### Document Control

**Title**

Animals and Pets in Hospital Policy

<table>
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<th>Version</th>
<th>Date Issued</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comment / Changes / Approval</th>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>Nov 2012</td>
<td>Draft</td>
<td>Initial version for consultation</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>Feb 2013</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Approved at IPCC 5th February 2013 with amendment required by IPCC made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Minor amendments to formatting for document map navigation and semi-automatic table of contents. Prompts to author in red text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Feb 2016</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>New Template. Minor amendments</td>
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**Main Contact**

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Director of Nursing

**Superseded Documents**

NHS Devon / Devon Provider Services Guidance on Animals and Pets in Healthcare Facilities policy

**Issue Date**  
February 2016

**Review Date**  
February 2019

**Review Cycle**  
Three years

**Consulted with the following stakeholders:**

- Infection Prevention & Control Committee

**Approval and Review Process**

- Infection Prevention & Control Committee

**Local Archive Reference**

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**Filename**

Animals and Pets in Hospital Policy v1.2 February 2016
Policy categories for Trust’s internal website (Bob)
Infection Control

Tags for Trust’s internal website (Bob)
Guide Dogs
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1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to detail Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust’s guidance policy on animals and pets in hospitals. It provides a robust framework to ensure a consistent approach across the whole organisation, and supports our statutory duties as set out in the NHS Constitution.

1.2 This is a merged policy reflecting the incorporation of community services in Exeter, East and Mid Devon with Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust in April 2011.

1.3 The purpose of this document is to inform and guide staff on the control of animals and pets in hospital and applies to all healthcare staff.

1.4 Implementation of this policy will ensure that all staff are aware of the Trust policy regarding animals and pets on Trust premises.

1.5 The policy applies to all staff.

2. Definitions

2.1 Animals and pets

The definition of animals and pets include all mammals, reptiles, insects, fish and birds.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Role of the Director of Nursing

The Director of Nursing is responsible for:

- Acting as a second point of contact to support
- Ensuring that a replacement main contact is identified should the original author be re-deployed or leave the organisation.

3.2 Ward/Departmental Managers

Responsibility for implementation of this policy lies with the Senior Nurse (usually Ward Sister) or Departmental Manager in Charge of the areas to which these statements apply unless specifically stated otherwise in the text.

3.3 Infection Prevention and Control Team

It is the responsibility of the Infection Prevention & Control Team to support managers in the implementation of this policy. The Infection Prevention & Control Team undertake to provide education and clarification to support the
utilisation of this policy prior to and following implementation when requested to do so by the Department Manager (usually Ward or Departmental Manager in charge of the areas to which these statements apply unless specifically stated otherwise in the text).

3.4 The Infection Prevention and Control Committee

Monitoring compliance with the policy
Ensuring that the policy is approved after review and prior to publishing

4. Contacting the Infection Prevention and Control Team

4.1 North: The Infection Prevention and Control Team can be contacted in hours on 01271 322680 (ext. 2680 internal at North Devon District Hospital), via bleep 011 or out of hours by contacting the on-call Medical Microbiologist via North Devon District Hospital switchboard.

4.2 East: The Infection Prevention and Control Team can be contacted in hours on 01392 402355. Out of hours via Royal Devon & Exeter switchboard on 01392 411611

5. Animals and Pets in Hospital

5.1 Introduction

Pet animals can enhance the quality of life for many people. However animals can carry infections which can occasionally be transmitted to humans, particularly people who are immune-suppressed or who have other health problems. Some animals may also be difficult to control and may pose risks to patients and staff due to their behaviour.

To minimise the risk to patients in hospital, all pet mammals, reptiles, insects and birds are not allowed on Trust premises. The only exceptions to this rule are assistance dogs:

- Guide dogs for the blind
- Hearing dogs for deaf people
- Dogs for the disabled (providing assistance to disabled people, people with autism, people with learning difficulties)
- Medical detection and seizure alert dogs
- Police sniffer/security dogs
- Dogs and cats belonging to the Pets as Therapy (PAT) scheme are also excepted

These animals are not excluded from the hospital premises because they are recognised as providing substantial benefits for patients. This policy describes the infection control regulations governing the visits of assistance dogs and PAT animals.
There may be some exceptional circumstances e.g. on the request of a dying person, where it may be beneficial for a pet to be brought to see an individual person. Such requests must always be discussed with the Infection Prevention and Control Team first and consideration given to the safety and perceptions of other service users and the public.

An aquarium may also be seen to be beneficial in some settings, such as waiting rooms, as watching fish is purported to have a calming effect and reduce stress.

5.2 Pets as Therapy Animals and Assistance Dogs

All cats and dogs used by the Pets as Therapy (PAT) organisation will have a record detailing their vaccinations, visits to the vet and state of health. This helps to minimise the risk of the animal harbouring an infection which could be transmitted to patients. A copy of the animal’s health record should be available on request. PAT animals are temperament assessed, must be over 9 months old, fully wormed and covered by the PAT insurance scheme. Any PAT animal visiting a clinical area should be accompanied at all times by its registered owner.

All visits should be pre-arranged. The nurse in charge of the clinical area will determine whether the PAT animal will be allowed into the area and whether any conditions or restrictions are necessary.

When an assistance dog or PAT dog or cat visits the hospital premises the following procedures must be adhered to:

- Staff and patients must wash their hands before and after handling the dog or cat.
- The dog or cat must be properly supervised by its owner or by a staff member at all times.
- Staff must identify whether there are immune-suppressed or otherwise vulnerable patients who may be put at risk from contact with the dog or cat. If such a risk is identified the animal must be kept away from the patients at risk or even excluded from the clinical area.
- Any visiting animals should be kept well away from any patients and/or staff with known allergies to animals.
- 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 Trust premises.
- If staff or patients who may come into contact with the animal have any wounds, sores or broken areas of skin, these must be kept covered at all times.
- No dog or cat food can be kept on the hospital premises.
- If the animal shows any signs of illness the ward staff must request that the animal is seen by a vet. The animal will require authorisation from the vet before it will be allowed to return to hospital premises.
- The Infection Prevention & Control Team may exclude the animal from clinical areas and/or from the hospital premises if it is suspected to be a source or vector of infection. The registered owner may be requested to have the animal examined by a vet before being allowed back into the hospital to ensure it is not a risk to patients.
- If the animal urinates or defecates in the hospital, it is the responsibility of the clinical staff caring for the patient to ensure that the faecal and/or urinary contamination is cleaned up immediately (see Decontamination Policy).
- Healthcare staff should inform the domestic services manager if extra cleaning may be required, for example the removal of dog or cat hairs from carpets and furnishings.
- When assistance dogs and PAT cats and dogs are allowed on hospital premises, the animal’s owner and healthcare workers must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance to other patients and that it does not interfere with patient care. If any patients object to the animal’s presence then arrangements must be made to ensure that the animal is kept away from them. If necessary the animal may need exclusion from specific clinical areas.

Animals owned by members of staff that are not registered as part of a PAT scheme should not be brought into a work setting.

5.3 Fish

Fish may be kept in main reception areas, however, infection risks are posed by aquarium water, and therefore either a maintenance contract with an aquarium maintenance specialist must be established, via the Procurement department, or a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) be in place identifying key issues around maintenance. This must be written on Trust SOP documentation, published on BOB and kept up to date by the responsible manager.

The fish tank must be cleaned and maintained as identified in the SOP. Hands must be washed after any activities involving the aquarium.
Any requests for new installations of aquariums must be raised with the Infection Prevention and Control Team before proceeding.

5.4 Other Animals

Any wild animals, e.g. hedgehogs, squirrels, rabbits, farm animals, and birds must not be encouraged into in patient settings by feeding.

6. Monitoring Compliance with and the Effectiveness of the Policy

Standards/ Key Performance Indicators

6.1 Key performance indicators comprise:

- Absence of incident forms relating to animals and pets in hospital.

Process for Implementation and Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness

6.2 After final approval, the author will arrange for a copy of the policy to be placed on the Trust’s intranet. The policy will be referenced on the home page as a latest news release.

Information will also be included in the Chief Executive’s Bulletin which is circulated electronically to all staff.

Line managers are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented across their area of work.

Monitoring compliance with this policy will be the responsibility of the Infection Prevention and Control team. This will be undertaken by Weekly monitoring of incident forms at the Infection Prevention and Control team meetings

Where non-compliance is identified, support and advice will be provided to improve practice.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

Table 1: Equality impact Assessment

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<th>Group</th>
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### 8. References

- http://petsastherapy.org/

### 9. Associated Documentation

- Decontamination policy