



ST. PATRICK'S CENTRE (KILKENNY)  
KELLS ROAD KILKENNY

## Policy Document

**POLICY TITLE: Pet Policy**

Prepared by: Anna Maria Das Chaudhury	Approval Date: 12.07.2019	Review Date: 12.07.2021
Policy Number 26 – Other Policies	Approved By: Signed: <u>David Kehran</u> Operations Manager Signed: <u>[Signature]</u> Board Member	

### Mission Statement

**To enable people to live a good life, in their own home, with supports and opportunities to become active, valued and inclusive members of their local communities.**

**To enable a supported self-directed living (SSDL) model of provision which is underpinned by our beliefs, values and vision.**

Review Date: Revision No: _____	Amendments required: _____	New Revision Status: _____
Reviewed by:	Approved By: Signed: _____ Operations Manager	

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## **1. Purpose of this Policy**

At Saint Patricks Centre (SPC) we recognise that pets can be a valued part of a supported persons environment, providing companionship and entertainment. Caring for pets can provide mental and physical health benefits i.e. stroking a pet can lower blood pressure.

Caring for a pet can boost a person's confidence and can help teach responsibility. The people we support can be assisted through interaction with pets.

## **2. Scope of this Policy**

At SPC we ensure that all interaction between the people we support and pets are supervised at all times. To ensure all interaction with pets is safe and healthy, we follow the procedures outlined below and remember that the priority is always each person we support health and safety. We believe that sensible precautions can reduce the risk of infection.

### **The following principles underpin the management of pets in SPC:**

- Only animals in good health will be allowed into SPC homes
- The people we support must be supervised at all times when interacting with animals
- All animals will have documented inoculation
- All of our animals will be registered with our local vets
- All animals will be treated for parasitic infections as directed by the vet
- All animals will be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection, flea infestation, or other illness
- If pets become ill, diagnosis and treatment by a vet will be sought
- Pets are only allowed out of their huts under direct staff supervision
- All pets are fed within their huts
- All pets are kept clean, bedding is changed every second day or more if required, and droppings are removed as soon as possible
- Feeding bowls must always be kept out of reach of the people we support
- All pet foods must always be kept away from food for human consumption

- Hands must be washed following any contact with animals, their food, bedding or litter

### **Procedures**

- Staff should always model safe behaviour around pets – to set a good example to the people we support.
- Most safety and health risks posed by animals can be greatly reduced by:
  - Careful supervision of the people we support and their pets
  - Following good hand hygiene practice
  - Teaching the people we support how to;
    - Play safely with pets
    - Avoid dangerous situations
    - Respond to danger signs
    - Wash their hands carefully after all contact with pets and other animals

### **3. Supervision and separation**

Pets and the people we support must be gradually introduced to each other. All contact between the people we support and pets is always directly supervised. This means that a staff member is in close range of the person we support and pet and can intervene if necessary.

The people we support also need to be able to have access and explore their outdoor environment without any risk from pets, therefore any animals outside are required to have a fenced environment.

### **4. Animal health and wellbeing**

All animals and birds kept in the garden must be in a clean and healthy condition. A constant supply of fresh drinking water will be supplied and a nutritionally balanced diet provided – vet to be consulted on food and nutrition.

### **5. If pets are sick**

If our pets show any signs of sickness, skin disease or behavioural problems, let the manager know and seek advice from the vet immediately and follow their instructions carefully. Keep sick animals away from children and be extra careful with cleaning and hand washing.

## 6. Hygiene

Wash your hands carefully after handling pets, their droppings, feeding bowls, bedding, toys or cage and show the people we support how to do same. Animal droppings need to be regularly cleaned and bedding should be changed every second day. If a person we support is bitten or scratched, wash the wound immediately and use disinfectant cream/solution. Always contact their GP if you are concerned about a wound or if the wound is not healing appropriately.

Remember, while pet ownership gives a sense of responsibility to children, only staff can truly be responsible for pets.

## 7. Potential health and safety risks to the people we support

Recognising when pets are sick and getting immediate advice from the vets is of utmost importance – the earlier you get advice and treatment, the less chance there is of the illness passing on to the people we support or staff. Keep sick pets away from the people we support.

To keep the people we support safe it is important to know about some of the potential risks associated with pet ownership;

- Bites and scratches
- Allergies or asthma triggered by animal fur, saliva, feathers and skin flakes (dandruff)
- Fall injuries – from being knocked over by a pet or from tripping over a pet, its toys or bowl etc.
- Choking injuries – people we support swallowing the pet's food or toys
- Zoonotic diseases – diseases that humans can get from animals. Although pets can carry germs, it is important to know that you are usually more likely to get some of these germs from infected food or water than your pet.
  - The risk of zoonotic diseases is higher for;
    - Young children and elderly people
    - People we a compromised immune system
    - Pregnant women – the unborn baby's immune system is not fully developed.