THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

ASSISTANCE DOGS POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

This University Policy and associated procedures were approved by the Health and Safety Committee on 22 May 2025 on behalf of the University of Sheffield Council and forms part of the Health and Safety Policy of the University of Sheffield.
The use of this Management Procedure and the incorporation of its requirements into working practices and activities will ensure that the University of Sheffield and its community achieve compliance with its legal duties with regard to health and safety

Table of significant changes since last review:

Section	Significant changes since the last review
	Incorporated Schools throughout the document
Appendix 1	The requirement of Public Liability insurance has been added.
Appendix 4	The risk assessment should consider the requirement of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

Date Created	September 2018	By	Health & Safety/Disability & Dyslexia Support Service
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Contents

1 Introduction 4

2 The University: Arrangements, Roles, and Responsibilities 4

3 Roles and Responsibilities: 5

3.1 Facilities (Accommodation & Commercial Services) 5

3.2 Facilities (Estates & Facilities Management) 5

3.3 Student Health, Wellbeing and Support Services 5

3.4 Heads of Academic Schools and Directors of Professional Services 5

3.5 Line Managers 5

3.6 Academic Supervisors 5

4 The Owner: Roles and responsibilities 6

5 Process for dealing with complaints and/or breaches of the policy 6

5.1 Complaints by assistance dogs' owners 6

5.2 Complaints about assistance dogs 7

5.3 Complaints about this policy 7

6 Appendix 1 - Emotional Support Animals 8

7 Appendix 2 - Assistance Dogs 9

8 Appendix 3 - Interacting with Assistance Dogs 11

9 Appendix 4 - Risk Assessment Considerations 12

10 Appendix 5 - Animals on Campus Approvals Process 14

1 Introduction

The University of Sheffield values the diversity of its workforce and student body and is committed to providing an environment that is welcoming for all.

This policy has been developed to address specific issues relating to assistance dogs on the University Campus and in Student Residences. It is also intended to raise awareness for staff, students and visitors of the issues relating to assistance dogs. *For information on emotional support animals, see Appendix 1.*

This policy aims to outline:

- the arrangements made to provide a welcoming and safe environment for assistance dogs and their owners.
- the roles and responsibilities within the University in relation to assistance dogs.
- the responsibilities of the owners of assistance dogs on University property.
- a process for dealing with issues and complaints if they arise.

More information on the definition of an assistance dog, as used in this policy, can be found in Appendix 2.

2 The University: Arrangements, Roles, and Responsibilities

The University makes the following arrangements in order to allow staff, students, and visitors with assistance dogs to enjoy the best possible experience:

- Spending pens are provided for the toilet needs of assistance dogs (for further information, contact Estates & Facilities Management: EFMHelpDesk@sheffield.ac.uk)
- On request, the University will provide familiarisation with and orientation on campus as part of induction.
- The University provides guidelines for staff and students on how to interact with assistance dogs. *This information can be found in Appendix 3.*
- The University is happy to listen to the suggestions of assistance dog owners as to how the University provision for assistance dogs could be improved.

3 Roles and Responsibilities:

3.1 Facilities (Accommodation & Commercial Services)

When a resident student has an assistance dog, the Accommodation Office is responsible for informing other students in Halls who are likely to come into contact with the assistance dog and for asking them to confirm that they would not be adversely affected by the presence of the dog.

Disability & Dyslexia Support Services will ensure that training/familiarisation is discussed with staff in Accommodation and Residence Life.

3.2 Facilities (Estates & Facilities Management)

Estates & Facilities staff will ensure the upkeep of Spending Pens is sufficient to ensure the health of the dog and the safety of the owner, including the provision of bins for dog refuse and the disposal of the refuse.

3.3 Student Health, Wellbeing and Support Services

Student Health, Wellbeing and Support Services will advise students with assistance dogs and signpost them to this policy to make them aware of the help provided by the University and their rights and responsibilities. If required, the Disability & Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) will liaise with the student's academic department/school and accommodation to ensure that any reasonable adjustments needed have been made. DDSS will also inform the Exams Team of students who will need an assistance dog in exams.

3.4 Heads of Academic Schools and Directors of Professional Services

Heads of Academic Schools and Directors of Professional Services are responsible for ensuring a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been carried out prior to assistance dogs coming on campus. They are also responsible for ensuring the risk assessment is reviewed at regular intervals (preferably every 12 months), when there are changes to the hazards in the workplace, or after an incident. *Considerations for risk assessment can be found in Appendix 4.*

3.5 Line Managers

Line Managers will ensure that staff with an assistance dog are aware of this policy, including their own responsibilities, and will work together with the member of staff to arrange any reasonable adjustments required. Line Managers will also ensure that other members of staff respond appropriately to the member of staff and the assistance dog. HR will provide support to Line Managers in addressing any issues that arise.

Line Managers should work with the assistance dog owner to ensure a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been produced and any control measures identified have been implemented. Assistance can also be sought from the University's Health & Safety Department.

3.6 Academic Supervisors

Academic Supervisors should work with the assistance dog owner to ensure a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been produced and any control measures identified have been implemented. Assistance can also be sought from the University's Health & Safety Department.

4 The Owner: Roles and responsibilities

The assistance dog is the responsibility of its owner, who must ensure that the assistance dog:

a) Is kept on a lead at all times when walking around the University premises.
b) Uses the Spending Pens provided by the University and does not allow it to foul the University paths or grounds; however, should it foul in other outside areas e.g., footpath, ensure this is cleaned up and disposed of in an external bin.
c) Have its requirements in relation to toileting and feeding met?
d) Does not enter other students' bedrooms, the shared toilets or shower rooms in Halls of Residence and University accommodation without permission.
e) Behaves in an appropriate manner at all times and does not disrupt others.
f) Has regular health checks, vaccinations, and an adequate standard of grooming.
g) Wherever possible, is clearly identifiable by the use of special collars and/or harnesses when on duty
h) Is covered by full public liability insurance (and provide a copy to the University if requested). adheres to the control measures identified in the risk assessment.

Access Restrictions
Assistance dog owners must respect access restrictions established by the University on grounds of health and safety e.g., laboratories.

The following action must be taken in the event of fouling:

In the unlikely event that the dog does foul inside University buildings, the owner must report this to an appropriate member of staff (e.g., a Facilities Assistant) to decide with Estates & Facilities Management to clean and sanitise the area.

5 Process for dealing with complaints and/or breaches of the policy

5.1 Complaints by assistance dogs' owners

If a student or member of staff with an assistance dog wishes to make a complaint about the treatment of themselves or their dog, they should raise this issue with the department/school in which the problematic treatment occurred. For example, if problems occur in student accommodation, it should be raised with Accommodation. If the problem occurs in the learning environment, it should be raised with the relevant academic department/school. The department/school in question will then investigate the issue.

Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally, including where appropriate the use of mediation. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the issue will be escalated and dealt with through staff or student disciplinary procedures, with reference to the Equality Act 2010.

5.2 Complaints about assistance dogs

If a student or member of staff wishes to make a complaint about the treatment of themselves or the dog or notices any breaches of this policy, they should also raise the issue with the department/school in which the problem occurred.

Again, every attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally with the dog's owner, including where appropriate the use of mediation. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or if the request to resolve the complaint is not complied with, the issue will be escalated and dealt with through staff or student disciplinary procedures.

5.3 Complaints about this policy

Complaints about the operation of the Policy should be made using the procedures set out in the relevant staff or student complaints procedure.

Appendix 1 - Emotional Support Animals

The University of Sheffield recognises the positive impact animals have on wellbeing and in providing emotional support assistance.

There is currently no recognised accreditation of emotional support animals. The University, therefore, reserves the right to refuse access to any animal at its discretion that is not accredited (as detailed in Appendix 2). However, in exceptional circumstances and when there is clear medical evidence, consideration will be given. Before bringing an emotional support animal on campus, a doctor's letter prescribing an emotional support animal to provide therapeutic emotional support must be provided to the Head of Department (HoD)/School (HoS). The HoD/HoS must ensure a *suitable and sufficient* risk assessment is carried out before authorising the emotional support animal to come onto campus, see Appendix 4 for more guidance.
The owner of the animal must arrange for public liability insurance and provide a copy to the HoD/HoS.

The owner of an emotional support dog must adhere to section 3 of this policy.

Appendix 2 - Assistance Dogs

Definition of Assistance Dog

For the purpose of this policy, an assistance dog is one which has been specifically trained to assist disabled people and which has been qualified usually by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK) or an equivalent organisation in another country. Assistance dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) or by an equivalent organisation in another country, have formal identification and are permitted to accompany their owners at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk). There is currently no definitive legal definition of 'assistance dog' in UK law but, in considering whether to allow an assistance dog on campus, the university would refer to section 173 of the Equality Act 2010

On the grounds of Health and Safety responsibilities to its staff, students and visitors, the University reserves the right to refuse access:

i. To a dog that is not qualified by one of the members of Assistance Dogs (UK).
ii. To dogs from other nations, which do not meet the full membership criteria of the established international assistance dog organisations – Assistance Dogs International, Assistance Dogs Europe, International Guide Dog Federation – or other such international bodies as may from time to time be recognised.
iii. For any other good reason.

Types of Assistance Dogs:
Guide Dogs assist people who are blind or are visually impaired.
Hearing Dogs assist people who are deaf or are hearing impaired.
Support Dogs for other disabled people.

An assistance dog can be trained to do many other tasks, which their owner may find difficult or impossible for example:

- Opening and closing doors
- Calling an ambulance
- Picking up objects
- Assisting with dressing and undressing.
- Accompanying their owner whilst shopping etc.
- Acting as a physical support
- Raising the alarm
- Operating control buttons
- Switching lights on and off
- Carrying items
- Loading and unloading the washing machine
- Fetching the telephone and other items

Support Dogs also train dogs for people with limited mobility and Seizure Alert dogs for people with epilepsy.
Seizure Alert dogs are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure, which may appear to be misbehaving.

Additional sources of information and guidance

Assistance Dogs (UK) is a coalition of assistance dog organisations that encourages the exchange of ideas and best practices amongst its members, raises awareness amongst the general public, and promotes behavioural and legislative changes to ensure the freedom, independence, and rights of its clients. This policy* refers to the definitions and types of assistance dogs provided on its website. http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/ (this website also lists current members of the coalition).

Appendix 3 - Interacting with Assistance Dogs

When interacting with assistance dogs or with people who have assistance dogs, please bear the following points in mind:

- Talk to the handler, not the dog!

It is very frustrating for a person to have to interrupt your conversation with their dog. Likewise, if you are helping a person with a guide dog to get somewhere, give the person directions or talk with the person as they follow you. They will give the dog the correct commands for following you. Please do not call the dog. The dog is used to working for the disabled owner. If it is responding to you, it is no longer focused on their needs but on you.

- Do not pet or praise the dog without asking first, please!

It can be very dangerous for the handler if their dog is distracted and not doing its job. It is important to remember that while they are extremely intelligent, devoted, and highly trained, service dogs are still capable of acting upon natural instincts and may display the same behaviours as other dogs from time to time. Guide dogs sometimes scavenge for food, get distracted by other animals, experience fear, and forget about their work when tempted by things they like. People's attention can be especially alluring. Praise is a reward for service animals, and people who work with the dogs provide it when it is appropriate. Sometimes it is given quietly in small doses; and at other times it is given lavishly. If another person says, "What a good dog," in passing, the person may have just rewarded the dog, without knowing it, for something the dog did just before the person arrived that was dangerous to the user. When admiring a service dog, it is best to keep eyes averted, comments directed to the user, and voice modulated appropriately (e.g., do not speak as if addressing a child or use an especially sweet-sounding voice, as this will draw the dog's attention).

- Don't get angry at the handler if he or she does not want to stop to talk about their dog. Please keep in mind that they hear the same questions many times a day and often would just like to get home. Nice comments are always welcome, however!

- Don't feed the service dog.
  Many – not all – service dogs are on strict, healthy diets to keep their working lives long, and they may also have allergies that you are not aware of. It also can break the dog's training if they learn that they get food in a public place.

Appendix 4 - Risk Assessment Considerations

The main risks associated with keeping animals in the workplace are physical injury, by bites, scratches, kicking or crushing and infection or infestation from micro-organisms or parasites, zoonoses (an infectious disease that has jumped from a non-human animal to humans), and asthmatic or allergic reactions. Other considerations:

- Has a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) been completed as per University Guidance (Provide link once revised guidance has been uploaded).
- Has consideration been given to others that will come into contact with the animal who may be asthmatic or allergic, have phobias etc.?
- What hazards does the animal present? e.g., tripping, bites, scratches, transmission of diseases
- By what routes can any micro-organisms be transmitted to humans? e.g., hand to mouth contact, bites, scratches, or through the air
- Animals are regarded as potential sources of infection or infestation, does the animal have regular check-ups at the vet and have updated vaccinations, flea, and worming treatment, where applicable?
- What will be the procedure in an emergency e.g., in the event of a fire, how will animals be evacuated without causing a hazard to others evacuating the area?
- Has the animal been toilet trained?
- How will toilet break for the animal be managed?
- Where will the animal be located during the normal workday? Will the animal be kept secure on a lead? Away from walkways to prevent slip, trip and fall incidents.
- Would the animal create a likely source of distraction/disruption for others, such as in lectures or workplaces where high levels of concentration are required?
- Animal welfare facilities
- Animal waste disposal facilities
- Animal smells
- Animal noise e.g., barking
- Human hygiene (after petting)
- What behavioural training does the animal have?

- How will the animal respond to being left alone and the security of the animal when left alone e.g., when the owner goes in a meeting or to the bathroom?
- The areas the owner is likely to visit during the course of their day
- Are people likely to visit the area where the animal is normally based?
- Are there any new or expectant mothers working in the area?
- Do children visit / pass through the area?
- What other animals may be present? (Are they territorial)
- Vehicle movements
- Equipment/machinery

Appendix 5 - Animals on Campus Approvals Process

