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|  | **Please reply to:** Mrs Frances Hughes,  |
| Assistant Director (Community & Customer |
| Services), c/o Town Hall, Castle Circus,  |
| TORQUAY, TQ1 3DR |
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|  | **My ref:** | FH/AMO/ |
| **Your ref**: |  |
| **Telephone:** | 01803 208002 |
| **Fax:** | 01803 208854 |
| **E-mail:** | Frances.hughes@torbay.gov.uk  |
| **Website:** | [www.torbay.gov.uk](http://www.torbay.gov.uk) |
| **Date**: | 7 October 2015  |

**Re: Petition relating to homelessness and pets**

Thank you for your petition regarding discrimination against homeless people with pets.

Torbay Council does not discriminate against those with pets. Torbay Council acknowledges that pets are a very important part of a family and we know it can be very hard and/or distressing to have to leave them behind.

 Since August 2014, Torbay’s accommodation contracts have included the requirement that “The Provider must be whenever possible open to accommodating pets, this to be in agreement with Housing Options Service on a case by case basis”.

This has meant that with our providers co-corporation we are usually able to accommodate pets, and for example we have in the past year accommodated a number of dogs and a cat.

Under the Housing Act and Code of Guidance the local authority has a duty to protect people’s belongings (which includes pets). This does not always mean that the council can find accommodation which is suitable for both the person in need and the pet together, but we do wherever possible make alternative arrangements for the pet e.g. a temporary kennel. The Council is not however obliged to fund the alterative arrangements. With regard to our duty to assist in finding pet accommodation we are proactive in this respect and have identified kennel vacancies, and arranged travel to and from for client to take pets there and pick them up.

Where clients in need are accommodated by the Leonard Stocks Hostel they do accept pets and do so on a regular basis. The facility includes a holding pen if dogs are sick or need to be kept safe.

They can also accommodate other small pets including rats, cats.

The staff at the hostel work with the pets owners to register them with the Dog Trust who help with free vaccinations and microchips. The hostel staff are committed to the ethos of caring for people holistically and take very seriously the welfare of any pets living there, or indeed on the streets with their owners.

There are some occasions, where, for example the Council feel that in shared facilities an animal may be a risk to other residents (especially children) that an alternative provision for the pet needs to be found.As in all walks of life some people who come to us for help are not as responsible for their pets as we would hope. Where this occurs we will work with the owners to find a suitable alternative.

The council also works at an early stage with people who are threatened with homelessness and they have pets. In these circumstances we do advise that they try to have a plan in place or other housing options identified for their pet.

I trust this answers your concerns but if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Housing Options Team who will be able to assist you further.

Yours sincerely

## FRANCES HUGHES

Assistant Director

Community & Customer Services