Assistance Dog Policy

Northdown Surgery & Dashwood Medical Centre

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Assistance Dog Policy

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## Purpose and definitions

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and assurance to patients that Northdown Surgery & Dashwood Medical Centre are committed to continually providing high quality healthcare for all patients and supporting the staff who provide this care. The aim of the policy is to ensure that all patients, staff, and visitors, including those with assistance dogs, have appropriate access to the practice.

* Assistance dogs are specially trained dogs that have been trained by accredited member organisations of Assistance Dogs International and the International Guide Dog Federation.
* Assistance dogs include:
  + Guide dogs.
  + Hearing dogs.
  + Medical alert dogs.
  + Pet as therapy dogs.

All patients regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, culture, cognitive function, sexual orientation, or marital status have the right to have their privacy and dignity respected.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Northdown Surgery & Dashwood Medical Centre, contractors, seconded staff, placements, and agency staff.

## Roles, rights, and responsibilities

**Patients**

All patients have a right to be able to access the premises safely including those who need the support of assistance dogs.

All assistance dog handlers should:

* Ensure the dog is fit and well and care regimes follow guidance provided by Assistance Dogs UK.
* Ensure the dog does not wander freely throughout the practice.
* Follow infection control policy.

**All staff**

All staff will be aware of the policy and ensure that assistance dogs are welcome in the practice.

**Clinical staff**

During consultations and examinations clinical staff will avoid contact with the assistance dog if possible.

**Practice manager**

To update the policy, ensure that it is aligned with national guidelines, distribute appropriately, and ensure that staff are trained at induction and at regular intervals so that they are aware of the principles of allowing access to assistance dogs and the content of the practice policy.

## Principles of this policy

This policy adheres to local and national guidance and policy, including the Equality Act 2010.

**Access**

All people with assistance dogs will be welcome to access the practice, with the exception of any high-risk areas. Water will be provided for the dog if required.

**Identifying assistance dogs**

All staff will be able to identify assistance dogs. Assistance dogs can be identified by:

* A collar or harness.
* A dog jacket.
* ID tags on the dog’s collar.
* An identification card carried by the handler.

**Infection control procedures**

Infection control procedures will be in place and effective hand hygiene will be performed if practice staff come into contact with an assistance dog.

If the dog fouls it will be cleaned in line with the blood and body fluid spillages policy.

**Safety**

A risk assessment will be carried out and any risk of harm to the owner, dog, or other staff will be identified and reduced.

**Patients with allergies or phobias**

As far as possible any other patients who are known to have allergies, phobias, or other concerns about dogs will have their needs and concerns addressed. This may include, but is not limited to, ensuring that any appointments are scheduled for times when an assistance dog is not expected to be in the practice.

## Distribution

Employees will be made aware of this policy via TeamNet.

Patients will be made aware of this policy using patient leaflets and on the practice website.

## Training

All staff will be given training on how to recognise assistance dogs and the related practice policy at induction and at regular intervals thereafter.

Any training requirements will be identified within an individual's Personal Development Reviews. Training is available in the Training module within TeamNet.

**Equality and diversity impact assessment**

In developing this policy, an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken. An adverse impact is unlikely, and on the contrary the policy has the clear potential to have a positive impact by reducing and removing barriers and inequalities that currently exist.

If, at any time, this policy is considered to be discriminatory in any way, the author of the policy should be contacted immediately to discuss these concerns.

**Monitoring and reporting**

Monitoring and reporting in relation to this policy are the responsibility of the practice manager.

The following sources will be used to provide evidence of any issues raised:

* PALS.
* Complaints.
* Significant and learning events.

Any incidents relating to assistance dogs will be monitored via incident reporting.

## Summary of NHS legal and mandatory documentation

Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

## Versions

Document review history

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version number** | **Author/reviewer** | **Summary of amendments** | **Issue date** |
| 1.0 | Clarity Informatics | Policy written | 28.5.2020 |
| 2.0 | Clarity Informatics | Reviewed and updated | 11.2.2022 |
| 3.0 |  |  |  |
| 4.0 |  |  |  |
| 5.0 |  |  |  |
| 6.0 |  |  |  |
| 7.0 |  |  |  |

**Bibliography**

Royal College of Nursing. [Working with dogs in health care settings](https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-007925)

Gateshead Health NHS Trust. [Animals on hospital premises](https://www.qegateshead.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/users/user10/IC36%20Animals%20on%20Hospital%20Premises%20Policy%20v1.pdf)

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde. [Assistance Dog Policy](http://live.nhsggc.org.uk/media/233306/nhsggc_policy_assistance_dog.pdf)

[Assistance Dogs UK](https://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/)