

Assistance and emotional support animal policy

Last revised: March 2025

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## Scope

This policy applies to all visitors to National Library of Scotland buildings in Edinburgh and Glasgow. This includes people visiting the Visitor and Access Centres, all reading rooms, permanent and temporary shops, and the exhibition and events spaces in all locations.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms have the corresponding definitions.

* **Assistance animal:** an assistance animal is a highly trained animal that helps people with disabilities or long-term medical conditions.  Examples of such assistance include:
  + guiding people who are blind or visually impaired,
  + alerting people who are deaf or hearing impaired,
  + pulling a wheelchair,
  + alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure,
  + calming a person during an anxiety attack,
  + or performing other duties.

Assistance animals are working animals and are covered by the Equalities Act 2010.

* **Service animal:** another term for assistance animal.
* **Emotional support animal or ESA:** an emotional support animal (ESA) is a pet that helps someone with a mental health or psychiatric disability. Emotional support animals have no official training structure or legal recognition in the United Kingdom.
* [**Equality Act 2010**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents)**:** the Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.
* **Owner:** a person who legally owns an animal.
* **Custodian:** a person who has responsibility for taking care of an animal.
* **Library buildings:** National Library of Scotland buildings located at:
  + 57 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh;
  + Causewayside, 33 Salisbury Place, Edinburgh;
  + 312-320 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh; and Kelvin Hall, 1445 Argyle Street, Glasgow.
* **Library staff:** all staff employed by the National Library of Scotland.

## Policy statement

The National Library of Scotland permits assistance and emotional support animals in Library buildings. To enter Library buildings, assistance and emotional support animals must:

* Be highly trained.
* Always be under the control of the owner or custodian.
* Be harnessed, leashed, tethered or caged unless doing so would interfere with the animal's work or the owner or custodian's disability prevents the use of such devices. In such a case, the owner or custodian must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
* Where possible, wear a vest or other accessory identifying it as an assistance or emotional support animal.
* Not demonstrate disruptive, agitated, or aggressive behaviour, including but not limited to barking, whining, biting, growling, jumping, scratching, leash pulling, sniffing, or any harassment of Library visitors or staff.
* Not foul Library buildings.
* Only eat and drink within the cafe or packed lunch area of the Visitor Centre at George IV Bridge, the entrance area at Causewayside and Lawnmarket, and the cafe or corridor area at Kelvin Hall.
* The owner or custodian must always ensure the animal's welfare.

## Responsibilities of owners or custodians

In the event of an assistance or emotional support animal or its owner or custodian not complying with these guidelines, Library staff will remind the owner or custodian of the need to adhere to this guidance. If the owner or custodian does not take effective action, Library staff will request that the animal be removed from the library building. In these cases, the owner or custodian will be able to continue their visit, or visit on another date, without the animal.

## Breaches of policy

If the owner or custodian of an assistance or emotional support animal refuses to adhere to guidance or requests made by Library staff, the breaches of terms and conditions policy may be invoked.

## Awareness of Library staff

Library staff in all public facing roles will have regular training to make them aware of the library policy on assistance and emotional support animals.

## Related policies and procedures

* [Access policy](https://www.nls.uk/media/lvqjoowe/2023-10-access-policy.docx)
* [Terms and conditions](https://www.nls.uk/join/terms-and-conditions/)
* [Breaches of terms and conditions](https://www.nls.uk/join/terms-and-conditions/breaches/)
* [Service charter](https://www.nls.uk/about-us/what-we-do/service-charter/)

## Document information

* Document name: Assistance and emotional support animal policy
* Document status: approved
* Contact: Head of Reader Services
* Approval:

1. Date of Library Leadership Team Approval: 1 April 2025
   * Date of Whitley Approval: not applicable
   * Date of Audit Committee Approval: not applicable.
   * Date of Physical Security Steering Group Approval: 5 February 2025
2. Equality Impact Assessment Completed: sent to ER group 18 March 2025

* Date of next review: April 2026
* Business classification: 05.01.05.00

1. Retention: review for historical and business value one year after approved policy has been superseded.
2. There is also a risk assessment document and an FAQ document for staff (which is still being developed based on feedback).

## Document control

| Date | Action |
| --- | --- |
| 2024 01 24 | Head of Reader Services arranged stakeholder meeting to discuss potential policy. |
| 2024 11 24 | Initial guidance document outlining policy written by Special Collections Reading Room Manager and circulated to Reader Services managers for comment. |
| 2024 01 24 | Guidance document and risk assessment circulated to wider stakeholder group for comment. |
| 2025 02 05 | Guidance document and risk assessment discussed at Physical Security Steering Group. Agreed as a policy for the library. |
| 2025 03 01 | Special Collections Reading Room Manager created this version as basis for the policy going forward, derived from previous guidance document. |