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## CONSULTATION AND DISTRIBUTION RECORD

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| Consultation Process / Stakeholders: | • |
| Distribution: | • |

## CHANGE RECORD

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Version No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Risk Dept</td>
<td>GDPR statement added in section 3 and updated name of Data Protection Act</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>K. Torrance</td>
<td>Extended until April 2021 (COVID-19).</td>
<td>1</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 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 for assistance dogs to the operational structure of a modern health service. NHS Lanarkshire 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. AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

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 Equality Act 2010. Will we do this through reference to the following specific aims:

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

3. SCOPE

3.1 Who is the Policy intended to Benefit or Affect?

The policy applies to all employees and service providers of NHS Lanarkshire in all locations, patients, carers and visitors.

- This policy applies to all NHS premises in NHS Lanarkshire including wards, outpatient departments, GP surgeries and dental surgeries
- This policy applies to home visits
- This policy applies to Out of Hours services
- Throughout this policy, Person in Charge can include Managers, Senior Charge Nurses and Nursing Staff.

3.2 Who are the Stakeholders?

Staff, patients, service users, carers, guide dog owner (as they’re not necessarily the same, the guide dog owner could be the patient’s family member), service providers and visitors NHS Lanarkshire sites
Definitions:

Recognising an Assistance Dog:

- **Canine Partners**: canine partners provide practical day to day for people with physical disabilities with tasks that may be difficult to perform. They also provide increased confidence, independence and social interaction. Identification: **purple jacket**.

- **Dog A.I.D (assistance in disability)**: empowers their clients to train their own pet dog to assist them with daily tasks – tailored to the individual. Identification: **red jacket**.

- **Dogs for Good**: assistance dogs for adults with physical disabilities (age 17+), children with physical disabilities (age 7 – 16) and children with autism (age 3-16). Identification: **green jacket**.

- **Guide Dogs**: assist adults and young people who are blind or who are partially sighted. Identification: **white** working harness with **yellow reflectors** and tags on their collar. Note: A Guide Dog with a **red and white harness** indicates the owner is deafblind.

- **Hearing Dogs**: assist adults with a hearing impairment (aged 17+) and hearing dogs for children with a hearing impairment (ages 7-12). Identification: **burgundy jacket**

- **Medical Detection Dogs**: specialist dogs trained to detect the odour of human disease. Identification: **red jacket**.

- **Support Dogs**: a national charity (Mainland UK) dedicated to increasing independence and quality of life for people with various medical conditions. Identification: **blue jacket**.

Some dogs are dual-purpose dogs, for example, a guide and hearing dog.

**All assistance dogs**:  
- Handlers should carry an identification card that will display the name of the relevant assistance dog charity they are associated with.
- Are working animals; please therefore do not touch or feed the dog;
- Are trained to toilet on command and are therefore unlikely to foul in a public place;
- Will sit or lie quietly beside their handler;
- Will not wander freely throughout premises and its movement should be restricted by keeping it on a lead and in harness;
- Are highly trained working dogs and not pets;
- Are working whenever the harness is in place, when removed this would indicate a rest period for the dog.

For further details see link: [http://www.assistedogs.org.uk/members/](http://www.assistedogs.org.uk/members/)

**Throughout this policy, Person in Charge can include Managers, Senior Charge Nurses and Nursing Staff.**
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“NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.”

4. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

Key points to consider:

- Consideration should be given to the type of appointment, length of visit, environment and transport services when arranging an appointment for an assistance dog handler.
- It is important you introduce yourself to the patient before addressing them, and let them know if you are walking away.
- It is also important to advise the patient of any delays and keep them informed of the situation.
- If there are delays staff should consider provision of water and toilet relief for the dog.
- It is important to give some orientation to the handler in relation to your services environment e.g. verbal explanation, description of layout in particular information regarding fire exits or toilets.
- It is the guide dog owner’s responsibility to look after the dog, if they are able to do so.

4.1 Assistance dogs in NHS Hospital and NHS Community Settings.

4.2 Inpatient services
It is not customary for assistance dogs to be able to stay in hospital with their owners. The care of assistance dogs should be discussed with the patient where possible prior to hospital admission and alternative arrangements for care of the dog outwith the NHS setting should be considered.

In cases of unplanned care, where family or friends are unable to look after the dog, please approach the relevant assistance dog charity to make arrangements for the care of the dog during this time. For further details: http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/members/

4.3 Outpatient Area or Primary Care
Assistance dogs can generally accompany the patient to outpatient or primary care visits. However, if the patient requires tests or treatment the patient may prefer that the assistance dogs be left in a suitable area for a short period. The assistance dogs can be kept in a quiet area, office or duty room while the patient is having any procedures or treatments.

If the patient is being transferred for a test, for example to X-Ray in a chair or trolley, the assistance dog can be led by its owner or a member of staff and should be able to accompany the patient.

4.4 Home Visits
Assistance Dog Policy

Assistance dogs can generally accompany the patient during any home care visits. However, if the patient requires treatment or tests and if the patient or clinician prefers that the assistance dog be left in another suitable area for a short period, the assistance dog can be kept in a quiet area, in another room in the house while the patient is having any procedures or treatments.

This should only be done with the clear and agreed consent of the patient and guide dog owner (as they’re not necessarily the same, the guide dog owner could be the patient’s family member/carer).

4.5 Visitors
The visitor with an assistance dogs should be greeted on arrival to the clinical area and the Person in Charge will communicate any limitations to the visitor.

Assistance dogs should be allowed into wards/residencies with the agreement of the Person in Charge of the area. Consideration should be given to respect the needs of others as well as to the assistance dogs’ owners, this can be a sensitive aspect of access and tact should be used with all involved.

4.6 NHS Lanarkshire Employees
Where a need/request to allow an assistance dog has been identified through the Recruitment process or Sickness Absence policy- with regard to reasonable adjustment- the organisation will endeavor to accommodate this, subject to compliance with other relevant provisions.

4.7 Access
It is the decision of the Person in Charge as to whether it is appropriate for the dog to be allowed into a particular clinical area. The Person in Charge should consider whether the care needs of other patients present a reasonable objection to an assistance dogs being present in the area. Reasonable objections include:

- medical conditions or allergies associated with dogs
- mental health issues with dogs including reasonable fear of dogs

Objections under religious beliefs are not considered reasonable. This may be a concern for Muslim patients as within the Muslim faith dogs are generally seen in a negative context. In 2003, the Sharia Council, based in the United Kingdom, ruled that a ban on dogs does not apply to Guide Dogs.

When there are concerns regarding the dogs presence, staff should try and make adjustments. For example, if the patient could be cared for in another area of the ward or side room, if one is available, this should be considered and it shouldn’t necessarily always be the guide dog owner having to move.

4.8 Justifiable Separation
Infection control and patient safety remain paramount. Assistance dogs will generally be permitted access into wards and other hospital areas, GP surgeries and clinics with the exception of any high risk area.

High risk areas include:
- High Dependency Wards
- Intensive Care Units
- Operating Theatres
- Day Surgery Units (primary recovery rooms)
- Haematology Wards
- Oncology Wards
- Transplant Units
- Neonatal unit
- Renal dialysis units

The care of assistance dogs should be discussed with the patient and where patients will use ‘high risk’ services then alternative arrangements for care of the animal should be considered:

However, where this is not possible,
- The assistance dogs can be kept in a quiet area, office or duty room.
- Check with other members of staff if this is appropriate.
- The dogs can be left alone but should be checked on a regular basis
- In the event of separation of the assistance dogs from its owner, staff should ensure this is for as short a time as possible.

4.9 Hygiene and Infection Control

Staff, patients and visitors must ensure they follow hand washing and infection control procedures at all times. Assistance dogs owners should also be given hand gel and follow the same infection control procedures as all visitors.

Areas where assistance dogs have visited should be cleaned on a daily basis as part of the usual cleaning schedule. If the assistance dogs accidentally fouls within the NHS premises blood and body fluid spillage policies should be consulted and followed. Cleaning of the area should be carried out as per existing protocols.

4.10 Risk

Organisational risk associated with assistance dogs can be broken into 3 principle areas with associated controls:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Control</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced patient access and non-compliance with legislation</td>
<td>Compliance with content of policy and reasonable adjustment</td>
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Assistance Dog Policy

| Infection control concerns and potential dog fouling | Compliance with existing infection control procedures including hand washing and decontamination procedures in line with NHSL policy to support best practice |
| Inappropriate impact of dog presence or behaviour to others i.e. patient allergies or dog bite | Safe and considered conduct by staff and dog |

4.11 Allergies

Some individuals are allergic to the fur, feathers and dander of certain animals. This often manifests itself as a rhinitis or wheeze. The ward/residency should be mindful of this and take appropriate action to minimise/prevent contact, which may include excluding the assistance dog from an area.

The ward should be mindful of this and take appropriate action if this occurs.

5. ROLES AND 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 Equality Act 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.
- Staff should have a clear understanding of the Policy. Staff should be aware of the different types of support provided by assistance dogs and the support needs of patients when the patient or visitor has been separated from the assistance dog.
- The best way to identify the needs of patients or visitors is to ask.
Assistance Dog Policy

- Are responsible for minimising the potential of cross infection.

(e) General responsibility
- Assistance dogs must be in good health, it is the guide dog owner’s responsibility to ensure that the dog is well groomed and in good health.
- They must not be fed by staff and patient allergies must be considered prior to their admittance to any area.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
   None identified

7. COMMUNICATION PLAN
   A communication plan will be developed to support the launch and the promotion of the Policy, targeting key staff groups including:
   - Facilities Managers
   - Practice Managers
   - Person in Charge
   - Reception Staff

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – Monitoring and Review
   Monitoring of the policy and guidance will be by exception, with routine monitoring of complaints through existing complaints arrangements within Directorates or Partnerships.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
   This policy meets NHS Lanarkshire’s EDIA. A completed copy has been sent to hina.sheikh@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

10. SUMMARY or FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)
    N/A

11. REFERENCES
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