

SALISBURY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Pets and Animals within the Healthcare Setting

1. Quick Reference Guide

The purpose of this policy is to set out the expectations and control parameters under which animals are allowed onto Trust premises.

Version Information			
Version No.	Updated by	Updated On	Description of Changes
1	Director of Nursing / Director of OD&P	November 2019	New policy
2	Head of Employee Relations and Policy	September 2022	Reviewed in conjunction with Deputy Director of Nursing

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The presence of animals in health care facilities has traditionally been discouraged on the basis of Infection Control and Health and Safety issues. However, more recently, certain groups of patients have been shown to benefit from contact with animals. Similarly, there may be patients and staff who rely on their purpose-trained animal to access hospital services e.g. guide dogs etc.
- 2.2 Animals can carry microbes and parasites which can occasionally be transmitted to humans, particularly people who are immunosuppressed or have other health issues. This is a serious consideration that must be addressed prior to any animal visiting in-patients of the Trust.
- 2.3 Some animals may be difficult to control and may pose a risk to patients or staff due to their behaviour. Again this factor must be considered before any animal is brought onto the hospital premises

3 Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the expectations and control parameters under which animals are allowed onto Trust premises.
- 3.2 This Policy applies across all Trust occupied buildings and is relevant to all Trust employees, service users and all other persons who may enter/use these buildings.

4. Definitions/Guidance

4.1 Assistance Dogs:

Properly trained dogs that aid or support an individual with a disability and which has been qualified by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK).

Assistance Dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) have formal identification and are permitted to accompany their owners at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom.

Certification is granted by the Department of Health.

Guide dogs for the blind: properly trained dogs that assist people who are blind or visually impaired.

Hearing dogs for the deaf: properly trained hearing dogs that alert the deaf to normal sounds as well as to danger sounds (e.g., sirens, smoke alarms).

Seizure alert dogs: dogs that are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure, which may appear to be misbehaving

4.2 **PAT Dogs / Pets as Therapy Dogs (or Similar Schemes):**

These dogs are trained, assessed and registered by Pets as Therapy (PAT) and are temperamentally suitable for visiting patients to provide therapeutic assistance.

4.3 **Security Animals**

These are dogs that work for the Emergency Services, Border Control or security companies.

4.4 **Pets**

Domestic or tamed animals or birds kept for companionship or pleasure. Pets are owned by individuals and will have varying levels of training and a range of temperaments.

4.5 **Infections**

There are a number of infections that animals can bring into the hospital environment which are usually transmission to humans via direct or indirect contact with animal faeces.

Animal bites can also lead to infections.

Therefore any animal known to be unwell or suffering from vomiting and /or diarrhoea should not be brought onto the hospital premises.

4.6 **Parasites**

Parasitic worms that can be transmitted from animals to humans though direct or indirect contact with animal faeces.

Fleas can also be transmitted to humans, although this is rare.

All visiting animals should be regularly wormed and given preventative flea treatments.

4.7 **Allergies**

Animal allergens are a widespread cause of allergic reaction.

Any visiting animal should be kept well clear of patients and staff with known allergies to animals.

Known allergies of patients including animals should be documented on admission.

4.8 **Phobias**

Some patients/staff may have a fear of a particular animal and may become extremely distressed should they be placed in closed proximity to them.

4.9 **Other Mammals**

Generally speaking, most assistance animals will be dogs although there are instances where other mammals have been used to assist humans.

Where somebody requests access for their assistance animal (other than a dog), any decision to grant such access must be made by Ward/Department Lead in conjunction with the patients consultant and the Infection Control team. If access is granted local procedures to manage potential risks must be documented. See section 10 for further details.

Generally, mammalian animals other than dogs, such as cats, rabbits and rodents should not be brought onto the hospital premises unless agreement has been reached with the Ward/Department Lead in conjunction with the patient's consultant and the Infection Control team.

4.10 **Non-Mammals**

Non-mammalian animals such as snakes, reptiles and spiders should not be brought onto the hospital premises under any circumstance.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Trust Board of Directors

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Trust has the necessary management systems in place to enable the effective implementation of this policy.

Director of Nursing/Director of OD and People

The Director of Nursing and the Director of OD and People, who are the owners of this Policy have executive responsibility for ensuring systems are in place to facilitate staff awareness of this document.

The Infection Control Team (ICT)

The ICT should provide any necessary advice on preventing the spread of infection through animal visits. The team has the responsibility to inform the Director of Nursing of any changes to infection control legislation which may affect this policy.

Ward / Department Managers

Ward and Departmental managers have a responsibility to follow this policy when considering requests for animals to enter their area.

It is also the responsibility of Ward/Department Managers to ensure that assistance dog users are made to feel welcome in their area and that all access needs are catered for. Should an assistance dog user be refused access to a ward or department, the Trust needs to ensure that this decision is based on appropriate and reasonable grounds.

Voluntary Services Manager

All PAT visits should be arranged with the Trust's Voluntary Services Manager and be coordinated in advance with relevant Ward and Departmental Managers. Copies of training and assessment certification and relevant insurance for PAT dogs will be recorded by the Trust's Voluntary Services Manager.

All Trust Employees and Volunteers

All Trust employees and volunteers should be aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities.

6. General Guidance for All Animal Visits

- 6.1 The majority of cases of animals visiting the Trust will be assistance dogs accompanying their owners.
- 6.2 Working/assistance animals should be identifiable by a specific coat or harness. Should it be unclear whether an animal is in service, the Trust employee must seek clarity from the animal's owner.
- 6.3 Trust employees are not permitted to bring their pets onto the hospital premises.
- 6.4 Visitors are not permitted to bring their pets onto the hospital site other than under circumstances described in the policy and animals should never be left unattended in a vehicle.

7. Animal Welfare

7.1 Health of the Animal

Any animal that is visibly ill e.g. suffering from diarrhoea or vomiting, should not be brought onto the hospital premises.

7.2 Age Restrictions

It is not acceptable for any animal to visit the hospital if it is an infant/puppy (under 6 months old), heavily pregnant, or has recently given birth.

7.3 Food and Water

Animals should be provided with clean drinking water. Owners should be encouraged to bring a drinking bowl with them. Food should not normally be given to visiting animals unless the visit is for an extended period of time. If necessary, dogs should feed from a clean bowl provided by the owner.

7.4 Stress and Anxiety

Even well-trained animals can suffer from stress and anxiety when put into an unfamiliar and strange environment. Should an animal be showing signs of stress or agitation, it must be removed from the environment immediately.

8. Assistance Animals

- 8.1 These animals provide support in a range of ways that help their owner's access services and maintain independence.

8.2 Unless there is a clinical or health and safety reason why an animal cannot be admitted into an area (see section 12), assistance animals should be permitted to accompany their owners at all times while at the Trust.

Given that assistance animals will most likely accompany patients and visitors for short periods of time (for an outpatient's appointment or to visit a relative etc.) there is usually no need for formal prior arrangements to be made.

8.3 However for any assistance animal visit the following principles should apply:

- The animal must be properly supervised by its owner.
- Staff must wash their hands after handling the animal.
- The animal should not come into contact with open wounds.
- The animal must not be allowed access to any kitchens or food preparation areas.
- If the animal urinates or defecates it is the responsibility of the clinical staff to ensure that the substance is cleaned up immediately, using appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Clinical staff must inform domestic services if any further cleaning is required (e.g. if carpets are soiled).
- It is imperative that the owner organises people to walk the animal regularly for exercise and for toileting purposes if they are unable to.

9. Pets as Therapy (PAT) Animals

9.1 PAT animals belong to volunteers who have trained them sufficiently to be accredited by the Pets as Therapy organisation. PAT animal visits must be arranged by Voluntary Services Manager on behalf of or in conjunction with a relevant ward or department.

9.2 PAT animals should remain with their owners whilst on site and remain on a lead at all times. These animals can be stroked and interacted with, but should a member of staff feel the animal or patients are becoming stressed, the visit should be ended immediately.

9.3 For any PAT visit the following principles should apply:

- Visits must be by prior arrangement and appointment only.
- It may be necessary to postpone visits if circumstances on the day dictate.
- The animal must be properly supervised by its registered owner at all times.
- Staff and patients must wash their hands after handling the animal.
- Staff must identify whether there are immunosuppressed or otherwise vulnerable patients. If such risk is identified the animal must be kept away from the patients at risk or even be excluded from that area.
- Animals should not come into contact with open wounds.
- The animal must not be allowed access to any kitchens, or food preparation areas

- The animal should not be fed on the premises.
- The animal must be removed if showing any signs of illness.
- If the animal urinates or defecates, it is the responsibility of the clinical staff to ensure that the substance is cleaned up immediately using appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Clinical staff must inform Domestic Services if any further cleaning is required (e.g. if carpets are soiled.)

10. Security Animals

- 10.1 Should security animals be required to enter Trust property this should be in agreement with the Trust's Senior Management.
- 10.2 If it is necessary for a security animal to enter a clinical area, it must remain under the control of the owner/supervisor at all times. Patients contact should be minimised to reduce the risk of infection.
- 10.3 Should the security dog/animal be required to enter prohibited area as defined in section 12, this will only be permitted for as short a period as is necessary and in exceptional circumstances.

11. Long Stay and Terminally Ill Patients

- 11.1 There may be occasions when a long-stay or terminally ill patient would gain benefit from a visit from their own pet. This policy should be adhered to in such situations.
- 11.2 Household pets are not usually trained to cope with the noise, sights and smells of a hospital therefore any visit should be arranged for quieter times of the day.
- 11.3 If small enough, the animal should be transported in a purpose-built carrier and should always be accompanied by a friend or relative who is familiar with the animal.
- 11.4 The pet should be exercised prior to entering the hospital premises.
- 11.5 Only the owner/patient should have contact with the pet.
- 11.6 A risk assessment with input from the ICT ward/department lead must be carried out prior to all such visits, ([Appendix A – Risk Assessment Form](#))

12. Trust Employee's Pets

- 12.1 Trust employees are not permitted to bring their pets onto the hospital premises under any circumstances.

13. Restricted Areas

- 13.1 Owners of assistance animals are taught about animal hygiene so as to minimise health risks. Assistance animals are therefore welcome in most areas of the Trust.
- 13.2 However there are occasions where it is not appropriate for assistance or PAT animals to enter an area because of infection control or safety concerns. The reasoning behind such decisions must always be discussed with the animal's owner.

13.3 On this basis assistance and PAT animals will not be permitted into the following areas:

- Operating theatres including anaesthetic and recover rooms
- Any clinical procedure rooms
- Endoscopy
- Neonate Intensive Care Unit
- Maternity
- Any area used for cooking or food preparation
- Other areas that are kept sterile or clinically clean by default.

13.4 Consideration of other vulnerable patients must be undertaken at all times and the issue of whether or not it is appropriate for an assistance /PAT animal to be allowed into an area should be assessed on an individual basis by the Ward / Department Lead, responsible consultant and the ICT.

14. Provision for the Assistance Dog in the Event of Justifiable Separation

14.1 If it is absolutely necessary to separate the owner and their assistance dog, the period of separation should be kept as short as possible. The assistance dog should be left as near as possible to their owner. A quiet area should be identified where the assistance dog can remain out of the way of staff and patients and where they can lie quietly.


14.2 Where Assistance Dogs are separated from their owner and hence “not working” their harness or working jackets should be removed.

15. Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness of this policy

15.1 This will be monitored by the OD and People Directorate. Our People managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy and procedure.

16. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and was presented to the ratifying committee at the time of approval.

Appendix	Description	File
A	Risk Assessment Form	https://mg.salisbury.nhs.uk/media/3534/appendix-a-risk-management-form.doc  Appendix A - Risk Management Form.doc

Post Holder /Author Responsible for Policy:	Head of Employee Relations and Policy
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