

This guidance reinforces the protocols in place for the following scenarios for involving animals for patient benefit within NHS Lothian:

- [A therapy animal](#): visits care settings for identified therapeutic purposes. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or affiliated organisation.
- [An assistance dog](#): trained for the benefit of the handler (this is not always the person receiving healthcare) e.g., guide, hearing, signal or seizure dog. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or owner.
- [A patient's own pet](#): an animal owned by the person receiving care.

**The only animal approved to visit NHS Lothian sites are dogs.**

All other animals are not permitted.

Animals **not suitable** for care settings and thus **must not** be introduced include:

- Exotic animals e.g., reptiles, snakes or fish that require specialist facilities or foods which could introduce infections
- Birds and rodents
- Ruminant animals such as ponies, reindeer, llamas etc. in acute healthcare settings
- Feral animals (nor should they be actively fed on healthcare premises)

**A therapy animal: visits care settings for identified therapeutic purposes. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or affiliated organisation.**

Canine Concern Scotland Trust are **the only organisation** who have been approved to provide Dogs as Therapet®'s within NHS Lothian's hospital settings.

The processes and procedures which **must** be followed when arranging for a Therapet® volunteer from Canine Concern Scotland Trust to visit your department are documented in the following procedure:

[Involving Animals Procedure](#)

All Therapet® visits delivered by Canine Concern Scotland Trust occurring on an NHS Lothian site, should be arranged and agreed through [The Voluntary Services Team](#) and the ward or department making the request.

To contact the Voluntary Services team email: [Loth.VolunteerEnquiries@nhs.scot](mailto:Loth.VolunteerEnquiries@nhs.scot)

[Appendix 1: Key considerations before requesting a Therapet® visit to your ward/department](#)

## Canine Concern Scotland

All Canine Concern volunteers hold the relevant level of PVG check for their role and will carry a Canine Concern ID badge and lanyard, their dog will also have a visible yellow lead flash as shown below identifying them as a Therapet®.

Some volunteers may also wear a light blue Canine Concern t-shirt/polo and their dog may have a yellow bandana as pictured below.



## Canine Concern Volunteers

Canine Concern Volunteers should only visit wards/departments with their Therapet® Dog where a visit has been agreed, recorded and arranged by the Voluntary Services team.

Where a Canine Concern Volunteer's dog is asked to visit a patient in their capacity as a family member or friend, this visit should be considered as a patient's own pet visit and the following checklist should be completed:

[http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet\\_Checklist\\_POP.pdf](http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet_Checklist_POP.pdf)

Please note: when this is the case, the animal should not be recognisable as a Canine Concern Therapet® (i.e., all lanyards, lead flashes etc should be removed).

If a member of NHS Lothian staff member is a Canine Concern Volunteer in their own time, then they may visit as a Volunteer with their Therapet® **ONLY** through pre-arranged visits organised by the relevant ward/department and the Voluntary Services Team.

**Assistance Dogs: An assistance dog is trained for the benefit of the handler (this is not always the person receiving healthcare) e.g., guide, hearing, signal or seizure dog. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or owner.**

It should initially be established what purpose the assistance dog will have for the handler and permission should be sought from the appropriate person in charge that the animal is permitted to visit.

The checklist for the patient's own pet should be completed by the member of staff in charge for each visit of the animal.

[http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet\\_Checklist\\_POP.pdf](http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet_Checklist_POP.pdf)

**Patient's Own Pet: A patients own pet is an animal owned by the person receiving care. Animals are the responsibility of the handler or owner.**

It should initially be established what purpose the patient's own pet visiting will have for the patient and permission should be sought from the appropriate person in charge that the animal is permitted to visit.

The check-list for the patient's own pet should be completed by the member of staff in charge for each visit of the animal.

Such visits should only be permitted where significant patient benefit is expected or in exceptional circumstances (e.g., palliative care).

[http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet\\_Checklist\\_POP.pdf](http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/InfectionPreventionAndControl/Documents/Form/Pet_Checklist_POP.pdf)

## **Appendix 1: Key considerations before requesting a Therapet® visit to your ward/department:**

**Who are the visits for?** Visits should be for patient benefit only. You should consider whether your patient group is appropriate for a visit and what benefit this will bring to them.

**Approval:** You must have approval from your Clinical Nurse Manager and demonstrate that you can meet the Infection Control requirements.

**Location:** All visits must take place in a designated space. This can be a ward setting but it must be clear which rooms/beds the visit will focus on. Animals should not routinely visit multiple acute wards on the same day.

**Type of dog:** The ward must consider what type of dog is appropriate for visiting their ward. E.g., long haired dogs and dogs which are prone to shedding are not appropriate in certain environments.

**Responsible person:** There must always be a designated person assigned to all Therapet® visits, this can be a member of staff or an NHS Lothian volunteer. This member of staff or volunteer must ensure good hand hygiene throughout the visits and ensure that only patients who have given direct consent prior to the visit are visited. Visits will not be started until this is in place.

**Consent and Checklists:** A member of staff in the ward or department must ensure that consent is given by each patient or their parent/guardian/power of attorney. This must be done prior to the animal arriving to ensure patients feel able to say no. Patients must be able to refuse a visit at any point. A visit checklist must capture the patient's consent to visit, any phobias, allergies, infection control measures needed, immunosuppression and lines/wounds. It is the responsibility of the ward/department to ensure this is completed prior to every visit. Visits will be withdrawn if this is not completed for every visit.

**Allergies:** Staff must check if any patients have an allergy to animals. If there are patients with allergies not taking part in a visit, a clear protocol to ensure these patients are not exposed to allergens must be in place. Staff who will deliver direct patient care during and following a visit must limit their contact with the dog to ensure dog hair does not transfer to their uniform.

**Feeding the animal:** Food must be moved out of the way of the visiting animal e.g., by pushing patient tables out of the immediate vicinity of the animal. Only dog treats supplied by the owner should be given and explicit consent must be gained before doing so. No other food items should be given to the dog.

**Duration:** Visits should last no more than 2 hours, but most visits are 1 hour. This is to ensure the health and wellbeing of the animal.