

# THE ATRIUM HEALTH CENTRE

## PATIENT POLICY

**Title:** Assistance Dogs Policy

Review Date:

July 2022

Version:

1.1

## Introduction

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### Policy statement

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 permits assistance dogs to accompany their owners into most areas of medical facilities, as a service user or an employee.

It is unlawful for disabled people to be treated less favourably than other people, without justification, in areas such as service provision. Under the [DDA Section 21](#), service industries are legally obligated to make all reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access to their services. The DDA only recognises very limited circumstances in which there may be “justification” for treating a disabled person less favourably than other people.

## Guidance

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### Requirement

We are committed to providing services that are equally accessible and responsive to all sections of the community. To that effect, assistance dogs are welcome.

Assistance dogs may also be in training and visits to public spaces will be part of their training. Therefore, dogs under training may also be permitted to attend along with their walker or sponsor. This “owner” may not be disabled.

Dogs that are not assistance dogs **are not** permitted entry to the practice.

### Definition

An assistance dog is defined as a dog that has been specially trained to live with and accompany a disabled person carrying out such tasks as prompting them to take medication or assisting them to cross a road<sup>1</sup>.

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

- Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Support Dogs
- Dogs for the Disabled
- Canine Partners
- Dog A.I.D
- Medical Detection Dogs

Registered assistance dogs are working animals, not pets, and are relied on by their owners for independence. Each charity will have their own agreements outlining the expectations and responsibilities of the owner. They will also regularly monitor the owner and the dog to ensure their expectations are fulfilled.

Information about these charities can be found at [www.assistedogs.org.uk](http://www.assistedogs.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)

## **Policy**

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Assistance dogs are able to enter most areas of this practice.

However, a risk assessment has been conducted and it has been deemed that, for infection control purposes, the Treatment Room areas are not permissible for any assistance dog to enter.

In these circumstances, the owner will be requested to ensure that alternative arrangements are made for the short period whilst they are receiving treatment. In these instances, the patient should be advised that it is our wish to minimise any separation time from their dog.

### **Owner's responsibilities**

The owner has a responsibility to ensure that their assistance dog is well behaved and supervised throughout the visit. Additionally, they are to ensure that their dog:

- Is physically fit before visiting the practice. If pets become ill, diagnosis and treatment by a vet must be sought
- Is kept on a lead throughout the visit and is clearly identified as an assistance dog
- Is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- Does not come into contact with open wounds
- Is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not wet, muddy etc.
- Is exercised and has had its toileting and feeding requirements met
- Has claws trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches
- Is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness
- Has received the relevant inoculations and is wormed on a regular basis

### **Summary**

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While the Atrium Health Centre has a responsibility towards the person who requires an assistance dog, it has additional needs to ensure that both other patients and staff are also considered.

Therefore, a robust risk assessment has been raised that promotes compliance with DDA legislation whilst also complying with both IPC and HASAW requirements.