

# **Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals on Campus**

## **Policy and Guidelines**

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## **1. Policy statement**

King's College London is committed to fostering a positive and inclusive environment for staff and students with disabilities and long-term conditions. This commitment is in line with both the [Equality Act 2010](#) and King's Policies on Disability ([King's Disability Policy](#) and [Student Disability & Inclusion Policy](#)) which guide the University's approach to making reasonable adjustments and promoting equal access. These principles underpin the policy on assistance animals and emotional support animals (ESAs) as a reasonable adjustment on university premises.

King's recognises the vital role that assistance animals and emotional support animals play in supporting the wellbeing and independence of staff and students who are disabled and have a long-term condition.

In accordance with our duties under the Equality Act 2010, the University is committed to providing reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled staff, students, and visitors are not placed at a disadvantage. Consequently, the University supports the access of assistance animals (such as guide dogs) across all campus areas. It is generally unlawful to refuse entry to guide dogs and well-trained assistance animals as they are considered an auxiliary aid. ESAs do not have the same legal status as assistance animals under UK law;

however, requests for the access of ESAs are considered through the University's formal reasonable adjustment processes.

Animals that are not being used for the direct support of a member of the King's community, or those that do not perform a specific task for the University, are not permitted on university premises. This includes King's Residences and all maintained grounds.

## 2. Policy Scope

This policy outlines the arrangements in place to ensure the safe access and appropriate conduct of assistance animals and ESAs while on University premises. It only applies to assistance animals and ESAs, not pets.

An **assistance animal** is an animal which has been highly trained to do work or to perform tasks or services for a disabled person. Assistance animals are usually dogs, such as guide dogs, trained to support people who are blind or visually impaired, or hearing dogs trained to support people with hearing loss, among others. They are usually trained and registered with specialist organisations. However, this is not a legal requirement, and some assistance animals may have been trained by their guardian and not be registered with a specialist organisation. More information is available in the [Assistance Animals & Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#).

An **emotional support animal (ESA)** provides emotional support or passive comfort that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a condition of a disabled person. For example, emotional support dogs help ease symptoms of depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). ESAs do not have to receive specific training and do not necessarily perform tasks. More information is available in the [Assistance Animals & Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#).

The policy applies to staff and students, and operates across all premises, that is solely owned, operated, or maintained by King's College London. In halls of residence, the [Residences Emotional Support Animal Policy](#) applies in addition to this policy and sets out further procedures and requirements specific to student accommodation.

## 3. How to organise access for assistance animals and ESAs

The [Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals Process document](#) outlines the steps to follow if staff or students want to bring an assistance animal or ESA on University premises as a reasonable adjustment. Line managers, [Disability Support & Inclusion](#) (DSI), and animal guardians must follow this process. Additional guidance is contained in the [Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#) or practical advice on organising access and managing assistance animals and ESAs on University premises.

### 3.1 Access restrictions

It is generally unlawful to refuse entry to guide dogs and well-trained assistance animals as they are considered an auxiliary aid. However, the University reserves the right to restrict or refuse access for assistance animals and ESAs for health & safety reasons. Access may be restricted or refused:

- In areas of the University that are considered high-risk environments, such as research laboratories, medical facilities, spaces requiring the use of protective clothing, plant rooms.

- If the welfare of the animal is at risk. Restrictions may be applied to make sure the animal is protected from harm, injury, and disease.
- If an animal shows signs of illness. If the animal is ill, in poor health, or unclean while on university premises.
- If the animal presents a direct risk to the health & safety of others.

Access will be assessed on a case-by-case basis through a risk assessment, and the University will make reasonable efforts to facilitate access.

The University may revoke previously approved access if any of the above circumstances arise. Where possible, animal guardians will be given an opportunity to address and remedy any issues before access is withdrawn.

### **3.2 Managing assistance animals and ESAs on University premises**

The [Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#) includes additional practical advice on managing assistance animals and ESAs on University premises. Individuals living or working near the assistance animal or ESA are responsible for reading this to inform themselves on what to expect and how to avoid behaviours that can interfere with the animal's role.

Individuals hosting regular visitors with an assistance animal or ESA should handle requests on a case-by-case basis following the same principles outlined in this policy.

#### **How the University supports this policy**

- Provide transparent, fair, and accessible procedures for the admission of assistance animals and ESAs to University premises. These procedures are outlined in the process document and may be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain aligned with legal requirements, best practice, and the evolving needs of the University community.
- Develop and disseminate clear guidelines on the presence and management of assistance animals and ESAs on University premises.
- Allow individuals with an assistance animal or ESA to take reasonable breaks to attend to their animal's needs.
- Provide guidance and signposting on appropriate toileting areas for assistance animals and ESAs.
- Make sure that teaching rooms, offices, and other enclosed spaces have sufficient floor space to accommodate animals comfortably within reach of their guardian (e.g. under desks or in corners).
- Make water and bowls available upon request.

#### **How individuals with an assistance animal or ESA support this policy**

- Adhere to access restrictions established by the University on grounds of health and safety.
- The University asks that assistance animals and ESAs are clearly identifiable while on university premises. For example, by wearing an identifying harness and by carrying a King's animal ID card. You can read more on identification and how to get an animal ID card in the [Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#).
- Timely communicate to the line manager and department any changes to routine or location to facilitate access and health & safety requirements.
- Ensure that the assistance animal or ESA does not cause harm or injury to others and damage to University's property. The assistance animal or ESA guardian is responsible for any damage to persons or University property.

- Assistance animals and ESAs are expected to be trained, responsive to instruction, well behaved and well groomed.
- Make sure the animal's health, hygiene, nutrition, and comfort needs are met.
- Make sure the animal's training remains up to date and appropriate and safe for their duties. If there are changes to the work environment, duties, or routine, the animal guardian must ensure the animal's training is reviewed and updated accordingly. Animal guardians may be asked to provide evidence of training if the animal shows signs of disruptive behaviour.
- Be responsible for cleaning up and disposing of animal waste. However, individuals who are registered blind and have a guide dog are not required to clean up after their dog. They should instead inform an appropriate member of staff, who will coordinate cleaning support.
- Make sure the animal is always kept on a lead when walking around the University estate or safely harnessed when unsupervised for short periods of time. Animals should not be left tied up outside a building or unsupervised for a prolonged period.
- Make sure that the animal is always covered by a valid Public Liability Insurance. A copy of the current insurance policy must be provided to the department at the point of registration and upon every renewal.
- King's is not responsible for the loss, ill health, or death of any assistance animal and emotional support animal.

### **How managers and Disability Support & Inclusion (DSI) support staff and students**

- Provide adequate notice, guidance, and support to those likely to work and study near the animal.
- In collaboration with the department, implement and address any needs or actions identified through the risk assessment process. The risk assessment should be reviewed periodically to ensure that any changes in circumstances, risks, or needs are promptly addressed.
- Make sure animal guardians complete the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) process and collaborate with the Estates & Facilities PEEP's Manager to assist with its completion.
- Facilitate arrangements for arrival or pre-arrival orientation on the University premises as part of induction and collaborate with the Estates & Facilities PEEP's Manager to arrange any emergency evacuation walk-through.

### **How the Estates & Facilities Teams maintain our spaces**

- Campus Operations assist with the identification and, if necessary, installation of appropriate relief areas such as spending pens.
- Campus Operations ensure that access routes are clear and easy to navigate, and obstructions removed or are identified as a potential hazard.
- Campus Operations provide campus familiarisation tours upon request, including support in identifying the most accessible routes.
- Cleaning Teams offer advice or coordinate additional cleaning support, for example, in cases where someone has an allergy.
- The Estates & Facilities PEEP's Manager sets out a safe and suitable PEEP for the animal guardian.
- The Estates & Facilities PEEP's Manager briefs animal guardians on emergency evacuation procedures and makes information on emergency evacuation available for reference in accessible formats. Any changes to fire safety alarms and procedures should also be communicated to the animal guardian.
- Emergency responders attempt to keep animals with their guardians in the event of an emergency. However, the emergency responder's priority should be toward the safety of the individual.

## 4. Addressing individual needs and concerns

The University recognises that some students or staff may be impacted by the presence of an animal due to:

- other disabilities and long-term conditions such as sensory sensitivities, PTSD, or neurological conditions
- allergies
- animal phobias
- religious or cultural beliefs

Managers or DSI should help explore and agree suitable alternative and equitable arrangements for all parties involved. Such issues will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Religious or cultural beliefs cannot be used to prohibit access to assistance animals and ESAs and their guardians.

The [Staff Disability Support Advice Service](#) can be contacted for further support and advice on staff adjustments.

[DSI](#) can be contacted for further support and advice on student adjustments.

For further information and advice please contact the [Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Wellbeing \(EDI&W\) Team](#).

## 5. Further information and resources

- [Assistance Animals and Emotional Support Animals on Campus process document](#)
- [Assistance Animals & Emotional Support Animals toolkit](#)
- [King's Residences Emotional Support Animal Policy](#)
- [King's Disability policy](#)
- [King's Student Disability & Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Hub](#)
- If you require a different format of this document, please contact the [EDI&W Team](#).

### Version Control

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