



our pets and people enriching lives,
one visit at a time

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Charity policy

The primary aim of Pets As Therapy is to bring temporary but regular animal companionship and comfort to patients, residents and young people in hospitals, hospices, day care centres, nursing homes, schools, etc, by means of visits from PAT Volunteers and their registered, healthy, temperament-tested PAT Pets. A PAT Volunteer is a person who does unpaid voluntary work on behalf of Pets As Therapy.

Pets As Therapy acknowledges that PAT Volunteers and their PAT Pets are a major national and local resource and make a crucial contribution to the aims and objectives of the Charity.

The Charity's policy in pursuing its aims and objectives are as follows:

- To establish clear principles for the involvement of PAT Volunteers and their PAT Pets.
- To clarify the role of PAT Volunteers and address the relationship between PAT Volunteers, those who engage them and those who receive their services.
- To recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of PAT Volunteers, PAT Pets, the Charity, its caring institutions, the patients and their carers, both lay and professional.
- To demonstrate the commitment Pets As Therapy feels towards the interests of those who benefit from the work of our PAT Volunteers.
- To help ensure the ongoing quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by our PAT Volunteers.
- To give a framework for recruiting and supporting PAT Volunteers, including people from under-represented groups.

General principles

- Pets As Therapy will employ an equal opportunities programme when recruiting and selecting PAT Volunteers.
- All PAT Volunteers will be required to complete an application form and agree to follow regimes of awareness of their pet's good health under the supervision of a veterinary practitioner and to the temperament testing of their PAT Pet by a person qualified to assess its suitability for the work of the Charity.
- PAT Volunteers may at any time contact Pets As Therapy if they have concerns about the nature of their voluntary work or are not completely happy with the Establishments they visit.
- PAT Volunteers will be encouraged to provide each other with mutual support and will have a named contact within the Charity who they should notify in the event of a grievance about any aspect of their volunteering work.
- PAT Volunteers will supply two referees from whom satisfactory references will be obtained prior to the individual being accepted by Pets As Therapy.
- PAT Volunteers will abide by all reasonable requests from Establishments visited.

Principles of good practice

- PAT Volunteers will strive to ensure that they and their PAT Pets are never put at risk.
- PAT Volunteers will at all times act in accordance with the advice and wishes of the medical, nursing or caring staff but within PAT guidelines.

Pets As Therapy recognises the rights of PAT Volunteers to:

- Know what is expected of them and to be given clear information.
- Be shown appreciation.
- Have safe working conditions and be free from discrimination.
- Withdraw from voluntary work at any time.

In carrying out their voluntary work for Pets As Therapy, PAT Volunteers have the responsibility to:

- Conduct themselves in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the Charity.
- Respect patients' confidentiality, dignity, wishes and privacy.
- Keep their PAT Pet well groomed, clean and healthy, so as to not cause concern to an Establishment, patients, carers or the Charity.

Voluntary Area Co-ordinators (VACs) are in the trusted position to support the vision, strategy and direction set by the Board of Trustees. They are expected to support the Board, management team and staff at all times, and in conveying messages from Head Office to other PAT Volunteers or in the public domain, should do so appropriately, without prejudice or their own personal opinion.

Pets As Therapy acknowledges the Charity's responsibility to:

- Inform, advise, guide and support its PAT Volunteers.
- Consult with its PAT Volunteers on any matters which may affect them.

Pets As Therapy reserves the right to:

- Request references for PAT Volunteers.
- Decline offers from applicants at its discretion.
- Terminate the services of any PAT Volunteer at its discretion, without question or appeal.

Rights and responsibilities of the people being visited by PAT Volunteers

- Any person at an Establishment visited by a PAT Team has the right to refuse to be present at the time of, or in the same room as, the PAT Volunteer and their PAT Pet.
- Where a person is either not fully responsible for their actions or not in complete control of their actions or reflexes, it will be the responsibility of the PAT Volunteer to safeguard their PAT Pet from potential harm.

Rights of PAT Pets

- All PAT Pets are to be treated with care and respect.
- PAT Pets are to be given adequate exercise for the relief of nature prior to a visit at an Establishment.
- PAT Pets should have access to water during their visit.
- PAT Pets are never to be exploited or put in situations where they are physically or temperamentally unable to cope.

Failure to adhere to good practice will result in immediate deregistration from Pets As Therapy.

Equal opportunities policy

It is the policy of Pets As Therapy that no employee, client, beneficiary or PAT Volunteer is to receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, visible or invisible disability, age or sexual orientation or is to be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be

justifiable. Our recruitment policy ensures that all employees and PAT Volunteers are advised of, undertake to abide by, and to apply our equal opportunities policy.

Confidentiality policy

PAT Volunteers represent the public face of the Charity and during visits they come into contact with a wide variety of people, including medical staff, patients, inmates, children and carers. It is vital that any information learned during visits remains strictly confidential.

It must be remembered that many beneficiaries of Pets As Therapy visits are vulnerable people. Should the PAT Volunteer wish to pass any details to their Voluntary Area Co-ordinator this must be agreed by a senior staff member of the Establishment concerned. No personal details should be discussed with any third party. Breach of confidentiality may lead to deregistration of the PAT Volunteer concerned.

Safeguarding policy

Pets As Therapy acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard the welfare of all children and adults. The Charity is committed to ensuring safeguarding practices reflect statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and Charity Commission requirements.

This policy recognises that the welfare and interests of young people and adults at risk are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or socio-economic background, every individual has a positive experience in a safe environment and is protected from abuse while participating in an activity with a PAT Volunteer.

Please familiarise yourself with further details of our Safeguarding Policy, available to download here. In the event of any safeguarding incident, notify Head Office immediately.

Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Pets As Therapy collects and holds personal data about individuals in order that they may volunteer for the Charity or receive our services and information. Personal data identifies an individual. It may include an individual's name, postal and email addresses, telephone number and financial details. It also includes an identifiable person in a photograph or video material. Pets As Therapy is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

PAT Volunteers and prospective volunteers give their consent for PAT to process their data via the online application process for the purpose of volunteering and supporting Pets As Therapy. In addition to this permission, we rely on legitimate interest to continue to carry out the Charity's work. Pets As Therapy adheres to GDPR 2018 requirements about personal data. The 2018 regulations put the onus on PAT to prove that anyone processing data/using PAT data on PAT's behalf is doing so responsibly and can demonstrate that they are. This includes simple security, for example, locking away PAT documents or laptops with PAT data on them when you go on holiday.

What information should Voluntary Area Co-ordinators (VAC) and Assessors hold?

VACs and Assessors should only hold information on PAT Volunteers that is necessary for our charitable business purposes, such as name, address, dates and detail of assessments and Establishments visited. You should hold the minimum necessary and should use the regular updates from Head Office to keep your

information up to date. When you get a new edition, the previous one should be destroyed. This applies to both electronic and paper files.

What data should be destroyed?

Out-of-date information that has been printed, such as details of retired PAT Volunteers, historic assessments, key names and contact details of inactive Establishments should be shredded or burned. Out-of-date digital data such as email correspondence and email addresses should be permanently deleted from all computers.

How should data be protected?

All personal information should be held as securely as possible. Computers should be password protected. Computers used for PAT data should not be used by others, including other family members.

What happens if there is a breach or possible breach?

Any breach, unauthorised access to or use of or loss of PAT data such as lists of volunteers' personal information or contact details of establishments should be reported immediately to Head Office. PAT has a duty to report breaches and potential breaches to the ICO. Reporting early is advisable. If you need any support in destroying information or records, please do not hesitate to contact Head Office.

Complaints procedure

Complaints from users regarding the activities of PAT Volunteer visits and/or their PAT Pets will be addressed initially to Head Office who will deal with the complainant. If no satisfactory resolution is reached, the complaint will be passed, with all relevant history, to the Chief Executive or Board for action.

Complaints from PAT Volunteers will be addressed initially to their local Voluntary Area Co-ordinator for resolution. If no satisfactory resolution is reached, or if the PAT Volunteer has no Voluntary Area Co-ordinator, the complaint will be passed, with all relevant history, to Head Office for action.

Any complaints relating to the policies or procedures of the Charity will be passed to Head Office. In all cases, copies of relevant correspondence relating to individual complaints must be passed to Head Office together with details of action agreed and/or taken.

Raw meat-based diet policy

Pets As Therapy has rigorously considered the potential risks posed when feeding pets a raw meat-based diet. Raw meat can contain not only parasites, but also the bacteria causing such serious infectious diseases, such as E. coli, salmonella and listeria, which can be extremely dangerous to humans.

In light of recent scientific and medical advice from a number of veterinary consultants, we have updated our guidelines with the aim of minimising any health risks associated with PAT Visits to the young, elderly and immuno-compromised recipients of our service.

The Royal College of Nursing, and an increasing number of NHS Trusts and education authorities, now state in their Infection Prevention and Control Policies that they will not accept visits from therapy dogs fed on raw meat. In order to ensure that PAT Dogs are considered safe to visit schools and hospitals in future, it is our duty of care to comply.

Therefore, **PAT Dogs should not be fed raw meat or unpasteurised milk**. Safeguarding our clients is our key responsibility, so your co-operation in this matter is much appreciated.

Vaccination policy

Pets As Therapy regularly reviews its vaccination protocols as part of our ongoing duty of care to minimise any risk to our clients and be pro-active in infection control and disease prevention. We aim to provide the best and safest possible service to the people in every Establishment we visit, many of whom are children, elderly and immuno-compromised.

The Charity operates within strict and frequently updated agreements in partnership with NHS Trusts, education authorities and private long-term care establishments. Minimising the risk to patients and residents from zoonotic diseases which can be passed to humans from visiting animals is one of our highest priorities. Zoonotic diseases in dogs include leptospirosis, therefore **all PAT Dogs must receive an initial course of inoculations against leptospirosis and booster vaccinations must then be administered annually.**

A copy of your pet's vaccination certificate must be forwarded to Head Office as part of the annual PAT Volunteer renewal process.

We also highly recommend that PAT Dogs should receive inoculations against distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus at the frequency recommended by your vet. Pets As Therapy does not accept homeopathic vaccinations.

Environmental policy

The Charity recognises the importance, no matter how small, of the impact of our activities on the environment and that there is a need to constantly consider ways in which we can conserve energy and minimise waste in all our operations and volunteer-led activities we undertake daily. The Environmental Policy is defined by the Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer and provides the framework of principles and commitments for managing our operations and volunteering activity.