



# **Pet Friendly Housing Pilot Final Report**



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# INTRODUCTION

Here at Dogs Trust, we know the bond between pets and their owners is truly special; with owners repeatedly reporting benefits to physical and mental health<sup>1</sup>, increased opportunities for socialising and an increased sense of purpose<sup>2</sup>. Pets are not just companions but cherished family members, so we work hard to keep people and their pets together throughout the challenges that life can bring.

Those who experience housing issues with their pets can face significant barriers in accessing pet friendly accommodation. In 2024, Dogs Trust received 43,230 handover enquiries from individuals across the UK. In Scotland, 1 in 10 of those who contacted Dogs Trust about relinquishing their dog to us stated that a change in housing status was a key reason. This figure rises to 1 in 7 across the UK. The situation is reflected across the animal welfare sector, with members of the Scottish Companion Animal Welfare Group (which Dogs Trust chairs) advising a large number of relinquishments are caused by a lack of pet friendly accommodation<sup>3</sup>.

In 2022 Dogs Trust's Outreach department was granted funding thanks to Postcode Lottery players through a Special Award from Postcode Animal Trust to run a Pet Friendly Housing Pilot, aiming to increase access to pet friendly housing for owners. The need for the pilot was identified by the work of our Together Through Homelessness (TTH) team, through which temporary accommodation providers had reported a lack of pet friendly permanent accommodation was creating a bottleneck for pet owners within their services.

Scotland was selected as the location for the pilot due to the warm relationships established during a previous pilot run with Simon Community Scotland from 2020-21 increasing the availability of dog friendly homelessness services. In Scotland, the majority of people entitled to permanent accommodation after being found unintentionally homeless move into a social home [80% in April-September 2025<sup>4</sup>]. Therefore, the social housing sector was determined to be the right fit for the pilot.

Unlike other areas of Dogs Trust's work, it was felt that the interventions needed to increase access to pet friendly housing were similar for owners of all pet species. It has long been recognised by both the housing and animal welfare sectors that pet ownership can present a significant barrier to accessing rented

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<sup>1</sup> PAW PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2024

<sup>2</sup> PDSA: *The benefits of owning a pet*. <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/looking-after-your-pet/all-pets/the-benefits-of-owning-a-pet>

<sup>3</sup> *Scottish Housing News: Animal welfare groups urge MSPs to strengthen renters' rights for pets [2024]*. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/scottish-animal-welfare-groups-urge-msps-to-strengthen-renters-rights-for-pet-owners>

<sup>4</sup> *Scottish Government, Accredited Official Statistics; Homelessness in Scotland: Update to 30 September 2025, p20*



accommodation. The opportunity to obtain funding to focus specifically on this issue was immensely welcome, and the decision was taken to develop the work to benefit owners of all common domestic pet species.

Funded from January 2023 to January 2026, the pilot aimed to:

- Create a [pet friendly housing] framework to be used by housing providers, as well as scaled up for large national providers
- Seek to secure a local council willing to make their entire council pet friendly
- Provide a case study, to be used as a lobbying tool to demonstrate the positive impact that pet friendly accommodation brings
- Collaborate with Postcode Lottery's policy team and other influential groups in the space to raise the profile of the [pet friendly housing] issue on a UK-wide scale

The original outcomes outlined in the funding proposal were:

- Ensure that pet owners experiencing housing issues and their animals remain together and access permanent housing
- Ensure that time spent in temporary accommodation is short and the barrier to moving to more permanent provision isn't household pets
- Enable suppliers of social and private housing to access support for their tenants and their pets to ensure tenancies are as successful as possible
- Increase awareness among landlords of the benefits of allowing tenants to keep a dog or cat to ensure this is an attractive proposition

These outcomes remained broadly the same throughout the lifetime of the pilot, however were expanded upon in a Theory of Change document designed by Dogs Trust and further developed by relevant stakeholders.

Throughout this report, we will explore the development and delivery of the pilot, the importance of relationship building, the outcomes achieved and lastly, recommendations for the future of pet friendly housing work. Together, we have achieved a huge amount and laid the foundations for a fairer housing system for pet owners throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK.

## **PROJECT PLANNING**

### **Developing a Pet Friendly Approach**

The funding from Postcode Lottery players provided us with a great deal of flexibility, allowing us to design and deliver the pilot in the way that would best help us meet our aims and establish a blueprint for pet friendly housing. The Pet Friendly Housing Team at this point consisted of a newly recruited Pet Friendly



Housing Lead (PFHL), oversight from the Pets and Housing Manager (PHM) and dedicated resource from Outreach's Monitoring and Evaluation Manager.

A project plan was developed, split into three phases:

1. Research and Scoping
2. Partnership
3. Expansion

The phases were broadly delivered over concurrent years, e.g. Phase 1 in 2023, Phase 2 in 2024 and Phase 3 in 2025.

### Phase 1 – Research and Scoping

In order to develop resources to support and increase pet friendly social housing, it was important to first understand the pet friendly social housing landscape in Scotland.

This understanding was shaped initially through desk-based research, in which the PFHL looked at each of Scotland's social landlords and their approach to pets. There are 182 social landlords in Scotland, comprising of 156 Housing Associations and 26 stock owning local authorities. Areas of focus for the research included determining whether a pet policy was in place, any restrictions on pet ownership and the size and spread of housing stock. This information would be vital in determining a strategic partnership in Phase 2. Our work brought us into contact with both Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Local Authorities (LAs).

It was also important to hear from the landlords themselves for further insight. We developed a comprehensive survey which was emailed to every social landlord in Scotland. The survey built on the existing research and gleaned greater insight into the processes, practices and attitudes regarding pets. 72 of the 182 landlords responded, giving a response rate of 40%. Of the 72 respondents, 19 confirmed that they would be interested in becoming the initial partner on the pilot. A scoring matrix was developed to assist in determining which of these 19 may be the best fit as our initial partner. Based on the scores, we shortlisted 7 RSLs as potential partners for Phase 2.

At this point, there was a change in personnel and a pause on delivery while a new PFHL was recruited in November 2023. The existing work and recommendations were reviewed, and the top 3 potential RSL partners were contacted via a support proposal, outlining our plans for Phase 2 and requesting they register their interest in working with us. By February 2024, Manor Estates Housing Association had been selected as our partner RSL. Manor Estates own just over 1000 homes, with the bulk in Edinburgh and a handful in Fife. They were selected as they demonstrated a strong commitment to pet ownership, however required new policies and practices to support this.

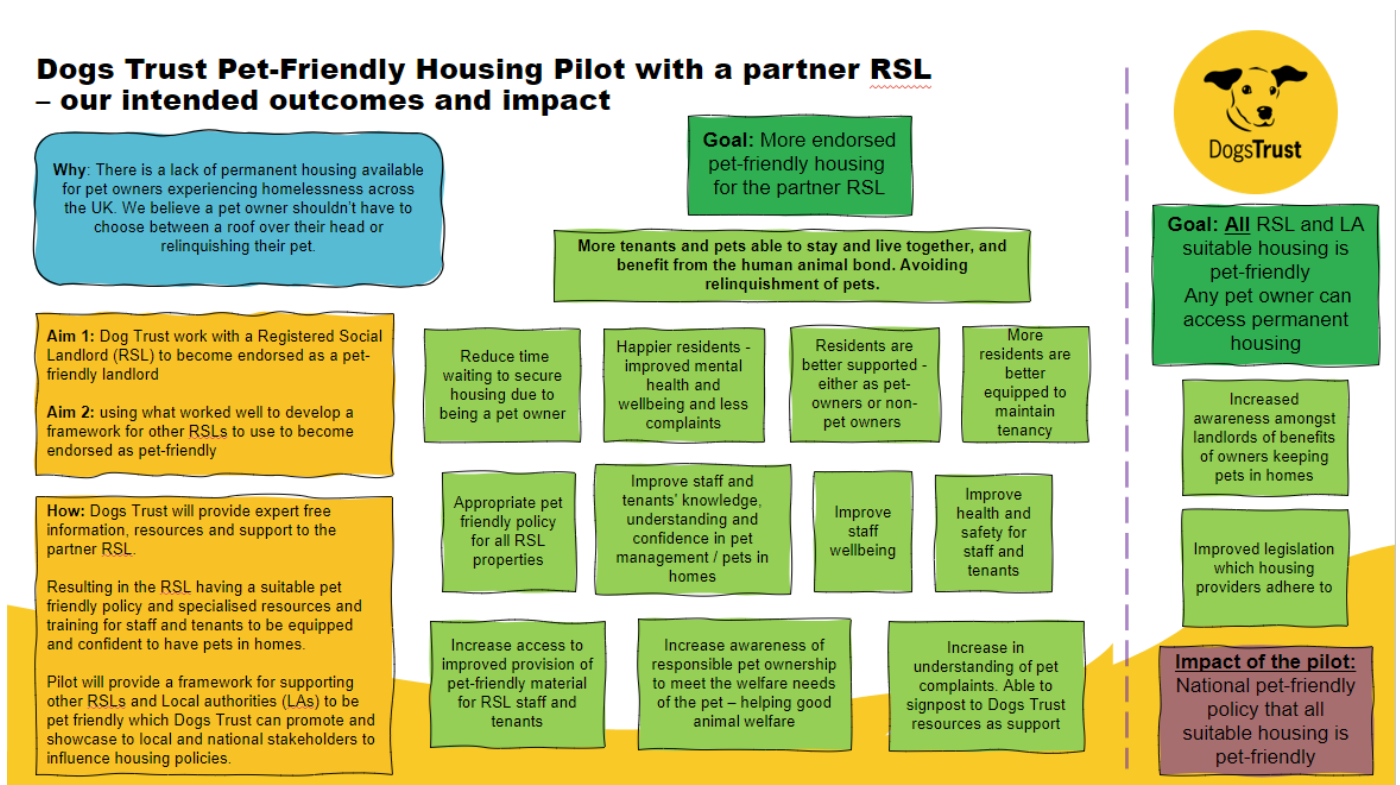
The funding application had also detailed that an additional team member would be recruited at this time. The role of Pet Friendly Housing Officer (PFHO) was



created, advertised and successfully recruited into by February 2024. This additional role would aid in the operational delivery of the partnership and wider pilot.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

As a pilot project, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the work was essential. Therefore, a dedicated resource from the Outreach team's Monitoring and Evaluation Manager was built into the project bid and plan. A Theory of Change (ToC) was developed to outline the desired outcomes of the pilot, as well as overall goals for the future of pet friendly housing. The first draft of the ToC is pictured below and was developed by the immediate project team (Pet Friendly Housing Lead, Pets and Housing Manager and Monitoring and Evaluation Manager).



Once the partner RSL had been selected and the new Pet Friendly Housing team was in place, a workshop was held with stakeholders from the animal welfare and housing sectors to develop the ToC further. The workshop was held at Dogs Trust's Glasgow Rehoming Centre and included a range of attendees, encompassing four internal teams (Pets and Housing, Rehoming Centre, Canine Behaviour, Community Education and Engagement) and three external organisations (Manor Estates HA, Simon Community Scotland, Cats Protection). Together, we brainstormed activities that would support each outcome being reached, and mapped out at which stage of the pilot this would occur. Updated version of the ToC below:

# Pet-Friendly Housing Pilot – Theory of Change

**Why:** There is a lack of permanent housing available for pet owners experiencing homelessness across the UK. Our pilot focuses on pet-friendly housing with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). We believe a pet owner shouldn't have to choose between a roof over their head or relinquishing their pet.

**Dogs Trust and Manor Estates partnership:** develop what it takes for a RSL to be accredited as pet-friendly

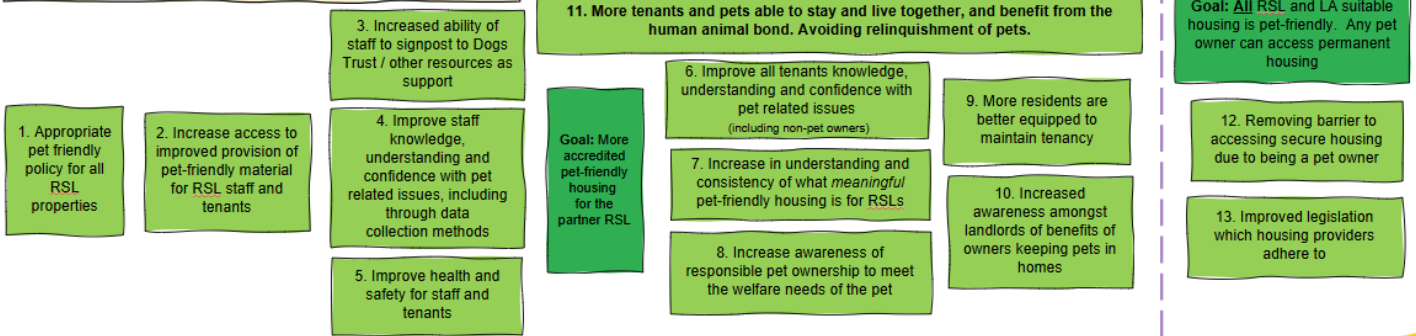
**Pilot:** using what worked well in the partnership to develop a framework for other RSLs to use to become accredited as pet-friendly

**Future**

Future Jan 2026 +

Pilot July 2024 to Jan 2026

Partnership July 2024 to Jan 2025



- Activities to build a knowledge base on what pet-friendly housing is**
- Scope out high-quality materials re: pets in home (for tenants and for staff use) to build a "Services Map": cross organisation working to develop PF materials and build local connections to services
  - Establish PFH forum and start central online space for stakeholders
  - Articulate "PFH" and "responsible ownership"
  - Develop guidance with consultation from tenants, RCs and CBT
  - Build PF policies and procedures and deliver training to staff, staff to advertise new PF policies

- Activities to raise awareness of pet-friendly housing resources**
- Provide information in newsletters
  - Social media updates
  - Surveys and quizzes
  - Tenant information pack providing information regarding Tenancy Fund
  - RSL portal have space for an online forum
  - Staff briefing documents with information
  - Tenancy visits
  - Networking events to discuss animal welfare
  - Community engagement events
  - Webinar to discuss best practice
  - Shared space for professionals (forum and resource library)

- Activities to educate and build an understanding**
- Training for frontline staff
  - Training for third sector support workers
  - Training topics: Defensive Handling & Body Language, Dogs and Children Living Happily Together, Happy Dog Happy Home
  - Target Edinburgh schools for school assemblies
  - Share list of resources available by stakeholder type
  - Engagement events for particular topics

We now had the practical steps in place to deliver the work needed to reach the agreed outcomes.




# PROJECT DELIVERY

With our partner RSL and Theory of Change in place, we could now begin delivering Phase 2 of the pilot; Partnership. To build the partnership with Manor Estates, we created an Onboarding Plan with various online sessions introducing their project team with key Dogs Trust (DT) staff members and services. This provided them with a holistic overview of relevant work across the organisation and built rapport between colleagues.

We also developed documents laying out the expectations and time commitment of each organisation, including a Memorandum of Understanding. We estimated that through agreed activities, Manor Estates would be accredited as Scotland's first pet friendly social landlord [as recognised by Dogs Trust] within a period of 8-10 months.

Behind the scenes, the Pet Friendly Housing team began developing documents to support the partnership and wider pet friendly housing work. We began by developing a definition of pet friendly housing in this context:



**Pet friendly housing is that which recognises the important bond between owners and their pets and supports them to stay together. This is achieved through a housing provider having a range of robust pet friendly policies and practices in place, so that tenants can live with their pets**

**Pet friendly housing providers have an inclusive pet policy in place, agreed upfront with tenants and prospective tenants. The providers understand that the presence of a well-behaved, well looked after pet(s) within a household should not present a barrier to the household being able to access housing. In relation to dogs, there are no breed restrictions in place.**

**There is a clear and fair complaints policy in place regarding pets, and housing providers manage complaints in a manner that balances the needs of tenants with and without pets. Where possible, pet friendly housing providers collect relevant data on the pet population within their homes, including animal numbers and species.**

**Pet friendly housing providers equip their staff with knowledge and resources allowing them to confidently deal with matters relating to pets in homes and communities. Training is provided where required and health and safety requirements are met. Tenants of pet friendly housing providers have access to relevant resources to support responsible pet ownership and promote animal welfare.**

**Animal welfare is of paramount importance, and any significant concerns regarding animal neglect or mistreatment will be reported to the Scottish SPCA.**





We also carried out a literature review spanning the animal welfare and housing sectors, looking at academic papers, sector reports, internal reports and data sets to determine indicators of pet friendly housing. We then determined if each indicator linked back to the outcomes identified in the ToC, to ensure that these outcomes would result in increased pet friendly housing once reached.

## **Journey map**

Lastly, we worked with our Intervention Development team to create a [journey map](#), showcasing the journey that a pet owner may move through when accessing social housing. The map highlighted the potential friction points owners could experience if their landlord does not take a pet friendly approach to tenancy provision and management. It then demonstrated how our work would intervene at each friction point to benefit pets, owners and landlords and result in sustained provision of pet friendly housing. We found the map a fantastic resource to provide a holistic overview of our work, however were unable to find a practical application for it.

### **Recommendation**

For future pet friendly housing work, we recommend revisiting the map and determining if it can be distilled for use in presentations, funding bids and influencing work.

## **Pet Friendly Housing Toolkit**

Now that we were certain that reaching the outcomes in the ToC would deliver increased pet friendly housing, we could begin bringing the practical steps to life, through development of the Pet Friendly Housing Toolkit. This would be the main output of the pilot; a set of steps and resources for landlords to use to become pet friendly.

The Pet Friendly Housing (PFH) Team began by pulling out relevant parts from the definition of pet friendly housing to form the main steps of the toolkit. We also consulted with Manor Estates and thought about the other steps that would be needed to support provision of pet friendly housing. Lastly, we considered the environment that would need to be created by the housing providers for these steps to be taken meaningfully. We adopted four principles of pet friendly housing, which were embedded into the toolkit, prior to the practical steps. We now had a draft version of the toolkit ready to test.

It was important that we got wider input into the toolkit, to be certain it would lead to better outcomes for pet owning renters and their pets. We also needed to ensure that the steps were reasonable and feasible for social landlords and upheld animal welfare standards.

We therefore established the Pet Friendly Housing Forum and used our connections to invite animal welfare organisations, and Manor Estates' connections to invite social housing providers. Attendees from eight social landlords and five animal welfare organisations came to the forum. We hosted an online session



looking at the key parts of the toolkit to explore important factors in detail (e.g. asking the group what would constitute the fundamental components of a pet policy). With the group's feedback and direction, we were able to hone the toolkit – changing some language to best reflect use in the sector and engage with landlords, and deciding on the practical tools that would sit behind each step of the toolkit to allow implementation.

This work led us to the final version of the Pet Friendly Housing Toolkit which is presented in full on the pages below:

# Pet Friendly Housing Toolkit



## Principles of Pet Friendly Housing:



The human-animal bond and benefits of pet ownership are understood and valued throughout neighbourhoods.



Pets are viewed as family members, meaning animals and owners are kept together as far as possible throughout housing journey.



Responsible pet ownership and high levels of animal welfare are promoted by housing provider.



A clear definition of pet friendly housing is available to staff and tenants.

We will provide you with a definition of pet friendly housing and work with you to share this internally and externally. You can also find this definition [here](#).

# Steps recommended to become an accredited Pet Friendly Social Housing Provider:



**Have an inclusive pet policy which meets animal welfare standards and has clearly defined guidelines. Ensure the policy is easily accessible by staff and tenants.**

Find our [template pet policy here](#). The template can be downloaded and personalised to fit your organisation, or we can work alongside you to create a bespoke version.



**Have transparent procedures for addressing pet related complaints that balance the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners. This includes a complaint policy which is easily accessible by staff and tenants.**

These procedures can be included in either the pet policy, complaint policy or both.



**Consider pets in Health and Safety procedures and policies, to provide a safe environment for tenants, staff and pets.**



**Ensure staff understand how to deal with matters relating to pets and know when and where to signpost externally.**

We will provide you with access to our [staff information pack](#), tailored to provide information on local animal welfare services.



**Provide tenants with animal welfare resources to support responsible pet ownership.**

We will also provide you with digital and physical versions of our [tenant information packs](#). The packs cover the 6 most common domestic pets and provide information on basic animal care as well as signposting to local support services.



**Communicate aims and work of Pet Friendly Accreditation clearly to all tenants, including those without pets.**

We will assist with any communications to tenants, whether in person or digital.



**Ensure pet friendly capability is sustained for existing and future staff members.**

Upon accreditation, we will provide training to your staff on any changes taken to become pet friendly and discuss how this better supports them, tenants and their pets. We will provide you with a short video to be shown to any new customer facing staff as part of their induction.



**Consider pets in context of domestic abuse; signpost or refer tenants to fostering services [Freedom](#) or [Lifeline](#) where appropriate.**

You could also:

- Improve understanding of pet population within housing stock by collecting relevant data throughout application, allocation and housing processes.
- Where possible, create pet friendly environments and spaces.
- Consider appointing a Pet Friendly Champion.



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In order to reach the outcomes identified in the ToC, our work would now focus on supporting landlords to take the steps in the toolkit and become accredited by Dogs Trust as a pet friendly social landlord.

## Recommendation

It was not felt that any further sessions of the Pet Friendly Housing Forum were required during the lifetime of the pilot. However, we would encourage introduction of local forums during expansion of pet friendly work in the future, to strengthen the bond between the animal welfare and housing sectors and develop a collaborative approach to pet friendly housing.

## Information packs

One of the main practical steps towards accreditation would be providing tenants and staff with information promoting responsible pet ownership and high animal welfare standards. At the PFH Forum, information packs for tenants were agreed as the best way to do this, focusing on the six most common pet species across the UK<sup>5</sup> - dogs, cats, small animals (rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, and ferrets), fish, birds and reptiles.

The information packs were created in collaboration with Cats Protection, Scottish SPCA, PDSA and Blue Cross. The packs were split up into the five welfare needs with the aim of meeting the toolkit step 'to increase awareness of responsible pet ownership to meet the welfare needs of the pet'. They were signed off by DT's behaviour and veterinary teams as well as the equivalents at the other animal welfare organisations. As well as welfare information, the packs contain localised signposting support with details on how to access support from charities in the

**Fig 1.1 Example page from Dog Information Pack**

### 2. Diet - providing a suitable diet for your dog

#### Food



When buying dog food, look for packets stating the food is 'complete'. This type of food should provide all the essential nutrients to your dog. It's difficult to ensure that home-prepared diets are nutritionally balanced – so it is best to buy commercial dog food rather than making your own. If you decide to give your dog a home-prepared diet, always seek veterinary advice first.

Most foods are now available to suit the different life stages: puppy, adult and senior. These have been formulated carefully to match the needs of dogs at different ages, so make sure you buy the right one for your dog. Whenever changing your dog's diet, transition to the new food gradually to avoid stomach problems. Additionally, different diets may be recommended if your dog has certain medical conditions, and these can be discussed with your vet.

Check food packets for a guide to work out the right amount of food for your dog. But be aware that these are only guidelines, and you may need to adjust according to your dog's individual needs. Be careful not to overfeed your dog. Obesity increases your dog's risk of arthritis, diabetes and heart disease. If you think your dog may be overweight, your vet will be able to help you with a feeding and exercise plan. Find more information [here](#).

#### Water



Your dog should always have fresh and clean water available. Speak to your vet if you're concerned about your pooch's water intake.

### 3. Behaviour - ensuring your dog can show normal behaviours

If you're concerned about your dog's behaviour, the first thing to do is speak to your vet to rule out any medical problems that may be influencing their behaviour, and to seek a qualified behaviourist. Underlying pain, disease or medical disorder can significantly affect dog behaviour. You can

<sup>5</sup> UK Pet Food, UK Pet Population [2024]. <https://www.ukpetfood.org/industry-hub/data-statistics/uk-pet-population-.html>

area. They therefore spread awareness of and engagement with the work of teams at Dogs Trust (such as the Behaviour Support Line), as well as other animal welfare organisations, to improve pet welfare. We also created physical versions of

the packs so digitally excluded tenants could still benefit from the animal welfare information and signposting support.

### Fig 1.2 Signposting support from staff information pack

If you become aware of any specific issues with tenants' pets, you can signpost them to the following resources. Tenants should also have been provided with this information in their pet information pack.

#### Pet food banks and cost of living support

If a tenant is struggling with the cost of pet food a food bank might be able to help:

- **Scottish SCPA's Pet Aid** has information on pet foodbanks and cost of living advice. Find the closest foodbank [here](#)
- **Blue Cross** give pet food to foodbanks across Scotland, this [map](#) can be used to find the closest one.

#### Help with vet costs

- **PDSA** offer help with cost of veterinary care including preventative treatments such as neutering, vaccinations, flea and worm treatments. Tenants can see eligibility requirements on their [website](#) or call 0800 731 2502.
- **Dog Aid Scotland** can help with veterinary costs in some circumstances. Tenants can visit their [website](#) or call 0300 365 2500.
- **Cats Protection** runs a reduced neutering scheme allowing eligible owners to neuter and microchip their cats for £10 at selected vets. Tenants can find out if they are eligible [here](#) and to see if Cats Protection can provide neutering support in their area, they can enter their postcode [here](#). Tenants can also phone Cats Protection for neutering enquiries on 03000 12 12 12 (option 2).

#### Discounted microchipping services

Microchipping is compulsory for dogs and recommended for other pets. It is a permanent way to identify a pet and keep them safe. Microchip details must be kept up to date for all animals, we would recommend encouraging tenants to do this if they have recently moved.

- **PDSA** offer discounted microchipping, please see eligibility requirements on their [website](#) or call 0800 731 2502.

Staff information packs were also created to meet the toolkit step 'to ensure staff have up to date and relevant signposting information to support tenants and their pets'. The staff packs have a problem solving section for common issues RSL staff may come across (e.g. tenants having more pets than they have permission for) with guidance on best practice to follow. Like the tenant information packs, they have signposting information to know where and when to signpost tenants to. Each information pack is bespoke to the individual landlord and edited to align with organisational requirements and procedures. We have received positive feedback on the information packs, for example Drumchapel Housing Co-operative stated "they were very useful in terms of providing staff and tenants with further information which can also be referred to in the future".



### Recommendation

We would like these, alongside all relevant resources to be centrally available to accredited landlords, e.g. on a dedicated webpage.

## Accreditation of Manor Estates Housing Association

As our partner landlord, Manor Estates were the first housing provider to work through the toolkit towards accreditation. However, before taking the agreed steps, we wished to engage with tenants to raise awareness of the accreditation process and gain insight into their experiences with pets during their time as a Manor Estates tenant. Alongside our Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, we designed a short survey asking questions on tenants' engagement with Manor Estates on pet related issues, and any issues they had experienced with their own or other residents' pets.



We attended three in person events with Manor Estates to meet with tenants and promote the survey and wider pet friendly accreditation, however these events were not well attended. We therefore focused our efforts on promoting the survey online, in the newsletter and via posters displayed in stairwells of Manor Estates properties.

Concurrently, we ran a staff survey asking similar questions regarding experiences of pets, and confidence in handling any issues. In both surveys, we asked respondents if they would be interested in participating in informal interviews carried out online or via telephone, for us to gain greater insight into their experiences and gather qualitative evidence to compliment the quantitative survey evidence. Six tenants and six staff members took part in the interviews, carried out by colleagues in the Research team.

A [report](#) was then prepared, looking at the evidence to:

- a. Summarise the insights into a scoring system, marking how Manor Estates were operating in relation to the toolkit. This scoring system later formed the 'Assessment Table' used in rolling out the accreditation scheme across Scotland
- b. Present the insights in additional detail with suggestions for delivery

The report was shared with Manor Estates staff to provide an overview of tenant and staff experience, and evidence the current level of 'pet friendliness' as a landlord.

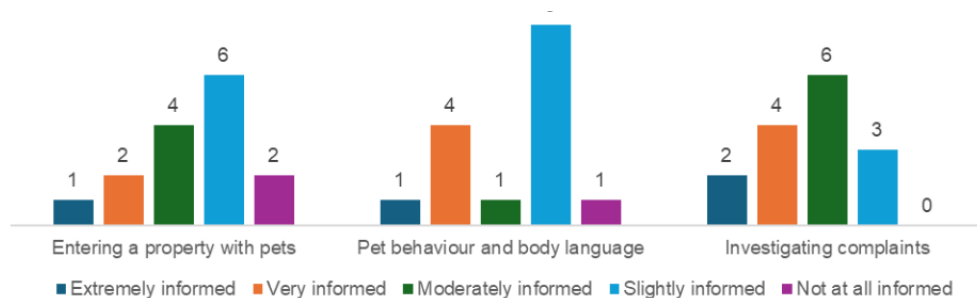
The key insights relating to the toolkit were:

- A general impression from surveys and interviews suggesting that Manor Estates did not *proactively* promote responsible pet ownership or animal welfare (principle 2)<sup>6</sup>
- Complaint resolution, often a letter from Manor Estates to the tenant responsible for the pet, weren't always seen as effective (step 2)
- Staff and tenants had mixed feelings about dealing with pet related issues and being informed about how to stay safe around dogs (step 3). Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below highlight this.
- It was not evident from surveys or interviews how Manor Estates have any resources that relate to responsible pet ownership, and if they do, how they were used (step 6)
- Data was not collected by Manor Estates in relation to pets, so housing staff did not feel well informed about pets in homes (step 8)

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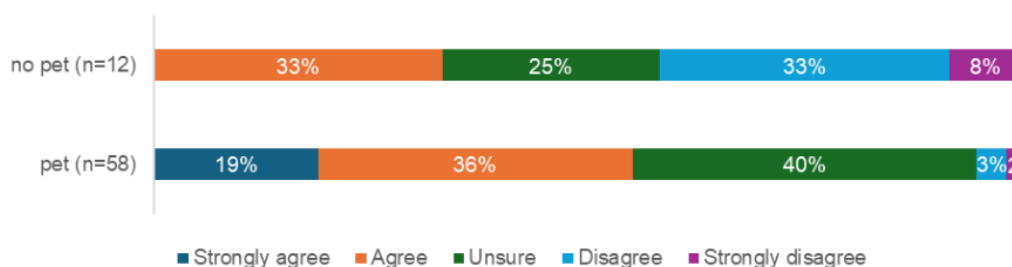
<sup>6</sup> Please see Assessment Table for details of the numbers corresponding to each principle and step

**Fig 2.1 Staff opinion of how informed they felt about various issues (staff survey, n=15)**



Staff were mainly *slightly* or *moderately informed* on entering property, and pet behaviour and body language. This could be dependent on personal experience of pets, and suggests staff would benefit from training on these topics.

**Fig 2.2 Tenant opinions (pet owners and non-pet owners) of how well-equipped staff were to deal with pet related issues (tenant survey, n=70)**



Tenants expressed some uncertainty on whether Manor Estates staff were well equipped to deal with pet related issues. Through the partnership, we hoped there would be a decrease in the score for *unsure* and *disagree*.

Gaining these insights allowed us to deliver interventions that would directly address any issues and move Manor Estates towards accreditation as a pet friendly landlord. Taken one by one, these interventions were:

- Creation and distribution of pet information packs for tenants and staff, promoting responsible pet ownership and highlighting support available locally (see section above for more details)
- Updating the pet policy to provide clarity on the complaints procedure relating to pets
- Provision of bespoke Dog Behaviour training provided to staff members by Dog Trust’s Canine Behaviour Team
- Introducing collection of basic pet data, and storage on housing management system

Throughout this process, we created a [template pet policy](#) that met Manor Estates' requirements and could be adapted for use by other social landlords. The policy promotes responsible pet ownership and high animal welfare standards by setting clear expectations and guidelines for pet owners. It was also important for us to ensure that housing providers adopted a collaborative approach should any pet related issues arise. Such an approach was built into the policy, by providing clear steps for housing staff to follow should issues occur and a focus on signposting to relevant support rather than punitive action.

The new policy was signed off by Manor Estates, bespoke training provided online and in person, pet information packs distributed and processes for collecting pet data agreed. With all these steps taken, **in February 2025 Manor Estates Housing Association was accredited as the UK's first pet friendly landlord as recognised by Dogs Trust!**

**Fig 3.1 Dogs Trust and Manor Estates staff**



### **Phase 3 - Expansion of the pilot**

After accrediting Manor Estates, the next stage was to use the toolkit to work with and accredit other RSLs as pet friendly. We reached out to the previously shortlisted RSLs and presented at sectoral webinars to promote the accreditation scheme. Manor Estates also used their housing contacts to help spread the word. Additionally, we mapped out other potential housing providers to contact directly, looking at factors such as size, location and pet friendliness to determine where we could have the most impact.

We developed the accreditation process to include the following steps:

- An initial meeting with housing management
- Signing of an Accreditation Agreement to set out expectations of both parties
- Provision of evidence from the RSL regarding current attitudes and processes in relation to pets
- Tenant and staff surveys to supplement the evidence provided by housing management
- Assessment of RSL performance against Toolkit Assessment Table (see below)
- Delivery of interventions to become pet friendly
- Reassessment of RSL performance against Toolkit Assessment Table
- Accreditation

The [Toolkit Assessment Table](#) was developed to score each landlord at the beginning and end of the accreditation process. As shown in the table, each principle and step of the toolkit was given a score from 0-4 (0-no evidence and not met, and 4-well evidenced and exceeds expectations). The PFH Team reviewed



the evidence and survey results to give each housing provider an initial score. Some steps were mandatory and required to be achieved prior to accreditation and others were optional.

These measures gave us an overall view and greater understanding of interventions needed to become pet friendly accredited. Interventions depended on how pet friendly an organisation already was, but could include:

- Introducing or updating pet policy, using our template policy if desired
- Provision and distribution of digital and physical staff and tenant information packs bespoke to each landlord
- In-person or online training from Canine Behaviour Team or provision of Behaviour Basics video
- Information regarding Freedom, including presentation from team and inclusion of Freedom's service on RSL's website or domestic abuse policy
- Provision of induction video for new starters
- Anti dog fouling posters and provision poo bags at cost price

Once the suggested interventions had been undertaken, we reassessed using the assessment table. Once a landlord scored 3 or above in all mandatory steps, we would officially accredit as pet friendly. Accreditation involved provision of a certificate, website sticker and a comms pack.

PR is an important piece of accreditation to recognise the great work landlords achieve by welcoming pets, and to publicise the pilot externally to encourage more landlords onboard. The comms pack was developed by DT's Strategic Communications and PR teams to share with accredited landlords and includes a template press release as well as resources for other comms channels such as social media and newsletters. Kingdom Housing Association had success with the pack [here](#) and Grampian Housing Association [here](#).

By the end of Phase 3, we had accredited an additional 7 RSLs:

- Angus Housing Association
- Ardenglen Housing Association
- Ayrshire Housing
- Bield Housing and Care
- Drumchapel Housing Co-operative
- Grampian Housing Association
- Kingdom Housing Association
- Plus SCS Homes, a charity who operate private tenancies

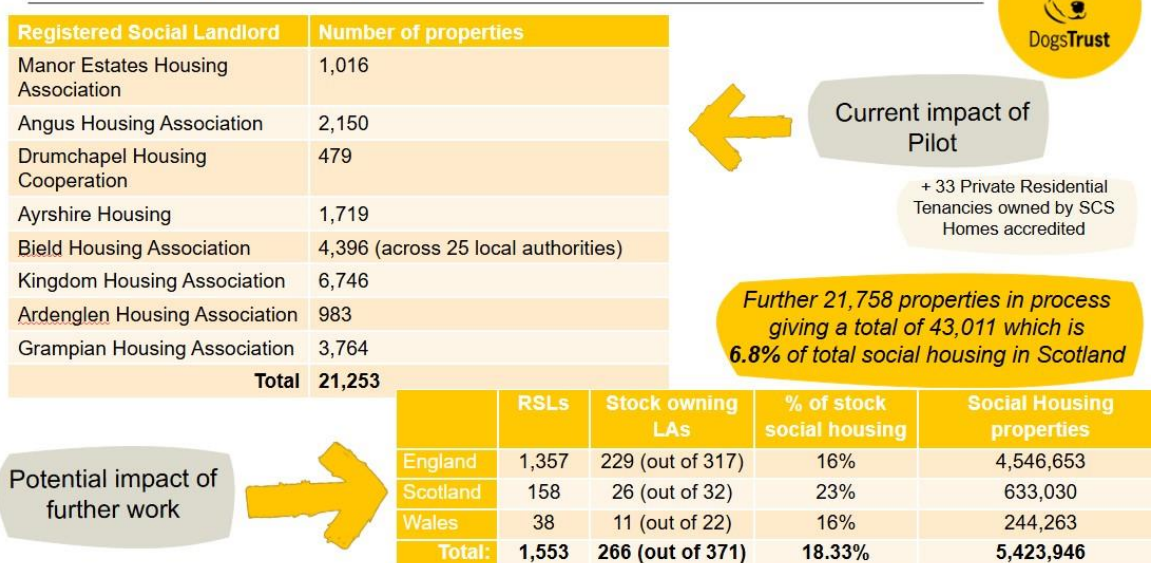
They represent a mix of housing providers, with community based landlords such as Ardenglen and those covering multiple local authorities such as Kingdom. They also had different approaches to pet ownership, with some requiring introduction of a pet policy from scratch and other minor changes. Of particular note is Bield Housing and Care, which predominantly provides housing to older people in a supported housing setting. They welcome pets throughout their developments, and allowed us to feel confident that accreditation could be achieved outside of mainstream housing settings.

Although the funded pilot ended in January 2026, we are continuing our work and are currently engaging with an additional 6 RSLs to become accredited early this year:

- Cernach Housing Association
- Hillcrest Homes
- Kingsridge Cleddans Housing Association
- Link Housing Group
- Lochaber Housing Association
- Scottish Veterans Residences

Once complete, these 14 accredited landlords will have just over 43,000 pet friendly properties among them, covering 6.8% of Scotland’s total social housing stock. We have included the graphic below demonstrating current and potential future impact. There is also scope to extend the work into Northern Ireland, however our Public Affairs team are currently engaging with the housing sector in a slightly different capacity, and thus those housing providers have been omitted from the graphic.

### Pet Friendly Housing Impact



### Further opportunities to influence pet friendly housing

#### Work in other housing sectors

An opportunity to test the toolkit out in a different housing sector presented itself with our warm contact Simon Community Scotland. Their temporary accommodation had already been endorsed by our Together Through Homelessness (TTH) team, but they also have 33 private tenancies (and expanding) in Edinburgh under their initiative SCS Homes. These homes were already accepting pets, so we were able to move through the toolkit quickly and the main



intervention was updating their pet policy to include a section for permanent tenancies. Through this work we found that, with minor tweaks, the toolkit can also be applied to the private rented sector.

Additionally, we worked alongside our colleague in TTH to accredit a local authority in England. TTH had been working with Mansfield District Council to endorse their temporary and emergency accommodation as dog friendly. The Council were positive and proactive to work with and interested in ensuring their permanent housing was also set up to welcome pet owners.

Working with an English based housing provider presented us with the opportunity to trial a hands-off approach to accreditation; providing a housing provider with the resources needed to become pet friendly, without support from us to implement them. We provided access to our template pet policy, tenant survey questions and accreditation steps, which Mansfield DC used to develop their own resources. They are currently consulting with tenants to garner feedback on their new pet policy. We have found that an arm's length approach can work, however requires a great deal of motivation from the housing provider.

### **Recommendation**

Given that we have found continued engagement to be a barrier to accreditation even with our support, an arm's length approach is unlikely to move us towards the structural changes we wish to see in increasing the supply of pet friendly housing. This assumption should however be tested with a range of landlords.

### **Political engagement**

We also worked alongside our Public Affairs team to feed into the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025. Dogs Trust responded to the consultation on the Bill and provided detailed feedback on the pros and cons of the pet provisions. The Pet Friendly Housing team highlighted that the proposed Bill would provide tenants with greater rights to request a pet once in a tenancy but would not increase the supply of pet friendly housing. Our Head of Outreach gave evidence in person to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Our feedback was well received and led to the Committee recommending that the Scottish Government introduce the automatic right to keep a pet within a tenancy. Ultimately, this recommendation was not incorporated into the final version of the Bill, however the timeframe for private landlords to respond to pet requests was reduced from 42 to 30 days following a supporter action run by the Public Affairs team. The final version of the Act gives tenants in the private and social housing sectors the right to pet ownership subject to their landlord's approval, which must not be withheld unreasonably. We are now working to influence the Scottish Government's secondary legislation which will provide guidance to landlords on this matter.

Similarly, we have engaged with Westminster regarding the Renters' Rights Act. Private tenants across England now have the right to request a pet, however the Bill does not extend to social tenants. We submitted a proposal to the UK Government detailing what we believed would be reasonable grounds to refuse



such a request, and guidance on this matter has now been published. The guidance reflects our recommendations and can be found [here](#).

Throughout the duration of the Pilot, a comprehensive programme of political engagement was undertaken to ensure that key decision-makers were fully informed of the initiative's purpose, progress, and wider policy relevance. At the outset, the Public Affairs team issued a detailed briefing to the Scottish Government and all Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), outlining the background to the pilot and the anticipated benefits for tenants and RSLs. The Minister for Housing formally acknowledged and welcomed the pilot in response to this correspondence.

As each accreditation was achieved, further communications were issued to local MPs and MSPs to highlight ongoing progress and to reinforce the positive impact of pet friendly housing. Regular updates were provided to political stakeholders throughout the lifetime of the pilot, ensuring continued visibility and understanding of its outcomes.

Insights from the pilot were also incorporated into wider policy engagement, particularly during discussions surrounding the Housing (Scotland) Act. When advocating for the end of blanket "no pet" policies, evidence from the pilot was used to demonstrate the practical benefits of more inclusive approaches to pet ownership in rented accommodation. In addition, briefings were issued to the Scottish Cabinet to ensure that all senior decision-makers were kept informed of developments and emerging findings.

This sustained and targeted engagement ensured that the pilot contributed meaningfully to the national policy conversation on pet friendly housing and supported legislative change in this area.

Overall, funding raised by Postcode Lottery players has allowed us to take a flexible approach to improving access to housing for pet owners, predominantly in Scotland but also across the UK. We hope that our tools and interventions have laid the foundations for short term impact and longer term change.

# PROJECT IMPACT

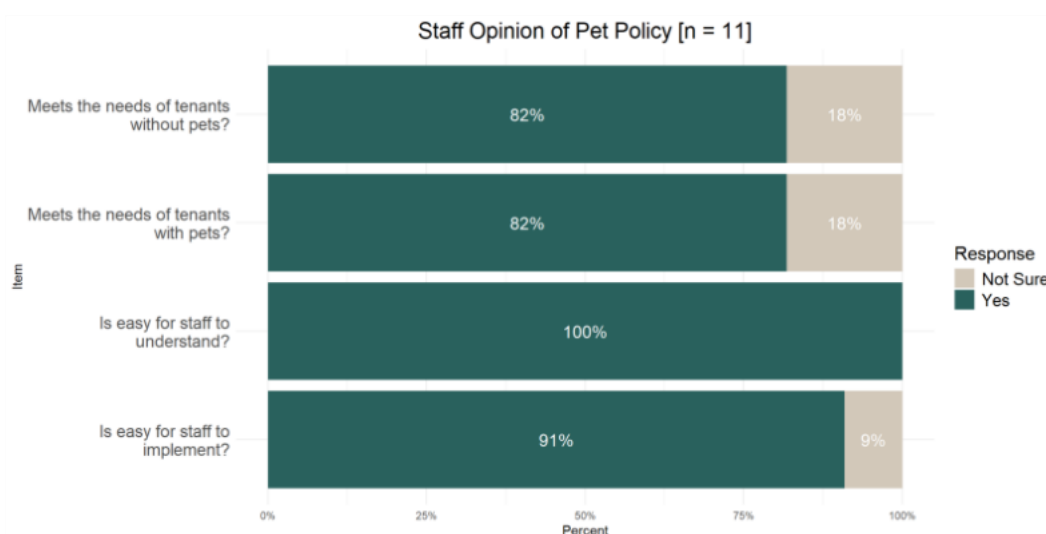
## Manor Estates Evaluation

Our Research team produced a [report](#) evaluating Phase 2 of the pilot. The report looked at embedment of the principles, toolkit effectiveness and whether Manor Estates had become meaningfully pet friendly from the perspectives of tenants and staff. A total of 18 tenants and 11 staff members were surveyed and 1 tenant and 4 staff interviews were carried out. The top findings included the following stats:

- 91% staff and 89% tenants believe pets are important family members
- 100% staff and 72% tenants agree Manor Estates are supportive of tenants keeping pets in their homes
- 73% staff agreed Manor Estates has a clear process for dealing with pet-related complaints
- 91% staff know where to find the pet policy
- 100% of staff either agree or strongly agree Manor Estates has a good understanding of pets in homes
- 91% staff believe Manor Estates has become more pet friendly with 82% strongly agreeing the updated pet policy contributing to this
- 28% tenants reported Manor Estates has become more pet friendly over the past 12 months

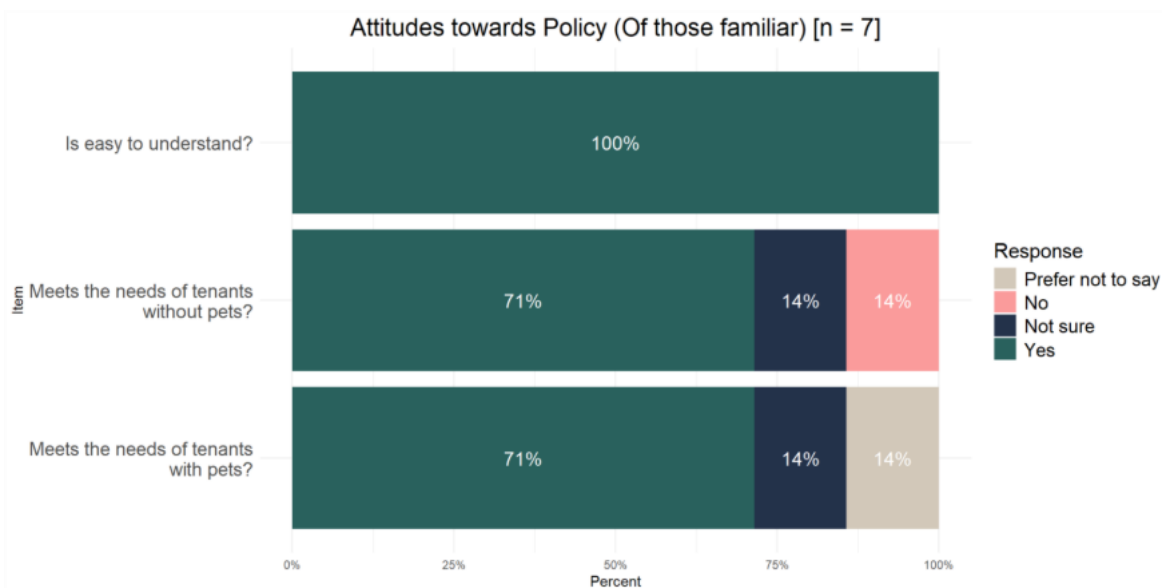
We took a further look at the opinions of the pet policy, given its reported importance in achieving pet friendly status.

**Fig 4.1 Staff opinion of pet policy (survey)**



All staff members were at least slightly familiar with the pet policy and 100% felt it is easy for staff to understand. Most staff members surveyed (91%) felt that the policy is easy for staff to implement, with just one person reporting that they were unsure about this. The majority of staff members felt that the pet policy meets the needs of tenants either with or without pets (82%, respectively). The remaining 18% were unsure about whether these needs are met by the policy.

**Fig 4.2 Tenant opinion of pet policy (survey)**



Awareness of the updated pet policy was lower among tenants. Only 42% reported being aware that this policy had been updated. Pet owners were more familiar with the policy than non-owners, which is to be expected. Of tenants who were at least slightly familiar with the policy (n = 7), 100% reported that it is easy to understand (Figure 4.2). Most also felt that the policy meets the needs of both tenants with pets and those without pets (71%, respectively). However, a minority (14%) did not feel that the policy meets the needs of non-pet owning tenants. Findings also indicated specific pet-related issues that are more commonly experienced by tenants (fouling, animals that don't seem to be under control, and excessive noise), which may be more challenging to address through the policy alone and might highlight areas of frustration for tenants.

Overall, as well as showing marked improvement in specific areas (e.g. the concerns regarding lack of clarity on complaints and understanding of pets in homes identified), early indicators suggested the partnership has had a strong impact relating to embedding the principles of pet friendly housing. Additionally, there was evidence too of the translation of this impact into policies, procedures and practices.

Tenants were around a third as likely as staff to state that Manor Estates had become more pet friendly. This may be explained by a) the small sample size and b) the fact that perceived level of 'pet friendliness' may not change on an individual basis, even if the policies and practices change at an organisational level.

Despite low levels of engagement, the results helped us establish a proof of concept and present encouraging signs the pilot is helping to lay the foundations for a broader cultural shift. Accreditation supports a movement away from a compliance-driven approach and toward one rooted in education, empowerment, and support. This suggests that the toolkit is, for many providers, likely to be a positive step as part of a longer-term journey toward inclusive and pet friendly housing. The following quote from a tenant survey respondent sums up the positive work that Manor Estates have carried out in achieving the pet friendly accreditation.

**Manor Estates deserve this accreditation because they really listen to their tenants and genuinely want what's best for us, our pets, and our communities. I would never hesitate to speak to their staff about a pet problem in our community. I know I'd be heard and they would advise me fairly.**

### Short term impact

During the pilot, a total of 21,253 properties have been accredited across the eight social landlords. A further 21,758 properties are in the process of becoming accredited giving a total of 43,011 which is approx. 6.79% of the total social housing stock in Scotland, in 27 of the 32 local authorities. Additionally, 33 private tenancies have been accredited and 6,303 social housing properties in England are in the process of becoming accredited. Through surveys carried out during the accreditation process, we have heard from a total of 1,413 tenants and 260 housing staff. Their insights have helped us deliver interventions suitable for each housing provider and ensure that pets and owners are better supported within social housing.

All landlords have introduced, updated or committed to updating their pet policies and procedures. Tenant information packs were distributed to all tenants meaning thousands of people now have access to up to date and localised animal welfare information to encourage responsible ownership. Staff information packs were also provided, to ensure staff know when and where to signpost tenants when issues arise. Other immediate impacts include website updates and accreditation information in newsletters, meaning landlords are now outwardly pet friendly and tenants know their landlord welcomes and supports them with their pets. Complaint procedures were also tightened up; an example is tenants having increased time to rehome their pets responsibly in the event of permission being withdrawn, and only after exhausting all other options.

Unfortunately pets can be a huge barrier for someone leaving an abusive relationship, so having domestic abuse information and signposting inbuilt into the pilot was vital, in order to raise awareness of Freedom (and Lifeline- Cats Protection's equivalent service) and the support that can be offered. Freedom colleagues presented to staff across 10 RSLs giving an overview of the service and how staff can signpost owners to support. We also encouraged landlords to

consider the links between domestic abuse and animal abuse, and signpost to our services via their domestic abuse policy, website<sup>7</sup> or both.

Our Canine Behaviour Team delivered in-person or online training sessions to 125 staff members across 7 RSLs. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive; all attendees reported that there had been 'some' or 'significant improvement' in their ability to interpret dog body language, and in identifying animal welfare concerns. When asked how their confidence in safely interacting with dogs had changed [on a scale of 1 (much less confident) to 5 (much more confident)], attendees reported an average of 4.2 post-session. 95% of those who completed the feedback form advised they would recommend it to other housing providers. An attendee from Ayrshire Housing provided the following feedback:

**I am pretty confident around dogs, however, this training highlighted that a dog may be anxious and looking for space instead of being happy to see you. I will no longer put my hand to their mouth or head when first meeting them which I usually do. I have more knowledge about where help is available for our tenants and now know where to direct them if they need a vet or advice on training. I know what to look for if I have concerns about a dog and I know what legislation to look for.**

Staff who could not attend the training were provided with a 30 minute Behaviour Basics video custom made by the Canine Behaviour Team for accredited RSLs. Landlords have either included the Behaviour Basics video in their induction process or as an e-learning module enabling access for current and future staff, so they know how to interact safely with dogs.

Our short term impact is detailed in this graphic on page 19, and we are incredibly proud to announce that 6.8% of Scotland's social housing stock has been recognised as pet friendly.

## **Long term impact**

To assess the potential long term impact, we must look at the original aims and objectives of the pilot and whether we have laid the foundations for these to be achieved beyond its lifetime.

From the funding proposal:

AIMS:

- Create a [pet friendly housing] framework to be used by housing providers, as well as scaled up for large national providers
  - *Yes. Our toolkit provides a framework for pet friendly housing to be established and accredited. We have tested with this housing providers of different sizes and locations and found it to be effective.*

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<sup>7</sup> We ensured landlords only included such information on webpages dedicated to domestic abuse, which have safety features embedded.



- Seek to secure a local council willing to make their entire council pet friendly
  - *Yes. We are working with Mansfield District Council to endorse their temporary accommodation and accredit their permanent accommodation as pet friendly. This provides us with a blueprint for working with other providers in this way in the future. We are mapping out housing providers with temporary and permanent housing stock, and barriers to pet ownership, across the UK to determine where we can expand this work.*
- Provide a case study, to be used as a lobbying tool to demonstrate the positive impact that pet friendly accommodation brings
  - *No. We have not sourced a case study, namely because it has not been required for lobbying with the Housing (Scotland) and Renters' Rights Bills passing through the Scottish and UK Parliaments. If this is required in future, we will need to work with landlords with major barriers to pet ownership to demonstrate maximum impact.*
- Collaborate with Postcode Lottery's policy team and other influential groups in the space to raise the profile of the [pet friendly housing] issue on a UK-wide scale
  - *Partially. We have had success with PR surrounding our accredited landlords, and seek to expand this by appearing on Scottish Housing News' podcast. The accreditation of Mansfield DC will also provide UK wide opportunities to promote our work and the benefits of pet friendly housing.*

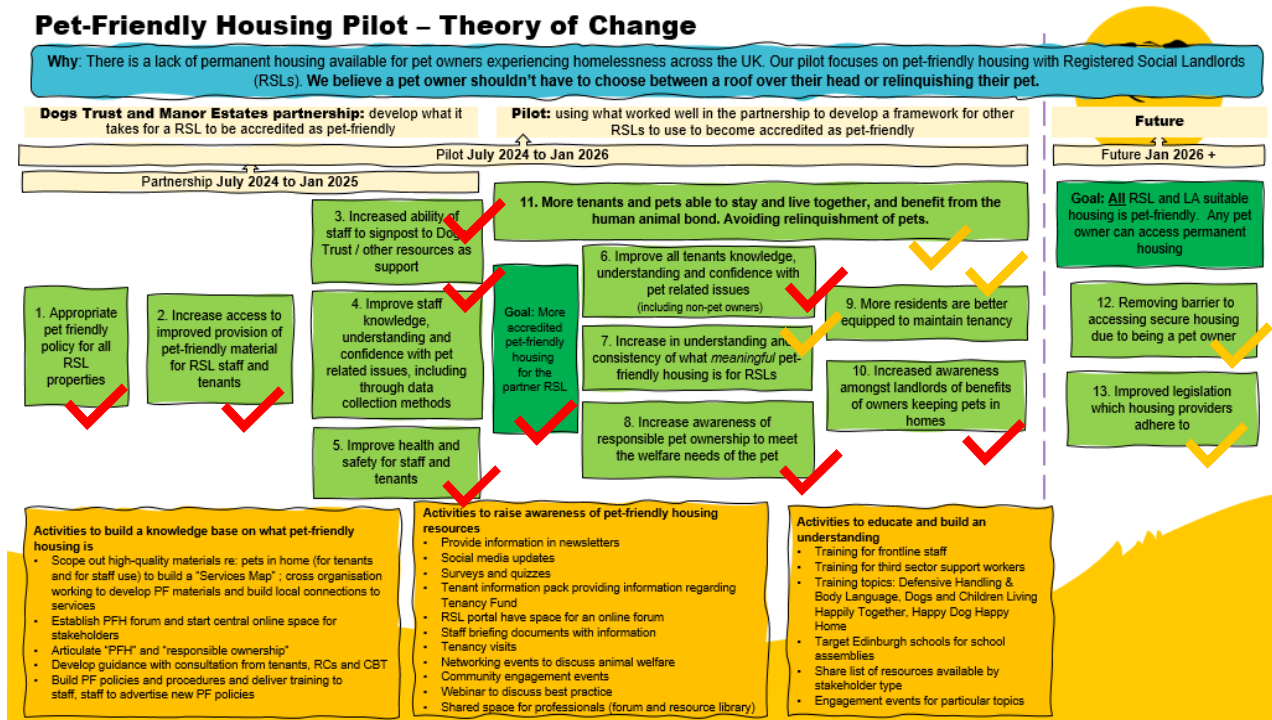
#### OUTCOMES:

- Ensure that pet owners experiencing housing issues and their animals remain together and access permanent housing
  - *Yes. We have created a framework and tools that allow landlords to become pet friendly. We have proved that the tools work, and now need to use them in more challenging environments to ensure supply of pet friendly housing is increased; for example social landlords with bans on specific property types or developments.*
- Ensure that time spent in temporary accommodation is short and the barrier to moving to more permanent provision isn't household pets
  - *Unknown. The pilot was not specifically aimed at those in temporary accommodation, however we can assume that greater access to pet friendly accommodation benefits all those awaiting social housing with their pets. We have included questions on move on accommodation to the annual survey sent to homeless services endorsed by Together Through Homelessness, so are beginning to collect data to demonstrate impact.*
  - *As a result of the pilot, Pet Friendly Housing and Together Through Homelessness are now working more collaboratively, and aim to engage with social housing providers with both temporary and permanent housing stock. This will ensure the needs of pet*

owners moving through the homelessness system can be better met.

- Enable suppliers of social and private housing to access support for their tenants and their pets to ensure tenancies are as successful as possible
  - *Yes. We have provided Information Packs for both tenants and staff, which have been well received and demonstrated to be useful. We will continue to monitor their use should our work continue.*
- Increase awareness among landlords of the benefits of allowing tenants to keep a dog or cat to ensure this is an attractive proposition
  - *Yes. We have encouraged landlords to state the benefits of pet ownership on their websites and/or pet policies, and have presented at multiple webinars and conferences detailing the human-animal bond.*

Now to turn to the outcomes identified in the ToC. Outcomes fully achieved are marked with red ticks and those partially achieved with yellow ticks. We shall address these in turn below:





**Outcome 7:** We aimed to achieve this outcome through providing a definition of pet friendly housing for accredited landlords to publish on their websites. However we have found that this is not a meaningful way of increasing understanding and consistency. Instead, this can be achieved through robust conversations with landlords, and ensuring the benefits of pet friendly housing are disseminated to tenants at point of accreditation.

**Outcome 9:** This outcome is too broad to meaningfully measure. Additionally, reported evictions or risk of eviction due to pet related issues is incredibly low throughout the social sector (as demonstrated in responses to our staff surveys). In future, we suggest either removing this outcome, or making it more tightly bound and measuring specific housing outcomes of pet owners. [*We believe it would be more meaningful to capture the experience of people accessing rented accommodation with a pet*].

**Outcome 10:** We have achieved this with landlords we have worked with or had contact with. For future work, consider how to reach wider audience, e.g. through targeted comms work.

**Outcome 11:** We have created a toolkit and provided resources to allow landlords to become pet friendly and to promote the human animal bond. Avoiding pet relinquishments is challenging to measure, and achieving this outcome requires greater collection of relinquishment data, as well as ensuring that landlords with the biggest barriers are pet friendly. We are beginning to explore how we can work with our Rehoming Centres to better capture this data.

**Outcome 12:** As above, we have made headway with this goal but in order to be highly impactful we need to encourage landlords with greater barriers to pet ownership to become pet friendly.

**Outcome 13:** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 and Renters' Rights Act 2025 have now passed. Both statutes will undoubtedly make it easier for tenants to request to keep a pet. However, the legislation does not increase the supply of pet friendly housing and notably in England, the Act does not apply in the social housing sector.

Overall, we have achieved our short term aims and are moving towards achieving our long term strategic aims of increased availability of pet friendly housing. However, in order to fully realise these aims we must identify exactly where and how we can have the greatest impact in removing barriers to accessing rented housing as a pet owner. Please see below for reflections and recommendations.

## **RSL feedback**

Six RSL Lead interviews were conducted during phase 3 to provide insight into the immediate impact they feel accreditation has had on their tenants, staff and organisations. Immediate benefits included having a Dogs Trust approved pet policy that provides clarity for staff, staff either having the knowledge through training or knowing where to find the information to assist tenants and increased confidence staff are giving up to date guidance. A case study from Kingdom HA described an immediate benefit of becoming accredited:



**One of our Neighbourhood Officers already has a success story. When dealing with a dog barking complaint, he encouraged the customer with the barking dog to contact the Dogs Trust for advice. The customer did, and after following the advice, the barking has stopped, and we have not received any further complaints from neighbours.**

RSL Leads were also asked about potential long term benefits of becoming accredited. Benefits mentioned were increased staff confidence and a consistent approach across organisations. Linlay Anderson, Director of Housing Services from Angus HA stated- *“It is good to be ahead of the game for the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Accreditation gives structure and makes tenants realise Angus HA are taking it seriously in terms of the bill.”*

All six interviewees would recommend the accreditation process to other landlords. Reasons included the support offered, a well-structured and straightforward process and collaborative working opportunities. Positives for staff encompassed increased staff confidence and staff being able to access high quality information including signposting. Having a pet focus outside of policy renewal allowed housing providers to reflect on current practices and the timing of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 was beneficial. Accreditation helped to align with meeting the needs of tenants as well as taking a united, proactive and positive approach towards pet ownership and is why landlords would highly recommend the process.



# LEARNINGS

## Reflections

Delivering a pilot project has allowed us to develop and test new approaches to improving and increasing the supply of pet friendly housing. Through this, we have gained insight into our own processes, the social housing sector and potential barriers to implementing pet friendly housing.

In delivering the work, we have discovered that certain steps in the toolkit are not required and can be removed. Similarly, we have discovered which parts of the toolkit are essential – namely ensuring that an inclusive pet policy is in place. We are also in a good position to create a slightly modified version of the toolkit for use within the private rented sector.

However, the schedule of introducing or updating policies can be restrictive. Generally, social landlords update their policies every 3-5 years so introducing changes outside of this timeframe can be challenging. Throughout the pilot, we have found various workarounds:

- We have sought commitments from landlords that agreed changes regarding pet ownership will be introduced during the next update cycle
- Introduced documents to sit alongside policies, setting expectations of owners and promoting high animal welfare standards
- Smaller, community based landlords have more freedom to introduce updates to policies

Introducing new policies is the gold standard approach but may not be time efficient. In further streamlining the Pet Friendly Housing Toolkit for future delivery of this work, we must consider how to balance these priorities.

We have also discovered that promoting our work is essential. Only 2 RSLs have contacted us organically using our online form, and neither of those organisations progressed to accreditation. The vast majority have begun engaging with us following promotion of the pilot at online forums, webinars or word of mouth introductions. This demonstrates that provision of online resources is not sufficient to drive increased supply of pet friendly housing.

In Phase 3 of the pilot, we wanted to work with a range of social landlords to test the toolkit in different settings, specifically those based in urban and rural locations and large and small organisations. By doing this, we have found that the toolkit works well regardless of setting, however there are geographical limitations such as availability of animal welfare services in rural areas. We have also found that time is a limiting factor for most housing providers, especially for bigger organisations with multiple layers of sign off. The shortest time period for the whole accreditation process from initial contact to has been 5 months and a lot of our time was spent chasing follow up communications from landlords. We did



consider introducing a more structured approach to deadlines for each stage, but each accredited landlord advised this would be detrimental to the process. Social landlords have many competing priorities, many of them statutory obligations, so while setting concrete deadlines may not be the answer, we do need to consider how to ensure becoming pet friendly remains on the priority list.

Throughout the pilot we have had direct engagement with 30 landlords. 17 of these have progressed or will progress to accreditation. This means 13 (43%) have not. We therefore need to consider how to maintain engagement throughout the process to best utilise our resources. Introducing a charge for accreditation may assist with this, however the impact on overall engagement would need to be considered. Just over half of the accredited landlords interviewed told us they may consider paying for accreditation; however this could pose a barrier for some.

We have also found that pet ownership within staff teams drove engagement with our work – i.e. those that were already aware of the benefits of pet ownership were more likely to push their organisation to become accredited. All accredited landlords reported that there had been no internal resistance to taking part. This therefore raises the question of how best to engage landlords without this motivation moving forward. Behaviour change is required alongside legislative change, so we must design resources challenging misconceptions landlords may have around pet ownership and promote these widely through engagement or campaigning work, to encourage landlords to feel comfortable welcoming pet owners.

We are proud of the work we have delivered in the pilot, the number of accreditations achieved and the amount of properties covered. However, it is important to note that there are limitations regarding the impact of the work in its current format. All of the landlords that we worked with were already relatively pet friendly, in so far as they did not place any bans on pet ownership. Working through the toolkit to achieve accreditation has brought benefits as noted above, and has promoted responsible pet ownership through introduction of pet policies and circulation of the tenant information packs. We can assume that this will have a positive impact on animal welfare across the pets owned by tenants of accredited landlords. Accreditation has also improved staff members' confidence in dealing with pets and driven change in the approach to handling pet related issues, from punitive to collaborative. However, while making pet ownership a more positive experience within social housing, these outcomes do not remove barriers to accessing housing as a pet owner. In order to truly build a future where pet friendly housing is the norm, we need to push for those barriers to be eradicated and for pet owners to have equal access to rented accommodation.

## **Looking forward**

As the pilot comes to an end and the next stage of pet friendly housing begins, we have an exciting opportunity to expand the work into new and more challenging environments. The first step will be to figure out what the main goal is, and if it is to remove the barriers to accessing housing as a pet owner, how this can be truly achieved whilst ensuring the work is as strategic and impactful as possible. For



the work to align with Dogs Trust's organisational objective of supporting more owners whose dogs are at risk of relinquishment or unnecessary euthanasia, more data is needed to understand why pet owners are relinquishing dogs for housing related reasons. One way of doing this could be to use internal data from Rehoming Centres or our Behaviour Support Line to track if there are any patterns geographically. We could also get insight from TTH endorsed homelessness services or Freedom to determine the kind of permanent accommodation residents are accessing.

We will no longer be bound by the geographical pilot restrictions, meaning we can expand across other areas of the UK, and potentially other sectors such as the Private Rented Sector (PRS). With England having 1,586 social housing providers and 4.5 million social housing properties<sup>8</sup> alone, how the accreditation scheme is run effectively and impactfully with limited staff members is key to any forward planning. Continuation of the work allows opportunities such as working with TTH and using their warm contacts to target housing providers that have temporary and permanent accommodation. This collaborative working approach would help focus the goal of ensuring people can access housing with their pets during every stage of their housing journey.

There is also the question of how best to engage with landlords that have no interest in pets or becoming pet friendly. Accrediting large and influential RSLs may help promote and encourage other housing providers to become pet friendly, however time and bureaucracy could pose issues so would need to be factored in. From our work so far in Scotland, we have found the social housing sector to be welcoming of pets and a quote from Zhan McIntyre, Head of Policy and Customer Standards at Bield Housing and Care helps sum this up- *"The social sector is already relatively pet friendly, the private sector and temporary accommodation is less so."* Continuing accreditation only in a sector that is already accepting pets likely will not help overcome the barriers for pet owners accessing housing, or have an impact on housing related relinquishments. If impact and removing the barriers is our focus, one option to continue working in social housing would be to strategically target and work with housing providers that have active restrictions, like high-rise or communal entrance bans. Research will be needed to figure out exactly where these barriers are, and if they are more acutely found in the PRS, this is where the work should focus.

By accrediting SCS Homes during the pilot, we have seen the toolkit can be tweaked to be used in the PRS. Therefore, engaging with letting agencies or landlords that own multiple properties could prove successful. A big piece of the work will be education focused, to challenge landlords' views and misconceptions regarding pets. Promoting the work using several methods of engagement will be needed to spread the word. With the Renters' Rights Act 2025 becoming law in May 2026, this gives us a fantastic opportunity to work with landlords whilst motivation is higher.

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<sup>8</sup> Hall, A. Registered providers social housing in England – stock and rents [2025]. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6900e16fab5cc9c8937994ed/2025\_RP\_Briefing\_Note\_FINAL\_V1.1.pdf



Another important step will be feeding into the transformation project for Pet Friendly Housing. This is where we will be looking at all DT's Pet Friendly Housing work in the context of the new strategy and working out what the future of this work looks like. Having engaged with landlords for three years, learnings from the pilot will be pivotal in shaping this work. We would want the work to continue to cover all domestic pet species, as it gives us a fantastic opportunity for collaboration with other animal welfare organisations, and ensures every type of pet owner has equal access to housing.

Throughout the transformation process, we must design teams and services that facilitate meaningful engagement across the housing sector. Relying on landlords' goodwill or interest in relation to pet ownership is unlikely to have a transformative effect nationwide. In order to truly be there for pets and their owners when they need us, we must consider how and where to best use our resources to shape the future of pet friendly housing.

#### Key recommendations:



#### **Social sector:**

- Active engagement in the housing sector by Dogs Trust is required, as pets are not a priority issue for landlords. RSLs have many statutory obligations which necessarily take precedence.
- Consider partnering with membership organisations in the sector to promote accreditation
- We must focus on the biggest barriers to pet ownership within the social housing sector, e.g. bans on specific property types.



#### **Private rented sector:**

- Consider focusing on PRS as the biggest barriers to accessing housing with a pet exist here.
  - The Renters' Rights Act 2025 provides us with a timely opportunity to engage with private landlords as their obligations change.
  - Changing perception of pet ownership amongst landlords is key, as demand for housing outstrips supply. Even with pet friendly policies in place, landlords can still choose to offer properties to those without pets.



#### **General:**

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 and Renters' Rights Act 2025 provide a strong basis for increasing and improving the supply of pet friendly housing. We urge the housing sector to take this opportunity to improve the experience of pet owning renters and work with us to welcome them into rented homes.
- We require a greater understanding of the reasons why owners relinquish their dogs to us because of housing issues.
  - *Opportunity to work with Research / Rehoming Centres / external organisations*
- It would be useful to have an online portal for [accredited] RSLs to access resources and training. Throughout the pilot, we have been sharing resources individually – which works but is time consuming and does not



provide a means for tracking their usage. An online portal was highlighted as a useful resource by both housing and animal welfare organisations during project meetings and the forum.

- We must establish working relationships within the animal welfare sectors in England and Wales. Engagement with the sector in Scotland has enriched the work of the pilot and allowed us to ensure we are promoting high animal welfare standards across common domestic pet species. This work could be further enhanced by developing a collective voice in relation to housing issues experienced by pet owners.
- We must consider the role of behaviour change and/or campaigning work in influencing landlords, to fully engage those who are currently unmotivated to become pet friendly.
- We should consider (re)establishing Pet Friendly Housing Forums in each local area we work in. The forum promotes good working relationships, good practice and continued engagement.
- An arm's length approach is unlikely to move us towards the structural changes we wish to see in increasing the supply of pet friendly housing.

#### Potential barriers:

- Geographical limitations of team; impact of engagement work can be diluted when spread out across a large geographical area.
- Motivations and misconceptions of landlords; significant behaviour change is required in this area, particularly within the Private Rented Sector.
- Keeping pets as a priority issue for landlords in the face of competing demands, many of which are statutory obligations.

We are working in a particularly challenging landscape with the housing emergency, cost of living crisis, increased levels of animal cruelty as well as animal welfare organisations and other charities under strain, so it is more important than ever to ensure the work is focused and strategic. The potential impact of expanding the project is renters will face limited to no barriers accessing housing with their pets. This would result in more available adopters and fosterers for Dogs Trust along with more people being able to experience the joy and mental and physical health benefits of living with a pet. If all permanent accommodation is pet friendly the temporary accommodation bottle neck will reduce and there will be less pressure on these services. Decreasing the 1 in 7 (England and Wales) and 1 in 10 (Scotland) housing related relinquishment figures substantially and keeping pets with their loving owners through increased availability of pet friendly housing will help Dogs Trust meet its organisational strategic aims. The Pet Friendly Housing Team will keep pushing towards a future where there is a fairer housing system for every pet owner accessing rented accommodation.

### **Acknowledgements**

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We hope our work has laid the foundations for increased and sustained pet friendly rented accommodation across the UK, and leads us towards a future where nobody has to choose between their pet and a safe place to live.

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