



The Alresford Surgery

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ALRESFORD SURGERY

POLICY TITLE: Assistance Dogs and Other Animals Policy
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REVIEW BY: Sue Lees

Change control Log:

05.09.2024 v1. New policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

This policy predominantly supports those patients and employees who may have the need for an assistance dog but also refers to therapy animals, pets and other animals that may visit Alresford Surgery. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), assistance dogs, guide dogs, hearing dogs, medical alert dogs and their owners have the same rights to access this organisation as everyone else.

1.2 Status

The organisation aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have regarding the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment. Furthermore, this document applies to all employees of the organisation and other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

2 Guidance

2.1 Requirement

Assistance dogs are welcome at this organisation as we are committed to providing services that are equally accessible and responsive to all sections of the community. This includes assistance dogs in training along with their walker or sponsor.

Other types of animals that are permitted within this organisation are detailed at [Section 4](#).

2.2 Definition

The [Equality Act 2010](#) defines an assistance dog as:

- A dog that has been trained to guide a blind person
- A dog that has been trained to assist a deaf person
- A dog that has been trained by a prescribed charity to assist a disabled person who has a disability that consists of epilepsy or otherwise affects the person's mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination or ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- A dog of a prescribed category that has been trained to assist a disabled person who has a disability (other than those described above)

Assistance dogs are working dogs that have been rigorously trained by the following associations:

- Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Support Dogs
- Dogs for the Disabled
- Canine Partners
- Dog A.I.D
- Medical Detection Dogs
- Dogs for Good
- Service Dogs UK
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance
- Veterans with Dogs

Registered assistance dogs are working animals, not pets, and are relied on by their owners for independence. Each charity will have their own agreements outlining the expectations and responsibilities of the owner. They will also regularly monitor the owner and the dog to ensure their expectations are fulfilled. Information about these charities can be found at www.assistancedogs.org.uk.

It is important to note that there is no legal requirement for assistance dogs to have been trained by a charity, or for them to carry specific identification, therefore there is no 'proof' that can be requested. Without any identity or any proof of training, it is not possible to confirm whether the animal is a pet or an assistance dog.

Further to this, in healthcare settings, there has been a significant growth in the number of working therapy dogs that help people with physical conditions and also assist with mental wellbeing.

The two main classifications of therapy dog are:

- Animal-assisted therapy (AAT), which is delivered in conjunction with other healthcare professionals, is ordinarily goal directed with the outcomes documented and evaluated
- Animal-assisted activity (AAA) is the term used when a handler brings a dog to the patient/resident for general interaction. These dogs are usually owned by the person who is their handler. This is also termed as being an emotional support animal (ESA) and further information on this can be found [here](#). ESAs are pets that are required for a person's ongoing mental health treatment or for their hidden disability.

Due to the nature of primary care, therapy dogs are unlikely to be needed within this organisation. Likewise, ESAs do not have the same legal recognition as an assistance dog.

The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) provides useful guidance on the legal standing and how businesses should comply with the Equality Act 2010.

2.3 Policy

Assistance dogs are able to enter most areas of this organisation.

A risk assessment has been conducted and it has been deemed that, for infection control purposes, the treatment room area is not permissible for any assistance dog to enter. In these circumstances, the owner will be requested to ensure that alternative arrangements are made for the short period while they are receiving treatment. In these instances, the patient should be advised that it is the organisation's wish to minimise any separation time from their dog.

A risk assessment is at [Annex A](#) which details all types of visiting animal.

2.4 Maintaining infection control measures

The organisation will pay particular attention to the maintenance of infection control following any animal having been on the premises. If necessary, should there be any animal body fluids that need to be cleared, this should be treated the same as the normal procedure as for human waste. Personal protective equipment should be worn and all surfaces cleaned with the appropriate cleaning solution.

Following attendance by an assistance dog to the organisation, the cleaning staff are to be made aware of any areas that the assistance dog visited. This will enable them to provide a higher level of cleaning to these areas.

For further detailed information, see the organisation's Infection Prevention and Control Policy.

2.5 Clinicians' responsibilities

Physical contact with a dog by clinical staff will be resisted during any consultation or examination.

All clinical staff must ensure good hand washing with soap and water prior to contact with an assistance dog, this will ensure the safety of the dog. All clinical staff must ensure good hand washing with soap and water after any contact with an assistance dog to ensure the safety of other patients.

Clinical staff are to be mindful following any attendance of an assistance dog that they then consider other patients in their surgery list for that session who are potentially adverse clinically to the presence of dogs.

This may include patients who:

- Have an allergy to animals, especially dogs
- Are immunosuppressed
- Have a phobia of dogs
- Another medical reason

2.6 Non-clinicians' responsibilities

Other staff are to ensure that following any physical contact with the assistance dog they also promote good hand hygiene.

2.7 Owner's responsibilities

The owner has a responsibility to ensure that their assistance dog is well behaved and supervised throughout the visit.

Additionally, they are to ensure that their dog:

- Is physically fit before visiting the practice. If pets become ill, diagnosis and treatment by a vet must be sought
- Is kept on a lead throughout the visit and is clearly identified as an assistance dog
- Is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- Does not come into contact with open wounds
- Is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e., not wet, muddy etc.
- Is exercised and has had its toileting and feeding requirements met
- Has claws trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches
- Is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness
- Has received the relevant inoculations and is wormed on a regular basis

2.8 Injury sustained from an assistance dog

Should an animal bite and injure any person, first aid is to be administered and the incident recorded in the accident log. It is recommended that the incident be recorded as a significant event to facilitate learning and prevent future similar incidents.

Should the police become involved, then the Care Quality Commission is to be informed as this is considered a [notifiable incident](#).

3 Employees with an assistance dog

3.1 Requests

Members of staff considering the need to apply for an assistance dog should apply to the Practice Manager who will seek advice from the occupational health service and a work place assessment is likely to be required.

In addition, any employee who requires an assistance dog will also require a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP).

The same principles will apply to any new starting employees.

Prior to any assistance dog arriving with the employee, arrangements will be made with the relevant charity to carry out appropriate training with other organisation staff.

3.2 Employee's responsibilities

To ensure that day-to-day operational activity is not affected at the organisation, the employee/assistance dog owner will be responsible for the behaviour of the dog at all times.

To ensure that infection prevention and control is being maintained, the employee is to ensure that they clean any mess that the dog may leave or, should this be difficult due to their disability, the employee is then to inform another member of the team to request support.

3.3 Reasonable adjustments

The Practice Manager will ensure that specific space will be made available for the dog and its bed. Changes to working hours will be considered to allow for short breaks for exercise and toileting purposes.

4 Other animals

4.1 Therapy dogs

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) document titled [Working with Dogs in Health Care Settings](#) discusses therapy dogs and animal assisted intervention and how this supports patients within a healthcare setting. Due to the nature of primary care, it is unlikely that there is any need for therapy dogs although larger multidisciplinary health centres may utilise therapy dogs.

4.2 Pets

This organisation will adhere to the guidance detailed in the RCN's [Working with Dogs in Health Care Settings](#) whereby pets are not permitted into healthcare settings unless in exceptional circumstances. This applies to staff members. However, should a pet be allowed into the organisation, it will be requested that the owner completes a risk assessment (see [Annex A](#)) to detail their knowledge and requirements of the pet. This risk assessment is to also confirm if employees have any allergies or phobias to animals.

The owner's responsibilities remain the same as detailed at [Section 2.7](#).

4.3 Visiting animals

This non-admittance is also to be extended to other pets, such as neighbourhood cats that may simply visit the organisation. Therefore, all animals, except assistance dogs, are not permitted and they are to be discouraged from entering the organisation's premises.

4.4 Injury sustained from a non-assistance animal

Actions are to be taken as detailed above at [Section 2.8](#).

Should a pet animal injure any person, then recourse is to be taken against the pet owner.

Annex A – Assistance dog risk assessment

Risk assessment title	Assistance dogs	Date of assessment	05/09/2024
Assessment conducted by	S Lees (Operations Manager)	Date of next review	September 2026
Contributors	M Ott (Practice Manager)		

What are the potential hazards?	Who is at risk of being harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Risk rating	Additional control measures required	To be implemented: by who, by when?	Residual risk
Infection	Staff, patients, contractors, visitors due to contact with the animal	<p>Effective IPC processes in place</p> <p>Dogs are well trained and are limited to where they can go</p> <p>Effective cleaning programme in place</p> <p>Robust hand hygiene measures in place</p>	9	<p>Signage to be displayed, warning all that assistance dogs are permitted onto the premises</p> <p>Ensure hand hygiene signage is placed throughout the premises</p>	<p>Ops Mgr – 05/09/2024</p> <p>Ops Mgr – 05/09/2024</p>	6
Phobia	Staff, patients, contractors and visitors could experience nervousness, anxiety	Such individuals are able to, so far as is reasonably practicable, remove	6	Remind all staff members to inform their line manager if they have a phobia so that this can be recorded in the risk assessment and measures taken	Ops Mgr - ongoing	6

	etc. due to an existing phobia	themselves from the situation				
Aggressive animal	Staff, patients, contractors and visitors are at risk of injury due to an animal becoming aggressive	All assistance dogs are appropriately trained and some wear ID badges showing they are registered	9	Remind all animal owners that when on the organisation's premises they are responsible for ensuring they control their pets at all times.	Ops Mgr - ongoing	6
Evacuation	Staff, patients, contractors and visitors with assistance dogs may need assistance to evacuate the building in an emergency	Patients, contractors and visitors will need to be considered in the General Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEP) Employees will require an individual Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)	9	Review the GEEP and PEEPs regularly ensuring they remain fit for purpose	Ops Mgr - ongoing	6

		Likelihood				
		1 Rare	2 Unlikely	3 Possible	4 Likely	5 Almost certain
U	O	5	10	15	20	25

	Catastrophic	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	4 Major	4 Moderate	8 High	12 High	16 Extreme	20 Extreme
	3 Moderate	3 Low	6 Moderate	9 High	12 High	15 Extreme
	2 Minor	2 Low	4 Moderate	6 Moderate	8 High	10 High
	1 Negligible	1 Low	2 Low	3 Low	4 Moderate	6 Moderate