



## ASSISTANCE ANIMALS POLICY: STUDENTS

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Bath Spa University is committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment and values the diversity of its staff and students. The University recognises the important role played by assistance animals which provide valuable, even life-changing, assistance for disabled people. This policy is designed to provide some general information and guidance regarding assistance animals on Bath Spa University campuses and in University-managed student accommodation. It should be noted that students living in University accommodation are not permitted to have any pets. This policy relates strictly to assistance animals only.

1.2 The policy outlines the following key areas:

- The definition and types of assistance animals;
- The practical arrangements on campus;
- University responsibilities;
- Owner responsibility;
- Dealing with complaints or concerns.

### 2. Definition and types of assistance animal

2.1 For the purpose of this policy, an assistance animal is one which has been specifically trained to assist disabled people (including physical and/or psychological disabilities) and has been duly accredited by the appropriate organisation. For example an assistance dog will be accredited by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK) or an equivalent organisation in another country.

2.2 Assistance dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) have formal identification (coloured coat and collar tag) and have been granted certification by the Department of Health. As such, they are permitted to accompany their owners at all times and in all places within the UK (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk).

2.3 In the interests of health and safety the University reserves the right to refuse access to a dog that:

- Is not qualified by one of the five membership organisations of Assistance Dogs (UK); or
- Is from another nation, which does 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.

2.4 Types of assistance dogs include:

**Guide Dogs** - assist people who are blind or visually impaired.

**Hearing Dogs** - assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

**Support Dogs/Dogs for the Disabled** – a Support Dog can be trained in a wide variety of practical 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 while 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.

2.5 There may be situations when other animals, including cats, are used to provide therapeutic support. This tends to be in terms of the benefits of their companionship and/or helping to alleviate depression and anxiety. Bath Spa University is happy to consider requests for other assistance animals on a case by case basis.

2.6 Notes on appropriate interaction with assistance dogs can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2.7 Advice and support may be available from 'Assistance Dogs UK', a voluntary coalition of seven assistance dog charities, including 'Support Dogs', a mainland UK charity that trains dogs for people with disabilities. It also trains Seizure Alert dogs for people with epilepsy, and Autism Assistance dogs.

### **3. Practical arrangements on campus**

3.1 The aim is to provide a welcoming and safe environment for assistance animals and their owners while ensuring the well-being and comfort of all staff, students and visitors. As such, for the purpose of assistance dogs, the university makes the following arrangements.

3.1.1 **Toileting:** the provision of 'Spending Pens' and waste bins for the toilet needs of assistance dogs. The dogs are trained to use these facilities only. In the unlikely event of a dog fouling elsewhere it is the owner's responsibility to remove the waste.

3.1.2 **Dining/Café areas:** Disabled people accompanied by their assistance dogs have full access to all dining/café areas on all campuses. Assistance dogs are trained to lie quietly at their owner's feet when they sit down to eat. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health has determined that assistance dogs are unlikely to present a risk to hygiene.

3.1.3 **Canine behaviour:** Assistance dogs are specially selected for their temperament, and undergo lengthy training to ensure they are always under the control of their owner, and will not cause a nuisance to anyone. Their owners also receive full training to ensure that they can handle their dogs appropriately.

3.1.4 **Allergy concerns/fear of dogs:** the Equality Act (2010) states that organisations must make reasonable adjustments to policies to accommodate disabled people. This includes amending any 'no dogs' and 'no pets' policies to allow access for assistance dogs, and means it is permissible for assistance dogs to accompany their owners anywhere on campus, including all lectures and seminars. If a person is identified as having an allergy to, or extreme fear of dogs, every effort will be made to ensure that the person has minimal or no exposure to any assistance dogs.

### **4. University responsibilities**

#### **4.1 Student Accommodation**

Student Accommodation will ask all applicants if they would be prepared to live in an accommodation block where an assistance dog is present. This early survey, at point of application, will ensure the University has a comprehensive level of data prior to the allocation

of rooms. If an applicant and their assistance dog (in any given academic year), will be attending Bath Spa University, we will:

- Inform other allocated students that an assistance dog will be present in their residences, and provide guidance on acceptable interaction with the dog (Appendix 1); and
- All applicants will be given the opportunity to amend their preference to live alongside an assistance dog; and
- We will undertake a final check prior to signing of the licence agreement to check all applicants do not have an allergy to dogs, or an extreme fear.

#### **4.2 Student Support Service**

The Student Support Service will provide advice and guidance for students with assistance dogs. It will provide students with a copy of this policy so they are fully aware of all procedures and responsibilities. Student Support will liaise with all University stakeholders, including Housing, Estates and Academic departments as appropriate and will be the first point of contact should any issues arise.

### **5. Owner responsibilities**

5.1 The assistance dog, or other animal, is the responsibility of its owner at all times. In the case of assistance dogs, the owner must ensure that it:

- is kept on a lead at all times when walking on university premises;
- uses the Spending Pens provided for all toileting needs and does not foul the grounds;
- has all its requirements met in respect of toileting, feeding, watering and veterinary attention;
- does not enter any other student rooms, in any university accommodation, without prior consent;
- does not enter any shared bathroom facilities in any university accommodation;
- is well-behaved at all times and causes no disruption.

### **6. Dealing with complaints or concerns**

#### **6.1 Complaints from assistance dog owners**

Any students with assistance dogs wishing to make a complaint about the treatment of themselves or the dog should report the incident to Student Support Services in the first instance. Student Support is responsible for investigating the complaint, making every effort to resolve the matter informally. In the event that it cannot be resolved informally, the issue will be escalated and dealt with through the University Complaints procedure.

#### **6.2 Complaints about assistance dogs**

Anyone wishing to make a complaint about an assistance dog should raise the concern with Student Support in the first instance. As above, every effort will be made to resolve the matter informally. In the event that it cannot be resolved informally, the issue will be escalated and dealt with through the University Complaints Procedure.

### **7. Complaints about this policy**

Complaints about the operation of the policy should be made using the procedures set out in the University Complaints Procedure.

**Guidance on interacting appropriately with assistance dogs**

Please bear the following points in mind when interacting with a person and their assistance dog:

1. Greet the owner, and ask before interacting with the dog. It is polite to greet the owner first and very important to ask permission before petting/talking to the dog. Remember that the dog is working and it is vital that its attention is focussed on the owner. It can be very dangerous for the owner if their dog is distracted and not doing its job.
2. Bear in mind that the owner is likely to be out for a reason and may not have time, or want, to engage in conversation about their dog. Positive comments are always welcome, though!
3. Do not feed the dog – many assistance dogs are on very specific diets to help keep their working lives long. They should only ever receive food and treats from their owner.
4. Be wary of giving the dog praise in passing. Praise is a reward for service animals and is provided by owners/handlers in a specific manner. If a person in passing says, “what a good dog”, for example, they may have rewarded the dog unintentionally at an inappropriate moment. When admiring a service/assistance dog, the guidance is to keep eyes averted, comments directed to the owner, and voice appropriately modulated i.e. avoid speaking in overly sweet or childish tones as this could attract the dog’s attention.