

**PETS AS
THERAPY**

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

Volunteer Handbook



UPDATED APRIL 2022



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WELCOME TO PETS AS THERAPY

Congratulations on becoming a Pets As Therapy (PAT) Volunteer. We welcome you to our network of dedicated volunteers who make a difference to the health and wellbeing of people living in our local communities. We would also like to thank you in advance for giving your time and we wish you well on your volunteering journey.

ABOUT PAT

Pets As Therapy (PAT) is a national charity founded in 1983 by Lesley Scott-Ordish, a dog owner who understood the unique bond between humans and animals – and the joy of volunteering. Today, we're the largest provider of organised visits by assessed teams in the UK, and we have over 4,500 pets registered as PAT Dogs and PAT Cats.

Our aim is to ensure that everyone in the UK, no matter their circumstances, has access to the companionship of a friendly pet, and we endeavour to visit and help wherever there is a need for our service.

OUR VALUES

PASSIONATE

We are passionate about the work we do, the people we do it for and the animals we do it with.

ACCOUNTABLE

We take personal responsibility for using our resources efficiently, achieving measurable results and being accountable to our volunteers, sponsors, service users and the Charity Commission.

PRINCIPLED

We are committed to the highest standards of personal honesty and behaviour, never compromising our reputation and always acting in the best interests of the Charity.

INCLUSIVE

We all work together positively, collectively focussed on achieving our vision. We welcome diversity and believe everyone has a valuable contribution to make, regardless of visible and invisible differences.

AMBITIOUS

We are determined to fully explore the potential of Pets As Therapy for people throughout the UK, constantly developing new and creative ways to deliver our service.

We're proud to say that PAT Teams visit residential nursing homes, day care centres, hospitals, hospices, schools, prisons and many other establishments throughout the UK. Every PAT Volunteer and their PAT Dog or PAT Cat are hugely appreciated for the part they play in delivering our services to those who need it.

This Volunteer Handbook is intended to accompany you on that journey. Please read at your convenience. We sincerely hope you enjoy being a PAT Volunteer.

Kindest regards

The Pets As Therapy Team

GETTING STARTED

1 – Contact your Voluntary Area Co-ordinator.

We have a network of dedicated Voluntary Area Co-ordinators (VAC) who will support and guide you on your journey to become a visiting volunteer. We encourage you to keep in contact with your co-ordinator, to use them as a support for you as a PAT Volunteer and it is also a great way to get to know the other volunteers in your area. The contact details of your VAC are on the top left of your welcome letter.

2 – Consider which type of establishment you would like to visit.

- a. When thinking about where to visit, please consider the type of establishment that best suits you and your pet. Do you want to volunteer alongside young people, or would you prefer to chat to residents in a care home? Some pets will feel more relaxed in a quiet day care centre or hospice, others will relish being the centre of attention in a school or prison. It's important that you both feel happy and at ease.
- b. Consider how much time you are able to give and the frequency of your volunteer visits. We recommend starting with one regular visit and build up from there. The ideal visit would be to an establishment close to home or work to make it easier to include as part of your normal routine. Remember that visits must not last any longer than two hours (including a break), but it may also be okay to just say a 15-minute hello.
- c. You may have an establishment in mind for your visits and may have had a conversation with them already. This is fine, but please check that the establishment is registered with Pets As Therapy before your visits commence. This is a requirement of our insurance.
- d. If the establishment needs to register, please direct them to our website, www.petsastherapy.org. Online registration is quick and easy. They will receive a copy of our Establishment Guidelines containing information about Pets As Therapy and guidance for supporting you in your volunteering role.

3 – Your first visit.

- a. Before you start, we recommend you set up an initial, informal meeting with the establishment. This is an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have, to understand their desired outcomes and how the visits will be conducted before committing to visiting.
- b. Establish who your designated contact is within the establishment who will be able to help with any queries you may have and clarify that you will be supervised while visiting.
- c. Once you have agreed an on-going placement, please log in to the Volunteer Community to create your placement. Once done, both you and the establishment will receive an email confirming the placement and be asked to sign a Visit Agreement PAT7. If you are unable to log your placement on your account, there is a paper copy of the Visit Agreement PAT7 available, [click this link to download](#).

For insurance purposes it is essential we have details on where our volunteers are visiting.

4 – Your PAT ID and merchandise.

Please make sure you and your pet are clearly identified as a PAT Team during your PAT visit and ensure both you and your pet wear your current PAT ID card on all visits.

It is not essential to wear official Pets As Therapy clothing when visiting. However, if you're to attend an event organised by Head Office, or are to appear in any media or publicity, we do ask you wear our official PAT clothing, which is available to buy from our [online shop](#). We also have a small selection of merchandise we can loan out for events. Please contact reception@petsastherapy.org to discuss.

YOUR PAT VISIT GUIDELINES

PAT Volunteers deliver supervised visits to groups or individuals in group settings. Volunteering with Pets As Therapy should be a rewarding and safe experience for you and your pet, for those you visit, and for the establishments who host your visits. Please comply with all supervision requirements, sign-in procedures and volunteer registration practices used by the establishment.

These guidelines set out the core principles and actions we ask you to respect and observe as a PAT Volunteer when on a visit.

- ✓ Keep to your PAT visit arrangements as agreed with your establishment – start time, duration, activities and programme. If you cannot visit for any reason and need to cancel a visit, please give the establishment as much notice as possible.
- ✓ On arriving at the establishment, please check in with your designated contact and supervising member of staff before your visit begins.
- ✓ Make sure you and your pet are clearly identified as a PAT Team during your PAT visit – please ensure both you and your pet wear your current PAT ID card on all visits.
- ✓ Some establishments may ask you to wear or carry other accreditation. Please wear this in addition to, not instead of, your PAT ID card. In any establishment on a PAT visit you are always a PAT Volunteer.
- ✓ Only take **one** assessed PAT Pet with you on any visit. For practical safety reasons, our PAT Teams are one adult over 18 years, one animal at all times.
- ✓ Be aware that individuals among our recipients and establishment staff may not have experience interacting with pets. They may be nervous of them or may be an allergy sufferer. Be sensitive to these situations when you introduce yourself and your pet.
- ✓ Always knock before entering the room of a patient or resident. If the door is closed or a bedside curtain pulled around a bed, stop and speak to a staff member.
- ✓ Never be tempted to move or assist anyone in or out of a bed or chair. Always inform a staff member immediately if anyone asks to be moved, even a very short distance.
- ✓ Please remember that PAT Pets should not enter food preparation or restricted areas.

The welfare of your PAT Pet is as important as your own, so we ask you:

- ✓ For their wellbeing and that of recipients, please ensure that your PAT Pet is healthy and fit to undertake any visit. Please make sure vaccinations are up to date.
- ✓ Please comply with any establishment requirements concerning your pet, for example, extra hygiene before visits, using sterile mats on beds, keeping pets from licking faces.
- ✓ Keep your PAT Pet on a standard lead throughout the visit, enabling close control if required.
- ✓ Make sure you are in control of your pet at all times, ensuring it stays close to you and does not jump up. If you own a small dog, it may be possible to sit on a chair so that the person you're visiting can stroke it more easily. Alternatively, with the permission of the person and establishment, your pet could be placed carefully on a lap or bed. For hygiene purposes, please use a disposable pad.
- ✓ Provide water for your PAT Pet and agree with your establishment where you can take them for comfort breaks if needed.
- ✓ Know your pet's normal behaviour and make sure you are alert to any behavioural changes before, during and after the visit, which may indicate that the animal is stressed. Pets As Therapy reserves the right to undertake spot temperament checks on registered PAT Pets.
- ✓ As much as PAT Pets enjoy meeting people, each individual PAT visit must last no longer than two hours to ensure that you do not overtire your pet, however in demand they may be.
- ✓ Stay alert and note if your pet is trying to pick up anything from the floor – there may be a dropped pill or something else hazardous to its health.
- ✓ If someone wants to give your PAT Pet a treat, ensure that it is one that you provide so that it does not receive anything inappropriate, or isn't overfed. You could also simply offer to take the treat home to give to your pet later as a reward for being good.

If you need to stop your visits, either temporarily or permanently, please inform Head Office as soon as possible, as well as your VAC. Establishments have the right to terminate PAT visits at their discretion. If an establishment asks you to stop visiting, please do so immediately and contact Head Office and your VAC.

There are also times when the expectation of the visit is not the same as the reality. Your VAC and the Head Office team are here to support and help solve any problems. You may just need a more appropriate placement that better suits both you and your PAT Pet. We always aim to find someone to cover a placement, at least temporarily, so keep us informed.

SUPPORTING PETS AS THERAPY

Pets As Therapy (PAT) is a fully self-supporting charity. We rely solely on the hard work and generosity of our visiting volunteers, fundraisers and the support of corporate sponsors.

Fundraising

From organising a coffee morning or cheese and wine evening to a swim-a-thon or 'guess the baby' competition, there are lots of fun ways you can fundraise for Pets As Therapy. The establishment you visit may be willing to get involved too.

Donations

We are extremely grateful to everyone who makes a one-off donation or commits to donating a regular monthly gift. Donations can be made in memory of someone you love or a faithful pet – this special tribute is a wonderful way to celebrate their life. You may also wish to donate a funeral or memorial collection made in lieu of flowers.

Please remember to Gift Aid any donation you make, if you can, as it allows Pets As Therapy to reclaim 25p on every £1 donation by a UK tax payer. If you donate £20, we can claim an extra £5, at no extra cost to you.

Visit our website to read our PAT Fundraising Guide and learn more about Gift Aid, a scheme that allows charities such as Pets As Therapy to reclaim basic rate tax paid on any money donated to them by UK tax payers.

To find out more about fundraising, donations and leaving a legacy gift in your will, please visit our website.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Safeguarding and DBS checks

Pets As Therapy has a duty of care to you and your pet as a visiting PAT Team and to the people who gain so much from their interactions. We aim 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.

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. For the security and safety of yourself and other individuals, your visits must be supervised by a member of the establishment's staff at all times.

Some establishments may require volunteers to undergo a Disclosing and Barring Service Check (DBS), further references, police checks, safeguarding or other training, or occupational health interviews. This will be organised by the establishment and should be at no cost to the volunteer. Pets As Therapy does not have a legal obligation or entitlement to routinely undertake DBS Checks on its volunteers.

Please make sure that each establishment you visit also gives you details of all their Health and Safety procedures and any other regulations that you need to comply with.

Older children may have a different set of needs from Pets As Therapy visits. They may want to play, groom or just cuddle your pet. They may say things to an animal that they are unable to say to an adult worker. If you overhear something which you feel should be passed on to a staff member, do so quietly and in confidence. Some children with special needs have challenging behaviours and may have lost some of their inhibitions, so please take this into account when choosing this type of visiting. Speak discretely to a staff member if you have any concerns or would like further guidance.

Confidentiality

Please remember that when visiting as a PAT Volunteer, confidentiality is paramount. Be aware of a person's right to privacy. All that is seen or heard on a PAT visit is to remain within the establishment, including a person's name and personal details, unless specific approval is given by the individual, their family and the establishment. This is especially important when it comes to social media posts or if you are approached by the media (including local papers, websites or radio stations).

Annual volunteer contribution

Liability insurance and associated administration expenses cost the Charity approximately £90 per PAT Volunteer per year. Pets As Therapy provides you with an insured and properly regulated framework that enables you to visit establishments safely and with confidence. To support this, we ask each PAT Volunteer to pay an annual contribution, single volunteer £25 or joint volunteer £35.

Pets As Therapy is not a membership organisation. Payment of the annual contribution does not constitute membership or voting rights.

Insurance and security

Pets As Therapy carries public liability insurance with an indemnity limit of £10million. In order to comply with the terms of our insurance policy, it is essential that all Pets As Therapy Volunteers adhere to the guidelines and standards of expected behaviour during visits as outlined in this Volunteer Handbook.

The Policies of Pets As Therapy and other useful documents are available to [download via this link](#).

**THANK YOU to all our volunteers and their pets,
for the time that you give to supporting Pets As Therapy
and for the difference you make to hundreds of people's lives every day.**

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact us:

Email: reception@petsastherapy.org

Telephone: 01865 671440





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VOLUNTEER DECLARATION

I confirm that once my pet is registered and I become a Pets As Therapy Volunteer I will:

- Abide by the Volunteer Handbook and policies of Pets As Therapy.
- Abide by the policies and procedures of the establishments I visit with my pet.
- Maintain and present my PAT Pet in good health, free from parasites and well groomed.
- **Not** feed my PAT Pet a raw meat diet or one containing unpasteurised milk.
- Accept complete responsibility for my actions and my pet's actions whilst on visits.
- Display my Pets As Therapy photo identity badge and my pet's photo ID on all visits.
- Keep my PAT Pet on a regular lead during visits, not a training lead, flexi lead, retractable lead, head collar, check chain or restraining harness.

Please tick to confirm

Photography Consent

I consent to Pets As Therapy using photographs of myself, which may be taking during the time I am registered with Pets As Therapy. These would be used to help promote the beneficial work of the Charity and would potentially appear in newsletters, magazines, newspapers, websites and promotional literature. I am aware that ALL publicity must be authorised in advance by a member of Pets As Therapy staff.

Please tick to confirm

Signed _____ Date _____

Name _____ ID number _____

Please return to Head Office:

- scan and email it to reception@petsastherapy.org
- or post to:
Pets As Therapy,
Hampden House,
Monument Business Park,
Warpsgrove Lane,
Chalgrove,
Oxfordshire OX44 7RW