

Assistance Dogs at Work Policy

The Bristol Methodist District. (Charity Number 1134873)

First Issued	January 2025
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines our commitment to supporting staff who require an assistance dog at work and the steps that we take to facilitate this.
- 1.2 The policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

2 Importance of assistance dogs

- 2.1 An assistance dog is a dog that has been highly trained to assist people with a disability or a medical condition, both by carrying out practical tasks and supporting the individual's independence.
- 2.2 The assistance dog may be accredited by one of the organisations below and registered as a member of Assistance Dogs UK:
 - Guide Dogs;
 - Hearing Dogs for Deaf People;
 - Support Dogs;
 - Dogs for Good;
 - Canine Partners;
 - The Seeing Dogs Alliance;
 - Dog AID;
 - Autism dogs; and
 - Medical Detection Dogs.

(This list may not be exhaustive at the time of reading)

- 2.3 Some assistance dogs are owner trained. Assistance dogs support people with a wide range of disabilities, including those relating to visual, hearing or mobility impairments and conditions, for example epilepsy or autism.
- 2.4 Assistance dogs are fully trained working animals, not pets, and their owners rely on them for both independence and mobility. Assistance dog owners will have received full training on how to manage their animal.

3 Assistance dogs at work

- 3.1 We are committed to making the workplace a diverse and inclusive environment. As part of this commitment, we welcome where possible the opportunity to allow assistance dogs into the workplace.
- 3.2 We are also mindful of how this commitment also reflects our legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.3 If you ask to bring your assistance dog to work, your Line Manager will discuss your request with you, and if appropriate, seek advice from assistance dog associations to assess the arrangement.
- 3.4 If we agree to your request, we will make appropriate arrangements with you, including accommodating necessary changes to your working patterns.

4 Health and safety procedures

- 4.1 Your Line Manager, in conjunction with you, will conduct a risk assessment before your assistance dog accompanies you to work for the first time and at regular intervals.
- 4.2 This assessment will cover assistance dog-related aspects, for example emergency evacuation procedures, dog toileting, and any health and safety or hygiene considerations.
- 4.3 Consideration may also be given to implications for any staff who work near the assistance dog. *Where appropriate, we will work with our external human resource partner.*
- 4.4 Should you be taken ill while at work, you and your Line Manager will agree what procedures will be followed and whom should be contacted. We will also establish and practice emergency evacuation procedures.
- 4.5 Your dog's toileting requirements will be established in consultation with you. Such arrangements may be on or off our premises and we will ensure that there are safe and appropriate access routes to the established area.

5 Responsibilities

- 5.1 We will agree areas of responsibility before your dog accompanies you to work for the first time. The following are example outline responsibilities which we will discuss with you:

5.1.1 Employee:

- 5.1.1.1 Ensure that the dog meets training, health and the grooming standards of the assistance dog association.
- 5.1.1.2 Control the dog as required, to maximise support and minimise disruption.
- 5.1.1.3 Provide all necessary equipment for the dog's wellbeing.
- 5.1.1.4 Manage toileting breaks and water provision as required.
- 5.1.1.5 Ensure that, while working, the dog wears a jacket, harness or tabard to indicate to the animal and to others that it is on duty. When not working, the dog's jacket, harness or tabard should be removed, as this indicates to the dog and others that it is not working.

5.1.2 Colleagues:

- 5.1.2.1 Take instruction from you in relation to contact and approaching the dog.
- 5.1.2.2 Address you rather than the dog and limit contact with, and distractions for, the dog.
- 5.1.2.3 Follow the principles within this policy and raise any concerns with their Line Manager.

5.1.3 Line Managers:

- 5.1.3.1 Provide a suitable and safe location for the dog, close to your workstation if possible. The location should be draught-free of suitable temperature and away from distractions such as light or noise that may disrupt the dog.
- 5.1.3.2 Facilitate toileting and other wellbeing breaks as required and generally provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for you and the dog.
- 5.1.3.3 Provide appropriate levels of time off, for example, for dog training and veterinary visits, and accommodate visits from assistance dog associations.
- 5.1.3.4 Communicate with staff to help integrate the dog successfully and create an inclusive workplace culture.
- 5.1.3.5 Respect your confidentiality, particularly if the disability or health condition is non-visible.
- 5.1.3.6 Ensure that colleagues continue to fulfil their responsibilities.

6 Consideration for others

6.1 Allergies

- 6.1.1 If colleagues in the workplace have allergies or conditions, for example asthma, that may be affected by an assistance dog being nearby, we will discuss the situation with everyone affected to find the best way to accommodate all needs.
- 6.1.2 This may involve taking advice from assistance dog associations.

6.2 Religious beliefs

- 6.2.1 If colleagues in the workplace raise objections on religious grounds to the presence of an assistance dog, we will discuss these and try to find a resolution if possible.
- 6.2.2 However, it is unlikely that we will refuse access to an assistance dog based on religious objections.

7 Review

- 7.1 This policy may be reviewed at any time at the request of any member of staff, but it will be automatically reviewed two years after initial approval and thereafter on a biennial basis unless organisational changes, legislations, guidance, or non-compliance prompt an earlier review.

8 Definitions

- 8.1 The Bristol Methodist District ("we", "us", "our")
- 8.2 The Employee ("you", "your")

Document control box

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