



Pets in homeless and temporary accommodation

Parliamentary briefing

September 2026

Big Issue is calling on the government to make temporary and homeless accommodation pet inclusive by default. No one experiencing homelessness should have to choose between a safe bed and their beloved pet.

Background

Big Issue has been at the forefront of homelessness and rough sleeping prevention for 35 years this September. Across the UK, we work with over 3,000 individuals each year to earn a legitimate income by selling the Big Issue. Vendors buy magazines for £2.50 and sell them for £5. Our frontline teams offer bespoke support to vendors to meet their needs and access vital services, from liaising with GPS, to housing support, to food and fuel vouchers.

Big Issue's position

Fewer than one in ten hostels in the UK allow pets. When someone experiencing homelessness with a pet approaches their council for support, they will be offered accommodation which does not allow them to bring their pet in the majority of cases.

This presents people in crisis with an impossible decision. They must choose between a safe bed to sleep in, or their closest companion. Research shows that 93% of people experiencing homelessness would rather sleep rough than give up a beloved pet in this scenario. They will risk their safety, stability and health to stay together.

We're calling on government to end this impossible choice. They must bring temporary and emergency housing in line with the private rented sector, and make it pet-friendly by default.

This change would require no new legislation and no significant funding.

Key statistics

- Fewer than 1 in 10 hostels are dog-friendly
- 77% of accommodation providers receive requests to accommodate pets
- 93% of people experiencing homelessness would rather sleep rough than give up a beloved pet for a safe place to stay
- Preventing an individual from experiencing homelessness for just one year is estimated to result in saving over £9,000 in public expenditure

Impact on rough sleeping

In England, the demand for emergency housing which welcomes pets far outstrips supply, pushing pet owners to sleep rough in many cases. This can be both dangerous and isolating, with devastating consequences for people's health and safety. Sleeping rough traps people in a cycle of crisis, shortens life expectancy to 45 for women and 43 for men, and creates additional pressure on local authorities and frontline services.

Big Issue warmly welcomed the Prime Minister's pledge to give everyone a route off the street by Christmas. In order to create viable routes, this scheme must accommodate companion animals. Failing to do so will exclude dog owners from the offer of safe accommodation.

Importance of companion animals

Pets provide emotional, social and practical support for many people experiencing homelessness, who commonly describe them as family members. Dogs in particular are reported to reduce loneliness, improve mental wellbeing and push people to access support services, for their pet and for themselves. This engagement can enable people to take steps to move beyond homelessness.

Andy sells the Big Issue in Brighton with his dog Charm. He said *"Charm's not just a dog to me. She's my best mate, my emotional support animal, my work colleague. She's there for me when times are hard. You're not going to give that up, you know. If that means staying homeless, then 90% of the boys will end up staying homeless."*

Implementing pet inclusive accommodation

Making emergency accommodation pet inclusive is practical and manageable. Evidence from temporary accommodation in the UK shows that when pets are welcomed, residents and staff rarely report problems and pets add little burden to staff workloads. Plus, staff believe keeping people and their pets together improves engagement with services and helps people move on from homelessness.

The right policies can enable social landlords to manage the risk of welcoming pets, including:

- Clear documentation, including pet records, owner agreements, behaviour expectations and agreed responsibilities for cleaning, exercise and care.
- Partnerships with specialist organisations that can provide veterinary support, emergency veterinary care, behaviour advice, pet food, pet essentials and staff training.
- Plans for safety nets such as temporary boarding, fostering or kennel provision during hospital admission, rehabilitation, or crisis, so separation is not the default option.

What you can do to support the campaign

1. **Sign EDM 504 [here](#)** for pet inclusive homeless and temporary accommodation.
2. **Submit this Written Question** and please consider using any oral questions or PMQs to raise the campaign.

MHCLG – *To ask the Secretary of State what steps her department is taking to increase the availability of pet inclusive homeless and temporary accommodation.*

3. **Write to the Secretary of State**, contact us for a template letter.

Contact us

If you're interested in discussing the campaign or Big Issue's wider work, we would welcome the opportunity to meet. Please email Rhianon.Steeds@bigissue.com or call 07485908054.