

## Disability Access Policy

The practice is committed to complying with the relevant regulations, legislation and the GDC Standards to provide a caring and inclusive environment for all patients. For the purpose of this policy, the term 'disability' may include physical and sensory impairments, learning disabilities, chronic or terminal illness, and the use of mental health services. People are protected from unlawful discrimination through the application of our policies and procedures.

The practice has made reasonable adjustments to the facilities, policies, procedures, communication, signage, and team members' training to provide access to our services. Practice information is available in an alternative formats of large print. If the adjustments are not sufficient to treat a patient safely, they are referred to a practice that can provide this service.

We have recently carried out remedial works to address the steep ramp highlighted in the risk assessment, wheelchair and ground floor access is available via the disabled entrance.

This policy applies to all team members including employees both full and part-time, self-employed personnel, trainees, subcontractors, casual, and agency staff. Team members are encouraged to undertake training in procedures relevant and important to people with a disability and strive to use language that is easy to understand and meets the needs of all patients. Disability access is covered in the practice induction programme.

When communicating with patients who have a disability, team members:

- Do not patronise, make assumptions, or think they know best
- Are ready to offer assistance, but never impose it
- Are prepared as necessary to :
  - Sit or bend down to talk to a person at his or her eye level
  - Offer a seat or help with doors
  - Let the person take their arm for guidance or support
  - Offer the use of equipment, e.g. a clipboard as an alternative writing surface
  - Use appropriate ways of communicating, e.g. writing notes if someone finds speech difficult to understand
  - Be courteous, patient and always talk to a disabled person directly, never through his or her companion; never shout or call attention to anyone; never compromise the person's right to privacy or confidentiality; check to make sure they have been understood

The practice always welcomes patients' views and suggestions on how services or access can be improved.

### Assistance dog risk management procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to promote access to assistance dogs within the practice. The practice welcomes such animals and recognises that under the Equality Act 2010 assistance dogs have special legal protection and that it would be unlawful to refuse access to a person who is accompanied by one.

We understand that the risks associated with assistance dogs are no greater than the risks associated with humans due to the training, vaccination, and parasite prevention accreditation these animals undergo, and that it would be unreasonable to refuse entry.

The practice is committed to ensuring high standards of hygiene and mitigating any foreseeable risk in relation to persons with phobias, allergens, or religious beliefs towards animals, as well as protecting the animal owner/handler and the animal itself. The following procedure has been adopted to reduce incidents so far as is reasonably practicable.

Assistance dogs are permitted into surgeries to support their owners during treatments, apart from during aseptic procedures; this will be discussed with the dog owner in advance. The practice is aware

that most assistance dogs are registered with AD(UK) and can easily be identified by organisation-specific branded dog jackets, harnesses, or lead slips, however, the practice recognises that this is not a legal requirement.

Therefore, as a matter of procedure, we do not seek to verify if an assistance dog is registered as such and will only ask for verification where there are concerns, such as if it does not meet the expectation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in being trained to recognised standards, such as through a member organisation like Assistance Dogs (UK).

It is our expectation, in line with recognised standards, that assistance dogs:

- Will not wander freely around the premises
- Will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to or near their owner
- Will not display reactive behaviours towards humans or other animals
- Have been trained to toilet on command and will not toilet in the practice
- Have comprehensive routine parasite prevention and do not have parasites

If an assistance dog does not behave in line with the above-expected behaviours the practice reserves the right to ask for the dog to be removed from the premises. Domestic pets that have not been accredited and trained by a suitable organisation, are not permitted onto the premises.

Hand hygiene protocols will also be followed, and those who have come into contact with the animal will be requested to clean their hands with soap and water, sanitiser, or alcohol rub.

#### *Incident management*

Whilst assistance dogs are highly trained and generally toileted before entering a public setting, the practice understands that there will always be a risk of accidental fouling during the visit. In the event of this occurring, the practice team will deal with it in a sensitive manner. The fouling and area in which it has taken place will be cleaned using the practice's body fluid kit and disposed of as offensive waste, replicating the practice protocols for human waste.

Whilst all due care and attention is given by team members when handling sharps, the practice understands that there will always be a risk of an assistance dog sustaining a needlestick injury when accompanying its owner into surgery. In the event of this occurring, the practice team will help the dog owner clean and disinfect the affected area using a non-alcoholic cleansing wipe, however, the practice team will not interact with the dog without the owner/handler's prior consent.

It is important to note for both the dog owner as well as team members, that dogs cannot contract HIV or Hepatitis B from humans and are also far more resistant to tetanus, therefore health risks associated with needlestick injuries are far less to dogs than to humans.

If, however, the dog owner is concerned about any injury to their dog, the practice will actively encourage them to seek medical advice from the local veterinary practice.

If required, for example, if the dog has hurt its paw and is unable to apply pressure or walk, the practice will arrange for a taxi to be called to collect and escort them to the veterinary practice.

Any incident occurring that involves an assistance dog or therapy animal will be recorded following the practice's significant event policy and procedures and will be discussed as part of a team meeting to identify potential learnings and improvements.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Disability Rights under the Equality Act.

Updated: 10.11.2025

To review: November 2028