

PRS 06

Ymgynghoriad ar y sector rhentu preifat
Consultation on the private rented sector
Ymateb gan: Blue Cross
Response from: Blue Cross



Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee - The Private Rented Sector Inquiry

Blue Cross is a pet welfare charity that provides specialist care, services and support for pets and people throughout their life together. The help we offer includes veterinary treatment, finding loving new homes for pets, behavioural advice, support with pet bereavement and education for future generations.

Background

Pets are vitally important to their owners; they provide companionship, help to alleviate loneliness and can be beneficial for the owner's mental and physical health. For many people they are literally a lifeline.

The pet keeping policies of private and social landlords is an issue of major importance for pet owners in Wales. Unfortunately, some owners can be faced with the awful prospect of giving up their pet if they must move homes. We also know that many animals 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.

'No Pet' Clauses

Blue Cross supports the option of owning a pet as the default position for a responsible pet owner. Blue Cross welcomed the proposals in the recently introduced Renters (Reform) Bill which will give tenants the right to request a pet in the property, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse.

Clause 66 of the Renters Reform Bill states "this Act extends to England and Wales only, subject to subsection". The Bill's explanatory notes state that "housing legislation in relation to Wales ... is within the devolved legislative competence of Senedd Cymru". Clarity on this would be beneficial.

Blanket bans are fundamentally unfair and prevent many responsible pet owners from keeping their beloved animals. Blue Cross is committed to working with the housing sector to enable them to embrace a more pet friendly approach and to support their tenants to be responsible pet owners.

Responsible Pet Ownership

Although we are opposed to blanket bans, Blue Cross is also a strong advocate for responsible pet ownership and we recognise that landlords and housing providers 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 these are rare occurrences. Similarly, we also recognise that some properties may not be suitable for housing a specific pet 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.

Blue Cross recommends that landlords and housing providers should have a robust and comprehensive pet policy in place, written in consultation with the pet welfare sector, which clearly outlines the responsibilities of the pet owner and the consequences for failing to adhere to it. This can provide clarity to other tenants as well as landlords/pet owners. Landlords/housing providers could liaise with animal welfare charities on the content of these policies. It could include, for instance, information on the five animal welfare needs in the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Further Recommendations

- Welsh Government could raise awareness with organisations such as landlord and letting agent associations to encourage use of new pet-friendly model clauses.
- We would also welcome a roundtable with stakeholders in the private rented sector to share best practice and ensure pet-friendly policies work for both landlords and tenants.
- Signposting tenants to tools and information which will help prove they will be responsible pet owners and reliable tenants.

Case studies

Blue Cross's Newport rehoming, advice and behaviour centre has provided a number of examples of pets coming into their care because of issues with rented accommodation.

- After being rehomed the previous year, a rabbit called Thumper was returned to the Blue Cross centre. Unfortunately, the owner's landlord was selling the property and they couldn't find private accommodation that allowed pets.
- Pippi the dog came to our centre in February. When her owner had to move, they couldn't find any accommodation suitable for pets. Her owner was extremely upset.
- We recently had a domestic violence case where the owner could not leave until we admitted her dog, as she couldn't find safe accommodation that allowed dogs.
- Reservations to adopt pets have had to be cancelled as the potential owners landlords won't give permission for pets. This then extends the pet's stay with us and reduces how many pets we can help and causes upset to the tenants who would like a companion.

For more information or to arrange a meeting to discuss this issue in more detail please contact:

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