

Dogs, Assistance Dogs and Support Animals Policy

POLICY CONTROL

Version	Description	Date
1	New policy 19 th May 2026 for permitted animals onsite at the foodbank centres	19 th May 2026
Board Approved		20 th July 2026
For Review:		July 2028

Related policies

Description
Health and Safety Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Volunteer Handbook
Referral Agency Handbook

Purpose

Chesterfield Foodbank is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, inclusive and accessible environment for clients, volunteers, staff, partner agencies and other users of our venues.

This policy provides guidance regarding dogs, assistance dogs, therapy dogs and support animals attending foodbank sessions, warehouse premises and associated activities.

General Principle

As a general rule, dogs are not permitted inside Chesterfield Foodbank sessions, warehouse premises or associated indoor activities, with the exception of assistance dogs.

Chesterfield Foodbank aims to balance inclusion, accessibility, health and safety, safeguarding responsibilities and the wellbeing of all clients, volunteers and partner organisations.

Assistance Dogs

The definition of an assistance dog according to the Equality Act 2010

“assistance dog” means—

- (a) a dog which has been trained to guide a blind person;
- (b) a dog which has been trained to assist a deaf person;
- (c) a dog which has been trained by a prescribed charity to assist a disabled person who has a disability that consists of epilepsy or otherwise affects the person's mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination or ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- (d) a dog of a prescribed category which has been trained to assist a disabled person who has a disability (other than one falling within paragraph (c)) of a prescribed kind;

Where a person advises that a dog is an assistance dog, Chesterfield Foodbank will accommodate this.

There is no legal requirement for an assistance dog owner to provide formal identification or certification for their dog.

All assistance dogs attending foodbank premises must:

- Remain under the owner's control at all times
- Be kept on a lead or harness
- Behave safely and appropriately around clients, volunteers, staff and partner agencies

To ensure safety and effective management within often busy and shared community venues, a maximum of one assistance dog will be permitted inside a foodbank session space at any one time.

Therapy Dogs and Support Animals

Therapy dogs, emotional support animals and other support animals do not have the same automatic legal access rights as assistance dogs.

Requests for therapy dogs or support animals to attend a foodbank session will be considered at management discretion on a case-by-case basis, taking into account safety, venue suitability, safeguarding considerations and the needs of other clients and volunteers.

Where possible, referral agencies are asked to contact the foodbank in advance to alert staff that a client may be attending with a therapy dog or support animal so that appropriate preparations and arrangements can be considered.

Alternative Arrangements

If it is not practical or feasible for the owner to leave their dog safely outside, where appropriate, clients attending with dogs may receive their food parcel outside the building or via another agreed arrangement for example their key worker can collect on their behalf.

Alternative arrangements will be considered with the aim of supporting accessibility while maintaining a safe environment for all building users.

Health and Safety

Chesterfield Foodbank has a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all clients, volunteers, staff, partner agencies and other building users.

Chesterfield Foodbank reserves the right to refuse entry to, or request the removal of, any dog displaying aggressive, disruptive or unsafe behaviour.

The safety of clients, volunteers, staff and members of the public will remain a priority at all times.

Volunteer Guidance

Volunteers should not attempt to physically handle or manage any dog belonging to a client or visitor.

Volunteers should not initiate contact with any dog, including touching or stroking the animal, without first checking with the owner that it is safe to do so and obtaining the owner's consent.

Any concerns relating to dogs, safety, behaviour or reasonable adjustments should be referred to the Operations Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Trustee Board and updated where necessary in line with operational, safeguarding, health and safety or legal considerations.