC established a link with the Canine Protection League and the PDSA, resulting in residents having access to discounted or free services, e.g. microchipping and, in some cases, veterinary treatment.

**FABRICK HOUSING**

Proactive partners

Fabrick Housing has always had a good, clear housing policy and tenancy agreement, as well as providing information on responsible pet ownership, among other things.

Until recently, Fabrick was unable to meet the gold-footprint criteria of providing discounted microchipping or the sourcing of regular advice from a reputable animal welfare source, because of the cost involved. However, in the last 12 months, Fabrick solved both these issues by going into partnership with Middlesbrough Council’s bronze-footprint-achieving dog warden service and building a closer relationship with the area’s RSPCA inspector.

The council and Fabrick pooled resources and offered free microchipping for pets at a number of different venues, including parks and community centres in the area. The partnership also secured funding via the neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF) to offer free neutering to pets in areas where ASB and crime were high. In addition, where there was a welfare concern regarding an animal, the council would accompany the RSPCA when visiting premises, with the RSPCA inspector investigating welfare issues and the council, together with the housing association, taking up any other issues surrounding nuisance, ASB or criminal activity in their tenancies.

This is a fine example of how multi-agency partnerships have lightened the load of the housing providers and at the same time allowed it to provide a five-star service to its pet-owning tenants.
A pets policy – other considerations

Pets of vulnerable clients placed in self-contained accommodation

Landlords responsible for placing individual clients in self-contained accommodation will need to introduce a pets policy that not only encourages responsible pet ownership wherever possible but also ensures the welfare of the pets is not compromised.

In the majority of situations it is hoped that pet ownership is encouraged and doesn’t form a barrier to an individual being allocated an overnight hostel or temporary accommodation. For homeless people or those seeking refuge, e.g. victims of domestic abuse or refugees, their pet is a valued companion and can often provide a link with ‘normality’.

Organisations providing this type of accommodation are therefore urged to introduce procedures and policies that enable owners and pets to remain together but also ensure the welfare of the animal concerned as well as the smooth running of the service.

The Hope project – run by Dogs Trust – has produced an information pack containing guidelines for accepting dogs into hostels, shelters and day centres, while the RSPCA’s Pet Retreat provides an information, advice and pet fostering service for families fleeing domestic abuse. Through its network of animal fosterers, Pet Retreat takes care of pets belonging to families who are going into a refuge. Once the owner has a new, safe place to live, they can be reunited with their pets.

Details of Pet Retreat and similar projects can be found in the Directory of useful contacts on p.16.

Evictions, abandonment, debt recovery

It may be necessary in certain situations for landlords to evict tenants and it is important that pets are considered during the eviction process, as well as other situations where pets may be left behind or removed.

Eviction: Any pets left behind by a tenant are regarded as ‘property’ under the law (just like any other items left behind) so the landlord is responsible for removing them, arranging for their care (ensuring that the animal’s needs are met, as defined under the Animal Welfare Act 2006) and then recouping any costs from the former tenant. In this situation, the landlord should contact the RSPCA immediately, which will, with the landlord’s cooperation, attend to the immediate welfare needs of the animals.

If the landlord wishes the animals to be removed from its property while the RSPCA attempts to locate the owners, the Society will seek written acceptance of boarding and veterinary liability from the landlord.

Abandonment: In cases other than those outlined above, if the housing provider genuinely believes that a tenant has left a property and any pets kept within it with no intention to return, the local authority should contact the RSPCA. In these situations, there may well be a case for further action under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Debt recovery: The RSPCA has received calls regarding pet owners being told by bailiffs that their pets could be seized as part-payment for rent arrears. The additional stress that this puts on the owner and, potentially, on the pet is of great concern.

It is, therefore, recommended that any landlords seeking to seize property in payment for rent arrears stipulate that pet animals are not to be seized as property.

The RSPCA as a resource for housing providers

The aim of this Guide to good practice is to provide general advice for housing providers regarding pets. It is by no means a comprehensive manual, nor does it try to be.

The RSPCA is the largest, oldest and best-known animal welfare organisation in the world. We have a wealth of knowledge and experience to tap into – not only from our 320 inspectors, but from education officers, scientists, political affairs and campaigns teams, branches, animal centres and hospitals (serving both England and Wales).

Cruelty and welfare concern

The RSPCA has a dedicated cruelty and advice line, which operates 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The cruelty and advice call team deals with emergencies such as trapped or injured animals as well as reports of cruelty and welfare concerns. The call is then tasked to a member of the inspectorate who will investigate.

RSPCA 24-hour National Cruelty and Advice line: 0300 1234 999

General animal care and welfare advice

The RSPCA’s advice team provides general, non-emergency animal care and welfare advice. Enquiries that may need a technical response will be passed to one of the RSPCA’s four science teams (companion animals, farm animals, wildlife, research animals).

Welfare advice is also featured on our website: www.rspca.org.uk

RSPCA Information and advice line: 0300 1234 555

(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Services for local authorities and housing providers

The RSPCA’s local government adviser can provide further information on specific areas of animal welfare-related issues that relate directly to local authorities and other housing providers, such as boarding, living with wildlife, and deterring pests. The society can also provide information that can indirectly impact on housing providers, such as emergency planning, stray dogs, status and dangerous dogs, and hoarding. In addition, we can provide briefings on key legislation regarding animals, on request.

The local government adviser can also help to put local authorities and housing providers in touch with the RSPCA chief inspector for their area.

To find out more, please contact Piers Claughton, the RSPCA’s local government adviser.

By phone: 0300 123 0166

By e-mail: pclaughton@rspca.org.uk

By mail: Piers Claughton, local government adviser, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS
Directory of useful contacts

Animal welfare organisations

**BATTERSEA CATS & DOGS HOME**
4 Battersea Park Road
Battersea
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Tel: 020 7622 3626
Fax: 020 7622 6451
E-mail: info@battersea.org.uk
Web: www.battersea.org.uk

**BLUE CROSS**
Shilton Road
Burford
Oxfordshire
OX18 4PF
Tel: 01993 822651
Fax: 01993 823083
E-mail: info@bluecross.org.uk
Web: www.bluecross.org.uk

**CATS PROTECTION**
National Cat Centre
Chelwood Gate
Haywards Heath
RH17 7BR
Tel: 0870 708 649
Fax: 0870 708 265
E-mail: helpline@cats.org.uk
Web: www.cats.org.uk

**DOGS TRUST**
17 Walkey Street
London
ECIV 7RQ
Tel: 020 7837 0006
Fax: 020 7833 2830
E-mail: info@dogstrust.org.uk
Web: www.dogstrust.org.uk

**FELINE ADVISORY BUREAU (FAB)**
Talesbury
High Street
Tisbury, Wiltshire
SP3 6LD
Tel: +44 (0)1747 871 872
Fax: +44 (0)1747 871 873
Web: www.fabcats.org
Email: information@fabcats.org

**PDSC**
Whitechapel Way
Priorslee, Telford
Shropshire
TF2 9QO
Tel: 01952 290999
Fax: 01952 390305
Eligibility: 0800 731 2502
Web: www.pdsa.org.uk

**RSPCA**
Wilberforce Way, Southwater
Horsham, West Sussex
RH13 9RQ
Tel: 0300 123 4555
Fax: 0303 123 0284
E-mail: enquiries@rspca.org
Web: www.rspca.org.uk

**WOOD GREEN ANIMAL SHELTERS**
King’s Bush Farm
London Road
Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire
PE29 2NH
Tel: 0844 248 8881
Fax: 01480 832885
E-mail: info@woodgreen.org.uk
Web: www.woodgreen.org.uk

Pet fostering/ services for owners

**CINNAMON TRUST**
A charity that assists elderly people who are hospitalised or terminally ill.
Tel: 01736 757900
E-mail: admin@cinnamon.org.uk
Web: www.cinnamon.org.uk

**DOGS TRUST FREEDOM PROJECT**
Tel: 0800 298 9199
(Greater London and Hertfordshire)
Tel: 0800 083 4322
(Yorkshire)
E-mail: freedomproject@dogstrust.org.uk
Web: www.dogstrustfreedomproject.org.uk

**PAWS FOR KIDS**
Tel: 01204 394642
E-mail: petfostering@pawsforkids.org.uk
Web: www.pawsforkids.org.uk
Covers: Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, North Cheshire.

**PET RETREAT RSPCA**
Tel: 0300 132 8278 / 07715 540182
E-mail: petretreat@rspca.org.uk
Web: www.rspca_petretreat.com
Covers: Avon; Berkshire; Cornwall; Cumbria; Devon; Dorset; Gloucestershire; Hampshire; Herefordshire; Isle of Wight; Leicestershire; Rutland; Shropshire; Somerset; south Lincolnshire; Staffordshire; Surrey; Wales; West Midlands; Wiltshire; Worcestershire; the north of England.
Get involved in 2010!

We hope that this celebration of good practice has inspired you to develop your welfare policies – for whatever service you provide – as well as encouraging you to enter the Community Animal Welfare Footprints in 2010.

The RSPCA is in a strong position to use its resources to promote and celebrate good practice in animal welfare, so if you would like to shout about good practice in the services you provide, we can help. To register for an entry pack for CAWF 2010, fill out the form on the right or e-mail: CAWF@rspca.org.uk, putting ‘Entry information’ in the subject line. Please include your name, job title and full postal address.

We will begin to send out entry packs late-March. The closing date for entries is Friday, 23 July. Award winners and footprint achievers will be announced on Wednesday, 15 September.

For further information, please contact:

Piers Cloughton, the RSPCA’s senior local government adviser
Tel: 0300 123 0166    Fax: 0303 123 0166    E-mail: CAWF@rspca.org.uk

Please send me an entry form for CAWF 2010

NAME

JOB TITLE

LOCAL AUTHORITY

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE

E-MAIL

Please tick if you require more than one entry pack: 2 3 4 5

Please return to:
Community Animal Welfare Footprints, External Affairs, RSPCA Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS

www.rspca.org.uk/cawf