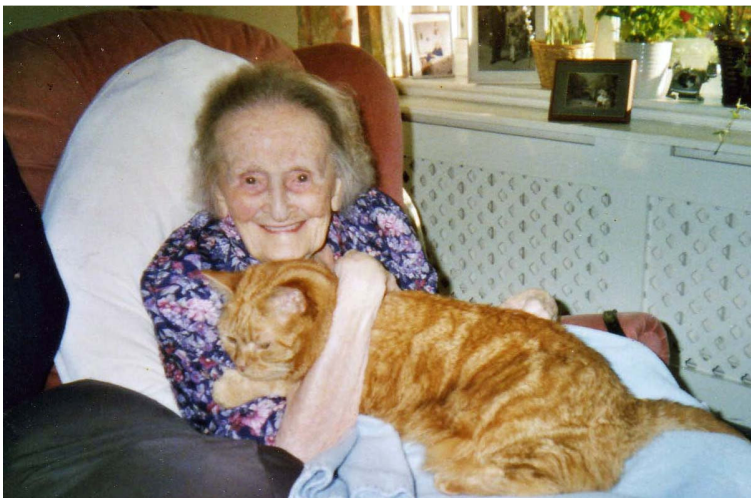


# Keeping pets in private retirement and sheltered housing A Good Practice Guide



AIMS (**A**dvice, **I**nformation and **M**ediation **S**ervice  
at Age Concern England)

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## Introduction

AIMS is Age Concern England's specialist **A**dvice, **I**nformation and **M**ediation **S**ervice for people living and working in sheltered and private retirement housing in England and Wales. AIMS helps to solve conflicts through the use of mediation as an appropriate dispute resolution tool, as well as give impartial advice and information on legislation and good practice. AIMS has increasingly been asked to help on issues concerning pets, and unclear or ambiguous pets policies and leases, which is why AIMS is producing this guidance to raise the issues and to offer practical solutions. The guide has been put together with the invaluable help and input from housing providers, staff and residents, as well as through research, AIMS casework files, and consultation with animal welfare charities and other interested parties. A bibliography of the research and details of useful contacts and publications are listed at the end of this guide.

It is perhaps all too easy to have a 'no pets allowed' policy. There is no confusion, there are no complaints, and life is simple. Everyone knows where they stand. Be warned, however, that this may be deemed as an unfair contract term by the Office of Fair Trading (see 'Writing a pets policy' on page 3).

For many older people either considering moving to or already in private retirement and sheltered housing, such a policy may cause great distress. It may mean giving up, or not being able to replace, a much-loved pet. Losing that animal companionship may mean their quality of life is significantly reduced.

### **AIMS recommendation**

Whilst AIMS acknowledges that there should be choice of accommodation with and without pets, we also believe that schemes should give serious consideration to having a presumption in favour of residents in private retirement and sheltered housing keeping pets for reasons laid out in this guide. This must, however, go hand-in-hand with responsible pet ownership. The policies, procedures and back-up to support this can then be put in place.

## Why introduce pets?

"One lady did not talk but when we put Vroom next to her, she just stroked him and her smile really lit up the room."

A PAT volunteer reporting on her cat, Vroom.

Research over many years has shown the benefits of owning a pet and the ways in which they can be good for your health.

Even in Ancient Egypt, it was recognised that a purring cat could induce a more restful and tranquil sleep. Modern research has shown that pets can help owners relax and reduce their stress levels, speed up recovery after a major illness, and

reduce their cholesterol level, blood pressure and heart rate, making them less prone to heart attacks. Should a person who owns/owned a pet have a heart attack, they also have a much better chance of surviving for more than a year after the attack than a non-pet owner.

Pet owners have also been shown to use medical facilities much less frequently than non-pet owners, and generally suffer fewer ailments, such as colds, flu, headaches, backache and hay fever. Pets can also help their owners maintain independence, mental health, mobility and motivation, as well as cope better with bereavement.

“I think everyone needs someone or something to love and cuddle and feel responsible for. I am never at home alone because I have my dog.”

Mrs K, retired nurse, aged 75

There are also social benefits. Pets provide companionship, friendship and fun, which can help owners overcome feelings of loneliness, isolation and depression. They can give an older person a reason to get up in the morning, and give them a sense of purpose, something to think about and care for, which can be very fulfilling. Pets can provide opportunities to meet and talk to other people. This may be when walking a dog, visiting the vet, having visitors to the accommodation, or joining a specific pet-related club or association that can bring pet owners together.

Well-behaved pets can improve both residents' and staff morale, and foster a community spirit. Studies have also shown that the presence of animals in retirement housing can actually reduce work for staff, not increase it, as residents are happier, less depressed, more sociable, outgoing and healthy.

“A pet can provide, in boundless measure, love and unqualified approval. Many elderly and lonely people have discovered that pets satisfy vital emotional needs.”

Professor Boris Levinson, 1969.

The evidence for these statements can be found in the publications and articles listed in the bibliography on page 20, or as referenced in many of the information leaflets issued by the major animal welfare charities, also listed (see page 21).

#### **AIMS recommendation**

In short, as pet owners enjoy significantly better health, we would recommend all providers of private retirement and sheltered housing to implement a *clear* pets policy. AIMS also recommends preparing for potential conflicts by having policies in place that are agreed with the residents, as implementation of a pets policy is likely to be smoother if residents have been fully consulted and there is consensus on the way forward for that particular scheme.

## Range of pets

The range of pets to be considered is very wide. Goldfish are the most common pet in the world but, in the UK, cats are the most common. According to statistics produced by the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PMFA), in 2004, the percentage of animal-owning households in the UK was broken down as follows:

- Cats 24.6%
- Dogs 21.1%
- Budgerigars 2.8%
- Canaries 0.8%
- Parrots 1%
- Finches 0.5%
- Other caged birds 2.1%
- Rabbits 4.6%
- Hamsters 2.5%
- Guinea pigs 1.8%
- Other rodents (mice and rats) 1.5%
- Goldfish 8.2%
- Fish in ponds 6.9%
- Tropical fish 3.9%
- Other fish in aquariums 1.5%
- Animals in terrariums eg: terrapins, turtles, snakes 1%
- Horses/ponies 0.9%

In some rural areas, AIMS has heard of goats, chickens, pheasants, ducks, geese, muntjac deer, dexter cattle and other livestock being cared for by residents.

## Writing a pets policy

### **AIMS recommendation**

All private retirement and sheltered housing schemes should have a clearly defined, written policy on keeping pets.

Even if the policy states 'no pets allowed', at least prospective residents know up front that they will have to leave their pet behind and they can seek alternative housing, which may be more amenable to their needs. AIMS also recognises that other residents may positively welcome and choose accommodation with a 'no pets' policy, if that is their preference. It should be noted, however, that having a blanket ban on pets may be deemed as an unfair contract term. The view of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), as cited in their publication, *Guidance on unfair terms in tenancy agreements*, September 2005, states:

- "Our objection is to blanket exclusions of pets without consideration of all the circumstances. Such a term has been considered unfair under comparable legislation in another EU member state because it could prevent a tenant keeping goldfish. We are unlikely to object to a term prohibiting the keeping of pets that could harm the property, affect subsequent tenants or be a nuisance to other residents."

However, AIMS has had feedback that people who rent, in particular, have trouble finding any suitable housing if they have a pet.

We have laid out in this guide the issues that need to be considered in order for residents in private retirement and sheltered housing to be able to keep pets in their homes. This includes guidelines for responsible pet ownership, keeping records and what to do in the case of complaints or nuisance. As one estate manager said, 'With the best will in the world you cannot make rules for every situation', but we hope we have raised sufficient awareness of the issues for landlords, managers, and residents themselves to work together and be able to overcome any problems or barriers. AIMS would be able to help housing providers with commenting and advising on proposed pets policies (and leases – see next page). Similarly, organisations such as Pathway (see 'Useful contacts' on page 21) would be able to help. Their booklet, Practical Guidelines on Pet Management for Housing Providers (see page 28), may be of use. It is available from Pathway or downloadable from their website.

### **Leases, tenancy agreements and a pets policy**

For most leaseholders, whether or not they can keep a pet may be specified in their lease, which, in many cases, would have been written many years ago. In AIMS' experience, leases fall into three general categories:

1. The lease specifies that pets, usually domestic and sometimes specified eg cat, dog, bird, are allowed as long as they do not cause nuisance or annoyance.
2. The lease clearly says 'no pets allowed (under any circumstances)'.
3. There is no mention of pets at all in the lease.

Under the first category above, in AIMS' experience, there is very little guidance contained within leases, especially with regard to what to do in the case of a complaint. This issue has been picked up in both 'Avoid ambiguity' and 'Complaints procedures' below. The clause may also be quite restrictive in terms of the type of animal allowed. Some specify just one or two types of animal, and it is rare to see rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs and other rodents mentioned in leases, yet, according to statistics produced by the PMFA (see 'Range of pets' on page 2), these mammals are more popular amongst pet owners than all the pet bird species together.

Under the second category above, this may be to the preference of some leaseholders, who may positively choose such accommodation. It may not be to everyone's liking, however, and, as with pet owners struggling to find suitable rented accommodation, so leaseholders may also struggle. If leaseholders wish to effect a change to their lease, it may be possible to apply for a variation of lease under part IV of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. This is a complicated procedure, however, and the Act sets out the requirements to be met in order for a lease to be varied, such as the percentage of leaseholders required to effect such a change.

#### **AIMS recommendation**

If there is uncertainty about how to proceed with effecting a change to the wording of a lease, you should take legal advice, or contact AIMS in the first instance for impartial advice and information.

Under the third category above, if a lease does not mention pets, the implications are not clear-cut and may ultimately be for a tribunal or court to decide, although there would be an expectation that negotiation or mediation, perhaps with help from AIMS, would be attempted before resorting to the formal action. A resident could have the right to expect to have a pet unless their landlord can find a good reason not to allow it. However, in many leases, there is also a clause that allows landlords to make additional rules and regulations, not to contradict any substantive terms, but to clarify anything that is open to interpretation or even 'silent'. This may be invoked if a leaseholder challenges the lease regarding pet ownership, and might be used to clarify the types of pets that may be suitable for that particular scheme. A challenge would be costly, time-consuming and stressful to all concerned. Good practice would clearly dictate, therefore, that this issue should always be addressed in the lease or in any additional rules.

In the same way as leases may or may not include a clause on keeping pets, so tenancy agreements may or may not include a similar clause. However, whilst tenancy agreements are also legal documents, they are usually much easier than a lease to change to include new policies.

#### **AIMS recommendation**

Even where a clause on keeping pets is included in a lease or tenancy agreement, AIMS recommends that landlords and managing agents also have a separate, clear policy on pets, written in consultation with leaseholders, incorporating some of the good practice guidance contained in this document.

This will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the pet owner, as well as making it easier for those managing the schemes to know what is expected of them. As with residents, some scheme managers may positively welcome and choose to work in accommodation with a 'no pets' policy, if that is their preference. As one scheme manager told AIMS, 'if a pet walks into this scheme, I'll walk out'. That does not mean that their views should always prevail, especially if a scheme does allow pets but this is blocked or made difficult by the manager. However, their views should be taken into account, as pets will definitely have an impact on their working life by creating additional work on the administrative side, and perhaps in seeking practical or imaginative solutions to any problems that may arise.

#### **Publicising a pets policy**

Research undertaken by Anchor Housing Trust found that people providing services for older people such as vets, local authorities and animal welfare charities often did not know of local retirement housing that had pet-friendly policies and so were unable to advise owners who were making arrangements to have their pets euthanised or rehomed. Their research showed that nearly 40,000 pets are needlessly destroyed every year, causing great distress. In addition, the Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) reports that 137,000 pets are given up every year by older people due to no-pets policies.

**AIMS recommendation**

Each scheme should register their pets policy with the relevant local services, as well as with national organisations such as Elderly Accommodation Counsel or The Cinnamon Trust who provide lists of councils and housing associations that accept pets in their retirement housing.

Even non-pet owners may benefit and be more attracted to a housing scheme where they know there will be well-cared-for animals to watch and enjoy, without actually wanting to own a pet themselves. Research undertaken for the Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) shows that: “typically, only 10% to 25% of older residents in sheltered accommodation choose to have a pet. The majority are content to be animal ‘aunts and uncles’.” Their research has also shown that having a *positive* pets policy “is the most influential factor affecting choice of accommodation”. Consequently, some housing providers are now advertising their pet-friendly policy as a selling point to attract new residents.

**AIMS recommendation**

It is essential to promote the pets policy to staff, residents and potential residents.

The importance of this was flagged up to AIMS by a medium-sized housing association, which experienced difficulties when attempting to help owners who loved pets; they tried to relax their ‘no pets’ policy and allow companion animals to be brought in. However, although the association produced a pet-friendly policy, they did not establish robust internal procedures, with the result that some scheme managers allowed pets to be brought in without a written agreement and a clear understanding of responsibilities. It soon became apparent that some owners were not taking sufficient care over the welfare of their pets, causing problems for other residents. Reluctantly, the association has reverted to its initial ‘no pets’ policy (although existing animals will be allowed to stay). AIMS would hope that this good practice guide will avoid situations such as this from developing.

**Layout of the scheme****AIMS recommendation**

AIMS acknowledges that the design, layout and location of the scheme will need to be considered when considering a pets policy. In this respect, we recommend that policies should be scheme-specific, not organisation-wide.

For example, special consideration may be needed where there is a communal walkway or shared entrance. Some accommodation may be unsuitable, perhaps too small, for animals such as cats and dogs, and even certain caged birds need large cages, larger often than potential owners may realise.

It is highly unlikely, however, that there are many, if any, places where ‘no pets’ at all can be accommodated.



## Avoiding ambiguity

In many instances, when AIMS has spoken to officers in housing associations that specify 'no pets', an unwritten rule seems to apply that goldfish, budgies and the like are acceptable. It is felt that such schemes need to address this issue more formally so that the policy is clearer. This is to the benefit of staff, pet-owners, and other residents. Roles and responsibilities are clearer, and a clear pets policy can also feed into a clear complaints policy to minimise problems and conflict. It can also avoid the very serious problems that have been reported when housing associations, which have long turned a blind eye to the 'illegal' keeping of pets, suddenly decide to strictly enforce their 'no pets' policy.

AIMS has been told of a 'fins and feathers' policy at one scheme. Whilst we all understand that this would not mean that sharks and condors are acceptable, it does raise the point that the policy is unclear as to where the line is drawn. At what stage does a bird or fish become too large and unacceptable? Or, indeed, why would pets such as gerbils or hamsters be unacceptable? They can be easier to care for than parrots, for example, which can bite, chew, screech, and are often messy, active and need a high level of attention.

Having an unambiguous policy, with clear guidelines and written agreement, can also minimise problems and conflict. AIMS has been told of a horse actually *sharing* one resident's accommodation. A clear policy should also specify what happens if a complaint is made. With regard to the horse, once it became known, the resident was enabled to find suitable accommodation for his large 'companion'.

A lease received by AIMS stated that:

'No chickens pigeons or live stock shall be kept on any part of the Scheme Land and no bird dog cat or other domestic pet kept on the demised premises shall be permitted to cause annoyance to any lessee or occupier of the flats in the house.' [sic]

This is ambiguous and could lead to problems. Whilst 'livestock' is classified in the dictionary as farm animals, the aforementioned 'live stock' means any live animal. Is that really what was intended? One can also make an assumption that the resident *can* have a pet in their own part of the property but that it cannot annoy anybody else. It does not say what happens if it does but it appears that it can lay the resident open to immediate eviction of the animal – perhaps ultimately of the owner. As discussed in greater detail in 'Complaints procedures' on page 13, there are a number of reasons why such policies need to be clearer. For example, AIMS has been told of several schemes where complaints were made about a pet, none of which were upheld, which led us to believe that the dispute was nothing to do with the animal, and that the conflict ran deeper, and was perhaps more personal, between the residents. No clause should allow an animal or its owner to suffer immediate consequences due to unclear wording and lack of forethought in addressing the issue of pets.

## Policy reviews

### **AIMS recommendation**

The pets policy for each scheme should be reviewed regularly, in consultation with the residents to ensure that they still meet the needs/wishes of residents.

Reviews should also ensure that policies are not overly restrictive. For example, some schemes insist that only residents in ground floor flats can keep pets, which seems illogical as not every pet needs access to the outside. Other schemes only allow a pet that can be kept in 'a small cage or tank', whilst not addressing the issue that some caged birds, snakes, terrapins etc *can* be more difficult to keep. Others insist on 'small' animals, which may unfairly preclude a loving, gentle, quiet greyhound, for example – assuming there is sufficient space in the resident's accommodation. A few policies place a restriction on the number of pets, which does not recognise that a tank containing many fish or a cage of small finches, for example, may cause less noise or potential nuisance than one large bird. See also 'Suitable pets' on page 17 for further guidance.

### **AIMS recommendation**

AIMS believes that if certain restrictions are imposed on residents in the care of their animals, they should be given reasonable assistance to cope with them.

For example, AIMS knows of a scheme that allows cats, but insists that cat litter is cleared daily but not discarded in the general rubbish; however, it does not provide on-site facilities for safe disposal. This could be overcome by the provision of a pet waste disposal tank, for example, that is buried in the garden: the system is generally easy to use and treats the faeces chemically so there is no smell or health hazard. There are also bio-degradable cat litters that break down like mulch when added to garden beds.

## Written agreement

### **AIMS recommendation**

It is generally accepted good practice that pet owners should advise any scheme before they move in that they wish to bring their pets with them, and get written agreement to do so.

Such agreement should, in most cases, be a formality if the tenancy agreement allows pets. Rules should be applied consistently, although the housing provider will need to ensure that, for example, dangerous dogs or other wild animals are not introduced to a communal scheme (see 'Animals and the law' on page 28).

Existing residents who wish to keep a pet should also seek written agreement, if their lease/rent agreement allows.

This should include the resident's written agreement to take responsibility for their pet, and to provide the information and follow the good practice guidance, as outlined below.

Whilst some schemes or organisations, and even some residents, might feel that obtaining written agreements can be restrictive or unnecessarily obtrusive, AIMS believes there are sound reasons: for example, it can aid the welfare of the animals, staff know in an emergency what animals and how many are on-site, and they can more easily address the needs and concerns of other residents.

### **Replacing pets that have died**

AIMS understands that many housing providers do not want to put unnecessary barriers in the way of people who need the additional support of sheltered housing, so will sometimes allow existing pets to accompany their owners, but with the proviso that the pet cannot be replaced when it dies. Whilst AIMS applauds the intention behind this policy, in AIMS' opinion it is illogical, potentially discriminatory and may cause undue and unnecessary grief, at a time when the owner is already struggling to come to terms with their bereavement and loss.

#### **AIMS recommendation**

If a resident has shown their ability to look after a pet, has had no previous problems, and wishes to take responsibility for a new, suitable pet, AIMS does not see any reason why they should not be allowed to do so, providing that the good practice guidance, as set out below, is followed.

### **Pet records**

#### **AIMS recommendation**

It would be good practice for the scheme to hold details of each pet on file.

Details that should be included are:

- The owner's name and contact details;
- The type of pet;
- The name of the pet;
- Vet's details – all pets should be registered with a local vet;
- Pet's insurance details, if applicable. In certain circumstances, this is recommended (see page 18);
- Microchip details, if applicable.
- Contact details of at least one, preferably two or more, named individuals, who would be responsible in an emergency, such as if the owner becomes sick, goes into hospital or dies; and/or
- Contact details of charities, such as the Cinnamon Trust, that will also help foster in the case of emergency. The Cinnamon Trust can provide emergency cards on request. The charities providing assistance dogs will

generally provide foster care for *their* dogs if the owner is unwell, and help rehome them if the owner dies. These include the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Dogs for the Disabled, Support Dogs and Canine Partners.

## **Responsible pet ownership**

Residents should always be responsible for caring properly for their pet, unless agreed and written arrangements are in place for a named person or organisation to take over that responsibility (someone to walk a dog, for example). This not only enhances the life of a pet but usually that of the owner, too.

An owner's responsibilities and duties should include the following, and might also form part of a written agreement.

### **Responsibilities to the pet**

The owner should undertake to:

- Feed their pet appropriately. Whilst this may sound obvious, with some caged birds and the more exotic species, for example, food might have to be specialist, more expensive, less easy to find or more difficult to prepare. Even cats and dogs cannot survive adequately on scraps and leftovers. A bad diet can lead to a wide range of health and behavioural problems.
- Provide access to water. All animals need water to drink. Fish need water to live – and tap water may not be suitable without treatment.
- Exercise their pet, if applicable. This is also essential for good health – of both owner and pet. Appropriate toys should also be provided.
- Take precautionary measures for their pet's health and wellbeing, where necessary. For example:
  - Treat the pet regularly for fleas, worms and other internal parasites, under veterinary direction.
  - Bath, clean and groom pets to keep them clean and healthy and to minimise problems of smell or public health issues.
  - Provide the correct housing and bedding for their pet.
  - Vaccinate the pet. This is not only for the health of the pet but for any other pets within the scheme, visiting etc.
- Care for their pet's health needs in the case of sickness and injury, including arranging and paying for any veterinary care.
- Neuter their pet, if applicable. This can be advantageous for both the pet and the owner, as a neutered animal is less likely to roam, stray, spray or fight. It can also help prevent certain cancers.

"A healthy pet is a happy pet and a happy pet can help us enjoy a much fuller and more rewarding life."

The Pet Health Council

## **Responsible ownership**

The owner should:

- Undertake to advise the scheme manager of the details required to maintain their pet records (see page 9).
- Be registered with a vet – details should be lodged with the scheme manager. Some owners on a low income or means-tested benefits may be eligible for free or reduced-rate treatment from charities such as the Blue Cross and PDSA.
- Nominate at least one individual, preferably two or more, and/or an organisation (such as an animal welfare charity) to be responsible for the pet should the owner become sick or die – details should be lodged with the scheme manager.
- Ensure their treatment of their pet, and the behaviour of the animal, are within the law (see 'Animals and the law' on page 28).
- Check their home insurance cover (see also pet insurance for eg third party liability on page 18) to ensure they are covered for any eventualities with regard to their pets. This might include, for example, an incident that AIMS was told about: "a large fish tank in an upper floor flat burst and caused a terrible flood (the fish weren't too happy either!)".

## **Responsibilities to fellow residents**

The owner should:

- Clean up after their pet. Animals should not be allowed to foul in communal areas. If they do, the owner should immediately pick up and hygienically dispose of the waste. Failure to do so is an offence (see 'Animals and the law' on page 28).
- Pay for damage or injury caused by pet.
- Keep their pet under control at all times. This includes controlling aggressive behaviour, noise problems and not allowing their pet to wander freely in communal areas. Dogs in particular are generally required to be on a leash and/or in the company of their owner/responsible person when outside of the owner's property. It is an offence to have a dog dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes instances where there is fear that an injury might occur (see 'Animals and the law' on page 28). In a public place, it is also a legal requirement that dogs must wear a collar with the name and address of their owner inscribed on it or on a disc attached to it (see 'Animals and the law' on page 28). Microchips are recommended by most, if not all, animal welfare charities.
- Respect any areas that are out of bounds eg communal kitchen, laundry, guest suite, and other residents' flats or houses etc.
- Endeavour to minimise the risk of other residents/staff tripping over their animals, perhaps with the use of a brightly-coloured collar, for example.
- Ensure that their guests also follow the guidelines in respect of the responsibilities outlined above.

“There are no such things as problem pets, only problem owners.”  
Sheltered housing scheme manager

It is generally accepted that owners should not be allowed to commercially breed their animals if living in private retirement or sheltered housing, although AIMS is aware of exceptions to this – in a rural area, for example, where there was more space in the ground, a resident was allowed to continue breeding his racing pigeons. In most circumstances, however, it would be advisable for housing providers to put a clause in their policy which states that residents are not permitted to breed pets on the premises (see ‘Animals and the law’ on page 28 for further details relating to some of the legal aspects relating to the breeding of dogs).

Many schemes that allow pet ownership also insist that consent may be withdrawn, at the discretion of the landlord/scheme manager. AIMS accepts that in certain circumstances, where cruelty or total lack of responsibility exists, or if the resident becomes increasingly mentally or physically unable to look after their pet, that this may be advisable. In such cases, AIMS is aware that some landlords/scheme managers have charged for any costs incurred. It would be useful if, in cases of physical or mental difficulties, the landlord/scheme manager were able to help a person to rehome their pet themselves. This would clearly be an emotive subject for many owners who are no longer capable of looking after a pet, so should be handled sensitively. Help and advice can be sought from organisations such as the Cinnamon Trust or any local rehoming centres. In cases of cruelty, this should be handled in conjunction with the RSPCA (see Appendix B – Useful contacts).

#### **AIMS recommendation**

Policies should be clear about the criteria for enforcing the rule concerning the withdrawal of permission to keep pets. AIMS has had feedback from residents that what they require is consistency of approach.

### **Involvement of other residents**

An idea started in America but which seems to be gaining in popularity in the UK is having a pets committee. This should be made up of staff and residents, both pet owners and non-pet owners. The committee can be involved in writing and regularly reviewing the pets policy, and would be the first point of call for residents who have problems with their own pet or complaints about another person’s pet. This takes the onus of responsibility away from the manager in dealing with day-to-day issues, although there should be clear guidelines as to who would be ultimately responsible, and what action should be taken, if the committee are unable to resolve an issue in the first instance.

Other residents may also like to be involved informally with other residents’ pets and to help out if necessary. Some residents positively want to help walk other people’s dogs – and sometimes support in the less pleasant duties: AIMS has been told of scheme where residents who are frail and have difficulty bending to clear up after their dogs are helped by ‘staff, neighbours and anyone else that we can rope in take it in turns to do the honours’.

As well as involving those who love pets, the owner and the landlord/scheme manager need to be aware and responsive to the health, wellbeing and concerns of non-pet owning residents, who may be afraid or do not like animals as much as the owners, or who may have other issues. Causes for concern to residents, which should always be sympathetically acted upon or taken into account, include:

- Fear
- Allergies
- Noise/desire for peace and quiet
- Smell
- Anxiety/upset if the pet is badly treated or uncared for
- Damage
- Mess/defecation
- Fleas
- Public health hazards
- Injury/sickness
- Disease (eg people can contract parasitic diseases from animals)
- Aggression

### Complaints procedures

#### **AIMS recommendation**

AIMS believes it is essential for each scheme to have a clear complaints procedure that includes what to do if there are complaints about pets.

It is perhaps all too easy to state that if any pet causes a nuisance, the pet (and perhaps ultimately the resident) should be removed. Such an open policy may also leave the scheme open to complaints about a pet that are ultimately not about the pet but a personal dispute between residents, as previously mentioned. AIMS' non-adversarial approach to resolving problems makes conflict less likely to arise – or, worse, be allowed to fester and grow.

If a complaint centres on a pet's behaviour, information and advice can be sought from the animal welfare charities that produce leaflets on the subject. There is also practical help available, either from dog-training centres, for example, or from organisations such as the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC). The APBC is an international network of experienced and qualified pet behaviour counsellors, who treat behaviour problems in dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, and other pets. This service is available on referral from the vet.

AIMS is able to help residents associations or scheme managers put together a complaints procedure. If disputes do arise, AIMS is also able to arrange a facilitated meeting or mediation to bring the disputing parties together and, hopefully, resolve the situation amicably, with a solution acceptable to both sides. Mediation involves an independent and impartial third party, the mediator, who can help people in dispute to reach their own voluntary and mutually-agreed resolutions. AIMS uses mediation successfully in resolving disputes between residents and their landlords or scheme managers, and between residents themselves, by helping to turn a two-way fight into a three-way search for a solution.

## **Animals and the law**

There are a number of Acts of Parliament, regulations and bye-laws that affect owners and their pets. This includes the Control of Dogs Order 1992, which requires that dogs in a public place must wear a collar with the name and address of their owner inscribed on it or on a disc attached to it. There are Acts such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 under which cat owners can be prosecuted if their cats cause a health hazard, for example by consistently fouling in neighbours' gardens.

Further details of these and a brief summary of other relevant legislation can be found in 'Appendix D – Animals and the law' on page 28.

### **AIMS recommendation**

Both pet owners and scheme managers with a responsibility for pets should seek advice on animals and the law from organisations such as the animal welfare charities, or specific pet-related clubs and associations.

## **Fostering animals**

Many animal charities are desperate for people to foster animals on a short-term basis, especially during the kitten season, for example. Sometimes a payment is made to cover the cost of food/litter. Almost invariably, vet's fees are paid for any animal in foster care. For residents who would like to have a pet but do not want to take responsibility on a permanent basis, or who are worried about the increasing cost of caring for a pet, this may be an idea to consider. There is also the advantage that foster cats/kittens, for example, *must* stay indoors, which would negate any problems of cats wandering or fouling in communal areas.

Of course, the animal has to be given up when a suitable, permanent home becomes available and it can be hard for fosterers to say goodbye – but there can be great pleasure gained in knowing that they have given the animal a safe and happy respite for a few weeks/months and that now it is happily homed. And there is always another animal desperate for its chance in life and for a good home.

## **Communal animals**

Some retirement housing schemes may allow communal animals, either in addition to individual pet ownership or in place of it. This may depend on the layout of the scheme, the wishes of the residents and, in particular, the wishes of the scheme manager, who will ultimately be responsible for the animals' welfare. It would be desirable for residents to be encouraged to take responsibility themselves for the day-to-day care of communal animals, as far as is possible, although, as recognised above, it is the scheme manager who is likely to be ultimately responsible.

Communal animals may be fish in an aquarium or caged birds/animals, for example, which are placed in a communal area. It may be that the scheme owns a cat or dog that is the responsibility of the scheme manager and may actually live



with them, either on or off site. It may be that the scheme manager owns their own cat or dog that either lives on site with them, or that they bring in with them when they are on duty.

Scheme managers should undertake to follow any good practice guidelines, especially those outlined under 'Responsible pet ownership' on page 9. These include making sure the animal is under control at all times, and does not cause noise or smell problems, damage, mess, or a public health hazard. Housing providers are advised to check their Public Liability Insurance for communal areas to ensure they are covered for any such eventualities and any injury to third parties, such as residents tripping over an animal, for example. If cats or dogs are allowed in communal areas, it might be a good idea for them to wear brightly coloured pet collars to help stop people tripping over them.

Scheme managers should also be sympathetic to residents who do not like or who fear animals, or who may have allergies that are exacerbated by fur or feathers. If the layout of a scheme permits a number of communal areas, at least one could be put aside for residents who have fears or allergies.

Communal animals can be very therapeutic but they are not necessarily a substitute for the unique relationship with one's own pet.

## Visiting pets

"One old gentleman just sat listlessly in a corner, he had no interest in life until he met Greyhound 'Sammy', then his eyes lit up, he started talking about when he owned dogs and he really becomes alive when Sammy is around."

A PAT volunteer, JT, Bradford

There are charities, such as Pets As Therapy (PAT), which can arrange for volunteers to take PAT dogs or cats on regular visits to various establishments. PAT has around 3,000 dogs and 92 cats, all temperament-tested and vaccinated, visiting throughout the UK. As highlighted earlier in 'Why introduce a pet?' on page 1, well-behaved pets can improve both residents' and staff morale, as well as providing health benefits such as reducing stress.

"She took away all my anxiety and sadness the first time I met her. She looked at me with her gorgeous eyes and I felt happy and calm after a stressful time."

A resident of Dorset who was visited by a PAT volunteer and her dog

## Visitors with pets

There was perhaps no other section of this guide that created more controversy during our research than the issue of visitors of individual residents bringing their own pets with them. Not least as to whether we should even address the issue. It is a 'minefield', one estate manager reported back to us. Many housing providers do not incorporate visitors' pets in their policies, even if they do have very clear

guidelines on residents and their pets. One small housing provider fed back to us: “We run our guest rooms as a service to tenants rather than to make any profit. They are so reasonably priced, visitors can afford to board their pets in kennels/cattery for their visit”.

On the subject of the visitors’ pets themselves actually being allowed to stay in the guest room, this was overwhelmingly rejected and clearly stated in any policies that addressed the issue of visitors. This was mostly on health grounds, to minimise future problems of a lingering smell, and hygiene and cleanliness issues in a communal area such as a potential flea infestation and future guests with allergies etc. This rule was previously waived by some housing providers for assistance dogs. In December 2006, it became a legal requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) that housing providers cannot discriminate against a disabled person, which includes discrimination against a person with an assistance dog.

Controversy then arose as to whether the pets of visitors who stay in the guest rooms could then stay in the resident’s apartment, as some housing providers do allow. If, for example, family members were visiting because the resident was ill, it would not be appropriate, as it may cause additional stress and anxiety to the person who is sick. If, however, family members were visiting from far away and bringing a favourite pet of the resident, perhaps even the resident’s own former pet that the family is now looking after, this could be deemed appropriate.

For some schemes, AIMS recognises that they may decide firmly that this is just not allowed. For others, it may now be an issue that they wish to address in their policy, and to formalise their procedures. One scheme manager fed back to AIMS that they knew of a scheme that allowed visitors with pets but not pets for residents, although it was not believed to have been an issue for residents.

#### **AIMS recommendation**

If the issue of visitors with pets is to be considered, AIMS would recommend that the scheme manager and the residents are all consulted, and that it is done scheme by scheme, perhaps case by case.

This will help minimise potential conflict, and can also address issues such as who is responsible for the visitors with pets, and who will oversee health and safety issues such as those laid out in the guidelines above with regard to responsibilities to the scheme and fellow residents.

#### **Assistance dogs for people with disabilities**

In December 2006, it became a legal requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) that anyone renting or selling a property cannot discriminate against a disabled person, which includes discrimination against a person with an assistance dog. The delay in implementing this section of the DDA gave landlords and property owners time to make any ‘reasonable adjustments’ that they had a duty to make. These included changing practices, policies or procedures, and providing auxiliary

aids and services. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) advises that 'reasonable adjustments' would include those required to be made to the property to allow access and tenure to people with a disability, where it is otherwise 'impossible or unreasonably difficult' for a disabled person to enjoy the premises. Another 'reasonable adjustment' would be waiving a 'no pets' policy for a disabled person with an assistance dog. All private retirement and sheltered housing schemes must implement a change in policy, if they have not already done so.

There are several charities that provide assistance dogs for people with disabilities. The dogs are easy to distinguish as they generally wear a harness and a special tag on their collar. The major charities that can advise on and provide assistance dogs are Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Dogs for the Disabled, Support Dogs and Canine Partners. All are listed in 'Useful contacts' on page 21. Contact the DRC (08457 622 633 or [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)) for more details of the DDA and its impact on the provision of housing and services.

### **What is a 'suitable' pet?**

Perhaps this is an impossible question to answer, as people are very diverse in their likes, wants and needs. Different people get different benefits from their animals. Some want the warmth, love and affection of a 'furry' mammal. For others, it will be the restful, relaxing effect of watching fish in a tank, whilst others will want the different type of relationship and challenges that comes with owning a bird or reptile. These may require more patience but they, too, can respond to human attention.

Even within each category outlined in 'Range of pets' on page 2, there will be many different types and breeds, all with their own characteristics and qualities. Potential owners will need to consider their lifestyle, space, budget, health and ability to look after certain pets. As was stressed to AIMS by a member of a local Cats Protection branch, the charity would always place the needs of the animal above those of the prospective owner when rehoming.

When choosing a dog, for example, the owner needs to bear in mind aspects such as the size, temperament, appetite and need for exercise of each breed. Different breeds of cats also have some distinctive characteristics, with some being more affectionate or more independent than others.

Another aspect to consider is the age of the animal, especially cats and dogs. Older animals can be less boisterous, less prone to roam or run around frantically, run up and down the curtains etc. Their personalities and temperament are more formed, which is generally known to staff at animal rescue centres who try to ensure the right home for the right animal. Animals from rescue centres also tend to be neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and health-checked before they are released. Donations are always welcome, if not obligatory, but *may* be waived for people on means-tested benefits. Some so-called 'golden oldies', such as cats aged 12+, may be rehomed with all their vets bills paid for life, as these animals are often more difficult to home because of their age but can be the most affectionate of pets when given a new lease of life.

Birds confined to cages need as large a cage as possible. They may also require a perch, if they are allowed out. Owners are advised to seek suitable advice from the relevant welfare charities listed in Appendix B – Useful contacts. Birds should never be allowed out unsupervised, as, not only can they be destructive, they may also escape, and injure or poison themselves.

With the growing trend among pet owners towards owning unusual or exotic animals, prospective owners need to be aware of the demands of time, commitment and money that are often required. Snakes, for example, eat other animals, such as mice and rats, and usually prefer them to still be alive. If the snake *will* eat pre-killed food, does the owner mind a freezer full of dead rats? If not, are they prepared to keep live mammals and feed them to their snake? Some tropical fish attack and kill other fish if they are in the same tank. Are potential owners aware of these dangers? A major animal welfare charity has told AIMS: “There is a huge amount of negligence when it comes to exotics and many live very short lives as a consequence of this”.

**AIMS recommendation**

Prospective owners should do as much reading and research as they can, try to find charities or clubs that can put them in touch with other owners to talk to, to find out the advantages and disadvantages of the type of pet they are considering.

Specialist clubs and societies include Amateur Entomologists' Society, British Hamster Association, British Rabbit Council, Budgerigar Society, The Hamster Society, National Fancy Rat Society, National Gerbil Society, National Mouse Club, National Pigeon Association, The Parrot Society, and The British Chelonia Group (for the care and conservation of tortoises, terrapins and turtles worldwide). Some are listed in ‘Useful contacts’ on page 21. A more extensive list can be found in ‘Useful contacts – pets’ pdf on the AIMS website.

Residents should not be put off. They should just be prepared. Owning a pet is a lifetime commitment. Pets are all living creatures. They require individual care and attention. Are the owners equipped to give it?

**Pet Insurance**

**AIMS recommendation**

AIMS recommends that owners investigate the possibility of taking out pet insurance, especially in certain circumstances, such as low income.

Veterinary fees are not getting cheaper and, unfortunately as with people, many health problems in animals tend to increase with age.

There is often an upper age limit, however, after which animals are ineligible to join an insurance scheme, although the age can vary between providers. This is an important point to consider for housing providers who may insist on owners having pet insurance, as it may unfairly exclude residents caring for older animals.

Cover can also vary between providers but can include:

- Vets' bills for the pet's illness and injury;
- Alternative/complementary treatment;
- Behavioural problems;
- Kennel/cattery costs if the owner has to spend time in hospital;
- Holiday cancellation costs if the pet needs emergency surgery;
- Third party liability if the pet causes injury or damage for which the owner is legally liable (for example, if their dog bit the postman, or got loose and caused a road traffic accident);
- Other eventualities, including advertising and reward costs if the pet gets lost or stolen;
- Lifetime or time-limited cover;
- Death of the pet;
- Cremation/burial costs.

### **Coping with bereavement**

Finally, it is most likely, given the average lifespan of a human being and the average lifespan of most pets, that owners will need to cope with the death of a pet and bereavement, perhaps many times in their life. This still does not make it any easier. Grief can be intense and very personal, and residents should be allowed to grieve, and be supported through their period of bereavement. There are charities that help people such as the Pet Bereavement Support Service run by The Blue Cross in conjunction with The Society for Companion Animal Studies.

Should residents be allowed to get a new pet right away? If the owner is still capable of providing care, AIMS believes they should. It may not always be appropriate to replace a pet straight away, as the person may need time to work through their grief and loss. Also, each animal has a unique personality and a new animal cannot automatically replace the one they have lost. When they are ready, however, they can look forward to building a new and loving relationship. This is another reason why AIMS believes that pets policies should not prevent residents from adopting another pet after it has died.

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## **Appendix B – Useful contacts**

Within this good practice guide, we hope we have raised all the issues that need to be considered when contemplating, implementing or reviewing a pets policy. However, we have not been able to cover all aspects in depth. The following organisations may be able to provide more detailed help, if required.

### **All About Pets**

A national pet care advice and information service for pet owners. Information is provided on pets such as cats, dogs, gerbils, rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters. It publishes a series of useful leaflets that can also be downloaded for free. All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross.

c/o The Blue Cross, FREEPOST NAT4336, Burford, Oxon OX18 4BR

Web: [www.allaboutpets.org.uk](http://www.allaboutpets.org.uk)

### **Amateur Entomologists' Society (AES)**

AES is the UK's leading organisation for people interested in insects. Their website has a long list of insect-related useful contacts.

PO Box 8774, London SW7 5ZG

Email: [contact@amentsoc.org](mailto:contact@amentsoc.org)

Web: [www.amentsoc.org](http://www.amentsoc.org)

### **Animal Samaritans**

A charity that rehomes ill-treated and unwanted animals in south-east London and north-west Kent. They may also be able to provide emergency cat fostering if the owner needs to go into hospital.

PO Box 154, Bexleyheath, Kent DA16 2WS

Tel: 01474 703542

Email: [info@animalsamaritans.org.uk](mailto:info@animalsamaritans.org.uk)

Web: [www.animalsamaritans.org.uk](http://www.animalsamaritans.org.uk)

### **Battersea Dogs and Cats Home**

Battersea's services include rescuing lost and unwanted dogs and cats, reuniting lost pets with their owners, rehabilitating dogs with behavioural issues, and helping all their dogs and cats to find a new home.

Lost Dogs and Cats Line: 0901 477 8477 (calls cost 60p per minute)

Behaviour Hotline: 0905 020 0222 (calls cost 25p per minute)

General enquiries: [info@dogshome.org](mailto:info@dogshome.org)

Rehoming enquiries: [rehoming@dogshome.org](mailto:rehoming@dogshome.org)

Web: [www.dogshome.org](http://www.dogshome.org)

### **The Blue Cross**

An animal welfare charity which exists to foster the bonds of friendship between people and animals, relieve the suffering of animals that have been injured, extend and promote pet-ownership, and add to the quality of human life. Some owners on a low income or means-tested benefits may be eligible for free or reduced-rate treatment veterinary services.

Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF  
Tel: 01993 825597  
Email: [info@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk)  
Web: [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

### **British Hamster Association (BHA)**

The BHA is a co-ordinating body for hamster clubs in the UK. It can provide details of your nearest hamster club and information on caring for your hamster.

PO Box 825, Sheffield S17 3RU  
Tel: 01373 300766  
Web: [www.britishhamsterassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishhamsterassociation.org.uk)

### **The British Herpetological Society (BHS)**

The BHS undertakes conservation activities, captive breeding, conservation, education and research to benefit amphibians and reptiles.

Baan Kulab, 74 Shawhill Road, Annan, Dumfriesshire DG12 6JX  
Email: [info@thebhs.org](mailto:info@thebhs.org)  
Web: [www.thebhs.org](http://www.thebhs.org)

### **The British Chelonia Group**

A charity concerned with the care and conservation of tortoises, terrapins and turtles worldwide.

PO Box 1176, Chippenham, Wilts SN15 1XB  
Web: [www.britishcheloniagroup.org](http://www.britishcheloniagroup.org)

### **Canine Partners**

The charity assists people with disabilities through the provision of specially trained dogs to enjoy a greater independence and a better quality of life. If a partner dies, depending on the age of the dog, the charity would either rehome the dog as a family pet/retire the dog to the partner's family, or, if appropriate, place the dog with another partner.

Mill Lane, Heyshott, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 0ED  
Tel: 08456 580 480  
Email: [info@caninepartners.co.uk](mailto:info@caninepartners.co.uk)  
Web: [www.caninepartners.co.uk](http://www.caninepartners.co.uk)

### **Cats Protection (CP)**

The UK's leading feline welfare charity. Through its local branches and its national adoption centres, it rescues and rehomes thousands of cats every year. CP also provides a wide range of cat care information. Leaflets are downloadable or hard copy on request. Subject areas include: cats and people; practical advice; health; and behaviour/environment.

Helpline: 08702 099 099  
Email: [helpline@cats.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cats.org.uk)  
Web: [www.cats.org.uk](http://www.cats.org.uk)



### **Celia Hammond Animal Trust (CHAT)**

CHAT runs low-cost neutering and vaccination clinics for pets of people on benefit or low income. They run two veterinary clinics in London and offer a rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming service for stray and unwanted animals throughout the South East.

High Street, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6AG

Tel: 01892 783367

Email: [chat@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:chat@ukonline.co.uk)

Web: [www.celiahammond.org](http://www.celiahammond.org)

### **The Cinnamon Trust**

The charity provides practical help for older or terminally ill people with any aspect of day-to-day care of their pets, including walking and grooming dogs, taking pets to the vet, cleaning cages or short-term fostering. Life-long fostering can also be arranged for pets whose owners have died or moved to residential accommodation which will not accept pets. Emergency cards available on request. When a pet is in the Trust's care, either short term or long term because the owner is in care, the owner is kept in touch with visits, if possible, or regular photos and letters. It also has a list of pet-friendly homes around the country.

10 Market Square, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HE

Tel: 01736 757900

Email: [admin@cinnamon.org.uk](mailto:admin@cinnamon.org.uk)

Web: [www.cinnamon.org.uk](http://www.cinnamon.org.uk)

### **Dogs for the Disabled**

The charity trains dogs to help disabled people live life more independently. The dogs are trained in practical tasks such as opening and closing doors, helping a person undress, and taking the laundry out of the washing machine.

The Frances Hay Centre, Blacklocks Hill, Banbury, Oxon OX17 2BS

Tel: 08700 776600

Email: [info@dogsforthedisabled.org](mailto:info@dogsforthedisabled.org)

Web: [www.dogsforthedisabled.org](http://www.dogsforthedisabled.org)

### **Dogs Trust**

The largest dog welfare charity in the UK. The charity aims to solve the problem of why there are so many unwanted dogs in the UK through practical measures and awareness-raising initiatives to educate and inform dog owners and prospective dog owners. Its website contains useful information on dogs and legislation.

17 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7RQ

Tel: 020 7837 0006

Email: [customerservices@dogstrust.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@dogstrust.org.uk)

Web: [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

### **Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC)**

EAC can advise on which councils and housing associations accept pets in their retirement housing.

3rd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP  
Tel: 020 7820 1343 (Advice Line)  
Email: [enquiries@eac.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@eac.org.uk)  
Web: [www.housingcare.org](http://www.housingcare.org)  
Web: [www.eac.org.uk](http://www.eac.org.uk)

### **The Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB)**

FAB is a charity dedicated to promoting the health and welfare of cats through improved feline knowledge, to help people care better for their cats. It publishes information leaflets and publications.

Taeselbury, High Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 6LD  
Email: [information@fabcats.org](mailto:information@fabcats.org)  
Web: [www.fabcats.org](http://www.fabcats.org)

### **The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association**

The charity trains and provides guide dogs for blind and partially-sighted people. It supports about 5,000 guide dog partnerships in the UK. It also breeds over 1,000 guide dog puppies every year. As guide dogs are not suitable for everyone, they can offer assistance with other forms of mobility such as training with a long cane. They also give advice to help visually impaired people come to terms with their sight loss, and practical help with reading, writing and household tasks.

Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG  
Tel: 0118 983 5555  
Email: [guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk)  
Web: [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

### **Hearing Dogs for Deaf People**

The charity trains dogs to alert deaf people to specific sounds in the home such as the doorbell, alarm clocks, cooker timers, and smoke or fire alarms. The dog alerts the deaf person by touching with a paw, then leading them to the source of the sound. It can also be trained to pick up dropped objects. An additional service provided by the charity is the provision of companion dogs for older people, who are hard-of-hearing. These dogs are trained to respond to just one or two sounds such as the telephone and the doorbell. The charity will look after the dogs in an emergency or if the recipient dies.

The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9NS  
Tel: 01844 348 100 (voice and minicom)  
Email: [info@hearing-dogs.co.uk](mailto:info@hearing-dogs.co.uk)  
Web: [www.hearing-dogs.co.uk](http://www.hearing-dogs.co.uk)

### **Mayhew Animal Centre**

The Mayhew Animal Centre runs a service for residents in London called the Pet Refuge Scheme where they provide foster care for dogs, cats, rabbits and guinea pigs belonging to people who are unable to look after their pets due to emergencies such as having to go into hospital or being made temporarily homeless. There is no specific geographical restriction, although most cases tend to be in London and the

south east. However, the charity would try to help, depending on the urgency of the case, and how many other alternatives have been sought before reaching them.

Trenmar Gardens, Kensal Green, London NW10 6BJ

Tel: 020 8969 0178

Email: [info@mayhewanimalhome.org](mailto:info@mayhewanimalhome.org)

Web: [www.mayhewanimalhome.org](http://www.mayhewanimalhome.org)

### **National Animal Welfare Trust (NAWT)**

NAWT operates rescue centres for unwanted, ill-treated and abandoned animals and birds, specialising in caring for elderly and 'retired' pets. At their purpose-built animal welfare centre in Berkshire, all the dogs and cats have their own 'apartments', complete with televisions and radios: these aim to give them a sense of the 'normality' which they may have experienced with their former owners, as most have come from caring and loving older owners who have either recently passed away or have moved into retirement accommodation that does not accept companion animals. Additionally, NAWT encourages older members of the community to foster the animals, or visit and take them for walks.

Tyler's Way, Watford-By-Pass, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 8WT

Tel: 020 8950 0177

Web: [www.nawt.org.uk](http://www.nawt.org.uk)

### **Pathway**

Pathway is a pets and housing working group which provides general information and guidance for housing providers wishing to establish pro-pets policies, and can advise providers on their pets policy. Pathway includes representatives from most of the major animal welfare organisations, the veterinary profession and housing sector.

c/o Dogs Trust, 17 Wakely Street, London EC1V 7RQ

Tel: 020 7837 0006

Web: [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk) or [www.pathwaypetsandhousing.org.uk](http://www.pathwaypetsandhousing.org.uk)

### **People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA)**

The PDSA, Britain's largest veterinary charity, provides free veterinary treatment to sick and injured pets of owners in need, who cannot afford private veterinary fees.

Whitechapel Way, Priorslee, Telford, Shropshire TF2 9PQ

Tel: 01952-290999

Web: [www.pdsa.org.uk](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)

### **The Pet Advisory Committee (PAC)**

PAC is made up of major animal welfare charities, veterinary organisations, environmental health, local authority and trade associations. Its remit is to examine the role of companion animals in society and to make recommendations to central and local government as to how pets can best fit into the environment, in the interests of the animal, its owner and the wider community. Its website contains useful information on animals and legislation.

c/o 1 Bedford Avenue, London WC1B 3AU. Tel. 020 7255 5489

Web: [www.petadvisory.org.uk](http://www.petadvisory.org.uk)

### **Pet Bereavement Support Service (PBSS)**

PBSS is dedicated to offering support and understanding to bereaved pet owners through a national network of trained volunteer telephone and email befrienders. All calls and emails are treated confidentially. The service is run by The Blue Cross in conjunction with The Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS).

Pet Bereavement Support Service: 0800 096 6606

Email: [pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)

### **The Pet Health Council**

The Pet Health Council promotes, informs and advises on the health and welfare of pet animals in the interests of both pets and people. It provides a number of useful leaflets on pet issues and the benefits of pet ownership, also downloadable free from their website.

1 Bedford Avenue, London WC1B 3AU

Tel: 020 7255 5408

Web: [www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk](http://www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk)

### **Petpals (UK) Limited**

Petpals services include: regular or occasional dedicated dog walking, exercising and companionship; 'at home' pet visits; home and pet sitting; home security checks; 'pet to vet'; pet taxis; flexible service routines for holidays, short breaks, and convalescence; and a registered key-holder service.

Basepoint Business and Innovation Centre, Caxton Close, East Portway, Andover. Hampshire SP10 3FG

Tel: 0870 300 9020

Email: [ukoffice@petpals.com](mailto:ukoffice@petpals.com)

Web: [www.petpals.com](http://www.petpals.com)

### **Pets As Therapy (PAT)**

PAT provides therapeutic visits to hospitals, hospices, nursing and care homes, and a variety of other venues by volunteers with their own friendly, temperament-tested and vaccinated dogs and cats. It has about 3,000 dogs and 92 cats visiting throughout the UK.

3 Grange Farm Cottages, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9NS. Tel: 0870 977 0003

Email: [reception@petsastherapy.org](mailto:reception@petsastherapy.org)

Website: [www.petsastherapy.org](http://www.petsastherapy.org)

### **Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)**

The RSPCA helps animals in distress, whether injured or trapped, or victims of cruelty or abuse. Their services include subsidised veterinary treatment for those in need, and neutering and rehoming schemes.

Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS

Tel: 0870 33 35 999

National Cruelty and Advice Line: 0870 5555 999

Web: [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

### **Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS)**

SCAS aims to advance the understanding of relationships between people and companion animals; disseminate information about human/companion animal relationships; and promote the quality of life of people and pets by encouraging responsible attitudes.

c/o The Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

Tel: 01993 825597

Email: [info@scas.org.uk](mailto:info@scas.org.uk)

Web: [www.scas.org.uk](http://www.scas.org.uk)

### **Support Dogs**

Formed in 1992, Support Dogs trains Seizure Alert Dogs® for people with epilepsy and Disability Assistance Dogs for people with physical disabilities. The dog can be a family pet or a rescued dog. Each dog is taught task work tailored to the owner's needs, enabling that person to lead a more full and independent life.

21 Jessops Riverside, Brightside Lane, Sheffield S9 2RX

Tel: 0870 609 3476

Email: [Supportdogs@btconnect.com](mailto:Supportdogs@btconnect.com)

Web: [www.support-dogs.org.uk](http://www.support-dogs.org.uk)

For details of any local pet-related clubs or societies, contact your local library. Alternatively, you may find details in your local Yellow Pages, which would also contain details of commercial pet-sitting services or boarding kennels/catteries, for example. Your local vet can also signpost you to other organisations, as well as give useful information and advice on your pet.

## **Appendix C – Useful publications**

### **Housing Pets and People: Animal welfare guidance and advice for housing providers**

*RSPCA, June 2004*

Guidelines for housing providers who may find themselves dealing with animal-related issues. It includes information about pets in flats and self-contained accommodation, as well as neighbourhood wardens, abandonment and living with wildlife. Email [externalaffairs@rspca.org.uk](mailto:externalaffairs@rspca.org.uk) for details of how to obtain copies.

### **Losing a Friend to Find a Home**

*Anchor Trust, 1998*

This booklet publishes the results of Anchor's research that highlights the problem of many older people having to give away their pets to move into residential care or retirement housing. Of these, nearly 40,000 are euthanised. Anchor urges housing providers to reconsider their 'no pets' policies.

### **Older People and Pets : A comprehensive guide**

*Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS), 2005*

This book provides insight into how companion animals improve health, provide social support and enhance the quality of life for older people. It addresses a wide

range of key issues, from animal-assisted therapy programmes, to the challenges faced by older pet owners moving into sheltered housing, to the impact of pet loss for older people. The book also contains some very useful guidelines on pet policy for housing providers and staff working in institutions.

### **Pets and People**

*Pathway, 2001*

This booklet, aimed at pet owners, acts as a companion guide to *Pets and Housing* to encourage responsible pet ownership and to give advice on living in the community with your pet. It covers topics such as choosing a suitable pet for your type of accommodation, and your pet's health. It also highlights some of the legal issues relating to pets.

### **Pets and People in Residential Care: Guidelines for policy and practice**

*McNicholas, J., Collis, G. and Morley, I. 1993. Social Care Research Findings 44; December 1993: The Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

The impact on older people of losing a pet can be considerable. If an older person is made to give up a pet when they move into residential care, there is evidence to suggest that they will suffer both psychological and physical problems.

### **Practical Guidelines on Pet Management for Housing Providers**

*Pathway, 2007*

In 2004, Pathway carried out a survey of over 1,100 housing directors and officers from local authorities and housing associations across the UK. The survey covered a number of areas relating to pet policies in social housing and also asked respondents what further information would be most useful to them. The results of the survey form the basis of this new resource pack. It includes up-to-date information specifically requested by respondents, such as guidance on relevant legislation, advice about how best to judge what is a reasonable number of pets for any given home, and what to do when things go wrong.

## **Appendix D – Animals and the law**

As outlined briefly in the guide, there are a number of Acts of Parliament, regulations and bye-laws that affect owners and their pets. These include the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 that is discussed under 'Assistance dogs for people with disabilities', as it will affect housing providers for people with a disability.

Other relevant legislation includes the Control of Dogs Order 1992, which requires that dogs in a public place must wear a collar with the name and address of their owner inscribed on it or on a disc attached to it. If a collar is not worn when out in a public place, the dog may be seized by the police and treated as a stray. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 makes it a criminal offence to allow dogs to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes instances where there is fear that an injury might occur. Owners found guilty could have their dog destroyed, and face the possibility of prison and/or a fine.

There are Acts such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 under which cat owners can be prosecuted if their cats cause a health hazard, for example by

consistently fouling in neighbours' gardens. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 gives local authorities the power to introduce and enforce dog fouling byelaws under which a person in charge of a dog can be heavily fined for allowing dogs to foul in a public place.

There are other Acts, which protect the animals themselves from ill treatment, including the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and Abandonment of Animals Act 1960. The Animal Welfare Bill received Royal Assent on 8th November 2006 and the main provisions of the Animal Welfare Act came into force on 6th April 2007. The legislation requires people to look after their pets properly, in line with best animal management practices. It also re-defines the offence of cruelty, increases the range of sentences that courts can use, strengthens measures on animal fighting, and bans mutilations such as docking the tails of dogs. For more information on the Act, visit: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/act/index.htm>

In terms of breeding dogs, there are a number of Acts: The Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, The Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 and the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999. Anyone who is in the business of breeding and selling dogs (more than four litters a year) will require a licence from the local authority under the 1973 Act as amended by the 1999 Act. It is for local authorities, who have extensive powers to check on the standards of health, welfare and accommodation of the animals, to enforce the requirements of the Act. The Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 extends the powers of local authorities to obtain a warrant to enter any premises, excluding a private dwelling house, in which it is believed that a dog breeding business is being carried out. Although a dwelling house is excluded, this does not include any garage, outhouse or other structure [S.1 (3)].

Other regulations such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) or the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 restrict the movement and/or trade in a range of endangered species. Pet shop owners and traders do not need to hold a Dangerous Wild Animal licence to sell a dangerous wild animal but anyone wishing to buy one must hold a licence. Owners of exotic species in particular should ensure they obtain any necessary paperwork. For example, certain macaws and cockatoos require EC Exemption Papers before they can be either bought or sold.

This is not a comprehensive list. We wish to make people aware of the fact that legislation and regulations do exist and animal owners should be aware of these. AIMS recommends that owners seek advice from organisations such as animal welfare charities, or specific pet-related clubs and associations. A useful list of animal-related legislation, with explanations, can also be found on websites such as the Pet Advisory Committee and the Dogs Trust.

Written by Sue Henning, AIMS (Age Concern's **A**dvice, **I**nformation and **M**ediation **S**ervice) for people living or working in private retirement or sheltered housing.

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Email: [aims@ace.org.uk](mailto:aims@ace.org.uk) Web: [www.ageconcern.org.uk/aims](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/aims)

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