

TITLE		Pets & Visiting Animals Policy	
Policy ref	R013P	Approval date	December 2023
Owner	Customer Operations Director	Planned review date	February 2029
Approved by	Theresa Wilson (Director of Customer Experience) and Lorna Smith (Head of Care & Housing Operations)		

1 Background	Abbeyfield acknowledges that animals can provide an important source of companionship and enjoyment for many people and that the wellbeing of residents and staff may be enhanced by the keeping of pets. Where possible, Abbeyfield will seek to accommodate a prospective or current resident's pet as part of our commitment that residents should be able to live their lives as closely as possible to the way they would choose to do so in their own home. However, additional factors need to be taken into account when assessing whether a house or care home can accommodate a prospective or current resident's pet, including health and safety and infection control risks, the needs and preferences of the other residents, and the welfare of the animal concerned.
2 Objectives	The aims of this policy are to ensure that: • a safe environment is provided for residents, visitors, and staff. • there is due regard for the welfare of any pet living in or visiting an Abbeyfield house or care home • all residents, visitors and staff understand their responsibilities regarding pets or visiting animals in the house/care home • clear guidance on pets and visiting animals is provided to safeguard residents, staff, and visitors, and to ensure the welfare of the animals concerned.
3 Scope	This policy applies to pets and visiting animals in Abbeyfield Living Society (ALS) housing services and care homes. It should be followed by all staff, including agency workers, and volunteers working in the house or care home, as well as central support staff who may visit a service. The term Manager in this policy refers to the House Manager or Registered Manager of a care home. This policy is intended to cover domestic animals that are kept for companionship, such as dogs, cats, hamsters, birds and fish.

	The following animals are excluded from consideration of being accommodated as a pet at Abbeyfield: • dogs listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (currently pitbull terrier, Japanese tosa, dogo Argentino, fila Brasileiro, and American XL bully) • wild or farm animals • endangered species • animals listed in the Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1975. Assistance dogs, such as Guide Dogs for blind or partially sighted residents or Hearing Dogs for deaf residents are not classed as 'pets' and therefore not subject to the considerations outlined within this policy. In housing services, where properties are let on a leasehold basis and the tenancy agreement differs from the information outlined in this policy in relation to pets, the tenancy agreement takes precedence.
4 Policy	4.1 Accommodating a resident's pet To safeguard the health and safety of everyone living, visiting, or working in an Abbeyfield house or care home, a resident will only be permitted to keep a pet subject to consideration of the following: • whether the resident will be personally able to take care of the pet; • whether the pet can be accommodated in the resident's own accommodation; • whether there are other pets in the house/care home at that time; • whether the presence of the pet in the house/care home is likely to impact on other residents; • how other residents are likely to react to the pet; • whether there are specific health and safety risks, including infection control, related to the animal, and; • whether the welfare needs of the animal in line with the Animal Welfare Act 2006, can be met. If the pet can be accommodated, the Manager will seek key information relating to the pet and ask the resident owner to sign an agreement to indicate their understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the pet. If a pet cannot be accommodated, the Manager will advise the current or prospective resident of the final decision and the reasons why, which must be fully recorded. A prospective resident will be supported to review alternative arrangements which might be made for the pet's welfare (if they choose to move into the house or care home).

	4.2 Responsibilities of resident owners A resident pet owner will be expected to: - accept full responsibility for the pet's exercise, welfare and cleanliness - meet all veterinary expenses - keep the pet generally in their own room/accommodation, unless other arrangements have been specifically agreed - take responsibility for the pet's behaviour if it has been agreed that the pet may enter communal areas - ensure that the pet does not enter any areas where food is likely to be prepared - ensure, as far as possible, that the pet does not distress other residents - accept responsibility for any damage or injury caused by the pet, including making appropriate insurance arrangements - hold full pet insurance unless an alternative agreement has been reached. - provide details of a nominated person to look after the pet in the event that they are temporarily or permanently unable to - provide the name and contact details of the pet's vet to the service to hold on file in the event of an emergency - where the pet is a dog, it must be kept on a lead at all times when exercising in the vicinity of the house or home. Abbeyfield reserves the right to withdraw permission for keeping the pet should any of the above conditions be breached.
	4.3 Pets belonging to the house/care home A similar assessment of residents' wishes, health and safety issues, and the welfare of the animal(s) must be undertaken and recorded where a Manager is considering whether to have a communal pet at a house or care home. Consideration must be given to the areas to which the animal will have access in the house/care home, its feeding and cleaning, and the location in which it can rest or sleep. Where a pet belongs to the house or care home, as opposed to an individual resident, Abbeyfield will: - inform prospective residents of the situation and of our policy, as some prospective residents may not wish to move into a house/care home with pets - ensure that named staff are allocated responsibility for the care of the pets - involve any resident who wishes to do so in the care of the pets - use contact with pets as a positive aid to the welfare of residents who enjoy such contacts - exclude pets from any areas of the home where their presence would constitute a health risk or from areas where it has been agreed should be pet-free (e.g. kitchen)

	• try, as far as possible, to ensure that pets do not distress residents who find them uncongenial • consult residents before rehoming an existing pet.
	4.4 Visiting Animals Abbeyfield recognises that some people enjoy contact with animals and that animal contact can have therapeutic value. Therefore, Abbeyfield will: • arrange for organised visits of animals to the house/care home or for visits by residents to places where they can have contact with animals, based on the residents' preferences • explore the therapeutic value of these contacts to maximise the benefits for individual residents • ensure that on such occasions that there are alternative facilities available for residents who do not wish to have contact with animals. Whenever anyone (including a staff member, volunteer, or resident's guest) wishes to bring a pet into the house/care home, e.g. on a visit, the procedure under Section 3.3 of the <u>Arrangements for Pets & Visiting Animals SOP (R013P 10.1)</u> must be followed. 4.5 Staff Pets While we understand the positive role animals can play, staff are not permitted to bring personal pets into our houses and homes unless they are recognised pet therapy animals or legally recognised service animals, and where their presence has been formally approved by the registered manager or Sheltered Housing Manager. All approved animals must be subject to appropriate risk assessment, infection control measures, and supervision, in line with organisational policies and where applicable, CQC expectations. This is necessary to ensure resident safety, prevent infection risks, and maintain a consistent standard of care.
5 Finance, Value for Money & Social Value	Abbeyfield recognises that pets and other animals are important to the lives of many residents, while it is also crucial to protect Abbeyfield by clarifying that we hold no responsibility or financial liability for resident-owned pets.

6 Linked policies	• Autonomy and Choice (R003P) • Infection Prevention and Control (YH010P) • Resident Involvement and Empowerment (R015P) • Visitors (Housing) (R022P) • Visitors (Care Homes) (C028P)
7 Relevant Legislation / Regulation	Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1976 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 Animal Welfare Act 2006 Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, particularly: Regulation 9: Person-centred care; Regulation 10: Dignity and respect.
8 Guidance	
9 Review	Every 3 years, subject to any regulatory or legislative updates.
10 Procedure(s) 10.1	Arrangements for Pets & Visiting Animals SOP (R013P 10.1)

Version	Purpose/change	Resident Panel Involvement	Author	Date
1.0	Previous policy written.	No	Unknown	April 2011
2.0	Policy reviewed by Heather Mohammed, and approved by Teresa Parker, DD West	No	H. Mohammed (Divisional Director)	December 2014
3.0	Policy reviewed and approved by Teresa Parker and Anna Humphries (Division Directors)	No	Doug Furlong (Head of Quality)	October 2017
4.0	Policy reviewed and written to clarify sections on pets owned by residents, pets belonging to the house or home and visiting animals, as well as a separation of policy from procedures.	No	J. Conway (Quality & Compliance Manager)	November 2020
5.0	Policy reviewed - reference to ALS added. SOP reviewed - clarification of areas to assess when making a decision on a pet added, as well as section on Health & Safety considerations. Three new assessments appended.	No	J. Conway (Quality & Compliance Manager)	November 2023
6.0	Added section 4.5 on staff pets	No	Julie Freear (Customer Operations Director)	February 2026