

Pet Policy

May 2025



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The subject of this document is the Torus Pet Policy which brings together information on how Torus manage responsible pet ownership within our properties.		
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy outlines Torus's approach to responsible pet ownership. The policy has been updated to align with the principles of the Social Housing White Paper, Torus is supportive of allowing the keeping of pets provided they are well looked after and do not adversely affect the lives of neighbours.

We want residents to own and enjoy pets in their homes as we believe pets can have a significant positive impact on their owner's physical and mental health. We also want and need customers to be responsible pet owners.

Subject to contract restrictions such as in the lease or tenancy agreement, customers are permitted to own a range of small domestic and exotic pets including fish, caged birds, and cats and dogs. In most instances residents do not need to request permission in advance, but there are specific criteria set out in the many body of the policy.

Permission of ownership can be withdrawn at any time if a tenant breaches the terms of their tenancy agreement, or if a tenant breaches other aspects of this policy. Enforcement action will be considered where pets cause a nuisance, are mistreated, or not cared for properly.

Torus have an accompanying pet procedure which sets out further details on how customers can seek permission to own a pet and how we will provide support and enforcement when necessary.

The aims of the policy are to ensure that:

- Tenants know what pets can be kept and in what circumstances.
- Information and advice is available to residents on responsible pet ownership.
- That Torus will deal efficiently and effectively with breaches of the tenancy agreement if we receive complaints with regards to pets that are causing a nuisance to neighbours or residents.
- That Torus will take immediate action if we are made aware of any animal welfare or cruelty concerns.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Policy applies to all tenants, leaseholders, licensees, employees, contractors, and anyone living in or visiting homes within our management and ownership. The customers it relates to may be living in general needs, supported, sheltered or extra care accommodation. The policy also applies to any visitors to our customers' homes or our schemes.
- 1.2 As an inclusive landlord with customers at the heart of everything we do, Torus promotes responsible pet ownership. Pets can be a critical support to our customers and assist in their general wellbeing, and physical and mental health. However, we must also ensure that property condition is not affected adversely, and controls are necessary to prevent other customers being negatively affected by some residents keeping pets. We also have a duty to protect customers, colleagues, contractors, and other visitors / stakeholders who visit our homes and neighbourhoods, from exposure to situations which may pose a hazard to their health and safety.
- 1.3 Implementing this policy will give a consistent approach to pet requests and ownership which will benefit Torus tenants but will also ensure that we will deal with complaints with regards to nuisance pets effectively and efficiently.
- 1.4 This policy clearly outlines where permission to keep a pet will and will not be required, and the instances where permission will not be granted and those instances when it may be withdrawn. It should be considered in conjunction with Torus's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy.
- 1.5 The terms of the individual tenancy agreement and any current, or future legislation will always take precedence over this policy. Operating this Policy considers the following legislation:
 - Housing Act 1988 (as amended)
 - The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (as amended in 1997)
 - The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
 - Animal Welfare Act, 2006

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Permission and application

Torus will consider all requests from customers to grant permission to keep a pet at their home. Permission is **not** required for small fish, birds or mammals which are housed in cages, bowls or tanks inside the home.

Customers living in a non-communal setting may keep cats/dogs (up to a maximum of two) without seeking permission from Torus.

Customers living in a communal setting must seek permission from Torus to own a cat or a dog. Torus will not reasonably withhold permission, but we need to ensure that these animals

will be responsibly owned so that we can manage our communal areas. Guide dogs are excluded.

Permission must be sought by all customers who wish to own exotic pets. Again, permission will not be unreasonably withheld but there may be additional risks we have to consider.

Assistance dogs are normally approved regardless of the property type but customers must provide evidence from a registered professional for this to be considered.

When requesting permission to keep any pets within your home, each request will be judged equally and fairly. Factors that will be considered are things like the size of your home, how many pets are currently in the property and the amount and size of the animals you are requesting permission to keep.

For permission to be granted a Pet Agreement needs to be completed with details of the pet you wish to keep. The details required include the type, size and breed of pet, welfare requirements and a nominated person who will look after your pet if you can't.

We retain the right to withdraw permission where the pet has caused nuisance, or we believe the owner to be showing signs of animal cruelty or neglect.

A Pet Agreement Form should be completed and submitted to the Tenancy Officer if an existing tenant is requesting a new pet. New Tenants should complete a Pet Agreement Form at the application stage.

2.2 Pets not permitted within our homes

Under no circumstances will the following be permitted to keep as pets:

- Any dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 unless exempt (see 2.3 and Appendix A)
- Any animals listed in Schedule 2465 of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (amended), (Appendix A).
- Bees.
- Livestock (Appendix A)
- Any endangered species.
- Any animals that must be kept outdoors (including caged birds, pigeons or similar)
- Where there is a high likelihood of animals creating a statutory nuisance e.g. through noise
- Breeding of pets or animals or any associated activity is not permitted and is considered a breach of tenancy.

2.3 XL Bully types of dog

The government has added this breed to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. From the 1st February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales, unless the dog has a Certificate of Exemption.

It is the owner's sole responsibility to obtain a Certificate, and the Government recommends taking a precautionary approach – meaning if someone thinks their dog may be covered by the ban, they should take action.

If an owner thinks their dog could be an XL Bully dog, they should comply with all new requirements. This includes puppies that may grow up to be an XL Bully dog.

Certificate of Exemption / Customer Responsibilities

If a customer wants a Certificate of Exemption, there are several steps which must be followed. These are:

- Get third party public liability insurance cover for the dog.
- Neuter the dog permanently if it is not already neutered. A vet must confirm if the dog is already neutered.
- Pay the £92.40 fee for each dog they want to keep. The fee is non-refundable.
- Apply for a Certificate of Exemption to keep an XL Bully dog.

In addition, to keep an XL Bully dog it must be:

- Microchipped.
- Kept on a lead and always muzzled when in public.
- Kept in a secure place so it cannot escape.
- Neutered.

And finally, the owner must:

- Be over 16 years old.
- Takeout third party public liability insurance against the dog injuring other people.
- Be able to show the Certificate of Exemption when asked by a Police Officer or a Local Authority Dog warden, either at the time or within 5 days.

A certificate of exemption does not necessarily mean Torus will give consent for the dog to be kept at one of its homes. But all relevant information such as a copy of the Exemption Certificate, Public Liability Insurance and microchipping must be taken and scanned onto the system. Each case will be considered following the above has been adhered to.

2.4 Communal areas and shared facilities

Those tenants living in a communal environment who have received permission to keep a pet should mainly keep their pet confined to their home. However, where pets need to be taken outside (such as a dog needing to be walked), pets must be restrained using leads or harnesses and must always be accompanied by their owner.

Animals must not be allowed to foul in communal areas but if this happens any fouling must be cleared up immediately.

Dogs must not be chained or tethered on balconies or communal areas and must be supervised at all times. All animals must not cause a nuisance, annoyance, or disturbance to others and all animals need to be kept in proper care and control.

It is a legal requirement that dogs must wear a collar with an identification tag. They could also be micro chipped for additional identification purposes.

Whilst pets are permitted in communal areas as explained above, pets are not permitted in communal facilities such as laundry rooms, bistros, bars and communal lounges, unless they are an official assistance or guide dog.

2.5 Responsible pet ownership and animal welfare

As a responsible owner there are a number of standards, we expect you to adhere to.

- You are **not** allowed to breed or board dogs in your home or on any Torus land.
- You are **not** allowed to sell animals from your home or on Torus land.
- Animals must **not** be allowed to foul in public or communal areas or play areas in the local area. Any fouling must be cleared up immediately.
- All animals must **not** cause a nuisance, annoyance, or disturbance to others. All animals need to be kept in proper care and control.
- Pets must be kept in a separate room when Torus employees or contractors attend your home.
- It is a legal requirement that dogs must wear a collar with an identification tag and in the UK must be microchipped by the time they are 8 weeks old. All cats must be microchipped by 20 weeks old.
- Pet owners must have suitable arrangements in place for looking after their pet during periods of absence such as holidays or emergencies. This is included in the Pet Agreement.
- Animals must **not** damage Torus homes or communal areas, owners may be recharged for any repairs carried out due to pet damage. It is advisable that owners seek their own insurance to cover any damage that could be caused.
- Cat or dog flaps are prohibited.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 (s.9) places a 'duty of care' on pet owners to provide for their animals basic needs, these include:

- A suitable environment (place to live).
- A suitable diet.
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (if applicable).
- To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

Any complaints of animal cruelty will be immediately reported to the RSPCA. Torus will also report any complaints via a third party to the RSPCA ensuring that we make it clear that we did not witness it. Details of any animal cruelty or welfare should be passed to the RSPCA on 0300 123 4999 or rspca.org.uk.

We have produced information on our website on responsible pet ownership which links to the Pet Policy and Tenancy Agreement. The page includes general advice on pet ownership, legal requirements and responsibilities for owners, nuisance behaviour and how enforcement action will be taken to deal with cases of nuisance pets or cruelty/ neglect.

2.6 Nuisance

Tenants have a duty to look after their pets responsibly and must not allow them to cause a nuisance to their neighbours, or any other member of the public. Tenants will also be held responsible for the behaviour of any pets brought into their homes or neighbourhoods by their visitors.

If a pet is found to be causing a nuisance or annoyance, Torus will manage the incident in line with its Anti-social Behaviour policy.

There are many examples of nuisance that animals can cause neighbours and residents. Some examples of these are below although the list is not exhaustive:

- Roaming and unattended pets.
- Excessive noise (e.g. dogs barking).
- Pets fouling.
- Aggressive pets, we will report all incidents of pets being out of control (or a danger to anyone) to the Police.
- Too many pets in a household.

2.7 Enforcement Action

Pet nuisance is recognised as anti-social behaviour and the Pet Policy and Procedure work alongside the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. The following is how Torus would deal with a complaint in relation to anti-social behaviour from a pet:

- As soon as a complaint is received this is logged onto our system and an acknowledgment letter is sent out.
- The Neighbourhood Officer will make contact within 5 working days and assess the nature of the case and take the most appropriate action to remedy the complaint.
- If the problem is not rectified there will then be a number of ways to remedy the problem. The first step will be to interview and send out warning letters.
- Referrals can be made to the local Environmental Health Department to act under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (e.g., incidents involving noise, fouling and smells).
- We can arrange for mediation professionals to become involved.
- We will use Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and make responsible pet ownership part of the contract, using one or more organisations such as the Police, RSPCA and the Local Authority.
- We will withdraw permission to keep the pet.
- We will apply to Court for an Injunction to start or stop an act or acts.
- We will apply to Court for Possession of the property in extreme cases.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 Any request for a pet will be reviewed and checks will be carried out to ascertain if the pet meets the required criteria.
- 3.2 The onus is on the customer to provide all relevant information and evidence to support the application.
- 3.3 Torus may also conduct further checks necessary to determine if any breaches of tenancy will occur if permission is given. We retain the right to withdraw permission where the pet has caused nuisance, or we believe the owner to be showing signs of animal cruelty or neglect.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Torus is committed to providing excellent services and ensuring value for money. Torus will consult therefore with tenants and leaseholders to ensure they are given the opportunity to participate in the development of neighbourhood services, which will assist in providing high quality services with continual service improvement.

- 4.2 This will be achieved through face-to-face consultation and via Torus Talk, the digital platform for customers.
- 4.3 This policy will require final approval from the Landlords Operation Committee (LOC).
- 4.4 The policy will also be amended in accordance and consultation with changes in legislation.

5. INCLUSION

- 5.1 Equality, diversity, and inclusion are important to Torus. Throughout the development of this document, Torus are committed to ending discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic (as cited in the Equality Act 2010).
- 5.2 The following have also been referenced in the development of this document: European Convention on Human Rights, and the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 5.3 This policy will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of the nine protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; and sexual orientation). Torus will ensure that this policy is accessible to all customers and can be requested in alternative formats including other languages.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years and is the responsibility of the Housing Services Director to ensure this takes place. There is discretion, in the event of evidence emerging, that the policy can be reviewed earlier.

Appendix A

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991:-

An Act to prohibit persons from having in their possession or custody dogs belonging to types bred for fighting; to impose restrictions in respect of such dogs pending the coming into force of the prohibition; to enable restrictions to be imposed in relation to other types of dog which present a serious danger to the public; to make further provision for securing that dogs are kept under proper control; and for connected purposes.

Dogs bred for fighting.

(1) This section applies to:

- a) any dog of the type known as the pit bull terrier;
- b) any dog of the type known as the Japanese tosa; and
- c) any dog of the type known as the Dogo Argentino; and
- d) and dog of the type known as the Fila Brasileiro; and
- e) and dog of the type known as the XL Bully
- f) any dog of any type designated for the purposes of this section by an order of the Secretary of State, being a type appearing to him to be bred for fighting or to have the characteristics of a type bred for that purpose.

(2) No person shall:

- a) breed, or breed from, a dog to which this section applies;
- b) sell or exchange such a dog or offer, advertise or expose such a dog for sale or exchange;
- c) make or offer to make a gift of such a dog or advertise or expose such a dog as a gift;
- d) allow such a dog of which he is the owner or of which he is for the time being in charge to be in a public place without being muzzled and kept on a lead; or
- e) abandon such a dog of which he is the owner or, being the owner or for the time being in charge of such a dog, allow it to stray.

Dangerous Wild Animals 1976

The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 regulates the keeping of certain species of wild animals. These also require a licence.

Animals covered by this legislation include certain wild species of cat, dogs, boar as well as primates and marsupials. A license for hybrid or cross-bred animals may also be required, depending on how far removed the animal is from its wild ancestor.

Mammals:

- Macropodidae: the western grey, eastern grey, and red kangaroo; the wallaroo
- most primates; except night monkeys, titi, squirrel monkeys, and bamboo lemurs
- the Tasmanian devil
- All bears, camels, elephants, eared seals, Giraffidae, Hippopotamidae, Rhinocerotidae, peccary, tapir, and walrus
- the aardvark, fossa, giant armadillo, giant anteater, and pronghorn
- Bovidae except the domestic cattle, buffalo, goat, and sheep
- Canidae except the fox, culpeo, grey zorro, raccoon dogs, and domestic dog
- Equidae except the donkey and domestic horse

- Larger [Felidae](#)
- Many [Mustelidae](#), but not the [European otter](#)
- [Suidae](#) except the [domestic pig](#) (farmed [wild boar](#) is also excepted in Scotland)
- [Viverrinae](#) except the [small Indian civet](#)
- [True seals](#) except the [common seal](#) and [grey seal](#)
- [Hyenas](#) except the [aardwolf](#)
- [Moose](#) and [Caribou](#) except [domestic reindeer](#)
- Many [hybrids](#) where one or both parents are classified as dangerous

Birds:

- [cassowary](#), [ostrich](#)

Reptiles:

- Crocodilians: all [Alligatoridae](#), [Crocodylidae](#), [Gavialidae](#)
- Snakes: all [Atractaspis](#), [Elapidae](#), [Hydrophiidae](#), [Viperidae](#); many [Colubridae](#)
- All [Helodermatidae](#)

Invertebrates:

- Spiders: All [Ctenidae](#), [Hexathelidae](#), [Sicariidae](#), [Theridiidae](#)
- Scorpions: All [Buthidae](#); and [Hemiscorpius lepturus](#)

Livestock

Livestock” includes cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses and poultry. For 'cattle' the legislation means bulls, cows, oxen, heifers or calves. 'Horses' includes asses and mules, and 'poultry means domestic fowl, turkeys, geese or ducks.