



## Dogs At Work Policy

### 1. Introduction

Cotswold District Council prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the absolute best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the circumstances in which dogs are allowed to be in the workplace.

We recognise the challenges that being a responsible dog owner presents and that usually dogs require daily exercise, affection and companionship.

As an organisation, we are committed to providing a safe, productive and respectful workplace and we believe that having dogs present would present significant challenges to this commitment for staff, visitors and councillors.

Therefore, there are only a limited set of circumstances in which dogs are permitted to be in the workplace, however, we will support dog (and other pets) ownership in other ways, recognising that owning pets is a personal choice, but also often usually brings significant benefits to health and wellbeing.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to employees employed by Cotswold District Council and also nonemployees such as contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation on site.

Whilst this policy refers to 'dogs' it includes all animals.

### 3. General Policy

Dogs are not permitted on company premises during working hours. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Open office areas
- Reception
- Meeting rooms
- Shared or communal spaces
- Council-owned vehicles
- Any premises or spaces visited as part of your role.

#### 4. Exceptions

##### a. Assistance Dogs

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Cotswold District Council will make reasonable adjustments to support staff with disabilities. **Assistance dogs** (e.g., guide dogs, hearing dogs) are fully exempt from this policy and are permitted access to all areas of the workplace.

##### **Definition of 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 organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK). The registered organisations include:

- Guide Dogs.
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.
- Support Dogs.
- Dogs for Good.
- Canine Partners.
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance.
- Dog AID; and
- Medical Detection Dogs.

A full list can be found at: [Find an Assistance Dog Charity - ADUK](#)

Assistance dogs support people with a wide range of disabilities, including those relating to visual, hearing or mobility, and other conditions, for example epilepsy or autism.

Assistance dogs 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. As the working life of an assistance dog is about six years, a dog owner could have several dogs during their lifetime.

Other types of dogs that are NOT registered assistance dogs.

### **Emotional Support Dogs**

While there is no doubt that an assistance dog provides companionship, an emotional support dog is a dog that offers comfort and companionship simply by being present, which requires no specialist training.

### **Therapy Dogs**

Therapy dogs and their owners usually visit a wider group of people who might be in a hospital ward, a school classroom, a nursing home etc. to provide comfort and support.

## 5. Process for introducing an assistance dog.

### **New starters**

If a new starter already has an assistance dog, they should make the HR onboarding team aware of this and the team will notify the Head of HR.

### **Current staff**

If a current staff member becomes the handler of an assistance dog (or knows that they will soon become a handler) they should discuss it with their manager and contact the Head of HR.

In both cases the Head of HR will:

- Request documentation from the handler regarding the registration and training of the assistance dog.
- Contact the H&S Lead to arrange for a risk assessment.
- Discuss with the staff member appropriate communication around the presence of the dog in the workplace.

- Meet with the handler/employee and their manager to discuss any other requirements to support the handler/employee with their assistance dog (for example time off for appointments, training needed for other staff, familiarisation sessions for the assistance dog) etc. See Appendix 1 for the Assistance Dog Checklist and Plan
- All documentation will be recorded in the employee's file and a review meeting should be scheduled in with the employee in no less than 6 months to check that everything is working well.

#### Visitors of staff

Where possible all employees and users of the building should be informed in advance if there is a visitor with an assistance dog and given any instructions/information that will ensure the visit goes smoothly.

Where it is not possible to give advance warning and information, staff should treat the visitor and their assistance dog with the same dignity and respect that we expect to be extended to all visitors and colleagues.

If you have a concern – please speak to your manager in the first instance, or if that is not possible, please contact your Head of HR.

#### 6. Handler/Employee responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the handler/employee to ensure that any legal requirements in the keeping of animals are met (e.g. The Animal Health Act and subsequent regulations require dogs to wear a collar with the owner's name and address).

Further responsibilities include cleaning up after their dog, supervising the dog, and ensuring the dog does not disturb coworkers or damage property.

The handler/employee is responsible for ensuring that the dog is fully vaccinated, wormed, and in good health. If the dog is unwell the handler/employee should stay away from the workplace until the dog is well. The employee/handler will need to speak to their manager about work arrangements during this time.

#### 7. Our responsibilities

We are responsible for making reasonable adjustments to ensure that the employee and their assistance dog are safe and comfortable in the workplace. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Ensuring the dog has space to rest.
- Giving the employee additional time to take the dog outside for toilet breaks

- Allowing time off for further dog training or vet appointments
- Training staff and other third parties in how to interact with the dog.

We will ensure that sufficient public liability insurance is in place that covers staff bringing an assistance dog into the workplace.

## 8. External sources of help

If further support is needed with accommodating assistance dogs in the workplace, these are some potential sources of help:

[Find an Assistance Dog Charity - ADUK](#)

<https://assistancedogregistry.co.uk>

[Support Dogs](#)

ADUK can provide a training session which will equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to ensure an accessible and welcoming experience for Handlers and their dogs. The manager of the employee bringing an assistance dog will be able to arrange this training for the team to attend.

If this policy has raised any issues for you and you need some emotional support, details of emotional support available for you can be found here: [Wellbeing Advocates - Cotswold District Council Portal](#)

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## Appendix 1

### **Supporting an Assistance Dog and their Handler: Checklist and Plan**

This checklist should be completed by the Assistance Dog Handler with their manager.

The H&S Lead and/or Head of HR or any other relevant parties may be consulted.

If the Assistance Dog Handler moves to a new manager, the new manager must be fully updated and given a copy of this Checklist and Plan.

If the Handler has a NEW Assistance dog, a new checklist and plan should be completed.

<b>Name of Handler:</b>	
<b>Name of Manager:</b>	

<b>Name of Dog:</b>	
<b>Gender of Dog:</b>	
<b>Type of Assistance Dog (if known):</b>	

<b>Date plan completed:</b>	
<b>Date for review:</b>	

#### **Part One – Day to Day**

Will the dog need a separate fob sign in, or is the dog assumed to be in the building once the owner signs in?

What will the dog be wearing to indicate that they are an assistance dog?

What facilities or equipment will the dog handler bring with them to work for their dog? (e.g. bowl, bed, toy)

Where will these be kept?

Where will the dog be placed whilst the handler is working? (e.g. lying/sitting under the desk/next to the desk)

Will the dog remain on a lead during these rest times?

If the dog needs to eat food during the day, where will this be? (e.g. next to the desk, in a designated area, in a break-space etc.)

Does the dog need regular access to water?

Where will the water be provided/accessed by the dog?

When moving around the building together, are there any additional considerations?

Will the dog handler be attending any meetings (internally or externally)?

What are the arrangements for the dog in the meetings? (e.g. sitting/lying next to the handler)

Will the dog be required to make any noises or signals during the working day to assist their owner? YES / NO

Do people need to be notified about this? YES / NO

If YES, who needs to be notified, what do they need to be told, and who will do this?

Are there any further considerations? Give details:

## **Interaction with the dog**

Can people speak to the dog?

Can people touch the dog?

Are there any dos and do nots relating to the dog? (e.g. regards feeding and treats)

Has this been communicated? Please give details:

## **Toileting**

Where and when will the dog go to the toilet?

Are there any further considerations around this?

Please give details:

## **Communication about the dog**

Is there a plan to communication to all staff about the dog and agree a 'feedback window'?

(consideration many need to be given if anyone reports that they are allergic to dogs or have a phobia of dogs, and a plan put in place)

Please give details of the proposed communication plan and the timings:

## **Medical Emergency Plan**

Please give details of what should happen if the owner feels unwell (e.g. if they need to go home but cannot follow their usual travel plans):

Please give details of what should happen if the owner is taken to hospital:

Should the dog go with the handler if allowed?

Who will temporarily take care of the dog if the dog cannot go with the handler?

Who should be contacted?

## **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

If the alarm sounds, it is expected that the owner and dog will follow the usual emergency evacuation procedure and proceed to the meeting point.

Should the emergency be critical. Should anything be done differently? (e.g. should the dog be carried?)

Has this been communicated to the team? Give details:

Has the been communicated to the Fire Marshall?

Give details:

### **Further Support for the Handler, Dog and Staff**

Is there a specific organisation that provides support and information relating to the assistance dog? Give details:

### **Any other information**

Is there anything else that would be useful for us to know or to consider?

## Appendix 2

### FAQs for Dogs in Work

Q My usual dog walker has let me down at the last minute – can I bring my dog into work just as a one-off?

A Unfortunately not. We only allow assistance dogs in the workplace for reasons explained. You will need to make alternative arrangements for your dog or speak to your manager and see if you can reach an agreement to work from home as a one-off.

Q Does the policy apply to other animals

A Yes, we only allow assistance dogs in the workplace and no other animals

Q I see my cat as a therapy cat – can they come into work

A No, only recognised assistance dogs are allowed in the workplace

Q What about if I am working from home

A It is your personal choice whether to have animals or pets in your home. You must ensure that they do not distract you or distract others from work. The occasional appearance of a pet on a Teams call is not a problem.

Q I am not keen on dogs – do I have to accept an assistance dog coming into work

A Assistance dogs enable people with disabilities to have jobs so it is really important that we are supportive. Assistance dogs are specially trained and are chosen for their gentle, compliant and clever natures. We will work with you to discuss your worries and concerns and see if there are ways, we can support you to be at work with an assistance dog around.

All assistance dogs in the workplace will be properly vaccinated, wormed etc.