

NHS National Waiting Times Centre Board Assistance Dogs Policy



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Approvals

This document is approved by

| Name | Signature | Title | Date of issue | Version |
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Definitions used in this document:

Assistance Dogs

Animals that are found in health care premises may be identified under the following categories:

1. **Therapy** – an animal that visits hospital wards and premises for reasons of goal directed interventions and is the responsibility of the handler or external organisation e.g. therapist;
2. **Assistance** – an animal that is trained by Guide Dogs Association, Dogs for the Disabled, Support Dogs, Canine Partners for Independence and Hearing Dogs Association, for the benefit of a patient with a disability e.g. guide, hearing or signal dog. The dog is the responsibility of the handler or owner.

It is likely that service dogs will visit the hospital with their owners.

Policy

A policy lays down the principles and processes for carrying out our activities. It is usually a document but can also be unwritten.

NHS National Waiting Times Centre (NWTC)

This Special Health Board is made up of the Golden Jubilee National

Hospital and the Beardmore Hotel and Conference Centre

DDA

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005

EDIA

Impact assessment is a way of thoroughly assessing and consulting on the effects that a policy, function or a procedure is likely to have on people. It must take into account differences such as ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief.

Involving People Strategy (IPS): A strategy that combined Patient Focus and Public Involvement (PFPI), equality and diversity and key elements of staff governance standards under one strategy, which is coordinated through a single steering group.

Involving People Steering group (IPSG): A single steering group that coordinates and implements the action plan of the Involving People Strategy. Members include staff, and lay representatives from the Disability Reference Group and Patient Focus Group.

Disabled: The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 says you are disabled if you have a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial adverse affect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, the adverse affect being great and long-term.

Part one

1.0 Introduction and context

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and the amended 2005 Act) requires public health service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' in order that disabled people can access our services.

Health care provision now has to balance the needs of Assistance Dogs to the operational structure of a modern health service.

The NHS National Waiting Times Centre (NWTTC) acknowledges the contribution that assistance dogs may provide to the quality of life experienced by patients.

Diseases can be acquired from pets, therapy and service animals, however, providing reasonable care is taken, the psychological and physical benefits of having them in attendance at appropriate times during patient visits must be considered.

2.0 Aims and objectives

The overall objective of this policy is to ensure that we provide a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors, allowing appropriate and sensitive access under the DDA section 21 for Assistance Dogs. Will we do this through reference to the following specific aims:

- to minimise restrictions of access for patients and their assistance dog;
- to minimise distress to the person, the dog, staff and other patients;
- to minimise the time that the assistance dog and owner have to be separated;
- to prevent transmission of disease from the assistance dog to patients; and
- to ensure that staff are fully aware of the policy content and control measures required to minimise cross infection from assistance dog to patients.

3.0 Responsibilities

In delivery of this policy the following responsibilities apply:

(a) Infection Control Team

- Promote and support the implementation of the policy.
- Liaise with Clinical Governance and Risk Management Development Unit (CGRMDU) in respect of any changes to infection control legislation.

(b) Clinical Governance and Risk Management Development Unit

- Must keep the policy up-to-date.
- Audit compliance with the policy.
- Ensure that the policy has an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment and that all DDA requirements are covered.

(c) Managers

- Are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the policy and that it is adhered to.
- Ensure that the list of guide volunteer staff for Assistance Dogs is kept up-to-date and that volunteers are supported.
- Are responsible for putting in place systems of work to manage the presence of Assistance Dogs in their area to provide a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors.

(d) All staff

- Must adhere to the policy.
- Are responsible for minimising the potential of cross infection.

(e) General responsibility

- Assistance Dogs must be in good health. They must not be fed by staff and patient allergies must be considered prior to their admittance to any area within the NWTC.

Part Two

Procedure for delivery of the policy

(a) Need for Assistance Dogs

The main reason that an assistance dog may require access to the hospital is because:

- the dog is a mobility tool to help their disabled owner to access hospital services; and
- the dog accompanies a visually impaired visitor
- the dog itself may be a visitor, brought in to maintain contact when their owner is an in-patient.

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

- Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA)
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Dogs for the Disabled
- Canine Partners
- Support Dogs

Assistance Dogs are vaccinated and checked by vets every six months, they are not exempt from Health and Safety regulations.

Caution must be taken where there are patients with suppressed or compromised immunity who may be susceptible to infections. For further guidance contact the Infection Control department.

(b) Process

(i) Patients

Planned admissions

In the case of planned admissions, arrangements should be made ahead of the hospital appointment to ensure the assistance dog is cared for with the support of family, friends and relevant associations.

Where there is no alternative but to have their dog accompany the patient (usually for out-patient appointments), arrangements must be put in place to reduce distress to the patient and other patients.

See Appendix 1 on page 15 for secure offices where staff are willing to look after Assistance Dogs, taking into account the knowledge and agreement of their managers.

When the assistance dog does visit an area within the NWTC, the following guidelines apply:

- ✓ The visiting time is arranged with the ward staff prior to the visit (during a quiet time).
- ✓ All visitors must be reminded about hand hygiene before and after visiting patients. Staff and visitors must also be reminded about hand hygiene after touching the assistance dog.
- ✓ After the visit, the room and ward corridor must be cleaned.
- ✓ The patient must be reminded about the care of any pieces of medical equipment in their room and ensure the assistance dog does not lick the item. If the patient has been in contact with the dog they must ensure they do not touch any pieces of equipment in their room. The patient must also ensure that the assistance dog does not come into contact with any medical items on their person, for example, if they have a catheter. If the patient does come into contact with the dog they must ensure they do not touch the item prior to washing their hands.
- ✓ The patient must always wash their hands after touching the assistance dog.

Unplanned admissions

In the event of an unplanned admission, for example when a transferred patient is admitted, the dog's owner should, where possible, either contact a friend or relative to care for the dog. Staff may be able to contact other organisations (see below) on behalf of the owner:

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA). Contact the GDBA 24 hour Duty Manager on: **0870-6092219**

and they will make arrangements to take over responsibility for the dog as soon as possible.

- ✓ Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- ✓ Dogs for the Disabled
- ✓ Canine Partners
- ✓ Support Dogs

For more information and contact details please see Appendix 2 on page 16.

If the owner is admitted as an emergency and is suffering from shock or they are unconscious, it is likely that the dog will also be showing signs of distress.

(ii) Visitors

Please follow the procedures that apply to patients.

(iii) Exclusion areas

We do not allow assistance dogs in the following areas:

- Kitchen and galley areas.
- Areas where sterile or invasive procedures take place e.g. minor operations, endoscopies.
- Operating theatres and recovery areas.
- Intensive Care Units, Transplant Unit and High Dependency Units.
- Diagnostic Areas e.g. Cardiac Catheterisation Laboratories and controlled areas in the Radiology department.

(iv) Areas where assistance dogs are permitted

The following guidance applies for areas where assistance dogs are allowed.

Where possible book the last appointment of the day for minor invasive procedures for patients who have their assistance dog in attendance. This allows the area to be cleaned afterwards and no further patients will be treated on that day.

If there is a room offering treatment to more than one patient, or in the case of visiting an open ward, the consent of the other patient(s) sharing should be sought prior to allowing the dog in. If in any doubt, please contact Infection Control via switchboard.

An assistance dog may accompany its owner in corridors, common or waiting areas, consulting rooms, dining areas and toilets, including the Beardmore Hotel and Conference Center's public areas.

(v) Provision for an assistance dog in the event of separation

If it is absolutely necessary to separate the owner and their dog, that period should be kept to the shortest time possible.

Guides will be provided for both the owner and their dog. (See Appendix 1 on page 15 for secure offices and the names of members of staff who are willing to care for any Assistance Dogs while their owners are attending hospital).

Alternatively, an area in the main hospital reception for the assistance dog should be identified; this area should be out of the way of staff and patients. Arrangements for out of office hours should be agreed with the managers within the areas the patient is being cared for.

Proper attention must be paid to the assistant dog's needs. They should not be fed by staff but should have access to a bowl of clean water for the duration of their stay and, if required, the dog should be taken for toilet breaks.

It is necessary that the volunteer guide should take responsibility for the assistant dog and check on the dog regularly, providing reassurance if needed.

(vi) Toileting of dogs

Bags for the use of cleaning up after an assistance dog are stored at the security desk.

Areas to be used will be designated by the Estates Department and must be kept clean.

If unsure please call the Engineering helpline on extension 5090.

(vii) Allergies

Staff are asked to inform their manager if they are allergic to animal fur. This often manifests itself as a runny nose or wheeze. The ward should be mindful of this and take appropriate action to minimise/prevent contact.

(Viii) Moving around the hospital

There may be rare occasions when the dog is not needed for mobility but still needs to accompany the owner, for example if they are being transported in a wheelchair or on a trolley. When not working, their guiding harness should be removed; this will indicate to the dog that it isn't being worked. They can then be led alongside by their owner or by a volunteer.

Appendix 1

Secure offices

The NHS NWTC will comply with the advice of the GDBA to provide a secure area for any Assistance Dogs. Members of our staff have volunteered to look after an assistance dog in their office where this is possible within their workload. Their offices are listed as secure offices.

Dogs should not be fed by staff, however, water should be made available. Dog bowls are available from security.

Training on how to address assistance dogs will be available for members of staff who volunteered to look after an assistance dog under the recommendation of the Disability Lead.

For a list of volunteer dog sitters, staff should go to intranet under Departments/Clinical Governance.

Appendix 2 - useful addresses

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association's mission is to provide guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services that meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

Guide Dogs for the Blind, West Scotland District Team

Axis House, 12 Auchingramont Road, Hamilton, ML3 6JT

T: 01698 785026 F: 01698 785126 E: wscotland@guidedogs.org.uk

Terry.Thorpe@guidedogs.org.uk

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People trains dogs to alert severely and profoundly deaf people to chosen everyday sounds such as the alarm clock, telephone/textphone, doorbell and smoke alarm. A hearing dog's special burgundy jacket helps others to recognise the owner's otherwise invisible disability.

The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough,
Buckinghamshire, HP27 9NS

T: 01844 348 100 (voice & minicom) **F:** 01844 348 101

E: info@hearingdogs.org.uk

Dogs for The Disabled

Dogs for the Disabled provides individually trained dogs to carry out retrieval work, pulling work, targeting and stability work in partnership with disabled people.

Dogs for the Disabled, The Frances Hay Centre, Blacklocks Hill, Banbury
Oxon, OX17 2BS

T: 01295 252600

Canine Partners

Canine Partners transforms the lives of people with disabilities by partnering them with highly trained assistance dogs, thus enabling them to live independently and enjoy an enhanced lifestyle.

Mill Lane, Heyshott, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 0ED

T: 08456 580480 **F:** 08456 580481 **E:** info@caninepartners.co.uk

www.caninepartners.co.uk

Registered Charity No: 803680

Support Dogs

Support Dogs is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with epilepsy and people with disabilities by training dogs to act as efficient and safe assistants. Seizure Alert Dogs® give their owners up to 45 minutes advance warning of the onset of a seizure, enabling them to find a place of safety.

21 Jessops Riverside, Brightside Lane, Sheffield, S9 2RX

T: 0114 261 7800 **F:** 0114 261 7555 **E:** supportdogs@btconnect.com

www.support-dogs.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1088281

Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland

Supporting blind and partially sighted people Transcription Centre

17 Gullane Street, Partick, Glasgow G11 6AH

T: 0141 337 2955 **F:** 0141 357 4025 **E:** rnib.org.uk

RNIB's website which features the current copy: "How to guide people with sight problems" and is published online at: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_howtoguide.hcsp