

# Procedures for bringing pets into care homes

Reference: \*

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## Document Control

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## Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
0.1	Nov 2006	Policy on Adult Service Users bringing Pets into Care Homes for Older People.	
0.2	July 2009	Significant update of procedure	
0.3	May 2014	Reformatted document Minor updates following consultation with Service Manager Adult Social Care Provider Services, care home Unit Managers and Service Improvement Team Updates to ownership to reflect current service structure	
1.4	Sept 2021	Review completed	SR

## Related Documents

Reference	Title	Tier



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The procedures provide guidance for staff and service users when considering whether the care home can accommodate a pet. They also provide guidance for the ongoing care of those pets that are accommodated.

## 2. Applicability

- 2.1. The procedures apply to all service users who have a permanent place in a care home.
- 2.2. Requests from respite service users will be considered on a case by case basis.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1. The **Service Manager Adult Social Care Provider Services** has overall responsibility for ensuring that the procedures are managed appropriately and for updating them in accordance with the published schedule.
- 3.2. The **Care Home Managers** are responsible for ensuring the day-to-day management of pets within the care homes and for ensuring the safety of service users and staff.
- 3.3. All **staff** are responsible for familiarising themselves with, and ensuring that they comply with the procedures.
- 3.4. They are also responsible for informing the Unit Manager of any known allergies that may affect them if they come into contact with pets in the workplace.

## 4. General principles

- 4.1. Wherever possible West Berkshire Council care homes will accommodate a service user's pet when the service user moves into a care home. WBC recognises that moving into a care home can be a traumatic and distressing time for clients, their families and carers. This distress can be exacerbated where the client must part with their pet before moving in.
- 4.2. At the assessment stage, when a care home is being considered, the discussion **should include** the subject of the prospective service user's pets. Clients and their families may not feel able to declare the presence of the pet in case it affects the outcome of the application for a place in a care home.
- 4.3. The outcome of this discussion must be recorded on the Assessment forms including any action that will be taken (and by whom), to find out whether the pet can accompany the service user. This must be explored with the care home/s being considered.
- 4.4. There is no guarantee that the care home can continue to care for a service user's pet in the event that the pet outlives their owner. The arrangements for managing this circumstance must be discussed and agreed with the service user / family / representatives as part of the admissions process.

- 4.5. In general terms WBC care homes can only accommodate small household pets only. The home cannot accept large pets, exotic species, or animals requiring substantial support from care staff.
- 4.6. There may be occasions where the Unit Manager agrees that the home will take over the responsibility for caring for a service user's pet if they are no longer capable of doing so and the family / representative are not able to take this on. In which case the home will also take on the responsibility for all costs incurred which will be funded from the home's Amenity Fund.
- 4.7. The Unit Manager may agree with the service user / family / representative that the home is not able to take over responsibility and another home will be sought wherever possible. Where this is not possible the only option may be to put the pet down which would normally be paid for by the service user / family / representative or the home in the last resort.
- 4.8. The health and well-being of service users and staff must take precedence when considering the accommodation of a pet – for example, if a service user / staff member is allergic to cat hair and the cat cannot be kept away from that person then the cat may not be able to be accommodated.

## **5. Standards**

- 5.1. The final decision regarding the accommodation of a service user's pet rests with the Unit Manager as this may depend on the number and type of animals already resident in the home, and the type and behaviour of the proposed pet.
- 5.2. The service user and / or family / representative must be consulted throughout the decision making process and, if the decision is that the pet cannot be accommodated, must be provided with the reasons for that decision to enable them to decide whether they wish to move into the care home.
- 5.3. Before accepting a pet into the home the Unit Manager must satisfy themselves that all necessary risk assessments and consultations with existing service users and staff have been undertaken.
- 5.4. The Unit Manager must also be satisfied that the arrangements for the care and management of the pet are in place and that the service user / family / representative etc fully understand their responsibilities in this regard – particularly that they are responsible for the costs of maintaining the pet.
- 5.5. The service user / family are responsible for paying all fees and charges in respect of food / vets fees / worming / other treatments etc.
- 5.6. Once the decision has been taken that the home will accommodate a service user's pet then the preference is for the pet to remain in the service user's room as long as this does not affect the home's ability to provide care to the service user.
- 5.7. When the pet dies the service user / family / representative is responsible for arranging the removal and disposal of the body and the home's garden must not be used as a 'pet cemetery.'

- 5.8. The Service User Guide must include a section on the management of pets within the care home to ensure that people are appropriately informed.
- 5.9. The situation must be kept under regular review to ensure that the continued accommodation of the pet is appropriate. This is particularly important when a pet becomes ill or requires specialist care that cannot be provided in the care home.

## **6. Procedures**

- 6.1. Prior to arranging the admission of a service user with a pet, the Unit Manager must ensure that a full risk assessment is undertaken and that the feelings and fears of other service users have been taken into consideration.
- 6.2. Each care home must draw up an agreement with the service user / family / representative as to how the pet will be cared for using the 'Guidelines for the care of pets in a care home' – [Appendix A](#). The guidelines identify the areas that must be discussed and recorded on a suitable document.
- 6.3. The arrangements, once agreed, must be shared with all staff to ensure that they understand its contents and what they are responsible for.
- 6.4. Staff should inform the Unit Manager of any known allergies so that action can be taken to minimise exposure and reduce the effects of the allergy.
- 6.5. Any staff member who has a concern regarding the well-being of the pet must report this to the duty senior at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken.
- 6.6. When the pet becomes ill the service user / family / representative should be informed so that appropriate action can be taken.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE CARE OF A PET IN A CARE HOME**

**The Unit Manager should obtain the following information from service user / family / representative regarding the pet:**

- Feeding routine.
- Sleeping habits.
- Other known behaviours / habits.
- Veterinary checks.
- History of worming and flea prevention procedures.
- Any Public Liability Insurance they may have.
- What is to happen to pet if it dies.
- What is to happen to pet if owner dies first.
- What is to happen if the owner moves from the home on a permanent basis (i.e. into care home with nursing).

**Discussion with the service user / family / representative to include:**

- Understanding and agreement that the pet may have to be removed from the home if it has a negative impact on other services users or staff.
- Acknowledgement that the Unit Manager has final say regarding the accommodation of the pet.
- That the owner of the pet either subscribes to an Insurance Scheme which ensures payment of veterinary fees or that they pay for all costs associated with the care of the pet.
- Any cost incurred by the home as a result of damage caused by the pet should be met by the service user or relatives.
- Provision of food and other items such as lead, bedding, litter tray and regular supply of litter, or sanded sheets for caged birds etc.
- Ideally dogs or cats should be neutered before coming into the home
- Agreement from other service users.
- All cost implications of maintaining the pet and that these must be met by the service user / family or representative.
- All transport to and from the vet for treatment will be undertaken by the family / representative etc.
- Circumstances where the service user is unable to fully understand this agreement the family / representative must agree to take full responsibility in abiding by this agreement and acting on their behalf.

**The following support from the care home will be provided wherever possible:**

- Provide fenced garden space.
- Animal loving staff to exercise pet if owner unable (and pet needs exercising) and to clear up any mess and dispose of appropriately.
- Staff who are prepared to empty litter trays etc if owner is unable.
- Staff who will help with feeding pet if owner is unable.
- Staff who will transport the pet to and from the vet in an emergency situation only if the owner / family etc are not able to do so.