

Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 27650

Dear FOI Team,

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I would like to request the following information concerning the presence of dogs (excluding assistance dogs) at Endeavour House, Ipswich, for the period from 7 May 2026 to the date of this request, unless a different date is stated below.

- 1. The council's current policy, rules or guidance governing whether animals may be brought into council buildings, including any relevant provisions of the health and safety policy, the building or facilities rules, and the staff handbook.*
- 2. Any earlier version of the policy, rules or guidance at item 1 in force at any time since 1 January 2026.*

Please see the attached policy documents.

- 3. The substance of any amendment made to that policy, rules or guidance since 1 January 2026.*

4 Emotional Support Animals and Pets

Emotional support animals, as the name suggests, offer emotional assistance to their owners. These animals are not necessarily trained to perform specific tasks like Assistance Dogs. Dogs, cats, rabbits, and even birds can serve as emotional support animals, depending on the individual's preference and needs.

Emotional support animals do not have the same legal rights under the Equality Act 2010 as trained Assistance Dogs. This guidance does not apply to emotional support animals or pets. SCC does not allow emotional support animals or pets onto its premises.

The last sentence was added to reaffirm the current policy position relating to all Suffolk County Council (SCC) staff. Approved by Mike Leake, Head of Health and Safety.

- 4. The date on which any such amendment took effect.*
8 July 2026.

- 5. The identity, by role or office, of the person who requested or proposed the amendment, and whether that person was a councillor, an officer acting on a councillor's behalf, or otherwise.*

Health & Safety Officer, not acting on behalf of a Councillor.

- 6. The identity, by role or office, of the person who approved the amendment and the authority under which they did so.*

Head of Health & Safety, not acting on behalf of a Councillor.

- 7. The reason recorded for the amendment.*

Version 1.2 of the Policy had a slight change to the wording to make it clearer that the prohibition of emotional support animals includes pets. The words "and pets" were added after the words "emotional support animals" (as per response to Question 3 above). This

was a matter of clarity as clearly the original meaning was that no animals other than properly trained assistance dogs are allowed on SCC premises.

8. Confirmation of whether any permission, exception or other arrangement has been granted since 7 May 2026 permitting a dog to be brought into Endeavour House.

9. If so, the identity, by role or office, of the person who sought it and the person to whom it was granted, if different.

10. The identity, by role or office, of the person who granted it and the authority under which they did so.

11. The date of the grant, and any conditions attached, including as to areas of the building, days, times, or the conduct and control of the animal.

Suffolk County Council do not hold any records or data in relation to this.

12. Any correspondence, including emails and messages on Microsoft Teams or similar platforms, that records the seeking or granting of this permission.

Suffolk County Council do not hold any records or data in relation to this.

13. Confirmation of whether the current policy or arrangement applies to a single individual, identified by role or office, a defined category of persons, identifying the category, or staff and councillors generally.

Details of who the policies relate to are referred to in the attached policies.

14. Confirmation of whether any other request to bring a dog into the building has been received or granted since 7 May 2026.

No requests received between 7 May 2026 and the date this Freedom of Information request was received by Suffolk County Council.

15. A copy of any risk assessment carried out in connection with the presence of a dog in the building, together with its date and the role of the person who carried it out.

Risk assessment attached.

16. A copy of any equality impact assessment or equality screening carried out in connection with the arrangement or any policy amendment.

17. Details of any consultation undertaken with staff or with trade unions on the arrangement or amendment.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was not carried out in relation to the amendment to the Assistance Dogs in the Workplace Guidance, as the change was limited to the addition of a definition and did not represent a material change to the guidance itself. In relation to the new Pets at Work Policy, recognised Trade Unions did query whether an EIA was required. This was considered as part of the policy development process. However, as the policy formalised the council's existing position regarding pets in the workplace and did not introduce a material change for employees, it was concluded that an EIA was not necessary.

Representatives of the Trade Unions raised no challenge towards approving the new policy.

18. Any record of advice sought or received concerning insurance or liability in connection with the presence of a dog in the building, including any requirement for the owner to hold or evidence third-party liability cover.

The risk assessment requires evidence of appropriate public liability insurance and

insurance details were requested from the owner of the dog.

19. Any correspondence with the operator of the building's catering facilities concerning the arrangement, having regard to food hygiene requirements.

Dog not to go near food preparation or breakout areas as agreed with owner as part of risk assessment.

20. Any communication issued to staff announcing or explaining the arrangement or any policy change.

Staff in the vicinity of the office of the Leader of the Council were informed, and a sign is attached to the door of the office.

21. Confirmation of whether the arrangement or amended policy is subject to any review date or trial period, and if so what.

Risk Assessment review date in 6 months of date of the assessment, or earlier if required.

22. The number, in numerical form only and without identifying any individual, of concerns, complaints or incident reports recorded from staff or visitors in connection with a dog in the building.

No complaints or concerns have been raised in connection with a dog in the building.

23. Confirmation of whether any register or log is kept of dogs present in the building.

A register or log of this nature is not maintained.

Redacted Information

All information released in response to a Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or Environmental Information Regulation 2004 (EIR) request is deemed to be in the public domain. As such we must consider whether or not the requested information qualifies as personal information and should therefore not be released into the public domain.

The council has determined that this is personal information and is therefore exempt from disclosure under **section 40** of the FOIA and **regulation 13** of the EIR.

The Council considered the following, including the possible consequences of disclosure for the data subjects concerned and their reasonable expectations as to the use of their data:

- expectations of the individuals concerned about personal information being put into the public domain;
- reasonable expectations - the data subjects concerned would have a legitimate expectation of privacy concerning their personal information and would not have anticipated this being put into the public domain;
- whether or not the requested information could be anonymised; and
- balancing the individual's rights and the legitimate interests - In past cases the Information Commissioner has weighed the individual's rights to privacy against the public interest in disclosure. There is no presumption in favour of releasing personal data.

This is an absolute exemption, which means that if the condition is satisfied there is no additional public interest test to consider.

In assessing fairness, the Council considered the likely consequences of disclosure of the requested information. Personal information should not be used in ways that have unjustified adverse effects on the individuals concerned. The council also considered whether such disclosure would be within the reasonable expectations of the individuals, given that any response to a request under the FOIA or EIR is deemed to be in the public domain. The council believes that in this instance it is not fair to disclose personal data and is therefore withholding the requested information under section 40 of the FOIA and regulation 13 of the EIR.

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Workplace / Location Councillor Leaders Office	Directorate: Corporate Services	Assessment Date: 03/07/2026	Review Date: 03/01/2027
Risk Assessors Name: [REDACTED]	Job title: Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisor for Corporate Services and Public Health and Communities	Risk Assessment For: Councillor Michael Hadwen to bring his dog into the workplace	
Hazards:	Who can be harmed and how:	Control Measures:	
Dogs bites, scratches or aggressive behaviour	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the Public. Potential injury to employees from dog aggression or playful behaviour.	The owner must provide evidence of appropriate public liability insurance. This will be reviewed on annual basis. The owner must ensure that the dog is supervised at all times. In the owner's absence, responsibility for supervision must be formally assigned to a designated responsible individual. The owner must confirm that the dog is appropriately socialised and displays suitable behaviour. The owner is to take full responsibility for the dog's behaviour and welfare and ensure that they are always under control. Any signs of aggression, excessive barking, disruptive behaviour, or loss of control will result in the immediate review of these arrangements. The dog must remain on a lead or harness whilst in office environments and communal areas. The requirement for a muzzle should be determined following an assessment of the dog's temperament and behaviour history. Staff need to be aware of reporting any incidences, near misses or safety concerns through the incident reporting system on oracle. Health and Safety reporting	

Slips, trips and falls	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. The above may sustain injuries such as sprains, strains, or fractures due to dog leads, toys, bedding, or other associated equipment creating trip hazards.	Dog bedding, leads, harnesses, toys, and other accessories must be stored in a designated area within the Councillor's office and kept away from walkways, doorways, and emergency escape routes. The dog will be kept on a lead when outside of the Councillor's office. Appropriate signage should be displayed on the office door to inform staff and visitors of the dog's presence.
Allergies	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Staff allergic to dogs causing respiratory irritation and or allergic reactions. Employees with dog allergies may suffer symptoms such as sneezing, itching, or asthma.	Individuals with known allergies should be identified. Dog free zones and enhanced cleaning arrangements including adequate ventilation should be maintained in consultation with Facilities Management (Vertas).
Fear and Anxiety around dogs	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Fear and anxiety of dogs	Staff should be informed in advance of the dog's presence within the workplace. Communication should be issued to staff outlining the arrangements and expectations regarding the dog in the workplace.
Fire Evacuation and Emergency Procedures	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Delayed evacuation and injuries.	The dog must be kept under the owners control, the dog must not obstruct escape routes. Ensure access / egress routes are always kept clear. The owner should ensure arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of the dog during emergency situations and that relevant additional responsible persons are familiar with these procedures.

Hygiene and cleanliness	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Contamination, unpleasant conditions	The dog must be kept away from all kitchens / food preparation areas or food consumption areas. Agreed cleaning and hygiene arrangements should be established in consultation with Facilities Management (Vertas). Any accidents involving the dog must be cleaned promptly and appropriately by the owner.
Zoonotic diseases and parasites	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Dogs may carry diseases or parasites that could affect other dogs or employees.	The owner must ensure that the dog is fully vaccinated, treated for fleas / worms, and appear healthy before attending work. The owner is to provide a full list of vaccinations and treatments upon request.
Interaction / socialising with other dogs	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public.	Limit amount of dogs in the workplace at one time. The owner must confirm that the dog is appropriately socialised and displays suitable behaviour around other dogs.
Noise and disruption	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Barking or making noise may disturb employees or meetings.	The dog will be supervised at all times and in the event of unsociable barking a review of the current arrangements will be undertaken.
Electrical Hazards	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Electrical Hazards from chewing cables.	The owner will ensure that the dog will be supervised at all times. Consider securing cables within the Councillor's office. Access to electrical equipment should be restricted where practicable.

Movement Around Council Premises	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Uncontrolled movement of the dog within Council Buildings.	The dog MUST be kept on a harness / lead when moving around the floorplates and building.
Owner becomes unwell or leaves the site unexpectedly.	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public. Owner becomes unwell or leaves the site unexpectedly.	The owner must provide emergency contact details for a nominated responsible person who can collect and care for the dog if required. Emergency arrangements should be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain current and effective.
Dog Suitability Requirement	Employees, Councillors, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public.	The dog must be appropriately trained, house-trained, well-socialised, and suitable for a professional office environment. Any history of aggression, biting, excessive barking, or behavioural issues must be disclosed and may result in permission being withheld or withdrawn. The Council reserves the right to require the immediate removal of the dog if concerns relating to Health, Safety, Welfare, or workplace disruption arise.

I have read and understand the risks associated and will adhere to the control measures as outlined above.

Date:

Signed:

Print Name:

RISK RATINGS

SEVERITY	
5	Death. Debilitating injury e.g. permanent loss of hearing or sight, loss of a limb or limb function <i>Enduring psychological impact, suicidal planning or suicidal attempt.</i>
4	Major injury – Broken bone. Loss of a digit. Unconsciousness. 7+ days lost time. <i>Anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts. Burnout. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).</i>
3	Moderate injury - Sprains. Strains. Hospital referral. 1-6 days lost time. <i>Feeling overwhelmed. Acute stress reaction.</i>
2	Minor injury - cuts, 1 st Aid required, <1 day lost time <i>Shock. Short term distress.</i>
1	Trivial injury - Minor bumps and bruises. No lost time

RISK RATING	ACTION REQUIRED	
Unacceptable	Stop	Stop activity and take immediate action
High	Urgent action	Take immediate action, stop activity if necessary, maintain existing controls rigorously.
Medium	Action required	Improve within a specified timescale
Low	Monitor	Seek to improve at the next review or if there is a significant change
Trivial	No action	No further action, but ensure controls are maintained and reviewed

LIKELIHOOD	
5	It is expected to happen in most circumstances
4	Will probably occur at some time, or in most circumstances
3	Fairly likely to occur at some time, or in some circumstances
2	It is unlikely to, but could, occur at some time
1	May only occur in exceptional circumstances

Likelihood	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		Severity				

Pets at Work Policy

Document Owner : Tim Jermyn
Version : Issue 01.a
Document ID : PSCC039
Date : 09 July 2026

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1.1 Introduction

This policy sets out Suffolk County Council's (SCC) position on bringing pets into SCC workplaces, community-based locations and any other SCC property, including car parks.

The Council recognises that, in some circumstances, people may prefer to have their pets with them during the working day. However, workplace arrangements need to take account of health and safety requirements, operational needs and the impact that pets may have on colleagues, visitors and members of the public who use our services,

For this reason, those covered by this policy are not permitted to bring pets to work.

This restriction does not apply to trained assistance dogs, which are covered separately under the Council's Assistance Dogs in the Workplace Guidance (SHAW53G).

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all SCC employees, including those on Grey Book terms and conditions, and staff on teaching terms and conditions and school-based support staff working within Education and Learning and Inclusion Services. It also applies to agency workers, volunteers and casual workers engaged by SCC.

It does not apply to teaching and support staff employed directly by schools, or staff who are covered by separate policies, procedures or arrangements relating to this subject, Elected members, partner organisations, tenants, or individuals who occupy, share, hire or

otherwise use SCC premises, including car parks.

This policy is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

This policy may be amended at any time, following consultation with the Council's recognised Trade Unions.

2 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Assistance Dog

An assistance dog is a dog that has been highly trained to assist people with a disability or a medical condition, both by carrying out practical tasks and supporting the individual's independence.

The assistance dog may be accredited by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs UK (in which case it will have a formal identification tag).

The registered organisations include:

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

Some assistance dogs are selected and trained by the owner (where possible) under the auspices of Assistant Dogs UK.

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

Assistance dogs are highly trained working animals that help people with a range of everyday tasks. Training can take anywhere from six months to two years, depending on the role the dog will perform. They are not pets, and their owners rely on them to support their independence, mobility and ability to go about daily life.

Assistance dog owners receive full training on how to manage their animal.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a trained Assistance Dog is classes as an 'auxiliary aid', meaning it provides additional support or assistance to a disabled person. They are often identified by wearing a jacket, harness, or brightly coloured collar and lead. By law, an Assistance Dog cannot be denied entry into a public or workspace.

For more information regarding Assistance Dogs, please read '*Assistance Dogs in the Workplace Guidance (SHAW53G)*'. [Assistance Dogs in the Workplace - SHAW53G](#)

2.2 Pets

For the purposes of this policy, a pet is any animal that does not meet the definition of an assistance dog above.

2.3 Bringing Pets to Work

Those covered by this policy should not bring pets into SCC workplaces or SCC community-based locations or any SCC property, including car parks.

Some SCC buildings and community-based locations are shared with, occupied by, or accessed by individuals and organisations that are not covered by this policy. Separate arrangements may apply to those individuals and organisations.

The Council recognises that pets may occasionally be present within SCC premises in circumstances that fall outside of the scope of this policy.

Where concerns arise about a pet brought into an SCC location by someone who is not covered by this policy, the matter should be referred to SCC Health and Safety or Human Resources for advice rather being considered under this policy.

2.4 Pets and Working Arrangements

The Council acknowledges that caring for a pet may form part of an individual's day-to-day responsibilities.

Individuals are expected to make appropriate arrangements for the care of their pets alongside their work commitments.

Where pet ownership affects an individual's preferred working arrangements, this should be discussed with their line manager.

2.5 If a Pet is Brought to Work

If a pet is brought into an SCC workplace, SCC community-based location or any SCC property, including car parks by someone covered by this policy, the individual will be asked to make arrangements for the pet to be removed from the workplace.

Managers should seek to resolve any concerns informally in the first instance.

Informal resolution will be the usual approach where concerns arise under this policy. Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where there is a repeated or deliberate failure to comply with this policy, the matter may be managed through formal processes in accordance with the SCC's relevant policies and procedures.

2.6 Consideration for Others

The Council recognises that some individuals may have allergies, medical conditions, religious beliefs or other concerns relating to animals.

If concerns arise about the presence of a pet in an SCC workplace, community-based location, or other SCC property, including car parks, advice should be sought from SCC Health and Safety. Where the concern involves an employee, support can also be provided by Human Resources.

This section does not apply to assistance dogs. Any concerns relating to the presence of an assistance dog should be managed in accordance with SCC's Assistance Dogs in the Workplace Guidance (SHAW53G), taking account of the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

3 DOCUMENTATION CHANGE CONTROL

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Changes History

Issue No	Date	Amended By	Summary of Changes
01.a	09.07.2026		Introduction of Pets at Work Policy

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

OFFICIAL

Corporate Services Controlled Documentation Scheme

Role	Name	Approval Date
Assistant Director: HR & OD	Tim Jermyn	09.07.2026

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Assistant Director: HR & OD	Tim Jermyn	09.07.2026

Reviewers (Consulted)

Role & Review Responsibilities	Name	Approval Date
Corporate Change Forum		09.07.2026

Distribution List - Once authorised (Informed)

Name	Organisation

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
	HR

Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Guidance Assistance Dogs in the Workplace

Document Owner:	[REDACTED]
Version:	Issue 1.0
Document ID:	SHAW53G
Date:	4 March 2025

OFFICIAL
Assistance Dogs in the Workplace – SHAW53G

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Changes History

Issue No.	Date	Amended By	Summary of Changes
1.0	4 Mar25	██████████	New guidance

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Safety, Health & Wellbeing Advisor	██████████	4 Mar 25

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Head of Health and Safety	Mike Leake	28 Jan 25

Reviewers (Consulted)

Role & Review Responsibilities	Name	Approval Date
Consulted	SHAW Team	24 Feb 25
Advised	SHAW Board	
Vertas - Consulted	██████████	25 Feb 25
Head of ASC – Consulted	██████████	29 Jan 25

Distribution List - Once authorised (Informed)

Name	Organisation
All Staff - IRIS	Suffolk County Council

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
	██████████

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1 Aim

The aim of this guidance document is to support Suffolk County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Health and Safety Policy by setting out guidance for allowing assistance dogs into Suffolk County Council buildings in a safe and controlled manner.

This guidance is to be used to enable reasonable adjustments to be made in the workplace enabling disabled employees, contractors, and visitors to attend its sites fulfilling the Council's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.

This guidance is for [Assistance Dogs](#) only.

2 The Law

Disabled people have important rights under the Equality Act 2010. The employer must make [Reasonable Adjustments](#) to enable a disabled person to work in or access the building. It is unlawful for employers to treat disabled people less favourably because of their disability or because they have an [Assistance Dog](#).

3 Definition of an Assistance Dog

[Assistance Dogs](#), are **not** pets. They are highly trained to support an individual with their day-to-day activities out and about or at home.

They are mainly used by people that are visually impaired, hearing impaired, have physical disabilities, or are significantly affected by conditions such as autism, epilepsy, or diabetes, and they can also be used for various mental health conditions.

An Assistance Dog is provided through a professional organisation such as [Guide Dogs](#) (for the blind) which is accredited to Assistance Dogs UK or they may be selected and trained by the owner (where possible) under the auspices of Assistance Dogs UK. The Assistance Dog undertakes basic training like a pet dog would before completing their specific service training, depending on the need of the individual.

Assistance Dogs can take between six months and two years to professionally train before they can be used for certain specific tasks to support the individual.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a trained Assistance Dog is classed as an 'auxiliary aid,' meaning it provides additional support or assistance to a disabled person. They are often identified by wearing a jacket, a harness, or a brightly coloured collar and lead. By law, an Assistance Dog cannot be denied entry to a public place even if it is not a pet friendly place.

4 Emotional Support Animals

[Emotional support animals](#), as the name suggests, offer emotional assistance to their owners. These animals are not necessarily trained to perform specific tasks like [Assistance Dogs](#). Dogs, cats, rabbits, and even birds can serve as emotional support animals, depending on the individual's preference and needs.

Emotional support animals do not have the same legal rights under the Equality Act 2010 as trained Assistance Dogs. This guidance does not apply to [emotional support animals](#). SCC does not allow emotional support animals onto its premises.

5 Reasonable adjustments

As an employer, Suffolk County Council, is required by law to make [reasonable adjustments](#) to enable a disabled employee or visitor with an [Assistance Dog](#) to attend their workplace.

This could include:

- Making space for the dog and its bed, potentially moving a workstation to a quieter part of the office space.
- Making changes to working hours to accommodate short breaks to allow the dog to have a comfort break.
- Providing or allocating an outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself, where outside spaces are available. Where no such space is available, more time may be necessary to allow the owner to walk the dog around the block or to a nearby public space.
- Agile and flexible working arrangements, depending on service requirements.

It will be the responsibility of the host or line manager, in consultation with the health and safety team and facilities manager, to collaborate with the visitor, employee, or contractor to ensure that all reasonable adjustments are met to ensure that they and their dog can operate safely in the workplace. This includes ensuring that a suitable risk assessment has been conducted, the emergency evacuation plans are updated, and a [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan](#) (PEEP) is completed where required.

6 Risk Assessment

It is the responsibility of Suffolk County Council to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is undertaken to ensure the safety of not only the [Assistance Dog](#) and its owner but all other persons who may be affected by the presence of the Assistance Dog.

This includes communicating with other members of staff who may be affected by the presence of the Assistance Dog for example due to an allergy or phobia.

7 Responsibility of the Assistance Dog Owner

It is the responsibility of the [Assistance Dog](#) owner to adhere to this guidance and work with Suffolk County Council to ensure the safety of themselves, the Assistance Dog, and other staff / visitors within the building.

7.1 Identification:

The [Assistance Dog](#) must be always identifiable using an appropriate jacket and harness.

7.2 Insurance:

It is the owner's legal and financial responsibility for any damage to property or people because of the [Assistance Dog's](#) behaviour. The owner must ensure they have public liability insurance for their dog and provide a copy of the insurance cover where requested.

7.3 Animal care and supervision:

The owner is responsible for the behaviour and wellbeing of their Assistance Dog. The owner should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their dog does not cause physical harm to another, nor damage Suffolk County Council property.

Animal care such as feeding, watering, health checks, up to date vaccination, treatments, and grooming, are the owner's responsibility. Owners must ensure that their dog does not introduce parasites to Suffolk County Council premises. At no point should the assistance dog be brought onto site if it is unwell.

[Assistance Dogs](#) must be always kept on a lead and under the control of the owner. At no time can the Assistance Dog be left unattended, and the owner must be respectful of other staff and visitors who may have an allergy or phobia of dogs.

7.4 Toileting:

The owner is responsible for ensuring that the [Assistance Dog](#) is given comfort breaks in the area designated by the building / site manager for toileting. The owner is responsible for cleaning up any dog waste and disposing of it accordingly in a dog waste bin or similar.

7.5 Travelling in a vehicle:

The owner is responsible for ensuring their dog is suitably restrained, according to [rule 57 of the Highway Code](#) when travelling with their [Assistance Dog](#) in a vehicle.

If the owner is an employee using a Suffolk County Council vehicle, they must have authorisation from their line manager and/or Vertas, as appropriate, before allowing the dog into the vehicle. The owner must also be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure that the vehicle interior is suitably cleaned after use should it need to be used by another Suffolk County Council employee as they may have allergies.

7.6 Timetabling:

To ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made, the dog owner is requested to give sufficient notice of them attending a Suffolk County Council building / site with

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their [Assistance Dog](#). This may, for example, include sharing their calendar timetable with the building manager / their line manager.

8 Restricted Access

Suffolk County Council may restrict access of [Assistance Dogs](#) to certain areas where risk controls for health or safety may be compromised. Examples of restricted areas may include food preparation areas, busy vehicle / plant yard areas or areas where protective clothing is required etc.

Exceptions to access will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any review will consider risk management and potential reasonable adjustments.

9 Removal of Assistance Dogs

Suffolk County Council reserves the right to remove or bar entry to an [Assistance Dog](#) if it compromises the health and safety of others or where unresolved animal misbehaviour continues.

10 Responsibilities of Suffolk County Council Staff

Assistance Dogs are not pets, and Suffolk County Council staff members should not:

- Feed, pet or praise [Assistance Dogs](#)
- Distract or startle an Assistance Dog; or
- Interfere with the Assistance Dog's service.

Staff members must:

- Notify their line manager of any personal allergy or phobia towards dogs where it is known an Assistance Dog will be present.
- Inform their line manager of any incidents, near misses or safety observations, including any failings in the reasonable adjustments in place.

11 Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

1. What is an Assistance Dog?

An [Assistance Dog](#) is highly trained and used to support an individual with their day-to-day activities out and about or at home. Commonly an Assistance Dog can support people that are visually impaired, hearing impaired, have physical disabilities, or are significantly affected by conditions such as autism, epilepsy, or diabetes, however they can also be used for various mental health conditions.

2. What UK laws cover Assistance Dogs?

[Assistance Dogs](#) are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and are legally protected. This means that businesses and public areas must grant access to Assistance Dogs. However, there may be some restrictions in place based on the size and behaviour of your Assistance Dog.

3. What is an emotional support animal including dogs?

An [emotional support animal](#) provides comfort and support in the form of affection and companionship for an individual. Unlike an [Assistance Dog](#), an emotional support animal is not trained to perform specific tasks for the disabled individual and are not protected under UK Law and can be restricted from entering Suffolk County Council workplaces.

4. What are my employer's duties under the Equality Act 2010?

As an employer, Suffolk County Council, is required by law to make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled employee or visitor with an [Assistance Dog](#) to attend their workplace. This does not include [emotional support animals](#).

5. What are reasonable adjustments?

To enable you and your [Assistance Dog](#) to attend the workplace, reasonable adjustments can include but are not limited to:

- Making space for the dog and its bed, potentially moving a workstation to a quieter part of the office space.
- Providing or allocating an outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself (if outside spaces are available).
- Making changes to working hours to accommodate short breaks to allow the dog to have a comfort break.
- Agree agile and flexible working arrangements, depending on service requirements.

6. What responsibilities do I have if I would like to attend the workplace with my Assistance Dog?

As the owner of the [Assistance Dog](#), we ask that you adhere to this guidance and work with your line manager, in consultation with the health and safety team and facilities manager, to ensure the safety of you, your Assistance Dog, and other staff / visitors within the building.

Further detailed responsibilities are explained in this guidance document.

7. Who do I contact if I would like to bring my assistance dog into the workplace or know of a visitor who needs to access the building with their Assistance Dog?

Please contact your line manager as soon as possible to enable suitable adjustments to be put in place. The manager will consult with the health and safety team along with the facilities manager to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place and that we do not discriminate in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and this guidance document.

8. Who do I contact if I feel that I am being discriminated against?

Please report to your line manager and / or the Human Resources team via the HR Helpdesk on [Oracle Fusion](#) who will document and investigate your complaint in accordance with Suffolk County Council grievance policy and procedure.

9. What do I do if I have an allergy or phobia of dogs?

Contact your line manager to make them aware of the situation. Your line manager, in liaison with the facilities manager and health and safety team must consider other staff members and visitors when arranging the reasonable adjustments for the assistance dog and owner to attend the building.

In addition, the owner of the [Assistance Dog](#) also has responsibilities which includes ensuring the dog is always on a lead, not left unattended and the owner must be respectful of those who may have an allergy or phobia of dogs.

10. Do these rules apply to other users of the building or just Suffolk County Council staff?

This guidance document is for Suffolk County Council staff, however, other users of our buildings who have assistance dogs have the same rights under the Equality Act 2010. It is the responsibility of their employer to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made, including a sufficient risk assessment, be put in place. That employer must also liaise with the Suffolk County Council facility manager to confirm that all reasonable adjustments have been made and to confirm any areas where the dog may not be permitted for safety or hygiene reasons.

11. What do I do if you feel that this guidance is not being adhered to?

Staff are encouraged to report any near miss incidents or safety observations such as unsafe acts or unsafe conditions. If you have any concerns or wish to report an incident please contact your line manager, the facility manager or the SHaW team, or report the incident directly on the Health and Safety Incident Reporting tool on

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12 Terminology

Assistance Dog – Refers to many different schemes which are accredited by the umbrella organisation '[Assistance Dogs UK](#)'. It includes organisations such as Guide Dogs (for the blind), Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and [many other groups](#). These dogs are highly trained to support disabled people and people with medical conditions in a variety of ways.

For clarity, we have used the expression *Assistance Dog* throughout this guidance to distinguish from emotional support animals.

Emotional Support Animal - Refers to any animal which serves as emotional support to an individual, depending on their needs. These animals are not necessarily trained to perform specific tasks, and they do not have the same legal rights under the Equality Act 2010 as trained Assistance Dogs. SCC does not allow emotional support animals onto its premises.

Reasonable Adjustments – Employers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that workers or service users with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged. Any adjustments need to be reasonable and proportionate. Ask yourself: Is it practical? Do we have the resources? Will it be effective? Will it have an adverse impact on others?

[Service Dogs](#) – Specifically refers to dogs provided for those with PTSD who have served. In colloquial speech however, people sometimes use this expression to refer to Assistance Dogs in general. Service Dogs UK are part of the Assistance Dogs UK scheme.

[Support Dogs](#) - Specifically refers to dogs provided for those with Autism, Epilepsy and other disabilities. In colloquial speech however, people sometimes use this expression to refer to Assistance Dogs in general. Support Dogs are part of the Assistance Dogs UK scheme.

Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Guidance Assistance Dogs in the Workplace

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Head of Health and Safety	Mike Leake	28 Jan 25

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Name	Organisation
All Staff - IRIS	Suffolk County Council

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
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Assistance Dogs in the Workplace – SHAW53G

1 Aim

The aim of this guidance document is to support Suffolk County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Health and Safety Policy by setting out guidance for allowing assistance dogs into Suffolk County Council buildings in a safe and controlled manner.

This guidance is to be used to enable reasonable adjustments to be made in the workplace enabling disabled employees, contractors, and visitors to attend its sites fulfilling the Council's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.

This guidance is for [Assistance Dogs](#) only.

2 The Law

Disabled people have important rights under the Equality Act 2010. The employer must make [Reasonable Adjustments](#) to enable a disabled person to work in or access the building. It is unlawful for employers to treat disabled people less favourably because of their disability or because they have an [Assistance Dog](#).

3 Definition of an Assistance Dog

[Assistance Dogs](#), are **not** pets. They are highly trained to support an individual with their day-to-day activities out and about or at home.

They are mainly used by people that are visually impaired, hearing impaired, have physical disabilities, or are significantly affected by conditions such as autism, epilepsy, or diabetes, and they can also be used for various mental health conditions.

An Assistance Dog is provided through a professional organisation such as [Guide Dogs](#) (for the blind) which is accredited to Assistance Dogs UK or they may be selected and trained by the owner (where possible) under the auspices of Assistance Dogs UK. The Assistance Dog undertakes basic training like a pet dog would before completing their specific service training, depending on the need of the individual.

Assistance Dogs can take between six months and two years to professionally train before they can be used for certain specific tasks to support the individual.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a trained Assistance Dog is classed as an 'auxiliary aid,' meaning it provides additional support or assistance to a disabled person. They are often identified by wearing a jacket, a harness, or a brightly coloured collar and lead. By law, an Assistance Dog cannot be denied entry to a public place even if it is not a pet friendly place.

4 Emotional Support Animals

[Emotional support animals](#), as the name suggests, offer emotional assistance to their owners. These animals are not necessarily trained to perform specific tasks like [Assistance Dogs](#). Dogs, cats, rabbits, and even birds can serve as emotional support animals, depending on the individual's preference and needs.

Emotional support animals do not have the same legal rights under the Equality Act 2010 as trained Assistance Dogs. This guidance does not apply to [emotional support animals](#). SCC does not allow emotional support animals onto its premises.

5 Reasonable adjustments

As an employer, Suffolk County Council, is required by law to make [reasonable adjustments](#) to enable a disabled employee or visitor with an [Assistance Dog](#) to attend their workplace.

This could include:

- Making space for the dog and its bed, potentially moving a workstation to a quieter part of the office space.
- Making changes to working hours to accommodate short breaks to allow the dog to have a comfort break.
- Providing or allocating an outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself, where outside spaces are available. Where no such space is available, more time may be necessary to allow the owner to walk the dog around the block or to a nearby public space.
- Agile and flexible working arrangements, depending on service requirements.

It will be the responsibility of the host or line manager, in consultation with the health and safety team and facilities manager, to collaborate with the visitor, employee, or contractor to ensure that all reasonable adjustments are met to ensure that they and their dog can operate safely in the workplace. This includes ensuring that a suitable risk assessment has been conducted, the emergency evacuation plans are updated, and a [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan](#) (PEEP) is completed where required.

6 Risk Assessment

It is the responsibility of Suffolk County Council to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is undertaken to ensure the safety of not only the [Assistance Dog](#) and its owner but all other persons who may be affected by the presence of the Assistance Dog.

This includes communicating with other members of staff who may be affected by the presence of the Assistance Dog for example due to an allergy or phobia.

7 Responsibility of the Assistance Dog Owner

It is the responsibility of the [Assistance Dog](#) owner to adhere to this guidance and work with Suffolk County Council to ensure the safety of themselves, the Assistance Dog, and other staff / visitors within the building.

7.1 Identification:

The [Assistance Dog](#) must be always identifiable using an appropriate jacket and harness.

7.2 Insurance:

It is the owner's legal and financial responsibility for any damage to property or people because of the [Assistance Dog's](#) behaviour. The owner must ensure they have public liability insurance for their dog and provide a copy of the insurance cover where requested.

7.3 Animal care and supervision:

The owner is responsible for the behaviour and wellbeing of their Assistance Dog. The owner should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their dog does not cause physical harm to another, nor damage Suffolk County Council property.

Animal care such as feeding, watering, health checks, up to date vaccination, treatments, and grooming, are the owner's responsibility. Owners must ensure that their dog does not introduce parasites to Suffolk County Council premises. At no point should the assistance dog be brought onto site if it is unwell.

[Assistance Dogs](#) must be always kept on a lead and under the control of the owner. At no time can the Assistance Dog be left unattended, and the owner must be respectful of other staff and visitors who may have an allergy or phobia of dogs.

7.4 Toileting:

The owner is responsible for ensuring that the [Assistance Dog](#) is given comfort breaks in the area designated by the building / site manager for toileting. The owner is responsible for cleaning up any dog waste and disposing of it accordingly in a dog waste bin or similar.

7.5 Travelling in a vehicle:

The owner is responsible for ensuring their dog is suitably restrained, according to [rule 57 of the Highway Code](#) when travelling with their [Assistance Dog](#) in a vehicle.

If the owner is an employee using a Suffolk County Council vehicle, they must have authorisation from their line manager and/or Vertas, as appropriate, before allowing the dog into the vehicle. The owner must also be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure that the vehicle interior is suitably cleaned after use should it need to be used by another Suffolk County Council employee as they may have allergies.

7.6 Timetabling:

To ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made, the dog owner is requested to give sufficient notice of them attending a Suffolk County Council building / site with

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their [Assistance Dog](#). This may, for example, include sharing their calendar timetable with the building manager / their line manager.

8 Restricted Access

Suffolk County Council may restrict access of [Assistance Dogs](#) to certain areas where risk controls for health or safety may be compromised. Examples of restricted areas may include food preparation areas, busy vehicle / plant yard areas or areas where protective clothing is required etc.

Exceptions to access will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any review will consider risk management and potential reasonable adjustments.

9 Removal of Assistance Dogs

Suffolk County Council reserves the right to remove or bar entry to an [Assistance Dog](#) if it compromises the health and safety of others or where unresolved animal misbehaviour continues.

10 Responsibilities of Suffolk County Council Staff

Assistance Dogs are not pets, and Suffolk County Council staff members should not:

- Feed, pet or praise [Assistance Dogs](#)
- Distract or startle an Assistance Dog; or
- Interfere with the Assistance Dog's service.

Staff members must:

- Notify their line manager of any personal allergy or phobia towards dogs where it is known an Assistance Dog will be present.
- Inform their line manager of any incidents, near misses or safety observations, including any failings in the reasonable adjustments in place.

11 Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

1. What is an Assistance Dog?

An [Assistance Dog](#) is highly trained and used to support an individual with their day-to-day activities out and about or at home. Commonly an Assistance Dog can support people that are visually impaired, hearing impaired, have physical disabilities, or are significantly affected by conditions such as autism, epilepsy, or diabetes, however they can also be used for various mental health conditions.

2. What UK laws cover Assistance Dogs?

[Assistance Dogs](#) are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and are legally protected. This means that businesses and public areas must grant access to Assistance Dogs. However, there may be some restrictions in place based on the size and behaviour of your Assistance Dog.

3. What is an emotional support animal including dogs?

An [emotional support animal](#) provides comfort and support in the form of affection and companionship for an individual. Unlike an [Assistance Dog](#), an emotional support animal is not trained to perform specific tasks for the disabled individual and are not protected under UK Law and can be restricted from entering Suffolk County Council workplaces.

4. What are my employer's duties under the Equality Act 2010?

As an employer, Suffolk County Council, is required by law to make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled employee or visitor with an [Assistance Dog](#) to attend their workplace. This does not include [emotional support animals](#).

5. What are reasonable adjustments?

To enable you and your [Assistance Dog](#) to attend the workplace, reasonable adjustments can include but are not limited to:

- Making space for the dog and its bed, potentially moving a workstation to a quieter part of the office space.
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