

Policy for Animals and Pets visiting PTHB premises.

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The latest approved version of this document is online.
If the review date has passed, please contact the Author for advice.

Powys Teaching Health Board is the operational name of Powys Teaching Local Health Board
Bwrdd Iechyd Addysgu Powys yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Addysgu Powys

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Engagement & Consultation

Key Individuals/Groups Involved in Developing this Document.

Role / Designation
IP&C Team

Circulated to the following for Consultation.

Date	Role / Designation
19.01.2024	W&OD
	Occupational Health
	Health and Safety
	Facilities/Estates
	Clinical Leads
	Corporate Services

Evidence Base

Please list any National Guidelines, Legislation or Health and Care Standards relating to this subject area?

- Equality Act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Welsh Government Health and Care standards 2015
- The Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2007

Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment Summary					
	No impact	Adverse	Differential	Positive	Statement
					Please remember policy documents are published to both the intranet and internet .
Age	X				The version on the internet must be translated to Welsh.
Disability				X	
Gender reassignment	X				
Pregnancy and maternity	X				
Race	X				
Religion/ Belief	X				
Sex	X				
Sexual Orientation	X				
Marriage and civil partnership	X				
Welsh Language				X	
Human Rights				X	
Risk Assessment Summary					
<p>Have you identified any risks arising from the implementation of this policy / procedure / written control document?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal bites, scratches. • Passing of infection or disease through direct contact with animals. • Passing of infection or disease through contact with animal urine or faeces. • Passing of infection or disease to immuno-compromised persons • Allergies to animals • Fear of animals <p>Risk assessment undertaken. This SOP was developed to minimize any potential risks.</p>					
<p>Have you identified any Information Governance issues arising from the implementation of this policy / procedure / written control document?</p> <p>None</p>					
<p>Have you identified any training and / or resource implications as a result of implementing this?</p> <p>No additional resource or training implications identified as a result of implementing this this policy.</p>					

1 Policy Statement / Introduction

Traditionally, the presence of animals in healthcare facilities has been discouraged based on infection control and health and safety issues.

Although infections acquired from animals (zoonoses) are well described there is very little evidence to suggest that this risk is significant in a controlled setting.

Over the last few years some patient groups have been shown to benefit from contact with specially trained service animals or therapy animals, particularly in respect of a decrease in stress and anxiety levels and a reduction in perceptions of pain (Abrahamson et al. 2016; Ávila-Álvarez et al. 2020; Pruskowski et al. 2020).

This Policy recognises the potential therapeutic value of association with animals as part of the recovery process, but confines the visiting of animals to:

- Service/ Assistant animals.
- An area / room specifically designated for such activity.
- Patients' own pets, by prior arrangement with PTHB, as described in section.
- Organisations / Registered individuals who specialise in providing therapy animals for the rehabilitation of patients such as Pets as Therapy.

Employees should not bring their personal pets into any of PTHB's hospitals, under any circumstances.

The guidance in this Policy supersedes all requirements and stipulations from any organisation that provides a pet therapy service within PTHB.

2 Objective

- To provide clarity to PTHB staff, to patients and to visitors regarding pets and animals visiting hospital premises.
- To set out the infection control parameters under which animals may be permitted on PTHB premises.
- To ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, patients, and visitors.

3 Definitions

- **PTHB** – Powys Teaching Health Board
- **Assisting animal/ Service Animal.** A dog that is specially trained to aid or assist an individual with a disability.
- **Allergic.** A condition of increased sensitivity to a substance (an allergen) considered harmless to most people.
- **Chronic disease.** A disease that is long-lasting or recurrent, which may be controlled but often not cured.
- **Diarrhoea.** An increase in the frequency, liquidity, and weight of bowel motions
- **Health care premises.** Where care or services are delivered to a person related to the health of that individual.
- **Immuno-compromised.** An immune system that is impaired by disease or treatment, where an individual's ability to fight infection is decreased. Infection An organism presents at a site and causes an inflammatory response, or where an organism is present in a normally sterile site.
- **Isolation.** When a patient is cared for in a separate area or room due to them having an infection that may be detrimental to other individual's health. Or when the patient may be vulnerable to infection.
- **Pet.** A domesticated animal kept for companionship.
- **Pets as therapy.** A national charity. To enhance health and wellbeing in the community through the visits of trusted volunteers with their behaviorally assessed animals
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE).** Specialised clothing or equipment worn by employees for protection against health and safety hazards. Gloves, aprons, gowns, masks, and eye protection.
- **Phobia.** An overwhelming and debilitating fear of an object, place, situation, feeling or animal Vector Any agent (person, animal, or microorganisms) that carry and transmit a disease.

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- **Therapy Animals.** Animals termed as Therapy Animals have not been trained to provide specific assistance, instead, they are pets who have been assessed by a charity or other organisation as calm, gentle, sociable, and friendly and once deemed appropriate, can be registered to visit organisations such as hospitals, schools and prisons accompanied by their owners who are registered volunteers.
 - **Zoonosis.** Diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.
 - **Medical alert dogs.** Medical alert dogs are dogs that are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential deterioration in their owner's health such as seizures, type 1 diabetes, Addison's disease, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS) and severe allergies.

4 Animals.

4.1 Therapy Animals

Animals termed as Therapy Animals have not been trained to provide specific assistance, instead, they are pets who have been assessed by a charity or other organisation as calm, gentle, sociable, and friendly and once deemed appropriate, can be registered to visit organisations such as hospitals, schools and prisons accompanied by their owners who are registered volunteers.

Whilst it is not always encouraged for animals to be within a healthcare setting, research suggests that pet therapy can have beneficial effects. The PAT service is a nationally recognised charity founded in 1983, which provides a visiting service to hospitals, hospices, care homes, schools, and other venues across the UK. The animals in question are dogs or cats, which are easier to control and train. The owner of the dog is always fully responsible for their PAT dog and must stay with them for the duration of their time within the healthcare facility.

4.2 Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs are properly trained dogs that aid or support an individual with a disability, and which has been qualified by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK).

Assistance dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) have formal identification and are permitted to always accompany their owners and in all places within the UK.

Certification is granted by the Department of Health.

Guide dogs for the blind are properly trained dogs that assist people who are blind or visually impaired.

Hearing dogs for the deaf are properly trained hearing dogs that alert the deaf to normal sounds as well as to danger sounds (eg, sirens, smoke alarms)

Medical alert dogs are dogs that are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential deterioration in their owner's health such as seizures, type 1 diabetes, Addison's disease, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS) and severe allergies.

Under the Equality Act (2010) guide dogs, hearing dogs, PAT dogs and assistance dog owners have the same rights to services as everyone else. This includes healthcare premises. Hearing, guide, PAT or

assistance dogs should be allowed access to clinical areas when they are working. This could be when the owner themselves are attending an outpatient appointment or when they are visiting a patient.

If a hearing, guide, or assistance dog is used by a member of staff then HR should be involved to ensure that the appropriate facilities and provisions are implemented. It is highly unlikely that the animal will be required to stay with its owner should the owner be an inpatient, but if this is thought to be necessary consultation will need to be made with the infection prevention and control team to ensure that appropriate facilities and provisions can be made, as again under the Equality Act (2010) it is reasonable that the patient is offered the same service as anyone else and if the service will be greatly hindered by them not having their hearing, guide or assistance dog with them then this needs to be taken into consideration.

The dogs will have been trained and will have been exposed to different situations, but it is still important that staff are aware and communicate with the assistance dog owner to establish if any special requirements are needed. The hearing, guide or assistance dog owner will be aware of the dog's needs but may require help to take the dog outside if it needs to go to the toilet or may request water if they are in the building for a long period of time.

4.3 Patients own pets.

Visits from the patient's own pet may take place in exceptional circumstances, for example 'palliative care' when a prior arrangement has been made. The general infection prevention and control principles that must be followed are as follows:

- Pets are to have contact only with its owner who is the patient that is being visited and the handler who has brought the animal into the area to visit the patient
- Be exercised prior to entry to the facility grounds to reduce the risk of excretion on site
 - If the animal defecates in Trust grounds the animal handler is required to remove and dispose of the waste promptly.
 - The animal should not be allowed to visit if it is ill, especially if it has diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

5 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to be aware of the medical and legal implications if a pet is brought onto the ward and it bites or scratches a patient, visitor, or member of staff or if an infection occurs following contact with faecal material.

The Ward Sister or Senior Staff nurse should be aware of all major infections that can be transmitted by domestic pets (Appendix A)

- Animal visits to wards, whether initiated by staff or patients, must be by prior arrangement only.
- The potential visit should be discussed and assessed by the Ward Sister or Senior Staff Nurse in liaison with the Infection Control Team.
- A staff member should be nominated as the point of contact for the visiting handler and animal. They are responsible for supervising the interactions and activities of the visiting handler and animal. They do not need to be with the handler continuously unless the ward manager/senior staff requests it but should be identified to the handler as their first point of contact for any issues while on PTHB premises.
- A visit agreement should be completed – see appendix C.
- The animal must be healthy.
- The animal must be continent.
- A veterinary surgeon should initially assess the pet for freedom from disease and infestation, followed by routine periodic health assessment and treatment programs.
- The animal should be up to date with all the necessary vaccinations.
- The animal's normal behavior must be suitable for visiting a hospital. It should be calm and gentle and relied upon not to scratch or bite strangers.
- The nurse in charge must check that other patients/staff with phobias or allergies to the relevant pet are not put at risk.
- Staff members who book the visit must also record the visit using a system that will be fit for audit purposes

6 Visiting arrangements

- The visit must take place privately, e.g., in a side ward, private day room or interview room.
- A member of staff will be nominated to supervise/oversee the visit.
- Pets must be properly always supervised by handlers or by a staff member.
- Visiting pets must be kept on a lead or otherwise suitability restrained and must not be allowed to wander freely around clinical areas or elsewhere on Health Board premises.
- Cats must be brought to the ward in a cat box.
- Volunteers must be identified with a name badge.
- Pet and Assistance Dog owners should make sure that their pets have relieved themselves before visiting the hospital or health care facility and give them ample opportunity to go outside as needed.
- Owners/volunteers/handlers must always carry appropriate hygiene items such as dog waste bags, wipes, hand gel.
- The owner and health care workers must ensure the pet is not a nuisance to other patients and that it does not interfere with patient care. If any patients object to the pet's presence, then arrangements must be made to ensure the pet is kept away from them.

6.1 Visiting restrictions

Pets are unable to visit:

- During mealtimes.
- A ward/unit which is carpeted.
- Patients who are being barrier nursed
- Patients who have open wounds
- Patients who are immunocompromised in anyway

The pet should not be allowed to approach any patient without the handler first ascertaining whether:

- the patient is likely to be allergic to the animal's fur/hair.
- the patient wishes to be visited.

6.2 General hygiene measures

- Staff and patients must wash their hands before and after handling pets.
- Pets are not to be fed by patients or ward staff.
- If the animal is to be placed on the bed for petting, the bed clothes should be protected with a plaster sheet and draw sheet

or incontinence pad, which must be removed immediately and disposed of once the visit is over.

- Any member of staff handling the animal must wear a disposable plastic apron. Immediately afterwards the apron must be removed, and the hands and forearms effectively washed.
- After touching the visiting animal, all concerned, patient, staff and visitors must wash their hands and forearms effectively.
- Any staff or patients must wash their faces if they have been licked/kissed by the animal.
- If the pet vomits, urinates or defecates while on the ward this should be cleaned up immediately, use dog waste bags and paper towels to remove any solid particles, dispose as clinical waste, then clean manually with neutral detergent and water, disinfect with chlorine releasing solution made up to 1000 ppm. Wash hands thoroughly after this procedure. **Chlorine based products should not be used directly on urine.** Assistance will be provided by an appropriate member of the wards staff if required e.g., for guide dog owners.
- Pets must be kept out of the kitchen area, all food preparation areas, and the dining rooms.

7 First Aid

In the case of bite/scratch/injury from a visiting pet the following first aid measures should be undertaken:

- Clean the area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Cover the wound.
- If it is a deep wound line manager should arrange for a swab to be taken and patient to be seen by the on-call physician
- Determine whether the pet has been vaccinated against rabies.
- Remove the pet from the premises.
- Inform the line manager, infection control and hospital matron.
- Complete a Datix incident report.

8 Monitoring Compliance, Audit & Review

All visits to PTHB premises by therapy or service animals will be recorded. The ward manager will keep records of the date of visit, the handler's name, the organisation or charity that they are from if relevant, the dog's name, the patients visited, any relevant information about the visit e.g., injuries sustained, undesirable behaviour of animal or handler. An example is available in Appendix B.

These records must be kept up to date and available for review/audit by the IPC team as part of standard ward/departmental visits.

This document will be reviewed every three years or earlier should audit results or changes to legislation / practice within PTHB indicate otherwise.

9 References / Bibliography

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- Ávila-Alvarez, A. et al. 2020. Assessing the Outcomes of an Animal-Assisted Intervention in a Paediatric Day Hospital: Perceptions of Children and Parents. *Animals: an open access journal from MDPI* vol. 10,10 1788. doi:10.3390/ani10101788 (Accessed 9/6/22)
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- *Communicable Disease Control Handbook* 3rd Edition. London: Blackwell
- Pets as Therapy-Charity <http://www.petsastherapy.org/> (Accessed 18/8/2015)
- Mims, C; Playfair, J; Roitt, I; Wakelin, D; Williams, R; (2012) *Medical Microbiology* 5th Edition London: Mosby
- Pruskowski, K. et al. 2020. Impact of the implementation of a therapy dog program on burn center patients and staff. *Burns* vol 46. 2 doi.org/10.1016/j.burns.2019.11.024 (Accessed 9/6/22)

Appendix A

Major infections transmitted by domestic pets.

Animal	Pathogen	Disease
Dogs	<i>Rhabdoviruses</i>	Rabies
Dogs	<i>Campylobacter</i>	Campylobacter
Birds	<i>Chlamydia</i>	Psittacosis
Dogs & cats	<i>Sarcoptes scabiei</i>	Animal scabies (mange)
Rats	<i>Leptospira</i>	Leptospirosis
Birds	<i>Salmonella</i>	salmonellosis
Birds	<i>Cryptococcus</i>	Meningitis
Cats & Dogs	<i>Dermatophytes</i>	Ringworm
Cats & Dogs	<i>Cryptosporidium</i>	Cryptosporidiosis
Cats	<i>Toxoplasma</i>	Toxoplasmosis
Dogs	<i>Toxacara</i>	Toxocariasis
Cats & Dogs	<i>Taenia</i>	Tapeworms

Appendix B

Animal Visit Record

Template for pet dogs visiting health care settings.

OWN PET VISIT PLAN

Patient name:		ID Number (NHS, HOSPITAL):
Date of visit:		Ward:
Reason for visit:		Where visit will take place:
Approval obtained	Name and signature	Date
Consultant		
Nurse in charge		
Infection control, if necessary		
Patient family agreement		
Patient, if relevant and possible		
Person responsible for the animal		

Checklist

Instructions	Name	Initials
You take full responsibility for your animal		
You will ensure the animal will be bathed and brushed		
You will prevent interaction with anyone other than the person you are visiting		
You will go directly to the place agreed and leave the premises immediately after the visit. A maximum period must be agreed with staff as well as the time of arrival and departure		

Your dog/animal will be on a lead and under control or in a pet carrier		
If the animal becomes distressed, disruptive or causes a nuisance you will remove it immediately		
If your pet urinates, defecates, or vomits you must let the staff know. You are responsible for cleaning it up. Staff will provide gloves and disinfectant		

Appendix C

Visit Agreement Example

PETS AS THERAPY **PAT Volunteer Team Visit Agreement**

The primary aim of Pets as Therapy is to bring regular animal companionship and comfort to patients/residents in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, schools, and other establishments by means of visits from volunteers and their registered temperament-tested pets.

Since the start of the Pets as Therapy journey in 1983, over 26,000 dogs have been registered with us. Every year some of these retire and new dogs, having first passed our assessment on health, temperament, suitability, and stability grounds, join us to become, with their owner, a proud 'PAT Team'.

Our PAT teams can only visit establishments that are registered with us. Online registration is easy and takes only a couple of minutes. Just ask the manager of the Establishment to complete the short [Request a PAT Visit form](#).

PAT Volunteer Team Visits

- Only one registered PAT pet can accompany the volunteer on a visit. Volunteers are not insured to visit with an unregistered pet or multiple animals.
- Establishments must make the PAT volunteer aware of all Health and Safety procedures and regulations that they are required to follow.
- Pets As Therapy asks that the establishments agree to ensure that our volunteers and their PAT dogs are treated with respect and dignity during their visits to you. They are bound by our policies and procedures and should never be asked to contravene these by putting their PAT pets or themselves at risk in any way.
- PAT Volunteer Teams must be always accompanied by a member of the establishment's staff and never left alone with a service user.
- The Establishment should nominate a designated member of their staff as a point of contact to direct and support our volunteer.

-
- The PAT Volunteer always holds their PAT pet on a lead to ensure that they have full control of their pet should an emergency situation arise.
 - The PAT volunteer and their pet must display the correct photographic PAT ID badges as issued by the Charity.
 - The Establishment must check that the PAT volunteer's badge is still in date and valid. Volunteers with old badges are no longer covered by PAT insurance.

If there is an incident where either one of our volunteers or their pet is involved, they are required by Pets as Therapy to notify Head Office.

If you require a copy of the Volunteers Handbook or any other information or have any concerns which you would like to discuss, please call Head Office on 01865 671440.

We hope that you will receive many visits from our very special volunteers and their companion animals and that all your staff and patients/clients will feel the proven benefits of our service.

Pets As Therapy (PAT) is a fully self-supporting charity. We rely solely on the hard work of our visiting volunteers, the generosity of fundraisers and the support of corporate sponsors.

If you would like to donate to support Pets as Therapy, there are four easy ways to do so:

- 1) BACS – Electronic Bank Transfer to NatWest,
Account No: 70057605,
Sort Code: 53-61-55
please include your establishment name in the payment reference so we can acknowledge your donation.
- 2) Via our website [Pets As Therapy](#)
- 3) By credit card over the phone, please call 01865 671440.
- 4) By cheque, payable to Pets as Therapy

Many thanks, your donation will help us to continue to support our communities.

PETS AS THERAPY
VISIT CONFIRMATION AND ACCEPTANCE – PAT7

Please complete and sign as confirmation that you have read the PAT Volunteer Team Visits Agreement and Risk Assessment and agree to the conditions as laid out in this document.

ONLY FORMS SIGNED BY THE A MEMBER OF THE ESTABLISHMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM OR ESTABLISHMENT VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR WILL BE ACCEPTED AS A VALID AGREEMENT.

ESTABLISHMENT DETAILS	BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE
ESTABLISHMENT NAME:	
POSTCODE:	ID NO:
CONTACT NAME:	POSITION:
EMAIL:	TEL NO:
SIGNATURE:	DATE:
VOLUNTEER DETAILS	BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE
NAME:	
PAT REFERENCE NO:	PET'S NAME:
SIGNATURE:	DATE:

Please return the signed form by email to: reception@petsastherapy.org or by post to:

Reception (Ref: PAT7)
Pets As Therapy, Hampden House
Monument Business Park
Warpsgrove Lane
Chalgrove, Oxfordshire OX44 7RW