

Trinity Medical Centre Pets/Assistance Dogs Policy

Introduction

This purpose of this policy is to set out a few simple principles for pets/assistance dogs on the premises.

The Equality Act makes it unlawful for disabled people to be treated less favourably than people to whom the disabilities do not apply although it does recognise limited circumstances in which there may be 'justification'.

The Practice is legally obliged to make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people have equal access to our services. Assistance dogs are a vital support to many individuals.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the restrictions of access to assistance dogs
- Reduce the potential for distress to owners of and the assistance dogs themselves
- Inform staff and other patients on the requirements for assistance dogs
- Inform staff on requirements for pets

Policy Statement

Trinity Medical Centre is committed to providing services that are equally accessible and responsive to all sections of the community.

Assistance dogs are welcome to have access to all areas of the practice with the exception of any high risk/confidential areas.

While any animal can be registered as an Emotional Support Animal (ESA), it's important to be aware that in the United Kingdom, health laws prohibit the entry of such animals into businesses. Emotional support animals do not have the same legal rights as assistance animals. Health and safety laws take priority over using an emotional support animal when accessing services.

All other pets are not permitted access to all areas of the practice due to health and safety and to preserve infection controls for the practice and other patients.

All practice staff should have a clear understanding of this policy and be aware of the different types of support provided by assistance dogs. It is important that staff recognise assistance dogs are working dogs and staff should try to minimise distractions.

Definition of Assistance Dog

An Assistance dog is one that has been specifically trained to assist a person with a specific disability and has been qualified by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK):

- Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Dogs for the Disabled
- Canine Partners
- Support Dogs

All assistance dogs will have identification, it is acceptable to ask to see this and for this to be recorded on patients record for future. It should be permitted to accompany its owner at all times with the exception of high risk/confidential areas.

Trinity Medical Centre Pets/Assistance Dogs Policy

Types of Assistance Dogs:

Guide Dogs assist people who are blind or are visually impaired. They usually wear a white working harness with yellow reflectors and tags on their collar.

Hearing Dogs assist people who are deaf or are hearing impaired. They usually wear a burgundy coloured coat with 'Hearing Dog' written on the coat.

A guide dog with a red and white harness indicates the owner is deafblind

Assistance Dogs, Support Dogs or Dogs for the Disabled assist people with many different tasks ranging from alerting people when their owner has a seizure, carrying items, loading and unloading a washing machine and many other tasks. They usually wear a purple coloured coat.

Hygiene and Cleanliness guidance

When an assistance dog is/has been on the practice premises, particular attention should be given to hygiene and cleanliness.

Hand Hygiene

All staff must ensure they undertake good hand washing with soap and water prior to and after contact with the assistance dog.

General Cleanliness

All areas of the practice the assistance dog has been should be cleaned thoroughly as well as all equipment that has come into contact with the assistance dog.

If necessary all animal fluid should be treated as human waste, PPE (Personal Protective equipment) should be worn.

General Guidance

If the patient feels it is necessary to walk around the practice accompanied by their assistance dog, the practice will look to accommodate that.

When it is known that an assistance dog will be accompanying a patient a warning message should be added to the patients EMIS record, so the clinician is aware. The Clinician will then need to ensure that the room is cleaned prior to any other patients attending an appointment in that room in case a patient has a Medical Condition or allergies associated to dogs.

Assistance Dog Owners Responsibilities

It is the owner's responsibility to ensure they inform Reception staff if the dog fouls inside the practice.