

Adult Social Care Property and Finance – Protection of Property (Pets)

Overview of the Licensing Function

1. The role of the team is to protect vulnerable people across the Borough who are assessed as being unable to manage their financial affairs because they lack mental capacity and where they have no relatives, friends or solicitor to assist them.
2. Part of the team's work is Protection of property which includes homes, valuables and pets.
3. Under the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2015, and the Animal Welfare Act 2006, local authorities have the following responsibilities:
 - Where an individual is ordinary resident within the local authority area, the authority must make arrangement to protect property of a person who is in hospital or admitted to 24-hour care.
 - Local authorities have a duty to make provisions for pets where no family or relative are available to them.
 - To ensure the welfare needs of the animals are met whilst they are responsible for them.
4. Temporary protection of property, including pets, is a local authority responsibility. Therefore, all departments should work together at the point of contact from the person, Police or a relevant representative to ensure a coordinated "tell us once" approach.
5. Stockton Borough Council provides a provision for a person's property, including pets if they are admitted to hospital or into temporary 24-hour care. Pets are supported through commissioned kennels with boarding services provider. The Provider is subject to licensing regulations and is required to maintain records regarding the animal's welfare.
6. If the person becomes a permanent resident in 24-hour care or passes away, the local authority will take reasonable steps to find pets a suitable home, subject to consent or best interest assessment by social workers.
7. This service is provided to residents who have no relatives or friends who are willing or able to safeguard the property during temporary periods of admission to hospital or 24-hour residential care.
8. Section 47 of the Care Act 2014 places a statutory duty on the local Authority to protect a person's moveable property when:
 - admitted to any hospital.

- admitted to a 24-hour residential care.
- admitted to any other place under the Act.

9. Where it appears, they are unable to protect their property (including pets) and no alternative arrangement is in place.

10. In the last three years the team has provided assistance to:

Animals	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Dogs	6	8	15
Cats	5	10	10
Other	0	15	0

11. The total cost for the provision of kenneling or outreach, pet sitting services is:

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
£13,007	£20,707	£32,701

12. The cost of kenneling pets is recharged to the person when they return to their home or if they pass away. Ongoing kenneling costs are recovered directly each month for any person whose finances are managed by the local authority.

13. The team have recovered income for costs for boarding and other pet related costs to owners for the previous three years:

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
£10,097	£10,189	£8,698

Response to Key Lines of Inquiry

14. What is the minimum (statutory) service that the Council must provide?

The statutory duty is outlined above under section 47 of the Care Act, requiring protection of property, including pets, where individuals are unable to make arrangements.

15. What services are the Council providing above the minimum required and why?

In addition to kennel provision, the council arranges outreach and pet sitting services where kennel capacity is limited. This ensures continuity of care and support animal welfare when demand exceeds available kennel provision. The council currently commissions 5 kennels, which must meet licencing requirements, including isolation capacity.

16. What is the current position on “put to sleep”?

Decisions regarding euthanasia are not taken routinely and would only be considered in exceptional circumstances, based on veterinary advice and approved by the Assistant Director of Social Care and based on Veterinary advice.

17. How effectively does the current service safeguard animal welfare?

Animal welfare is supported through:

- Use of commissioned licenced kennel provider.

- Maintenance of welfare records
- Alternative arrangement such as outreach and pet sitting where appropriate.

Challenges arise where animals fall outside typical provision (e.g. non-domestic pets) limiting availability and due to increase in demand the welfare of the animal may also be supported the social worker if involved and Adult Social Care Property and Finance.

18. How long are animals at council funded facilities?

Animals are accommodated as long as required. However, efforts are made to return pets to their owners or arrange rehoming, typically after around six months, as long -term kennelling can negatively impact on the pet's welfare.

19. How has demand for the service changed, e.g. number/complexity of cases, and what impact is this having on the service?

The above figures show the demand has grown which has resulted in:

- Increased costs
- Capacity issues
- Challenges in meeting licencing and vaccination requirement, which restrict alternative provision.

20. What support is given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets?

The team does not provide direct ongoing support for pet ownership. However, it will arrange temporary care for pets where individuals are not able to do so due to hospital admission or admission to 24-hour residential care.

21. How is the service funded?

The service is funded through the adult social care budget.

22. Are there any income-generation opportunities?

Costs for kennelling and veterinary care are recovered from individuals where possible, including from estates. Invoices are raised and escalated to the corporate debt team in cases of non-payment. There is a potential to introduce charges for administration and officer time associated with arranging appropriate welfare for the animals.

23. What current partnership arrangements are in place and how effective are these?

The current partnership arrangements are with the contracted provider of the kennels. The team has informal links with the animal welfare team, Vets and Police were necessary.

24. What are the options for increasing capacity to meet an increased demand? E.g. additional facilities, shared provision, alternative models?

Consideration has been given to expand provision with the current provider, including developing additional kennels. This would:

- Increase capacity

- Support compliance with licencing
- Improve animal welfare through better isolation facilities.

25. What training is required for animal welfare officers?

Adult social care property and financial staff are sometimes required to handle animals; however no formal training is currently in place.

26. Is additional training or support required to manage more complex and/or sensitive cases?

Here is a need for:

- Training in handling animals if there is no other alternative service to undertake this task.
- Guidance for situations where animals must remain temporarily in the home environment before placement.

Support is currently sought from the commissioned kennel provider.

27. What public engagement is being carried out to promote responsible pet ownership and reduce abandonment and dangerous dog incidents? How effective are these?

When social care staff undertake assessments and identify pets within the home discussion are had around contingency plans and advice given around services to support owners when they are unable to provide care.

Name of Contact Officer: Carol Malham

Post Title: Service Manager Assessment (Early Intervention)

Telephone number: 01642 524922

Email address: carol.malham@stockton.gov.uk