

**West Dunbartonshire Council
Pets Policy
2026**

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1. Purpose of the Policy

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC, the Council) recognises that keeping pets can offer significant benefits to their owners and therefore we want to allow pet ownership when possible. However, irresponsible owners can cause nuisance and affect the quality of life for other residents, and some tenancy types are not suited for pet ownership.

The Council also recently carried out a survey on pet ownership, 59% of respondents currently have a pet in their household. Dogs and Cats are the most common pets. The main concerns listed for the keeping of pets were noise problems and safety such as aggressive animals. Companionship and mental health benefits were considered the most positive aspects of pet ownership.

Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to set out the Council's requirements, expectations, and procedures regarding the keeping of pets in council tenancies. The policy ensures responsible pet ownership, prevents nuisance and risk to the community, and complies with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025.

2. Scope

This policy is for all WDC tenants, including those in temporary accommodation and sheltered housing. Regarding pets it applies to larger animals (cats, dogs, rabbits), larger birds (parrots), large numbers of smaller animals/birds and to animals that could be classed as "exotic" (snakes, caged spiders, iguanas etc.) or rodents (hamsters, mice, rats etc.). The policy does not apply to small animals that are few in number and kept in small cages or bowls/tanks and do not need to be allowed out of property, i.e. small birds (canaries or budgies) and small fish (goldfish).

3. Reason for obtaining permission

In accordance with the Council's tenancy agreement and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, tenants must receive written permission before keeping a pet. Permission must be sought for new pets, existing undeclared pets, replacement pets, outdoor accommodation required for a pet, exotic species, or large numbers of small animals. Applications will receive a response within 28 days.

4. Conditions of Keeping a Pet

Tenants must care for pets appropriately, and the control of pets, and any pet visiting the property is the responsibility of the tenant. If cats are allowed free access outside, then steps must be taken to ensure they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours. It is recommended to neuter your cat, but not a requirement, however, if issues are caused with a tom cat spraying, or unwanted litters etc. we would recommend neutering or the cat may need to be removed. Dogs must always be kept under control in public areas and should not be permitted to roam freely in communal areas.

The keeping of pets is subject to the following conditions:

- You must apply for written permission to keep a pet before it is moved into your own home, and we will consider every application on its own merit.
- You have a right to keep working dogs such as guide dogs and hearing dogs that are essential to daily living.
- We will generally allow you to keep one pet, except in multi-story flats where dogs are not permitted.
- We will generally allow you to keep domestic pets.
- You will not be allowed to keep a pet if that pet is prohibited by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, is listed in the Schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, or by any other law.
- You are responsible for the proper welfare and behavior of any pets owned by you or anyone living with you.
- You must take all reasonable steps to supervise and keep such pets under control when in public and within communal areas.
- You must take all reasonable steps to prevent your pets causing nuisance, annoyance or danger to your neighbours. This includes fouling, noise, smell and behaviour that gives rise to alarm or apprehensiveness.
- You must take reasonable care to see that your pets do not foul or cause damage to the tenancy property, your neighbour's property or any common areas. You are responsible for cleaning up your pet's faeces.
- We will ask you to remove your pet if it is causing nuisance, damage or its behaviour is out of control.
- You are responsible for any damage caused by your pet and will be recharged accordingly if repairs are needed to fix any such damage.
- You are responsible for the proper disposal of any dead pets.

- Dogs should be microchipped by the age of eight weeks old and have their details registered. This is a legal requirement which can result in a fine of up to £500.
- There is no legal requirement to microchip cats, but it is strongly recommended.

5. Granting of permission

An application for permission to keep a pet must be completed and sent to the Housing Operations Team, who will respond within 28 days. A home visit in some cases may be required before permission is given. This applies to both new pets, existing pets (if you have not already received permission from us), and replacement pets.

WDC will not unreasonably refuse consent for applications to keep common domestic pets. Each application will be considered on an individual basis. We will generally allow one pet in tenancies, if you wish to keep another pet you will need to seek permission again. Approval will be subject to the tenancy type, suitability of accommodation and if there have been any recorded instances of problems with pet ownership at the tenancy previously.

6. Refusal of permission

Permission may be refused if the property is unsuitable, i.e. no dogs are allowed in multi story flats, the pet is banned, too many pets are already present, adequate care cannot be provided, or nuisance/safety risks are likely.

If outside accommodation for a pet/pets is required, written permission must be obtained before it is built / installed. An application must include plans for the proposed construction/installation and details of the species to be kept. This will not be granted if it is felt it could lead to nuisance issues, smell, noise and the potential to attract vermin and permission will not be granted for any pet accommodation on outside communal spaces.

Under no circumstances will permission be given to breed or offer any animal for sale from a WDC tenancy.

7. Pets kept without permission

If you already have a pet and you haven't asked for permission, you can complete the online form or you can let your Housing Officer know. If the conditions for keeping your pet/pets are acceptable, retrospective permission will be given. If you keep pets without permission, you could have enforcement action taken against you.

If we are aware that you are keeping a pet without consent, a copy of this policy will be sent to you giving you 28 days to complete and submit a pet application form.

If permission was previously refused, or where permission would be refused, the Housing Officer will visit and explain why the pet / pets should be removed and a reasonable timescale set for the pet's removal based on a case by case basis.

If the animal is not removed, the case will be escalated to Area Coordinators and if necessary, legal advice will be obtained. The normal course of action would be for notice to be served, and an application made for repossession of the tenancy. WDC will agree to suspend repossession of the tenancy if the resident agrees to remove the unauthorised pet / pets.

8. Withdrawal of permission

Permission may be withdrawn if a pet causes nuisance, fouling, damage, fear, is inadequately cared for, exceeds permitted numbers, breaches a Dog Control Notice, or if required documentation (e.g., XL Bully exemption certificate) is not provided.

Nuisance behavior can include, but is not exclusive to the following:

- Pet owners not removing their animal's toilet droppings to a bin or allowing the animal to use grassed areas as a toilet and failing to clear up the mess.
- Keeping pets over the maximum number permitted.
- The keeping of pets such as snakes, rats, mice, rabbits or insects with inadequate facilities.

Specifically relating to dogs;

- Reports that dogs are used to intimidate people.
- Failing to comply with a dog control notice issued by Environmental Health.
- A dog owner failing to report if their animal is registered under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
- Nuisance dogs, i.e. excessive or uncontrollable dog barking, will be referred to Anti-Social Behaviour services, the power to address the behaviour is against the owner and not the dog itself.

9. Pets in Temporary Accommodation

The Council has a number of properties across the local authority area which are used to provide emergency and temporary accommodation to homeless households. Permission is required to keep a pet in these properties. A request to keep a pet must be made to the Temporary Accommodation Officer who will respond within 2 days.

The keeping of pets in temporary accommodation is subject to the same conditions as a tenancy **with the exception of dogs**. No dogs (except guide/service dogs) are permitted within temporary accommodation.

If you have a dog, you will have to ensure that you make alternative arrangements for them to be looked after. Households who have disclosed that they have an assistance / service dogs will be asked to provide supporting evidence. If pets are being kept in the accommodation without permission, households will be asked to remove them immediately or risk losing their accommodation.

10. Pets in Sheltered Accommodation

You are permitted to move into sheltered housing with an existing pet, but you must have disclosed this information to us prior to moving in and have been granted permission. We would also ask that you disclose if you require to have a guide / assistance dog rehoused with you. For pets not classed as guide / assistance dogs, we would ask in most cases that the pet is not replaced upon its death, however we do recognise the companionship that a pet can bring to people so this can be looked at on a case by case basis. Tenants must also complete a form confirming who will be responsible for the pet should they be admitted to hospital.

Staff cannot be responsible for feeding and toileting animals. Pets should not be brought into shared communal areas unless they are guide / assistance dogs.

11. Dangerous Dogs

The Police and Environmental Health will be informed if a resident, member of staff, contractor or visitor is bitten by a dog when visiting a WDC property. The police normally deal with incidents where a person has been bitten, WDC will deal with incidents where there is no actual injury, but the dog gives fear of injury or dog attacks on dogs and / or other animals.

The Police deal with Dangerous Dogs under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. WDC have enforcement powers under the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 for dealing with dogs that are out of control and cause fear and alarm to anyone. WDC can issue Dog Control Notices (DCN) on any dog owner whose dog is out of control.

These notices are recorded on the National Dog Control Notice database. Where a DCN has been issued (this is carried out by Environmental Health) Housing Operations will be notified, they will be informed of any breaches of the notice also if known by Environmental Health. A breach of a DCN is a criminal offence and therefore we would report any such breaches to the Procurator Fiscal for prosecution. Any tenant who has a DCN must inform Housing Operations of this when they move into a tenancy.

As part of a DCN the tenant also has a duty to notify Environmental Health of any change in address so that they can monitor the DCN. Failure to adhere to any of these obligations or breaching a Dog Control Notice could result in action being taken against the tenant and they could be at risk of losing their tenancy or only being offered a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy. WDC will not disallow the keeping of dogs who are subject to a dog control order, if the conditions of the order are being adhered to.

You must ensure your dog is monitored and is not given an opportunity to stray. WDC will seize and detain stray dogs. You will be charged a fee to collect your dog.

12. Banned Breeds

It has been a criminal offence for over 30 years to own a banned dog breed including the Pit Bull Terrier, the Japanese Tosa, the Dogo Argentino and the Fila Brasileiro. Consequently, none of these dogs are permitted within any West Dunbartonshire Council properties.

From 23 February 2024 new safeguards have been introduced by the Scottish Government for owners of XL Bully dogs. From this date XL Bully dog owners must follow the new laws to make sure their XL Bully dog is on a lead and muzzled in public places. This includes communal gardens, stairwells, lifts etc. within flatted dwellings. Owners can no longer give away, sell, abandon, or allow their XL Bully dogs to stray.

The second stage of the new rules allowed owners to apply for an exemption certificate on or before 31 July 2024. Exemptions will remain subject to conditions, including owners holding 3rd party liability insurance for their dogs, and dogs being neutered.

As of the 1st August 2024 it is an offence to own a XL Bully dog without an exemption certificate issued by the Scottish Government. Owners can however continue to have an XL bully dog, provided they have the appropriate exemption certificate.

Any owner of an XL Bully dog shall be required to send a copy of their exemption certificate to Housing Operations to demonstrate that their dog has been approved for exemption from the banned breed requirements of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Failure to provide an exemption certificate will result in the matter being reported to Police Scotland for further action in addition to explaining the impact that this could have on a tenant's tenancy.

13. Appeals

You can appeal against a decision not to allow you to keep a pet in writing by emailing the Housing Operations Team. A senior member of staff not been involved with the initial decision will investigate your appeal and send a written reply within 14 days.

If not satisfied with the outcome this appeal or if a tenant does not feel comfortable going directly to the service area, complaints can be made to the Customer Relations Team. Online forms can be completed or alternatively contact Customer Relations on the details provided on the website.

14. Policy review and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if changes in legislation require it. The numbers of tenants registering their pets, the numbers of tenants with a Dog Control Notice and the numbers of tenants who have provided their exemption certificates for owning an XL Bully dog will be monitored.