

**TRUST WIDE POLICY**

**PAT DOGS AND SERVICE DOGS  
(Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs for the Deaf)  
VISITING POLICY**

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Name and designation of policy author(s)	Clare James – Named Nurse for Safeguarding (Interim Author)
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October 2017	5.0	Sue Relph- Patient Experience Manager	Document reviewed minor changes
July 2020	6.0	Clare James – Named Nurse for Safeguarding	Policy reviewed and revised to meet new guidance by RCN – Working with Dogs in Health Care Settings

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Trust (CCC) believes in providing equal access to all those using its services. Assistance dogs can be used by people who have sight, hearing and other disabilities to give greater independence and part of that independence is that a person may have to bring a dog onto the hospital site.

The use of animals has been shown to have a beneficial outcome to some patients' emotional, physical and social wellbeing. Animals may provide benefits to the mental health of patients and help with relief of social isolation or boredom (Cherniack and Cherniack, 2014). Therapy dogs are also used as part of a patients' recovery plan whilst they are in hospital and is supported by the Pets as Therapy (PAT) Organisation.

Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Working Therapy Dogs are working dogs that have been trained as a mobility aid for people with visual or hearing and helping people with medical conditions and mental health issues too.

PAT Dogs have also been trained to provide therapy for patients recovering in hospital. The dogs are vaccinated, are checked by vets every six months, and groomed daily. Animals may carry microbes and parasites which are normal flora for them but can be transmitted to humans. Similarly, animals can be carriers of infectious pathogens which they may contract from patients (Khan and Farraq, 2000). The immunosuppressed patient group of a healthcare environment may be at higher risk from these organisms.

Under the Equality Act 2010, CCC is legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access to services. Additionally the Equality Act 2010 requires that all reasonable efforts be made to accommodate people's needs as long as patient and staff safety is not compromised.

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## 2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Clatterbridge Cancer Centre provides a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors allowing appropriate access under the Equality Act 2010.

Its aim is to minimise the risk and prevent cross contamination by establishing the processes that need to be adhered to if animals are coming into contact with patients and/or their environment, while confirming the situations where access for assistance and therapy dogs and animals are accepted in the hospital.

## 3.0 Scope

The guidance applies to staff, volunteers and patients. It ensures that staffs are fully aware of the contents and the measures required for promoting access for the benefit of patients and reducing the risk of cross infection.

*'In the event of an infection outbreak, flu pandemic or major incident, the Trust recognises that it may not be possible to adhere to all aspects of this document. In such circumstances, staff should take advice from their manager / Matron and all possible action must be taken to maintain ongoing patient and staff safety'*

## 4.0 Responsibilities

### Heads of Department/Ward Managers

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department or the Ward Manager to ensure that animal owners are made welcome within their area. Whenever it is not permissible, the hospital needs to justify grounds for failing to make the suggested reasonable adjustment.

They also have responsibility to ensure that any patients or visitors who may have an allergy or dislike or phobia of specific animals are informed if there is an expected visit of an animal within their ward or department.

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## **Staff**

All hospital staff has a responsibility to be aware of the guidance and ensure that an animal owner feels welcome upon arriving at the hospital. They also have responsibility to ensure that any patients or visitors who may have an allergy or dislike or phobia of specific animals are informed if there is an expected visit of an animal within their ward or department.

## **Animal owners**

It is appropriate to ask the owner of the animal to report to each department/reception area upon arrival. There should not be restriction for the animal in accompanying its owner in corridors, common or waiting areas, consulting rooms, and treatment rooms other than specified areas and wards.

## **Infection Control Team**

The team has a responsibility to offer advice to healthcare staff on the suitability of animal access and to inform Clatterbridge Cancer Centre of any changes to infection control legislation which may affect this guidance.

## **5.0 Laws & Regulations**

Working with Dogs in Health Care Settings (2019 revision) *A protocol to support organisations considering working with dogs in health care settings and allied health environments.*

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to refuse access to a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog except in the most exceptional circumstances.

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## 6.0 Definitions- Understanding the types of dogs that may visit health care settings

### Pet

A domestic or tamed animal or bird kept for companionship or pleasure. Pets are owned by individuals and will have varying levels of training and a range of temperaments.

### Assistance dogs

Assistance dogs are specially trained dogs working with an individual person to support them in a number of ways. These include:

- Guide dogs: supporting people with visual impairment or sight loss with guiding.
- Hearing dogs: supporting people with hearing loss or impairment.
- Assistance dogs: aiding mobility and support daily living such as undressing and picking dropped items up off the floor, opening and closing doors etc.

### Medical alert dogs

Medical alert dogs are trained to constantly monitor their partner's health condition and alert to impending episodes where their health would acutely deteriorate. The alert allows the person to take preventative action to avoid/limit the episode, or to ensure their safety; thus reducing the risk of injury during the episode.

For example:

- Type 1 diabetes,
- Addison's disease,
- Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTs),
- Seizures,
- Severe allergies.

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### Autism assistance dogs

The concept was born from Dogs for Good's pioneering work in training assistance dogs to meet the needs of children and adults with autism and their family.

### Dogs supporting people who have mental health issues

A psychiatric assistance dog (PAD) is a service dog that is trained to assist its handler (owner) who has been diagnosed with a mental health condition such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder.

### Animal Assisted Intervention and Visiting Dogs

Animal Assisted Activity (AAA) is the term used where a handler brings a dog to the patient/ resident for general interaction. These dogs are usually owned by the person who is their handler. Owners volunteer their services to provide visits to groups of people or individuals in health and social care settings and schools, to allow people to stroke the dog or interact with them to help them feel connected. This is the most common form of animal assisted intervention.

### Dogs Registered with a visiting AAI dog organisation.

These dogs are pet dogs which have been assessed by a visiting AAI dog organisation (e.g., Pets as Therapy) and are accompanied by their owners who are registered volunteers with the organisation. Owners and their dogs volunteer their services to provide visits to groups of people or individuals in health/ social care settings and schools, to allow people to stroke the dog or interact with them to help them feel connected

### PAT dogs / Pets as Therapy dogs

Dogs that are specially trained and screened animals that can make therapeutic visits to hospitals and other healthcare environments.

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## 7.0 Main Body of Policy

As noted above, it is unlawful to refuse access to a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog except in the most exceptional circumstances. It is therefore important for the health care professional to check that the dog meets the recognised criteria to be classed as a bona fide assistance dog.

Assistance Dogs (UK) is the umbrella organisation for charities that train assistance dogs that have been assessed and accredited against the standards set out by the International Guide Dogs Federation (IGDF) and/or Assistance Dogs International (ADI)

### **Assistance Dogs**

The majority of cases of animals visiting the Trust will be assistance dogs accompanying their owners.

All Assistance dogs:

- Are instantly recognised by the harness they wear and the identification tag on their collar.
- Handlers should carry an identification card that will display the name of the relevant assistance dog charity they are associated with.
- Will undergo rigorous health checks on a regular basis, have a strict set diet and are monitored regularly to ensure they meet the criteria of an assistance dog.
- Will not wander freely throughout premises and its movement should be restricted by keeping it on a lead and in harness.
- Are working whenever the harness is in place, when removed this would indicate a rest period for the dog.

### **Pets as Therapy (PAT) Animals**

PAT dogs belong to volunteers who have trained them sufficiently to be passed by Pets as Therapy. PAT dog visits will be arranged by Volunteer Services on behalf of or in conjunction with a relevant ward or department.

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PAT dogs should remain with their owners whilst on site and remain on lead at all times. These dogs can be stroked and interacted with, but should a member of staff feel the dog or patients are stressed; the visit should be ended appropriately. Appendix 1 shows the guidance all PAT animal owners must adhere to within the Trust.

**PAT DOGS;**

- ✓ The dog **MUST** be fully trained.
- ✓ The registration of the PAT animal a copy of the registration will be kept with Voluntary Services
- ✓ The animal will be identifiable by an ID disc and the owner's identification label
- ✓ The animal must have completed a temperament assessment.
- ✓ The owner to have public liability insurance
- ✓ The dog must be regularly vaccinated, de-wormed and treated against fleas/other infestations.
- ✓ The dog must be house trained and kept on a leash and accompanied by their owners at all times.
- ✓ The dog must be capable of confinement to designated areas of the healthcare environment e.g. day room, relatives' room, etc. This room to have cleanable surfaces, including flooring and furnishings.
- ✓ The dog must be excluded from clinical treatment rooms and kitchens at all times.
- ✓ The dog must be kept away from other clients with phobias or allergies.
- ✓ The dog must not be excited or provoked and must only visit patients where permission has been sought. This must be recorded.
- ✓ The dog must be discouraged from licking patients/staff.
- ✓ Toileting must be outside of the building and to have been to the toilet prior to entering the building
- ✓ If the animal passes urine, defecates indoors, this must be cleaned up by clinical staff ,using a hypochlorite solution and wearing PPE

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- ✓ The dog will not visit a patient that is nursed in isolation due to IPC

Before the PAT DOG visits patients, the ward clinical team will;

- ✓ Review immunosuppressed status of the patient visited and other patients on the ward by medical staff in consultation with IPC team.
- ✓ Not allow the visit of the PAT dog if the ward has been closed due to IPC issues.
- ✓ Ensure that there is strict hand hygiene with soap and water, hands being dried by disposable paper towels, by staff, patient and visitors that come in contact with the dog.
- ✓ Not allow the dog to be in contact with any patient that has open wounds, wounds should be covered prior to the visit
- ✓ Not allow visits during meal times

## **Pets**

From time-to-time people may make a request to bring a pet dog to visit a person in a health care setting. While we understand that people may value having time with their pet dog, it is important to recognise that many health care settings are unfamiliar environments for most dogs and can be very unsettling for a dog that has not been temperamentally screened and trained to deal with a very wide range of environments.

Similarly, it is difficult for hospital staff to have to deal with the requirement to assess a dog's health and vaccination history. It is therefore recommended that, except in exceptional circumstances, pet dogs are not permitted into health care settings.

Exceptions may well be in place in a hospice and some care settings where it is both appropriate and desirable for someone to see their pet dog.

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### **Exclusions to animal visits**

There are occasions where it is not appropriate for an animal to be permitted. CCC can prevent an assistance dog from entering the area within the hospital on the ground of Health and Safety by proving:

- ✓ They genuinely believe that there is a risk of endangering the disabled person or others, e.g. infection control risk, if other patients have an allergy to dogs.
- ✓ The belief is 'reasonable', e.g. it is not appropriate for a Guide Dog belonging to a patient to stay overnight in the hospital, or if the patient is critically ill.
- ✓ The risk cannot be overcome by a 'reasonable adjustment', which the service provider has to consider making, e.g. no side room or visitors' room for the patient or visitor to use while the dog is present and a patient on the same ward has an allergy to dogs.

However there are specific exclusions to which animals including working dogs will have prohibited access: -

- ✓ Haematology/Oncology Wards(7X + 7Y)
- ✓ Transplant Unit (10Z)
- ✓ Clinical Decision Unit (CDU)
- ✓ Brachy Theatre

### **Welfare of the animal**

- If the dog becomes visibly ill, e.g. suffering from diarrhoea or vomiting, it should not be permitted to enter the hospital.
- Animals should be provided with clean drinking water. Owners should be encouraged to bring a drinking bowl with them. Food should normally not be given to visiting animals.
- If the dog is showing signs of stress and agitation, it should be removed from the environment and taken to a safe place to calm down.
- If staff are concerned about the conduct or behaviour of the animal owner

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this should be escalated to the Voluntary Services Manager /Patient Experience team

### **Hygiene and Cleanliness**

All staff must ensure good hand washing practice as per the hand hygiene policy prior to and after contact with an Assistance Dog. All patients who come into contact with or handle an assistance dog should be encouraged to wash their hands. All areas where an Assistance Dog has been should be cleaned on a daily basis as part of the usual schedule.

If the animal urinates/defecates on the premises, this should be cleaned as human waste would be, using the appropriate PPE.

### **Justifiable Separation**

In the event that it is necessary that the owner and the dog have to be separated, that period should be kept to the shortest time possible. The dog should be left as near as possible to the owner.

### **Moving around the hospital**

When the owner is being transported on a trolley or wheelchair and the dog is not needed for mobility, they could still accompany the owner; the harness should be removed to indicate to the dog that it is not being worked.

### **Emergencies and unplanned admissions**

If the owner is admitted as an emergency case and is suffering from shock or is unconscious, it is likely that the dog will show signs of distress. In such cases the local Guide Dogs for the Blind Association should be contacted and they would arrange for the dog to be looked after. Contact details are within the appendices.

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### **Planned admissions**

Generally owners will not wish for the dog to stay with them in the restricted environment of the hospital, and for planned admission most owners will have made arrangements for their dog's care. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association would be able to arrange for the dog to visit the owner.

### **Staff Member Working With an Assistance Dog**

In situations where a member of staff is required to have their assistance dog at work to carry out their duties, this should be dealt with sensitivity and all reasonable measures taken to facilitate this. However it is recognised that some high risk clinical areas are not suitable for an animal to be present.

In this situation the person in charge of the area should undertake a risk assessment in conjunction with the infection control team to assess the risk associated with clinical activities undertaken and the presence of an assistance dog.

### **Religious and Cultural Considerations**

The Trust does not consider religious objections as reasonable objections, as the Trust does not consider that an objection on religious grounds would justify its failure to comply with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, in accordance with the limited justification defence set out in the Equality Act 2010.

### **Allergies and Phobias**

Consideration must be given to the sensitivity some patients may have to dogs, including allergies and any personal anxieties. Actions should be taken to minimise the risk to all patients in the vicinity.

## **8.0 Training**

The policy will be available on the hospital intranet site. It is the responsibility of all managers/departmental heads to ensure that their staffs are made aware of

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this policy. Patients can be made aware of the guidance through the PALS service.

## 9.0 Monitoring Arrangements

Minimum requirement to be monitored	Lead	Frequency of Report of Compliance	Reporting arrangements	Lead(s) for acting on Recommendations
<i>Employees are aware of the policy and how to access it.</i>	Patient Experience Lead	Annual	Policy audit report to be presented at ;  Patient Experience And Inclusion Group	Ward and Department Managers
<i>Assistance dogs have appropriate access.</i>				
<i>Pets as therapy dogs have appropriate access</i>				

## 10.0 References

*Open your doors to guide dogs*

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/>

*The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association* <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/>

*Community Teams*

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/contact-us/local-mobility-teams>

*Liverpool* 0345 1430211

*Hearing Dogs for Deaf People* - <http://www.hearingdogs.org.uk/>

*Equality Act 2010* - <http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/>

*Pets as Therapy* - <https://petsastherapy.org/>

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Cherniack, E & Cherniack, A, (2014) The Benefits of Pet and Animal-assisted Therapy to the Health of Older Individuals, Current Gerontology and Geriatrics Research, November

## 11.0 Appendices

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## Appendix 1 – PAT Therapy animals’ guidance notes

### Voluntary Services Department - Guidance for PAT volunteers

#### Before your visit;

1. Ensure your pet is suitably washed and groomed your pet before each visit
2. Do not visit if your pet is/or has recently been unwell
3. If inclement weather please brush and dry your pet before the visit
4. Make sure your pet has been given the chance to go to the toilet before each visit
5. Ensure you and your dog has your Pets as Therapy ID tags on you before entering the hospital
6. Always wear your volunteer badge within the hospital campus.
7. Report to the Voluntary Services Department before your volunteering session to sign.
8. Check the board for any PAT requests and complete the WEEKLY log and REQUEST log sheets
9. Check the volunteer request board for details of ward closures or moves.
10. Ensure your dog is fully registered and has been assessed by Pets as Therapy
11. Provide Volunteer Services with a copy of the completed PAT7 form and an annual copy of your Pat ID.

#### During your visit

1. On your first visit to the hospital with your dog you will need to attend a short induction in the public areas, i.e. the Concourse, Wards and Clinics to help your dog get used to the hospital environment.
2. You will be accompanied by a local PAT coordinator
3. When you go to the ward area, always request entry, and ask the person in charge if it is OK to visit, and if there are any patients or areas to avoid.

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4. Do not visit patients in isolation (e.g. barrier nursing) or those with potential or known infections present . Some wards insist you are accompanied throughout your visit, e.g. you may be asked to be accompanied by a play specialist
5. Wash your hands often, and encourage patients to use the alcohol gel before and after patting the pet.

**This is VERY important!**

1. Make sure you comply with the bare below the elbow policy, ensuring that you roll your sleeves up to elbow level or wear a short sleeved top; remove your wrist watch and any jewellery below elbow level.
2. You are permitted to wear a plain band ring.
3. Keep items you might need with you at all times, including biscuits, plastic bags, tissues etc.
4. Please ensure your pet is closely supervised at all times
5. Please follow the Trust's code of conduct standard.
6. Please note that this role can be emotionally challenging: if you see or hear anything that concerns you please speak to the nurse in charge or the Voluntary Services Manager
7. Carry a dog poo bag in case your dog has an accident and alert a member of staff
8. Please do not take personal photos of patients/visitors during your visit

**Do not:**

1. Make visits to patients who have open or uncovered sores or wounds. Any sores or open wounds should be covered by a dressing and if they are not, it may not be appropriate for you to visit that patient
2. Enter any areas of food preparation

**You must avoid visiting at mealtimes:**

- a. Breakfast is between 8am and 9am;

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b. Lunch is at midday until 1pm and

c. Dinner at 5pm until 6pm.

Please check these times before visiting as they vary from ward to ward.

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