

Bangor University

Disability Services, Student Services



Position statement on Assistance Dogs and Therapy Animals/Emotional Support Animals

Assistance Dogs

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) sets out when someone is disabled and therefore protected from disability-related discrimination. Assistance Dogs are specially trained to carry out specific duties for a disabled person (as defined by the Act). These animals are covered under the legislation and are legally permitted to always accompany their owner, partner or handler in all places (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017).

The Equality Act 2010, s173, defines Assistance Dogs as:

- A dog trained to guide a blind person.
- A dog trained to assist a deaf person.
- A dog trained by a prescribed charity to assist a disabled person who has a disability that consists of epilepsy or otherwise affecting the person's mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination or ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects.
- A dog of a prescribed category which has been trained to assist a person who has a disability (other than mentioned above) of a prescribed kind.

This means dogs which have been trained and registered with one of the Member Organisations listed by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) will meet these criteria.

Currently the following organisations are registered full members of ADUK:

- Canine Partners
- Dog A.I.D
- Dogs for Good
- Guide Dogs
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Medical Detection Dogs
- Support Dogs
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance

(Assistance Dogs UK, 2018)

There are organisations which train Assistance Dogs in addition to member organisations of the ADUK however there are concerns that some privately-trained assistance dogs are not meeting acceptable standards, with implications for the safety of the owner and general public. In addition, there is no system in place to accredit privately-trained assistance dogs Bennett O & Desai P (2016).

Whilst the legislation does not define 'a dog of prescribed category', the Equality and Human Rights Commission states that: 'Assistance Dogs are not pets and are treated as 'auxiliary aids' under the Act. Assistance dogs are highly trained which means they will not wander freely around the premises, will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner and are unlikely to foul in a public place (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017).

Therapy Animals and Mental Health

There is a growing upsurge in the engagement of 'therapy animals' or 'emotional support animals' for people with a range of difficulties including mental health issues and autism. However, these animals are not specifically trained to carry out any particular task, but rather their role is to be a source of comfort or support. Whilst this is different to a pet, there is no legal status for these animals currently in the UK. Whilst there is some evidence that animal assisted interventions can be helpful, there is a consensus that this evidence lacks scientific strength at present (Audrestch et al, 2015; Kazdin, 2017; O'Haire, 2013; O'Haire et al, 2015; Serpell et al, 2017).

Bangor University's Position

Bangor University's stance on this situation, therefore, is that trained Assistance Dogs accompanying a student to University will be allowed into University buildings and facilities, including Halls of Residences, in compliance with the law.

The University expects owners to be able to demonstrate that their Assistance Dog has been highly trained and meets the criteria currently laid out by the Equality Act and contained within the Equality and Human Rights Commissions guidance (2017).

If relevant paperwork can be provided, these will be considered on an individual basis. The owner will be expected to provide a supporting letter from their GP, assurances of training and welfare of the Assistance Dog and evidence of up to date public liability insurance, see [Conduct Agreement form](#). Preventing and rectifying the misbehaviour of an Assistance Dog is the owner's responsibility.

Other animals are currently not covered under legislation and will not be permitted to join students in any University building or facility or be housed in University accommodation. Whilst being with, and caring for, animals can be therapeutic, we do not advocate emotional dependence on an animal as an appropriate means of

accessing the learning environment. We encourage prospective students and current students to liaise with our Mental Health Advisers on alternative strategies.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

We will keep this Policy under review and amend in line with legislation and government guidance.

References

Assistance Dogs UK (2018) <http://www.assisteddogs.org.uk/faqs>

Audrestch, H., Whelan, C., Grice, D., Asher, L., England, G., & Freeman, S. (2015). Recognizing the value of assistance dogs in society. *Disability and Health Journal*, 8(4), 469-474.

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Kazdin, A. E. (2017). Strategies to improve the evidence base of animal-assisted interventions. *Applied Developmental Science*, 21, 150–164. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bangor.ac.uk/10.1080/10888691.2016.1191952>

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Serpell, J., McCune, S., Gee, N., & Griffin, J. A. (2017). Current challenges to research on animal-assisted interventions. *Applied Developmental Science*, 21(3), 223–233. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bangor.ac.uk/10.1080/10888691.2016.1262775>

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