

# Pet-friendly rental properties: Making it work for everyone

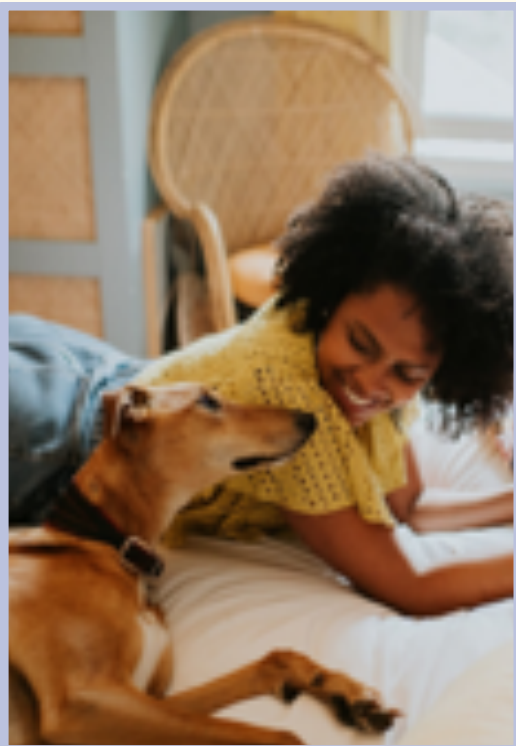
## A Guide for Landlords & Agents



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This leaflet is intended to help all types of landlords and their agents get the most out of deciding to make their property pet friendly. Based on extensive information and our new research, it explains the benefits, the practicalities, the potential pitfalls (and how to avoid them) and how you can make it work for everyone.



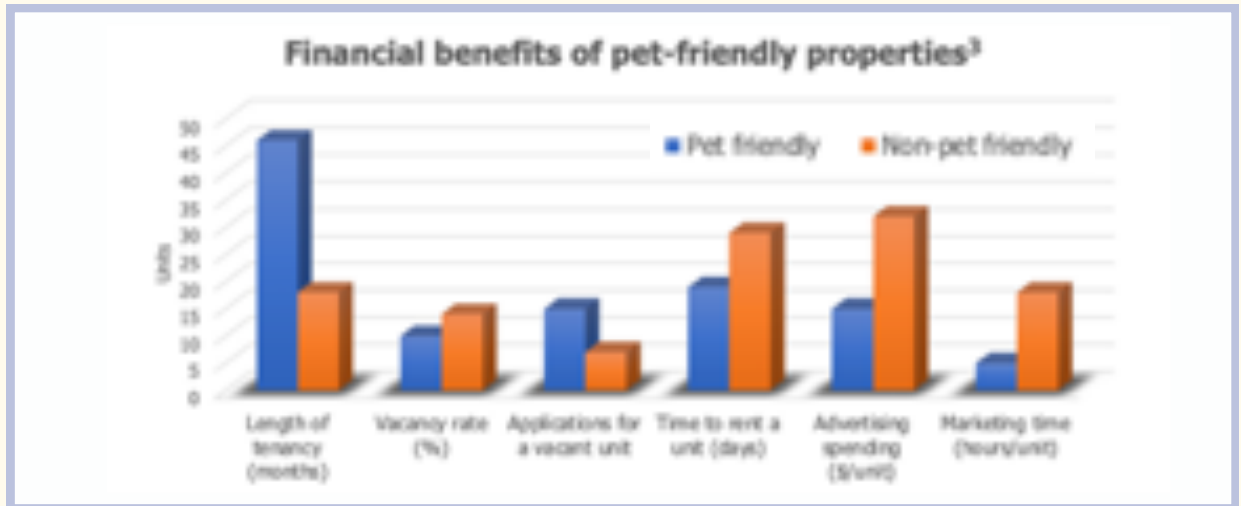
### The UK's private rented sector

- Pet-friendly rental housing brings financial benefits to landlords & agents that outweigh the risks<sup>1-3</sup>
- Demand for pet-friendly rental property has increased by 120%<sup>4</sup> and is likely to continue rising
- More people are renting privately (20.3% of households in England and Wales<sup>5</sup>)
- 75% of tenants own or aspire to own a pet (3.6 million)<sup>1</sup>



## Benefits for Landlords

Pet-friendly property is a better business model since it has more financial benefits than being non-pet-friendly<sup>1-3</sup>



- Lower turnover of tenants brings associated savings
- Lead a growing share of the rental marketing in the UK since 53% of UK adults have pets<sup>6</sup> and only 3.5% of rental properties are advertised as pet-friendly<sup>7</sup>
- Attract tenants seeking a long-term home<sup>8</sup>
- Because tenants 'feel at home' they tend to take better care of the property and have fewer mental health problems which can result in reduced payment delays, for example<sup>9-11</sup>

*"I think it's very unfortunate so many of the capital's landlords are shut shops for pet owners. The situation is obviously bad for pet-owning renters since their options are severely limited. But it's not great business sense for landlords either: they're closing themselves off from a surprisingly large portion of the market."* Harry Downes, founder and managing director of Fizzy Living<sup>12</sup>



## Benefits for Tenants

- Physical and mental health benefits from having a companion animal (pet)<sup>13-14</sup>
- By having their companion animals (i.e., keeping their household relationships), tenants can 'feel more at home' which brings them mental health benefits<sup>10-11</sup>
- Do not have to choose between housing and having companion animals
- Avoid the grief of pet relinquishment
- Reduced risk of suicide<sup>15</sup>



*"Having a pet may help you live a longer, healthier life! Pets can benefit your health in many different ways. They can help raise fitness levels... lower stress, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. Best of all, pets can boost people's overall happiness and well-being."*

American Heart Association<sup>16</sup>

*"A pet can be a great source of comfort and motivation. In many ways, pets can help us to live mentally healthier lives... Pets may also help with specific conditions. For example, people with ADHD may benefit from the structure and routine that a pet needs."*

Mental Health Foundation<sup>17</sup>



*"An animal can provide many benefits such as companionship, exercise, and improved wellbeing. They are a source of support and interaction and can help people to remain independent."*

Alzheimer's Society<sup>18</sup>

*"Autistic people can benefit from having a pet. Pets provide the kind of unconditional relationship that can help someone build social skills and confidence. They can provide a sense of calm and reassurance if their owner feels overwhelmed."*

Mental Health Foundation<sup>17</sup>



## Benefits for Animals

Landlords not allowing pets is the second most common reason for relinquishment of dogs<sup>19</sup>



- 1 million tenants would like to have a cat which means that over one million cats could be adopted potentially from shelters<sup>20</sup>
- Fewer healthy pets euthanised
- Fewer pets with behavioural problems due to being relinquished





## Benefits for the Community

- According to 71% of residents (pet and non-pet owners), pets can act as social capital and help build community by bringing people together<sup>21</sup>. And a sense of community increases residents' satisfaction and retention<sup>2</sup>
- Building community also protects the property investment since people care more about their community and environment which is associated with lower crime<sup>2,22</sup>
- Dog ownership is also linked with less antisocial behaviour and lower crime rate<sup>23</sup>



*"At Fizzy, we welcome four-legged friends. We're all about creating a strong sense of community and pets are an integral part of this. Our pet-friendly developments have pet grooming stations, pet parties (nick-named "Yappy Hour") and even pet welcome packs like our human tenants get but tailored to pets' needs..."*

Harry Downes, founder and managing director of Fizzy Living<sup>12</sup>



# Addressing Landlord Concerns

## 1. Are pets going to damage my rental property(s)?

Understandably, this is the main concern from landlords, but studies show it is not common (3-9%)<sup>1-2</sup> and having pets is not associated with having more property damage<sup>3</sup>. Although 62% of landlords were concerned with damage by cats only 17% have experienced it at some point<sup>8</sup>. Adults and children caused more costly damages than pets<sup>2</sup>. A few bad experiences with pets in rental properties seem to have a much bigger impact on landlord decisions than many good experiences with pets (as many as 63% of landlords of non-pet-friendly properties had never permitted pets in their rental units)<sup>3, 24</sup>.

## 2. Am I going to have other problems with pets such as noise or flea infestations?

Other concerns are related to problems with anti-social behaviour such as noise and property cleanliness, e.g., flea infestation. Although these are not nice problems to have, they are not common e.g., just 3% of dogs caused problems with noise<sup>1</sup> and although 34% of landlords were concerned with flea infestations by cats, only 2% experienced it<sup>8</sup>. Overall, 75% of landlords who allow cats did not have any problems with cats in their rental properties<sup>8</sup>.

## 3. I am concerned about the animal welfare problems in my rental property. Is it common?

At some point, 10% of landlords experienced a problem with animal welfare such as tenants moving out and leaving their pets at the property. When investigating a little further, we found that for example, for one landlord who had almost 20 properties for about 25 years, a tenant had left their cat behind once<sup>24</sup>. Of course, nobody wants to have a pet abandoned at their rental property, but animal charities and certified animal behaviourists can help resolve behavioural issues or abandonment.



## Addressing Landlord Concerns

### 4. How about bad tenants?

Unfortunately, some tenants do not take adequate care of their rented properties, a risk for both pet-friendly and non-pet-friendly landlords. A recent survey found that 79% of expense for landlords valued £1000 or more was caused by arrears and damages by human adults<sup>25</sup>. Hence, the problem is choosing tenants that will take good care of their rented properties even though that is not simple. In addition, when landlords allow their tenants to 'feel at home' (e.g. personalise the property such as hanging photos on the walls, and keeping their pets) tenants not only tend to stay longer but also to look after their home.

### 5. What if I have problems with my tenants' pets?

Having problems with tenants can be very upsetting and stressful, so it is understandable that most landlords will try to eliminate potential sources of problems to avoid the need to retain deposits or to evict tenants which can be a long and costly process. Allowing pets is often seen as one more problem to worry about since landlords, in general, believe that tenants with pets cause more problems and landlords lack the means to 'fix' them. However, new legislation is expected allowing landlords to ask for pet insurance or pet deposits to cover costs of damage. Other approaches such as adding a clause in the contract specifying that damages should be repaired, and carpets should be sprayed for fleas and/or professionally cleaned after tenants move out have been very useful to pet-friendly landlords. Money spent repairing the property may also be tax deductible.

### 6. Is my property suitable for pets?

Discussion with a prospective tenant about matching the needs of their pet with their plans to meet them are crucial. Properties with more robust pet-friendly features can protect the property from wear and tear expected in rental properties with or without companion animals.



# Making it Work for You

## 1. Before renting

- Advertise as 'pets considered' rather than 'No pets': open the dialogue
- Find out what is acceptable for you
- Make your property pet-friendly such as having more resistant flooring or providing pet blankets for covering furniture
- Clause in the contract for cleaning/ repairing any damage after tenant moves out
- Clause in the contract for requiring the pet to be registered with a veterinary practice and up to date with standard veterinary health preventives e.g., treated for fleas, etc, encouraging responsible ownership
- Specify what is considered wear and tear (i.e., expected) and what is damage (should be fixed by the tenant)
- Consider requiring insurance for pet damage or, where applicable, ask for a pet deposit

## 2. Choosing the tenant

- Ask for a Pet CV with information related to measures the tenant will take to be a responsible pet owner, e.g., providing veterinary records with flea and vaccination status and details of the pet's behaviours
- Ask for Pet References from previous landlords with information related to how long the tenant lived in the previous property with their pets, which pets they owned at the time, if the tenant can be considered as a responsible pet owner, were the tenant's pets well behaved
- Meet the tenant and their pets and get a feel for whether you consider them to be responsible owners and the animals to look healthy
- Ask potential tenants about their pet's routine such as when and how often it goes out for walks, where it likes to scratch, etc.
- Make an accurate risk assessment of the companion animal and tenant pair: what you really want is a responsible owner





# Making it Work for You

## 3. During tenancy

- Carry on early and frequent inspections to identify potential problems
- Maintain a good relationship with your tenants
- Discuss with your tenants about how to avoid problems with their companion animals, e.g., where to place the scratching post, how long the pet will spend alone
- Talk to your tenants about their pet behaviour if it seems problematic, e.g., suggest looking for an accredited behaviourist (registered with the Animal Behaviour and Training Council, Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors) or charities such as Dogs Trust and Cats Protection

## 4. After the tenancy has finished

- Any repairs or refurbishing to deal with wear and tear or damages are tax deductible

## 5. Set up a pet committee

In multiple unit housing blocks this has been found to reduce complaints, create harmony, and largely free management from involvement in pet-related incidents

**For further information and questions on how to implement these ideas, please contact SCAS at [info@scas.org.uk](mailto:info@scas.org.uk).**

*"My advice to fellow landlords? Don't be frightened! Meet the tenants and establish a relationship with them so they will be honest if any problems do arise. Meet the pet too before making a decision. Just because you're accepting of pets doesn't mean you have to accept every pet into every property. Be pragmatic."*

Deirdre, Mountgrange Heritage's pet-friendly landlord<sup>26</sup>



**Pet CV templates:**

- [www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning/purrfectlandlords](http://www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning/purrfectlandlords);  
<https://petslets.com/create-pet-cv>

**Pet reference questions:**

- [www.letswithpets.org.uk/landlord-and-letting-agency-resources/pet-reference](http://www.letswithpets.org.uk/landlord-and-letting-agency-resources/pet-reference)

**More questions for potential tenants:**

- [www.letswithpets.org.uk/advice-on-pets/responsible-pet-ownership](http://www.letswithpets.org.uk/advice-on-pets/responsible-pet-ownership)

**Advice for avoiding problems with pets:**

- [www.dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice); [www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice](http://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice);  
[www.cats.org.uk/media/1571/purrfect-landlords-report.pdf](http://www.cats.org.uk/media/1571/purrfect-landlords-report.pdf); [www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice](http://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice)

**Problems with pets:**

- [www.abtc.org.uk](http://www.abtc.org.uk); [www.apbc.org.uk](http://www.apbc.org.uk); [www.dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/behaviour-support-line](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/behaviour-support-line); [www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/cat-behaviour/managing-cat-behaviour](http://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/cat-behaviour/managing-cat-behaviour)

**Tax deductible for private rentals:**

- [www.gov.uk/guidance/income-tax-when-you-rent-out-a-property-working-out-your-rental-income](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/income-tax-when-you-rent-out-a-property-working-out-your-rental-income)

**UK housing associations:**

- **National Residential Landlord association (NRL):**  
<https://www.nrla.org.uk/resources/managing-your-tenancy/pets-a-landlord-guide>
- **Scottish Association of Landlords** (advice on pets in rental properties):  
<https://scottishlandlords.com/resources/documents-factsheets/managing-your-tenancy/factsheet-on-letting-to-pets/>

**Home Let** - tenant referencing and specialist lettings insurance company providing advice on pets in rental properties:

- <https://homelet.co.uk/landlord-insurance/landlord-lowdown-blog/five-tips-to-organise-a-pet-friendly-rental>

**Tenancy Deposit Scheme:**

- [www.tenancydepositscheme.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Guide to Pets in Rented Properties.pdf](http://www.tenancydepositscheme.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Guide%20to%20Pets%20in%20Rented%20Properties.pdf)

**Pets Lets** (housing association that runs advice on pets in rental properties):

- <https://petslets.com/pets-cvs-and-references>

**Purrfect Landlords** (advice on cats in rental properties by Cats Protection):

- [www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning/purrfectlandlords/private-landlords](http://www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning/purrfectlandlords/private-landlords)

**Lets with Pets** (advice on pets in rental properties by Dogs Trust):

- [www.letswithpets.org.uk/landlords/good-practice-for-landlords](http://www.letswithpets.org.uk/landlords/good-practice-for-landlords)

**Battersea** (advice on pets in rental properties):

- [www.battersea.org.uk/what-we-do/animal-welfare-campaigning/pet-friendly-properties](http://www.battersea.org.uk/what-we-do/animal-welfare-campaigning/pet-friendly-properties)

**Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS)** - information about pets in rental properties:

- [www.scas.org.uk/emmas-blog-pets-and-housing-february-2018/](http://www.scas.org.uk/emmas-blog-pets-and-housing-february-2018/)

**Pet-inclusive Housing Initiative** - resources for rental housing operators (USA):

- [www.petsandhousing.org/resources/](http://www.petsandhousing.org/resources/)

**Better Cities for pets** - certify cities that put programs in place to improve people and pets' lives (USA):

- [www.bettercitiesforpets.com/resource/pet-friendly-housing-toolkit/](http://www.bettercitiesforpets.com/resource/pet-friendly-housing-toolkit/)

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For further information and questions on how to implement these ideas, please contact SCAS at [info@scas.org.uk](mailto:info@scas.org.uk).

