

# Assistance Dogs Policy

***This policy applies to our employees. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. The Company may amend it at any time.***

## The policy

### General principles

The Company welcomes employees from diverse backgrounds with differing needs. We will consider all requests for assistance dogs to be accommodated in the workplace as part of a reasonable adjustment.

### Definition of an assistance dog

An assistance dog is a dog that has been trained to assist a person with a specific disability and that has been accredited by one of the below organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs UK:

- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association;
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People;
- Support Dogs;
- Dogs for Good;
- Dog Aid;
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance;
- Canine Partners; and
- Autism Dogs.

Assistance dogs support people with a wide range of disabilities, including those relating to visual, hearing or mobility impairments and conditions, for example epilepsy or autism. Assistance dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs UK have formal identification tags and are allowed to accompany their owner at all times and in all places within the UK (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk).

Assistance dogs are fully trained working animals, not pets, and their owners rely on them for both independence and mobility. Assistance dog owners will have received full training on how to manage their animal. The working life of an assistance dog is about six years;

therefore, a dog owner could have several assistance dogs during their lifetime.

## The procedure

If you have or intend to have an assistance dog, you should inform your line manager. The Company will undertake an impartial and objective assessment of the suitability of an assistance dog to your role and workplace, seeking advice from assistance dog associations where required.

If the Company agrees to a request to accommodate an assistance dog, we will make arrangements to enable the smooth integration and use of the assistance dog in the workplace. This may include allowing reasonable time off for training the assistance dog, taking the dog for veterinary checks and agreeing to accommodate check-ups by the training association. Training for both you and your assistance dog may well be provided by the assistance dog association and consideration will be given to supporting reasonable leave requirements for this. New dog owners will be allowed time to familiarise their dog with the workplace.

## Health and safety procedures

A risk assessment will be conducted before the assistance dog attends work for the first time and regularly thereafter. This will be conducted by the line manager in conjunction with the employee and will cover assistance dog-related aspects, for example emergency evacuation procedures, dog toileting, and any health and safety or hygiene considerations pertinent to the workplace. Consideration may also be given to implications for any other employees who will be located near the assistance dog. Advice can be sought from the People or SHE teams.

Medical emergency planning will take place between the employee and their line manager to cover procedures to be followed should they be taken ill while at work. In extreme medical emergencies, for example if the employee needs to be rushed to hospital leaving the assistance dog at the workplace, family, friends or the assistance dog association may offer support. Employees and their line managers must keep emergency contact numbers readily available and up to date on the HR system in case of these situations.

Emergency evacuation procedures will be established and

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practised for employees and their assistance dogs, with any new or revised considerations built into personal emergency evacuation plans. This should cover scenarios where they are both with and without their assistance dog and will lay down procedures for the safety of both them and the animal. Workplace familiarisation for assistance dogs should include emergency evacuation routes. Any appointed fire marshals should be aware of the presence and needs of the assistance dog and the employee.

Spending (toileting) requirements will be established in consultation with the employee with advice from the SHE team. Spending arrangements may be on or off the Company's premises. Safe and appropriate access routes to the spending area should be wide enough to allow the employee and their assistance dog to walk together to the area and meet accessibility standards. Disposal facilities should also be clarified, and agreements made regarding who will be responsible for each stage of the disposal.

### Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the employee, their line manager and co-workers should be clarified before the assistance dog attends work. The following are outline responsibilities for each group:

#### Employee:

- Ensuring that the assistance dog meets all standards, as set by the assistance dog association, for training, health and grooming at all times.
- Applying appropriate control, praise and discipline to the dog as required to maximise support and minimise any workplace disruption.
- Providing necessary equipment for the dog's wellbeing, for example a blanket or bed, water bowl and toys.
- Managing spending breaks and water provision as required.
- Being considerate of the needs of others in relation to the presence of the assistance dog.
- Ensuring that, while working, the assistance dog wears a jacket, harness or tabard to indicate to the dog and to others that it is on duty. When not working, the assistance dog's jacket, harness or tabard should be removed, as this will indicate to

the assistance dog and others that it is not working.

#### Co-worker:

- Taking instruction from the employee in relation to contact and approach to the assistance dog. It is inappropriate to stroke, feed or otherwise engage with the dog unless the owner has given permission.
- Addressing the employee rather than the assistance dog and limiting contact with, and distractions for, the animal.
- Following the principles within this policy and raising concerns relating to its implementation, if required.

#### Line manager:

- Providing a suitable and safe location for the assistance dog, close to the employee's workstation if possible. The location should be draught-free, of suitable temperature and away from machinery, light or noise that may cause disruption to the assistance dog.
- Facilitating toileting and other wellbeing breaks as required and generally providing a welcoming environment for the employee and their assistance dog.
- Providing appropriate levels of time off for aspects such as dog training and veterinary visits, and accommodating visits from assistance dog associations.
- Communicating with all impacted employees ahead of the assistance dog's arrival to help successfully integrate the animal and create an inclusive workplace culture. However, care should be taken to respect confidentiality needs, particularly if the disabilities or health conditions that the assistance dog supports are non-visible.

### Workplace considerations

#### Allergies

If co-workers in the workplace have allergies or conditions, for example asthma, that may be affected by an assistance dog being nearby, local discussion

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should take place to find the best way to accommodate all needs. Advice can be sought from assistance dog associations in conjunction with the People team, should any difficulties be perceived in locating the assistance dog and colleagues near each other.

### Religion and belief

If co-workers in the workplace raise objections on religious grounds to the presence of an assistance dog, these should be duly considered and managed locally. It is unlikely that an objection on religious grounds will be sufficient justification to not approve an assistance dog request, in accordance with the justification defence set out in the Equality Act 2010. Should the need arise, further advice can be sought from organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, in conjunction with assistance dog associations and the People team.

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28/09/2021	Added document control, updated language and context	002	Josie Walker		01/12/2021	30/11/2022
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