

Assistance Dogs Policy

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Assistance Dogs Policy

Policy Statement

BrisDoc is committed to providing services that are accessible and responsive to all members of the community. In line with this commitment, assistance dogs are welcome in all areas of our premises, except for those designated as high-risk.

Introduction

In the UK, disabled people have important rights under the Equality Act 2010, specifically section 173. The Equality Act makes it unlawful to treat disabled individuals less favourably than those without disabilities, although it recognises limited circumstances where such treatment may be justified. Under Section 29 of the Act, BrisDoc is legally obliged to make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled individuals have equal access to our services. Assistance dogs play a vital and central role in supporting many people with disabilities.

The Equality Act 2010 requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments for their disabled users and customers to prevent any disadvantage compared to non-disabled individuals. This requirement includes permitting access to assistance dogs where reasonable. While Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) do not have the same level of legally recognised status as assistance dogs, parliamentary advice suggests that if a person meets the Act's definition of disability and has an ESA to help manage that disability, service providers should consider allowing access to the animal.

In addition to assistance dogs, we recognise the important role that other assistance animals, including ESAs, may play in supporting individuals with disabilities. While assistance dogs are generally permitted, the inclusion of other assistance animals, such as ESAs, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This decision will depend on an assessment conducted by the most senior employee present, ensuring that the animal's presence aligns with the safety, health, and operational needs of our facility.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the restrictions of access to assistance dogs.
- Reduce the potential for distress to owners of and the assistance dogs themselves.
- Inform staff and other Patients on the requirements for assistance dogs.
- Minimise the time that assistance dogs and their owners have to be separated.

This policy is intended to facilitate the best interests for assistance dog users, the assistance dogs themselves and our staff.

All BrisDoc staff should have a clear understanding of the Assistance Dog Policy and be aware of the various types of support that assistance dogs provide. Additionally, staff should be mindful of the specific support needs of patients or visitors when they are separated from their assistance dog. It is important to recognise that an assistance dog is a working animal, and staff should make efforts to minimize any distractions to the dog.

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Definition of Assistance Dog

An assistance dog is one that has been specifically trained to support a person with a particular disability and has been qualified by one of the organizations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK), such as:

- Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Dogs for the Disabled
- Canine Partners
- Support Dogs

All assistance dogs will have formal identification and certification granted by the Department of Health. This certification attests to the dog's high standards of training, behaviour, health, and welfare, allowing it to accompany its owner at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom.

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Types of Assistance Dogs:

There are 9 types of service dogs

Registered charity no: 1119538



ADUK Member Trained Assistance Dogs



Service Dogs UK



Hearing Dogs



Autism Dogs CIC



Dog A.I.D



Dogs For Good



Medical Detection Dogs



Support Dogs



Guide Dogs



Canine Partners



Seeing Dog Alliance

The above dogs represent assistance dogs trained by organisations that are accredited by an international standards body. Not all assistance dogs are trained by a charity or an organisation. For a full list of organisations that are working towards accreditation visit www.assistedogs.org.uk

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In addition, there are people who have self-trained dogs. This means they have trained their dogs to meet their own particular physical, mental, or other needs. You should accept these dogs as well.

Passengers from other countries have assistance dogs also and you must accept these for travel.

- **Guide Dogs** assist people who are blind or visually impaired. They usually wear a white working harness with yellow reflectors and tags on their collar.
- **Hearing Dogs** assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired. A hearing dog communicates by touching its owner and then indicating the source of the sound. These dogs alert their owners to various sounds, including the doorbell, smoke alarm, baby alarm, and alarm clock. **BrisDoc staff** should be aware that hearing dogs may jump up onto their companion if telephones or alarms sound. They wear a burgundy-coloured coat with "Hearing Dog" written on it.
- A **Guide Dog** with a red and white harness indicates that the owner is deafblind.
- **Assistance Dogs**, such as Support Dogs or Dogs for the Disabled, assist people with a wide range of tasks, including alerting others when their owner has a seizure, carrying items, and loading and unloading washing machines. They typically wear a purple-coloured coat.

Emotional Support Animals

In addition to assistance dogs, we recognise the important role that other assistance animals, including ESAs, may play in supporting individuals with disabilities. While assistance dogs are generally permitted, the inclusion of other assistance animals, such as ESAs, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This decision will depend on an assessment conducted by the most senior employee present, ensuring that the animal's presence aligns with the safety, health, and operational needs of our facility.

Typical standards of behaviour of Assistance Dogs

Assistance Dogs are highly trained animals and distinguishable from pets in the following ways:

- Wearing a special harness and collar tag;
- Are carefully taught how to be well behaved in public places;
- Will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to its owner;
- Are trained to go to the toilet on command.

Assistance Dogs are exempt from usual hygiene rules by the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and their owners are given a card to carry with them which explains this.

Hygiene and Cleanliness Guidance

When an Assistance Dog is / has been on BrisDoc Premises, particular attention will be given to hygiene and cleanliness.

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Hand Hygiene

All staff must ensure proper handwashing with soap and water or use alcohol hand gel before and after any contact with an assistance dog. This practice ensures the safety of all patients and the assistance dog.

All patients who come into contact with or handle an assistance dog will be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water.

Assistance dog owners should also wash their hands with soap and water after handling their assistance dog and before coming into contact with patients.

General Cleanliness

All areas of our premises where an assistance dog has been present will be reported to the cleaning staff, who will ensure these areas are thoroughly cleaned with general-purpose detergent.

Any equipment that has come into contact with the assistance dog should be cleaned with general-purpose detergent or alcohol-impregnated wipes, where the use of general-purpose detergent is inappropriate.

If necessary, all animal body fluids should be treated as human waste. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be worn, and all surfaces should be cleaned with a 10,000 ppm HazTab solution.

General Guidance

Upon identifying that a patient is the owner of an assistance dog, BrisDoc will offer the opportunity for the owner and their assistance dog to visit and walk around the premises to familiarize themselves with the layout and routes, including access and egress routes, locations of toilets, fire exits, assembly areas, and consulting rooms.

BrisDoc will coordinate with the owner to conduct repeat visits as needed to serve as 'refresher training.'

If the patient requires tests or treatment and prefers that the dog be left in a suitable area for a short period, BrisDoc will make every effort to keep the dog in a quiet area, such as an office or duty room, while the patient undergoes tests or treatment.

During consultations and examinations, physical contact with the assistance dog by BrisDoc clinical staff will be avoided whenever possible.

When it is known that an assistance dog will be accompanying a patient for a consultation, BrisDoc will review the schedule for other patients attending that particular session who have previously expressed a reasonable objection to an assistance dog being present due to:

- Medical conditions or allergies associated with dogs

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- Mental health issues or a reasonable fear of dogs.

In such cases, BrisDoc will make every effort to arrange for these patients to wait and/or have their consultation in a different room.

Note: Objections based on religious beliefs are not considered reasonable grounds for denying access to assistance dogs. For example, within the Muslim faith, dogs are generally viewed in a negative context. However, in 2003, the Sharia Council in the United Kingdom ruled that the prohibition against dogs does not apply to guide dogs, allowing them to be used by Muslims who need them for assistance.

Should an incident occur which involves an assistance dog, BrisDoc will create a “Learning Event” or ‘Significant Incident’ record.

Assistance Dog Owner’s Responsibilities

It is the owner’s responsibility to ensure that the assistance dog’s toileting and feeding requirements are met.

Members of staff are not responsible for the care of assistance dogs.

Reception staff will advise the owner on arrival at our premises that in the event an assistance dog fouls inside BrisDoc premises, it is the owner’s responsibility to report this to a member of staff so that arrangements can be made to clean and sanitise the area.

The owner should ensure the dog is fit and well and care regimes follow guidance provided by Assistance Dogs UK.

The owner should follow the BrisDoc infection control policy, including the use of hand gel provided for all patients and visitors.

Related Policies

- Equality & Diversity Policy

Change Register

Date	Version	Author	Change Details
17.11.2011	Draft		Word nest amended to next
18.02.2015	1		I have added our values statement. The CQC outcomes have changed to so the policy now reads that “our services are responsive to patient’s needs”
31.10.2017	1		I have added pictures with descriptions of the various assistance dogs.

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27/09/2024	3.1		Slight changes to pictures and the number of assistance dogs covered within this policy has increased from 8 to 9. A paragraph has been added to describe emotional support animals.
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