

**Debate on the Local Government and Housing Committee (LGH) report on  
the Private Rented Sector (PRS)  
Wednesday 15 January 2025  
Blue Cross briefing**

Blue Cross is a pet welfare charity so our comments will be focussed on the provisions of the report which relate the keeping of pets (pages 61 – 70).

## **Summary**

- Blue Cross welcomed the LGH inquiry and report which outlined the challenges facing pet owners in the PRS in Wales
- There is a lack of pet-friendly housing in Wales at the moment leading to many pet owners having to make the awful choice between a home and a pet
- We do not believe the current proposals from the Welsh Government will lead to an increase in the availability of pet-friendly housing in Wales
- It will be unfair to unnecessarily burden pet owners in the PRS with additional costs for owning a pet so any damage which does occur – a rare occurrence - should therefore be redeemed from the initial deposit.
- Blue Cross supports the adoption of the English and Scottish approach whereby pet owners have a right to request a pet which the landlord cannot unreasonably refuse.

## **Background**

The pet keeping policies of private and social landlords is an issue of major importance for pet owners in Wales. 'No pet' policies are fundamentally unfair and prevent many responsible pet owners from keeping their beloved animals. Unfortunately, such bans can mean some owners are be faced with the awful prospect of giving up their pet if they have to move home and pets are not allowed in the new property. As the Committee report states:

"The evidence has demonstrated that discrimination by landlords against people with pets is real and needs to be addressed."

Blue Cross has daily experience of just how vitally important pets are to their owners - they provide companionship and comfort; help to alleviate loneliness and social isolation; provide motivation and purpose, and can be beneficial for the owner's overall mental and physical health. The benefits of pet ownership can therefore be not only good for the individual but can have wider positive social and economic impacts in Wales. For many people they are literally a lifeline. Research by the University of Huddersfield<sup>1</sup> has also shown that pet ownership can also be beneficial for landlords:

"On average, landlords can expect to gain more financially from renting to tenants with pets than they spend on associated expenses. Therefore, renting to pet owners can be financially viable and beneficial for landlords".

Animal welfare charities in Wales cite housing issues as one of the main reasons pets are relinquished into their care. Across Blue Cross as a whole, 27 per cent of people relinquishing their pet cite housing/accommodation issues as the main reason. Many animals also spend longer than necessary in rescue and rehoming centres because large numbers of potential pet owners are not able to rehome because they live in rented accommodation. Increasing the rights of tenants in the PRS to own a pet would help to reduce the strain on rescue and rehoming centres in Wales and provide positive benefits to pet health and welfare.

Blue Cross is also a strong advocate for responsible pet ownership so we recognise that landlords have a right to expect that the property will not be damaged by the pet and the pet will not cause mess, nuisance or distress to other tenants, although it must be stressed that these are rare occurrences. Similarly, we also recognise that some properties may not be suitable for housing a specific pet or number of pets as inappropriate accommodation can cause health and welfare problems for the animal. Blue Cross also believes some species, such as primates, should never be kept as pets as they are non-domesticated.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://bdch.org.uk/files/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_Pet\\_Ownership\\_Rental\\_Properties.pdf](https://bdch.org.uk/files/The_Financial_Impact_Pet_Ownership_Rental_Properties.pdf)

## **Current situation**

As is stands, there is no right for a tenant in the private rented sector in Wales to request or keep a pet. The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which came into force in 2022, allows keeping of pets as an additional term. The guidance to the Renting Homes (Fees Etc) (Wales) Act 2019<sup>2</sup> states that landlords may charge “a slightly higher deposit....should a tenant have pets”, although slightly higher is not defined.

The Welsh Government has also published a ‘Consultation on the White Paper on securing a path towards Adequate Housing, including Fair Rents and Affordability’. This proposes allowing a landlord to cover the cost of an additional premium on their insurance policy (or to take out a new policy) relating to ‘pet damage’ as a permitted payment under the 2019 Act.

Blue Cross will submit that it will be unfair to unnecessarily burden pet owners in the PRS with additional costs for owning a pet, particularly during very difficult financial circumstances for many vulnerable people. It could also prevent people from becoming pet owners in the first place and thereby nullify the purpose of the proposed changes. **We submit that any damage which does occur should therefore be redeemed from the initial deposit.**

## **Pet damage**

Although it is obviously a concern for some landlords, there is no evidence that pets cause substantial costly damage to properties. The LGH Committee’s report stated:

“While we recognise landlords’ fears of property damage by pets, we heard compelling evidence to demonstrate that damage is often less than anticipated and that landlords can make more money in terms of renting to pet owners as they are likely to stay in a property longer.”

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/letting-fees-guidance-for-landlords-and-letting-agents\\_1.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/letting-fees-guidance-for-landlords-and-letting-agents_1.pdf)

A 2021 YouGov poll for Cats Protection and Dogs Trust, which surveyed landlords who allow pets, found that 73 per cent reported no issues.<sup>3</sup> The University of Huddersfield research found that:

“Three out of four landlords (76 per cent) reported that they did not encounter any damage caused by pets in their rental properties”.

The research also found that on average, the total reported cost by landlords of pet-related damage was £300, compared with £775 for non-pet-related damages.

### **A different approach**

We do not believe the Welsh Government’s current proposals will lead to an appreciable increase in the availability of pet friendly housing in Wales. Simply tinkering with the system of payments allowed to be charged by the landlord will not significantly alter the situation for many pet owners and may actually cause more pets to be relinquished.

In England (the Renters’ Rights Bill) and Scotland (the Housing (Scotland) Bill), currently before the respective Parliaments, would provide pet owners with a right to request a pet which the landlord must not unreasonably refuse. We believe this approach will provide for decisions to be taken on a case-by-case basis which should provide for more flexibility and greater choice for pet owners and landlords. This approach would also provide more security and confidence for pet owners that their housing situation will not determine whether they can enjoy the companionship of their beloved pet, and greater clarity for both pet owner and landlord. **We urge the Welsh Government to consider the possibility of adopting this approach.**

Please contact Bronwen Dennis, Public Affairs Officer Wales, at [bronwen.dennis@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:bronwen.dennis@bluecross.org.uk) for further information

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning/purrfectlandlords/purrfect-landlords-survey-key-findings>