



RSPCA Briefing

Keeping pets in rented accommodation

Pets are still largely absent from the Renting Homes (Wales) Act. Since the beginning of 2022, the Welsh Government has published a series of regulations and model written statements relevant to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which comes into force on July 15. While landlords can use the new model written statements provided by the Welsh Government as the basis for creating new contracts, as of yet there isn't a statement which makes specific references to keeping pets in rented accommodation, much to the disappointment of RSPCA Cymru. With the increase in rent prices driven by high tenant demand and low numbers of rental properties available having affected Wales more than any other area of the UK over the last year according to Rightmove¹, RSPCA Cymru is concerned that without intervention from Welsh Government, pet owners will inevitably find themselves at a disadvantage when seeking appropriate accommodation in an increasingly competitive rental market.

With the annual increase in rent having risen by 20% in some areas in Wales², pet owners who find themselves having to seek cheaper rental accommodation against the backdrop of the rising costs of living could struggle to find affordable housing for themselves and their pets, which could potentially lead to an increase in animal abandonments and the number of pets needing to be rehomed, as well as homelessness figures if renters refuse to give up their pets. With pet owners in rented accommodation in a more vulnerable position than ever, RSPCA Cymru is strengthening its calls for the Welsh Government to issue model tenancy proposals to local authorities, housing associations and private landlords that make allowing pets a legal default, unless there is justifiable reason not to do so, as the UK Government have done in England³ under the incoming Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 to help benefit animal owners and their pets.

Pet owners who rent need more support in Wales. Estimates suggested that only 7% of private landlords advertise pet-friendly properties⁴, and this number could actually be even lower in Wales, given other UK nations have already introduced model tenancy agreements specifically discouraging blanket bans from pet ownership. As part of our long-running work with the private rented sector and housing associations across Wales to drive up standards and improve relationships between landlords and tenants, many of whom are responsible pet owners, the RSPCA has produced [our own model tenancy agreements](#), which we shared with Welsh Government as part of the consultation process on the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 last year.

Worryingly, accessing rented accommodation with companion animals poses many challenges to private or social housing tenants as landlords may be apprehensive about taking requests for pets in rented properties, through fear of an animal damaging the property, or causing a nuisance. However, if managed correctly, allowing the keeping of pets can yield wide-ranging social benefits, promote responsible animal ownership and facilitate happy, healthy tenants. This can also benefit the landlord by helping to maintain longer-term, successful letting arrangements,

While it has been suggested that there is the potential for allowing pets as a default in rented accommodation to be included as an additional term of the Renting Homes Act 2016, RSPCA Cymru is concerned that explanatory guidance relevant to this legislation previously stated that "additional terms are agreed between the landlord and contract holder"⁵ - which suggests that landlords could potentially still refuse pets for any reason should they wish to do so. Because of this, we're calling for the introduction of clear sections within the Welsh Government's model written statements on pet ownership and for landlords to be prevented from placing a blanket ban on pets within the rental sector. Such agreements should clearly and specifically lay out the conditions expected of the tenants, and

¹ South Wales Argus - [Pontypool named as having biggest rental asking price increase](#), 29 January 2022

² Ibid

³ UK Government - New standard tenancy agreement to help renters with well behaved pets, 28 January 2021

⁴ The Mirror - New rules mean landlords can no longer automatically ban tenants from having pets, 29 January 2021

⁵ Welsh Government, consultation document - Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 – Regulations relating to Model Written Statements of Occupation Contracts and Explanatory Information, issued 24 March 2021

provide the landlord with the ability to object to pet ownership, but only where good and justifiable reason exists - such as concerns for animal welfare, for example.

The development of a well-enforced Pets Policy by the rental industry, which could be supported and promoted by the Welsh Government, could ensure more tenants can keep pets responsibly, while helping to reduce anti-social behaviour associated with animals and creating more harmonious relationships between pet owners and non-pet owners. Positively, the Welsh Government does signpost to the [RSPCA's 'Homes for All'](#) document to landlords as part of their registration - but could go further by introducing mandatory training on the role of Pets Policies, and the importance of responsible pet ownership, as part of the training for landlords under the Housing (Wales) Act to ensure more widespread success with tenancy arrangements involving pets in the private rented sector. With pet owners who rent facing more challenges than ever, it is essential that Welsh Government does all it can to ensure that renters are not forced to choose between accessing affordable properties or keeping their beloved companion animals.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Can the Minister confirm how the Renting Homes (Wales) Act helps pet owners living in rental accommodation?**
- 2) What consideration has been given to the introduction of a Pets Policy in Wales to make it easier for tenants with pets to find rented accommodation in an increasingly competitive market?**
- 3) Will the Welsh Government consider introducing specific model tenancy agreements to prevent landlords from introducing blanket bans on pets in rented accommodation as part of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act?**