

Briefing document

Supporting pet-owning renters in Wales

Introduction

The RSPCA has long called for more support for current and prospective pet owners who rent in Wales to prevent tenants from having to choose between accessing rented accommodation and keeping companion animals. RSPCA Cymru strongly believes that allowing pets in private rented properties can yield wide-ranging social benefits, help promote responsible animal ownership and facilitate happy, healthy tenants. The positive physical and mental health benefits companion animals provide their owners with are well-known and widely established. Pets can combat loneliness by providing comfort and companionship to their owners - many of whom consider their pet/s to be a part of their respective families.

The specific challenges facing pet owning renters in Wales received much-needed attention during the last Senedd, with the previous Local Government and Housing Committee having included such a focus as part of a relevant inquiry. Within its subsequent [recommendations](#) that were published in October 2024, the committee stated that: *'The Welsh Government must urgently outline how it intends to extend tenants' rights to have a pet into contracts, including whether it will bring forward legislation to end this discrimination.'*

Still, renters who have or want pets are required to navigate significant obstacles, with pets owning renters in Wales now having less legal rights than those elsewhere in the UK.

Background

The number of households who have companion animals has increased in recent years - in 2015, the National Survey for Wales found that 47% of households owned a pet at the time. According to the latest [National Survey for Wales](#) which featured questions on pet ownership, 53% of households in Wales now have a pet. Data from the [last census](#) undertaken in 2021 estimated that 451,000 (33.5%) people in Wales rent their properties - an increase of almost 3% since 2011. While the number of people who have pets and rent their properties has increased in Wales in recent years, [previous estimates](#) suggest that only around 7% of rental properties are advertised as 'pet friendly'.

The formation of a new Welsh Government and Senedd coincides with a time where renters face significant challenges such as rising costs and demand outweighing supply in terms of the number of available private rental properties in some areas. Statistics published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) show that the average private rental price in Wales increased by 4.5% in the 12 months to July 2026 - the highest increase of any UK nation - with the average property now costing £843 a month. According to figures from [Rent Smart Wales](#), the number of rental properties in Wales is in a long-term decline, and has reduced by 2% in the five years up to May 2021, which makes it likely that there are less pet-friendly options than ever.

With the costs associated with - and the demand for - rental accommodation still rising, we are concerned that pet owners who find themselves having to seek accommodation against the backdrop of the ongoing cost of living crisis could struggle to find suitable housing. This could lead to further increases in animal

abandonments and the number of pets needing to be rehomed, as well as homelessness figures if renters refuse to give up their animals.

However, a change in the relevant legislation that looks towards making the keeping of companion animals in private rental accommodation a legal right could help ensure that pet owning renters are not subject to specific disadvantages. Such action could also create more homes for unowned companion animals, helping to alleviate pressure on charities and the rescue sector as a result.

The legislative picture

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 came into force in December 2022 but there is no reference to pet ownership within the legislation itself and little included in its associated guidance. While conditions relevant to pets can be included as an 'additional term' in rental contracts under this Act, this presents another hurdle for pet-owning renters. According to the aforementioned [explanatory guidance](#), an additional 'pets clause' would allow a contract-holder to ask for permission to keep a pet, which the landlord cannot unreasonably refuse. However, this guidance also states that additional terms are agreed between the landlord and contract holder - which suggests that landlords could potentially refuse pets should they wish to do so by refusing the inclusion of an 'additional term' in the relevant contract. Such a refusal could prevent a tenant from even requesting permission to keep a pet/s altogether.

The Consumer Rights Act 2015, which prohibits 'unfair terms' in rental contracts, is also referred to in [the guidance](#) for the Renting (Homes) Wales Act. Any 'additional terms' in contracts, such as pet clauses, are required to comply with this Act in terms of fairness. Nevertheless, with the inclusion of a pet clause still being classed as an 'additional term', there is no legal requirement for them to be included in a contract as standard or if a landlord refuses and therefore the Consumer Rights Act may not always apply to pet owning renters.

As it stands, renters in Wales are required to navigate additional obstacles in comparison to those in other UK nations such as England and Scotland. Both countries have passed legislation since the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act which gives tenants the legal right to request pets without having to secure an 'additional clause' in their tenancy agreements.

In addition, landlords in Wales can request an additional, uncapped deposit to cover themselves against any potential damage caused by pets at the end of the tenancy. Meanwhile, in England and Scotland landlords can only charge an entire deposit up to the value of five-six weeks rent or two months' rent respectively. With an additional deposit for a pet - as only currently legal in Wales - adding to the expense of the usual deposit and rent advances many agents and landlords require before a tenant moves in, this might not be a viable option for all pet owning renters. Landlords in Wales are also still legally able to advertise their properties as 'no pets' with such advertisements still commonplace.

What we are calling for

To help create a fairer balance between the rights of pet owning renters and landlords, we are calling on the new Welsh Government to amend the Renting Homes (Wales) Act in order to make the keeping of pets the legal default in tenancy agreements. Such action would give tenants an automatic right to keep pets, unless there is a genuine and definable justification as to why they cannot. We understand that not all rental properties will be suitable for all pets, therefore we agree that this provision should be removable if the landlord/s in question can demonstrate justifiable reason as to why they need to refuse. Such reasons could include concerns for animal welfare where a property would not suit an animal/s needs because of its size or lack of outdoor access, for example. We also agree that landlords should be made aware of any pets that are being kept in their properties and that any damage caused by pets should be reimbursed to them. Positively, commitments to address the issues facing pet owning renters were included in several parties' manifestos for May's election, including Plaid Cymru's. We therefore look forward to working with the new Welsh Government and Senedd to ensure that more renters in Wales are able to benefit from pet ownership in the coming years.