



Scottish Ambulance Service

Standard Operating Procedure – Ops 002

Transportation of Assistance Dogs

Aim

To ensure staff are aware of the procedures for transporting patients accompanied by Assistance Dogs.

Application

- Accident & Emergency Vehicle Crew Staff, Special Operations Response Teams and Operational Managers
- Patient Transport Service Staff
- ACC

Background

Clarity is required regarding the procedure staff should follow when transporting Assistance Dogs to ensure consistency across the Service.

Vehicle Crew Staff including Operational Managers

Occasionally a person with an assistance dog may need emergency transport or outpatient treatment. Depending on the patient's clinical condition, the assistance dog must be conveyed in the ambulance or ambulance service transport vehicle.

Scheduled Service - booking protocols must identify if an assistance dog is required to travel with the patient. Crew must be given prior notice to ensure seating configuration / allocation is optimised.

Emergency Cases

If the patient is conscious, the presence of the dog would provide comfort and eliminate any distress, which may be caused by the absence of the dog. Therefore, assistance dogs will usually be conveyed with the patient unless there are good reasons to the contrary.

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Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment - Positive impacts identified in relation to patients who are disabled.			
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If the dog is conveyed with the patient, the dog should be made to lie down on the floor and the lead attached in an appropriate part of the vehicle. This may be the base of a tip fold seat, passing the lead through a wheelchair restraint strap located in the floor tracking or secured through a seat belt.

A dog harness can be used to secure the dog if available.

If the patient is unconscious and/or intensive care would be required en-route, it would be advisable to make arrangements for the dog to be carried separately either by a relative, or if appropriate, the Police.

The assistance dog will be wearing a medallion bearing its own registration number and the telephone number of the Regional Training Centre, where someone is always available on call for advice in emergencies.

Proper arrangements must be made for the continuing care of the dog if it is not to be conveyed with the patient, and under no circumstances should the dog be abandoned.

If the dog is injured, the Police will normally arrange immediate help.

Should the dog be conveyed with the patient, the dog should remain on the floor at all times and the ambulance floor cleaned with the standard vehicle cleaning detergent and water on completion of the journey. It is unlikely that the dog will present any more risk of soiling or infection than is brought in on the average outdoor shoe. Ambulance staff should ensure they carry out appropriate hand hygiene following any contact with the dog.

Patients Transport Service

Whenever a request is received to convey an assistance dog, Control staff are to try to ascertain from the Hospital whether other patients allocated to the same vehicle are likely to be adversely affected through, for example, an asthma allergy to animal fur.

The ambulance crew, ambulance service car driver or contract taxi firm are to be informed when work is allocated that an assistance dog is to be conveyed with the patient. The dogs will normally sit quietly in the vehicle with their owners [securing methods as detailed at 3.3 above]

It may not be practicable for assistance dogs to be transported with a patient in the air ambulance. Arrangements should be made in advance for a sighted / hearing guide to be available for the patient at the receiving hospital and separate arrangements made for the care of the dog.

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Air Ambulance

Whilst assistance dogs can be conveyed in the Air Ambulance aircraft this will be dependent upon the approval of the aircraft commander in each case. It is more usual for separate provision to be made to transport the assistance dog; that is with the Police, other agency or family/ carer. This will be dependent upon the circumstances in each case and what is appropriate.

General

An assistance dog is extremely important to its owner as a mobility aid, but also brings confidence and independence. Ambulances are very often used at highly stressful times and the additional problem of refusal to carry an assistance dog could be a very upsetting experience.

Assistance dogs are welcomed in many places barred to ordinary pet dogs. They are generally clean and extremely well looked after, and are not considered a risk to health and hygiene.

The above has been produced in consultation with the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

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