

# Policy on Assistance Dogs

## Introduction

Keele values the diversity of its campus community and is committed to providing an environment which is welcoming and where all members of our community have an equitable experience in relation to work, study and life on our campus. We endeavour to work with disabled students and staff to support them during their time at Keele University.

Students and staff whose access to work, study and accommodation is facilitated using mobility aids, should not be refused entry based on their disability or reliance on mobility aids, including assistance dogs.

This policy has been developed to raise awareness of the important role of assistance dogs and to help respond to any issues relating to assistance dogs.

## Purpose and Scope

This policy applies for **all** University premises, including University Halls of Residence, Academic Buildings (Including the Library), social spaces / entertainment venues, administrative buildings, and campus grounds.

The aims of the policy are to make clear:

- The arrangements we have 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 1**.

## Organisational and Physical Arrangements

The University makes the following arrangements to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for assistance dogs, their owners, and all other members of the Keele community:

- Support, advice and information from Disability Support and Inclusion (DSI).
- Pre-entry information visits to assess potential works.
- Arrival or pre-arrival site orientation.
- Visits by the assistance dog's trainer are encouraged in the early settling-in days, and then regularly (annually at least) thereafter.
- The coordination of a route safety check (to check for hazards and/or obstructions).
- Issuance of assistance dog guidelines for students and staff.
- Identification and provision of spending pens for the toilet needs of assistance dogs.  
**(For further information contact: Disability Support and Inclusion).**
- Provision of water bowls for assistance dogs.  
**(For further information contact: Disability Support and Inclusion).**
- Setting out processes and procedures for adverse incidents in relation to the presence or admittance of assistance dogs, such as allergies, fear of animal presence, and misbehaviour.
- Setting out processes and procedures for the care and handling of assistance dogs and their owners in emergency situations.

## **Roles and responsibilities:**

### **Estates and Development (Student Accommodation)**

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

The University will ensure that staff in Halls will be provided with training so that they can respond appropriately.

Estates and Development staff will ensure the upkeep of spending pens to ensure the health of the dog and safety of the owner, including the provision of bins for dog refuse and the disposal of refuse.

### **Student Support**

Disability Support and Inclusion (DSI) 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, DSI will liaise with the student's Academic Faculty / School and Accommodation Services, to ensure that any reasonable adjustments required are in place.

### **Line Managers (Staff Only)**

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. The Human Resources Department will provide support to Line Managers in addressing any issues that may arise.

## **The Owner: Roles and responsibilities:**

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

- I. **Is always kept under control when walking around central campus other than when allowed to 'free-run' in appropriate locations.**
- II. Has its requirements in relation to exercise, toileting and feeding met. The University strongly encourages the use of the Spending Pens and that all dog-waste is disposed of appropriately where possible - **See Appendix 3**. In the unlikely event that the dog does foul inside University buildings, the owner must report this to an appropriate member of staff. Arrangements should then be made for the cleaning and sanitisation of the area.
- III. Does not enter other students' bedrooms without the permission of the student.
- IV. Does not enter the shared toilets or shower rooms, or kitchen/diners in Halls of Residence and University Accommodation, without the owner being present.
- V. Always behaves in an appropriate manner and does not disrupt others.
- VI. Is groomed in an appropriate place where arrangements can be made to clear away dog hair.

Students may be asked to sign an Assistance Dog Agreement - **See Appendix 4**.

If there are concerns about the behaviour or welfare of the dog, advice will be sought from DDS, who may request support from outside agencies. For example, it may be that further support from a dog trainer could quickly resolve the situation.

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

### **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 in which the problematic treatment occurred. For example, if problems occur in Student Accommodation, it should be raised with the Residence Life Team. If the problem occurs in a learning environment, it should be raised with the relevant Academic School. The department 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.

### **Complaints about Assistance Dogs**

If a student or member of staff wishes to make a complaint about an assistance dog or notices any breaches of this policy, they should raise the issue with the department 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.

### **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**

### **Definition of Assistance Dog**

For the purpose of this policy, an assistance dog is one which has been specifically trained to assist disabled people. Each request to bring an assistance dog will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is usually expected that the dog will have been qualified 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 always accompany their owners in all places within the United Kingdom (unless there is a genuine Health and Safety risk).

On the grounds of Health and Safety responsibilities to its staff, students and visitors, the University reserves the right to refuse access for a dog in some circumstances:

i. Where the dog is not qualified by one of the membership organisations of Assistance Dogs (UK) and upon assessing the individual case, the presence of the dog is not deemed to be a reasonable adjustment.

ii. Where the dog is 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) and upon assessing the individual case the presence of the dog is not deemed to be a reasonable adjustment.

iii. Where the dog does not adhere to the expected behaviour standards.

## **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/Dogs for the Disabled** a Support 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 disabilities 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.

## **Members of Assistance Dogs (UK)**

The following are registered members of Assistance Dogs (UK):

- Guide Dogs
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Support Dogs
- Canine Partners
- Autism Dogs
- Dogs A.I.D
- Dogs for Good
- Darwin Dogs
- Medical Detection Dogs
- Service Dogs UK
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance
- Veterans with Dogs

## Emotional Support Dogs

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the use of Emotional Support Dogs will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with University duties.

- An emotional support dog is a dog that provides comfort and companionship to its owner.
- There is no doubt that all the assistance dogs trained by ADUK members offer emotional support to their owners, but none of the members currently train emotional support dogs for the sole reason of bringing comfort or support.
- There is no register for emotional support dogs or assistance dogs in the UK, so it is not possible to register, validate or get an ADUK ID booklet for an emotional support dog.

## Additional sources of information and guidance

### Assistance Dogs UK

Assistance Dogs (UK) is a coalition of assistance dog organisations that encourages the exchange of ideas and best practice amongst its members, raises awareness amongst the 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.assistedogs.org.uk/>

## Appendix 2

### 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 dog guide 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.

Dog guides 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 assistance dog.**

Many, not all, service dogs are on strict, healthy diets, to keep their working lives long. 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.

**Please don't photograph the dog without the owner's permission.**

## **Appendix 3**

### **Spending Pens**

Spending Pens are provided for the toilet needs of assistance dogs. Accommodation Services / Estates will work with the student/staff member, DDS and Dog Trainers, where appropriate, to work out specific details on an individual basis.

Any difficulties maintaining a safe and clean environment should be raised with Staff as soon as possible so assistance may be provided where appropriate.

#### **Spending Pens - University responsibilities & duties:**

- The pens will be provided by the University and a nominated person will locate the pen in an area that is fit for this purpose, after consultation with guide dog association, owner and Accommodation Services Manager.
- The ground will, ideally, be concrete and have either a drain grid or drain holes / gullies required for cleaning and rinsing purposes. In the event the dog is unable to go on concrete we will work to identify an appropriate alternative.
- The area needs to have adequate lighting and shrubs or bushes, plant growth should be present around the outside edge of the run as the scent often helps stimulate spending in dogs that are more used to relieving on grass. The pen will be gated and there must be sufficient space for a wheelchair user to turn around and pull up parallel to the fence adjacent to the gate to accommodate wheelchair access.
- No plastic signs, tape or other loose materials should be placed in or around the pen for the safety of the dog i.e., chewing or distraction.
- The cleaning of the pen will be done daily by the nominated person. This will involve rinsing and scrubbing the area within the pen using a stiff bristled brush. Where it is deemed that a cleaning agent is required, harsh bleach and strong chemicals should be avoided to avoid harm to the dogs' feet. Washing up liquid or other mild detergent is sufficient. Rinsing the area daily with water is usually adequate.
- Dog waste bags should be used and then placed in general waste bin liners. These will be emptied into the general waste skips in the bin store areas.

