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## **Guidance Regarding Assistance Dogs and Other Animals Attending Clinical Areas**

### **Introduction**

There is evidence highlighting the benefits of pet interaction with patients in certain clinical environments. It is suggested that their presence can calm and distract patients who might be agitated; leading to an enhanced quality of life and positive patient experience. The inclusion of Therapy Dogs in health settings has also proven to be an effective psychological interaction which can improve patient experience and ultimate wellbeing.

It is imperative to understand that people who use guide and assistance dogs have equal rights under the Equality Act 2010 (EA), for example disabled people have the same right to services supplied by shops, banks, hotels, libraries, pubs, taxis and restaurants as non-disabled people.

Guidance within this document will be provided for all dogs and cats visiting clinical areas including;

- Assistance dogs for hearing and sight impairment and for the disabled (including seizure dogs)
- A dog, cat or small animal visiting, when a patient is at the end of their life or is hospitalised for a prolonged period
- 'Pets as Therapy' dogs and cats

### **Aim**

The aim is to provide guidance and clarity to allow the Ward Sister /Charge Nurse to make an autonomous judgement, using the information provided. If specific advice is required it is imperative that appropriate colleagues are contacted.

### **Objectives**

- To ensure process is adhered to in relation to animals visiting clinical areas
- To ensure the animals who visit are treated appropriately
- To ensure Animal Assisted Intervention and visiting animals comply with their specific guidance
- To enable visitors and patients who rely upon their assistance dogs seamless access to our services
- To enhance both the patient and carer experience

### **Scope**

This guidance applies to all of our staff, in all locations including those with honorary contracts, carers, patients and visitors.

This guidance is for clinical areas, however if dogs access the Health Board public areas i.e. car parks, grassed areas etc. they must be kept under control e.g. on a lead held by

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	2 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

someone able to control the dog.

**Equality Health Impact Assessment**

An Equality Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) has not been completed as it was not applicable in this instance. This is because this guidance falls in line with the UHB's Equality Diversity & Human Rights overarching EHIA.

**Documents to read alongside this Guidance**

- List all documents the reader is advised to read alongside / in support of this document:
- Equality Diversity and Human Rights Policy  
<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/249862>
  - Infection Control Standard Precautions Procedure Cardiff and Vale University Health Board  
<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/201844>
  - Cleaning Strategy  
<http://nww.cardiffandvale.wales.nhs.uk/pls/portal/url/ITEM/211E67A40F1F7372E0500489923C34BA>
  - Control of Substances Hazardous to health (COSHH) Procedure  
<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/183647>
  - Health and Safety Policy  
<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/166333>
  - Equality Act 2010  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga\\_20100015\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf)
  - Working with Dogs in Health Care Settings, RCN Guidance  
<https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of-nursing/.../2018/.../pdf-006909.pdf>
  - Controlling Your Dog in Public  
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/controlling-your-dog-public>
  - What Laws should I be aware of when walking my dog?  
<https://www.inbrief.co.uk/animal-law/dog-walking-and-the-law/>
  - Health and Safety Executive FAQ's  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/faqs.htm#faq8>
  - Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Hand Hygiene Infection Control Procedure (2017).  
<http://nww.cardiffandvale.wales.nhs.uk/pls/portal/url/ITEM/0EBC0BF9CEB8309BE0500489923C344F>

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	3 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

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<b>Accountable Executive or Clinical Board Director</b>	Executive Nurse Director
<b>Author(s)</b>	Lead Nurse Patient Experience

**Disclaimer**

**If the review date of this document has passed please ensure that the version you are using is the most up to date either by contacting the document author or the [Governance Directorate](#).**

**Summary of reviews/amendments**

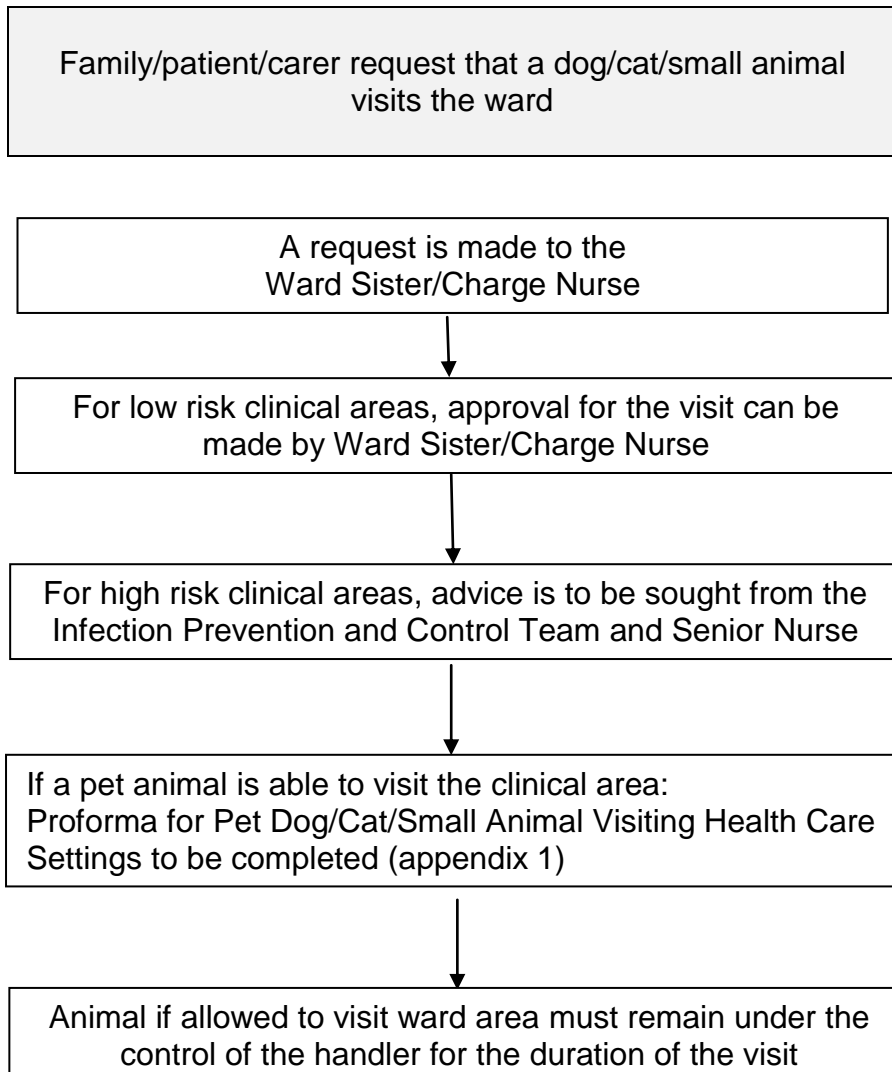
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date of Review Approved</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Summary of Amendments</b>
1	18/10/2018	19/10/2018	New document

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	4 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Flowchart	5.
2. Areas Requiring Special Arrangements	6.
3. Categories of Animals	6.
4. Infection Prevention and Control	6.
5. Housekeeping	6.
6. Health and Safety Points for Consideration	7.
7. Animal Health and Welfare	7.
8. Assistance Dogs	8.
9. Animal Assistance Intervention and Visiting Dog	9.
10. References	10.
11. Proforma for a Pet Dog, Cat or Small Animal Visiting Health Care Settings	11.

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	5 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

1. **FLOWCHART**



<b>Low Risk Area</b>	<b>High Risk Area</b>
The majority of clinical areas and hospitals	Critical Care High Dependency areas Patients in single rooms nursed with contact precautions Patients who are immunocompromised /neutropaenic High risk Mental Health units e.g. Intensive Care Unit

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	6 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

## **2. Areas Requiring Special Arrangements**

In the majority of clinical areas, permission for the animal to visit can be made by the Ward Sister or Charge Nurse. For requests in high risk clinical areas and /or individual patients, advice from the Infection Prevention Control Team and Senior Nurse must be sought.

The animals must not enter for example the Treatment Room or areas where food preparation takes place. In addition they should not be generally allowed to sit on any furniture. If however there are extenuating circumstances whereby the patient is bed bound, it is at the discretion of the Nurse in Charge to make an informed decision.

## **3. Categories of Animals**

The guidance is for all small animals e.g. cats/dogs/hamster/guinea pig visiting clinical areas across Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, inclusive of Assistance and 'Pet as therapy' dogs.

Prior to, and post direct contact with the animal, all persons should practice good hand hygiene and adhere to the Technique for General Hand Hygiene as detailed in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Hand Hygiene Infection Control Procedure (2017).

<http://nww.cardiffandvale.wales.nhs.uk/pls/portal/url/ITEM/0EBC0BF9CEB8309BE0500489923C344F>

## **4. Infection Prevention and Control**

Animals can carry infections which can occasionally be transmitted to humans. Therefore, the animal should not come into contact with any patient with large wounds, infected skin conditions, or who are immunosuppressed. Any person on the ward/ unit with open wounds or broken skin must ensure that this area is covered with a clean waterproof dressing.

During a visit, if the animal begins to show signs or symptoms of illness or bad behavior, the visit must be terminated.

## **5. Housekeeping**

In the event that the animal defecates or urinates the staff are responsible for ensuring that the contaminated waste is cleaned up by the owner in the first instance. It is imperative that the owner then washes their hands with soap and water. Staff are then responsible for disinfecting with a chlorine releasing agent, but this task should not be completed by a pregnant member of staff.

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	7 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

The waste should be disposed of immediately in Tiger (black and Yellow striped) waste bag in accordance with infection control procedures.

Once the animal has left the ward, the immediate area should be cleaned with a chlorine releasing agent. Inform housekeeping if extra cleaning is required, for example to remove dog or cat hairs from carpets and soft furnishings.

## 6. Health and Safety Points for Consideration:

- Any persons attending the unit whether that be staff, clients, carers or visitors to be informed when the animal will be visiting.
- Staff should identify whether those in the clinical area have any allergies, phobias, or dislike of dogs/cats /small animals. Should this be the case or a person objects to interacting with the animal, arrangements must be made so that contact is avoided.
- The animal should be kept on a lead or otherwise suitably restrained and must not be allowed to wander freely around clinical areas or elsewhere on the UHB premises.
- All actions must be undertaken to prevent potential trips, slips and falls occurring.
- Animals that may visit the ward environment, are not trained to cope with the sounds and smells of a hospital, therefore visits should be arranged during quiet periods if possible.
- In the event of any untoward incident involving the animal, this must be reported and dealt as appropriate and via the usual means, and a DATIX report must be completed.
- The animal should not be encouraged to lick the patient. However if it does happen 'accidentally' hands should be thoroughly washed and dried following the animal's visit.
- It is advisable that patients do not eat while the animal is visiting.

## 7. Animal Health and Welfare

It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that the animal has access to food and water, but these must be kept away from clinical areas and food preparation areas. Animal food and bowls should not be kept in kitchen areas.

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	8 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

The Ward Sister / Charge Nurse should determine the pet's length of stay on the clinical area. This will be discretionary and could be subject to change dependent upon activity / incident.

## **8. Assistance Dogs**

Assistance dogs play an invaluable role in maintaining the independence of people who access our services who are deaf and blind or have other specific conditions. Their handler will carry an identification card that will display the name of the assistance dog charity they are affiliated with. However be aware that permission must be sought before they are touched.

Disabled people who use assistance dogs are protected from discrimination and harassment under the Equality Act 2010. The Act also encourages services to be proactive in creating an inclusive approach and where appropriate "more favourable treatment" can be provided to a disabled person.

Assistance dogs are trained dogs working with an individual person to support them in numerous ways. These include;

- Guide dogs – supporting people with visual impairment or slight loss
- Hearing dogs - supporting people with hearing loss or impairment
- Assistance dogs –aiding mobility and support activities e.g. undressing, picking up items, opening doors etc.
- Medical Alert dogs –trained to constantly monitor health conditions, including type 1 diabetes, Addison's disease, allergies, seizures and Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia syndrome (POTS)
- Autism Assistance Dogs- supporting people with autism
- Dogs supporting people who have mental health issues

### **8.1 Key Points about Assistance Dogs. They;**

- have been trained to behave well in public
- have safe and reliable temperaments
- are healthy and do not constitute a hygiene risk observed over a considerable period of time
- are fully toilet-trained
- are regularly checked by experienced veterinarians
- are accompanied by a disabled handler who has been trained how to work alongside their assistance dog
- are recognisable by the harness, organisation specific coat, id tag on their collar or lead slip they wear
- if required they will be able to accompany patients into treatment areas



Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	9 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

If the owner is admitted to hospital unexpectedly it is advisable in the first instance to keep the animal in a quiet room with regular checks and access to fluid until the next of kin or charity can collect. Examples of such Charities include;

- The Cinnamon Trust <http://www.cinnamon.org.uk/home.php>
- People + Animals = Companions Together (PACT) <http://pactforanimals.org/pacts-work/military-foster-program>

It might also be advisable to contact the Social Work Department to discuss.

## **8.2 Guidance for Managers of Staff who use Assistance Dogs**

In situations where a member of staff is required to have their assistance dog at work to carry out their duties, this must be dealt with sensitively and all reasonable measures taken to facilitate this. However, it is recognised that some high risk clinical areas are not suitable to an animal to be present. In this situation, a risk assessment must be undertaken with advice from appropriate staff within Estates, Workforce and Organisational Development and the Infection Control Team. It may not be appropriate in all situations to endorse the presence of an assistance dog.

In situations where an assistance dog is present, consideration is required to whether or not the assistance dog requires to be fed whilst the member of staff is on duty and arrangements for toileting for the assistance dog. The ward/ department manager, together with the assistance dog owner is responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place.

## **9. Animal Assisted Intervention and Visiting Dog**

These can include Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI), Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), Animal Assisted Play Therapy (AAPT) and Animal Assisted Activity (AAA) dogs.

### **9.1 Pets as Therapy**

'Pets as Therapy' are an example of an Animal Assisted Intervention. They are a national charity that enhances health and wellbeing in the community through the visits of trusted volunteers with their behaviourally assessed animals. They provide a visiting service in hospitals, hospices, nursing and care homes.

If you wish to engage with 'Pets as Therapy' please contact the organisation directly to discuss and arrange.

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	10 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

Once agreed please contact the Health Board's Volunteer Services Manager (VSM) to advise them. This will ensure their database is updated and is accurate. The Volunteer Support Manager can be contacted on Tel: 029 20747867.

See link for further information; <https://petsastherapy.org/>

Whilst on the Health Board's premises care of the dog should be consistent with guidance provided in this document.

#### **10. References:**

Pets as Therapy. General guidelines on conducting a Pets as Therapy visit is available at: <https://petsastherapy.org/devsite2017/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Factsheet7-General-guidelines-on-conducting-a-Pets-As-Therapy-visit.pdf> [Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018].

Health and Care Standards 6.2 Peoples Rights

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/governance-emanual/standard-6-2-peoples-rights>  
[Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018].

Document Title: <i>Guidance When Dogs and Cats Visit Clinical Areas</i>	11 of 11	Approval Date: 18 Oct 2018
Reference Number: UHB 434		Next Review Date: 18 Oct 2021
Version Number: 1		Date of Publication: 19 Oct 2018
Approved By: Nursing and Midwifery Board		

## APPENDIX 1:

### Proforma for Completion for a Pet Dog, Cat or Small Animal Visiting Health Care Settings

Own Pet Visit Plan	
Patient name:	Hospital number:
Date of visit:	Ward:
Reason for visit:	Where visit will take place:

Approval obtained	Date	Name	Signature
Nurse in charge			
Senior Nurse			
Patient / family /carer agreement			
Patient (if possible)			
Person responsible for the animal			

Checklist		
Instructions	Name	Initials
You take full responsibility for your animal		
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 of time must be agreed with staff as well as the time of arrival and departure		
Your pet 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 staff know –you are responsible for cleaning it up. Staff will provide gloves and cleaning agent		

Please place completed proforma in the patient's notes. If electronic notes are used please scan and upload.