

KEY MESSAGES

- Housing issues are the second most common reason that dogs are relinquished to Battersea, with more than 200 dogs a year coming through our gates because of landlord restrictions.
- Demand for pet friendly accommodation in the sector is high, with 43% of tenants owning a pet and a further 33% aspiring to own a pet now or in the future. This suggests that 76% of tenants are directly affected by landlord pet policies.
- Rightmove reports that demand for rented properties that allow pets has increased by 120% in the last year.
- However, according to Zoopla, only 7% of landlords currently advertise homes as suitable for pets.
- Demand for pets has only increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Dogs and cats provided significant emotional support for many people during periods of lockdown and social isolation.
- This is an issue of importance for an increasingly large percentage of the population, especially with the numbers of people renting continuing to rise and the demographics of renters changing.
- We are pleased that the Government has indicated its intention to legislate to support more people to have the opportunity to own pets in rented properties and are keen to work with officials to help shape this.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

- In the UK, 4.6 million households currently rent their home from 2.6 million private landlords. In 2021 however, Zoopla reported that just 7% of landlords listed their properties as suitable for pets. This is despite a quarter of the population having a cat or dog.¹
- This year following the publication of our new campaign report focused on the private rented sector, we have been working alongside tenants, landlords' groups, and other stakeholders to find collaborative solutions.
- Demand for pet friendly accommodation in the private rented sector remains high, with 43% of tenants owning a pet and a further 33% aspiring to own a pet now or in the future. This suggests that 76% of tenants are directly affected by landlord pet policies.
- The pandemic and the lengthy lockdowns have had a profound impact on people's relationships with their home and pet ownership, with people saying that their home had become more important to them now than ever. For many, pets are part of their perfect home and are an integral part of their family.
- Since the campaign was first launched, Battersea has also been working with local authorities and social housing providers in London to provide advice on redrafting pet policies in the social housing sector.
- We believe that there is potential to explore the development of the market for insurance products which mitigate against potential damage caused by pets, as a happy medium which would give assurances to both landlords and tenants in permitting pets in a larger number of properties.

BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP AND RISING DEMAND

Battersea research²³ underlines the many benefits to pet ownership:

- Pet owners are 60% more likely than non-pet owners to get to know people in their neighbourhoods.
- Pet owners make 15% fewer visits to a doctor and pet ownership saves the NHS £2.45 billion annually.
- Pet owners stay longer in their tenancies and develop stronger community ties than non-pet owners.
- Pet ownership is good for the local economy as owners spend money on food, toys and services such as vets, grooming and dog walking in their local area.
- Dog ownership has significant health benefits, as walking and exercise lead to reduced obesity and lower cholesterol, protecting against heart disease and diabetes.
- Pet ownership promotes good mental health. It helps to lift depression, reduce loneliness and support independent living.

¹ All stats taken from Battersea, Pet Friendly Properties – The Private Rented Sector (2022) https://bdch.org.uk/files/BATTERSEA_Pet-Friendly-Properties-Report.pdf

² Battersea, Pet Friendly Properties (2018) <https://bdch.org.uk/files/Pet-Friendly-Properties-Report.pdf>

³ All Party Parliamentary Group on Cats, Cats as Companions (2020) http://www.apgocats.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/APGOCATS_Loneliness-Report.pdf

It is therefore unsurprising that there was a significant rise in demand for pets following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research shows that:

- Lockdown led thousands of people to impulse purchase pets for company, with more than 40% of people who bought puppies during lockdown admitting they had not previously planned to get a dog.⁴
- 35% of young adults (aged 24-35) have already become or are planning to become pet owners, with 19% collecting a new pet during lockdown.⁵
- Londoners are the most likely to have added a pet to their family⁶
- 75% of those surveyed said their rescue pet was helping them cope during the first national lockdown in 2020.⁷

CASE STUDY: MARK

Mark moved into a Coastal apartment from a privately rented shared house. He lived with a mental health condition and was convinced he could train a dog to be a companion to help him manage this. He was passionate about animals and had completed courses on how to care for them properly. When he realised that Coastal had relaxed their pet policy and it was possible for him to have a pet in an apartment, he was extremely happy. He moved in and once settled got a puppy which has given him a new lease of life. Mark feels he has a greater purpose by having the dog to look after. It has helped get him out of the house which has greatly improved his wellbeing, and has helped him get to know his neighbours, as they all fell in love with the dog too. Being able to have a dog has significantly improved his wellbeing and outlook on life.

LEGISLATIVE NEXT STEPS

- Battersea welcomed the UK Government's White Paper 'A fairer private rented sector'⁸, and that legislative action is in the pipeline to ensure that 'landlords do not unreasonably withhold consent' for pet ownership.
- Landlords will also have the power to request that tenants take out insurance against any damage their pets might cause.
- Further details are now needed on what will be considered by officials to define 'unreasonably withholding consent' will mean - for example whether landlords with concerns over potential financial losses would meet this definition, and crucially whether animal welfare will be factored into these decisions and how landlords could be supported in making this assessment.
- Battersea also welcomes the proposed changes to the Tenants Fees Act 2019 to allow for pet insurance as a permitted payment, as this was one of our recommendations in our Pet Friendly Properties report. More on this would be welcome, as Battersea is aware that the currently available range of specific pet damage insurance products on the market is limited.

CASE STUDY: KERRIE AND HAVEN

Kerrie and her family had been living in a home in Leicester when their landlord sold the property and they had to find a new place to live. It took Kerrie almost six months to find a home that was not only within distance of her son's school, but also allowed pets. She had to negotiate with agents and landlord until she found somewhere that would let the family keep their dog. This home came at a cost though – Kerrie had to use money she'd been saving for a wedding to pay an additional deposit and extra rent each month. A price she was happy to pay if it meant her whole family could stay together under one roof.

ABOUT BATTERSEA

Established in 1860 to care for abandoned animals, Battersea aims to never turn away a dog or cat in need of help. We will take in any animal that needs our care, regardless of age, condition and breed. This means that we see all too often animals that have sadly suffered the worst imaginable treatment at the hands of people.

In 2019, we directly helped over 5,000 animals including 3,213 dogs and 2,476 cats; and run an Academy which has provided best practice operational advice and support to rescue charities caring for the UK's animals and

⁴ Battersea, The Impact of COVID-19 on Companion Animal Welfare in the UK (2020) <https://bdch.org.uk/files/BATTERSEA-Covid-Research-Report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.pfma.org.uk/news/pfma-confirms-dramatic-rise-in-pet-acquisition-among-millennials-#:~:text=Londoners%20are%20the%20most%20likely,planning%20to%20make%20the%20change>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://www.battersea.org.uk/about-us/press/press-releases/we-rescued-them-now-theyre-rescuing-us>

⁸ <https://www.battersea.org.uk/about-us/press/press-releases/battersea-welcomes-long-awaited-new-pet-friendly-policies-renters-and>

across the globe. Battersea has supporters all over the UK and campaigns on behalf of cats and dogs, including co-providing the Secretariat to APGOCATS, the first All-Party Group dedicated to feline welfare.

Click [here](#) for more information on Battersea's work. Follow the Public Affairs Team on Twitter [@Battersea_PA](#)

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (Battersea) is registered in England and Wales (company no. 278802, charity no. 206394). Our registered address is 4 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4AA.