

Name of Home:

**Procedure 29.01**

**Animal Assisted Therapy**

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<b>Legal Reference</b>	
1.0	<b>Regulation 9 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014</b>
<b>Policy Statement</b>	
2.0	We are committed to providing first class care and support in an environment which enables residents to experience maximum independence and enjoyment of their environment through their continuing journey with dementia. This includes enabling residents to mix, associate and be involved with a variety of supporting animals which can stimulate a range of cognitive functions. For this reason, we are fully supportive of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT).
2.1	This policy relates to the therapeutic benefits from resident contact with animals. It identifies several reasons why animal assisted therapy may be considered in a care home setting, either on an individual or group basis. The policy does not include any information regarding pet ownership and welfare within the home – whether it be resident ownership or home ownership. For further information relating to pets in the home, staff are encouraged to read this document in conjunction with our existing “Pets” policy and procedure.
<b>Animal Assisted Therapy</b>	
3.0	Is a type of therapy that involves an animal with specific characteristics becoming a fundamental part of a person’s treatment. Animal assisted therapy is designed to improve the physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning of the patient, as well as provide educational and motivational effectiveness for participants. AAT can be provided on an individual or group basis. During AAT, therapists document records and evaluate the participant’s progress. Many kinds of animals are used in therapy including dogs, cats, birds, rabbits and other small animals. The animal is generally brought into the home by an external specialist who has groomed and trained the animal to be placid, compliant and non-confrontational. However, the animal may well be part of a project within the home to enable the participant to care for a pet over a more prolonged period.
3.1	<b>Benefits</b> People who have pets benefit in various ways, for example, the comfort of physical contact with animals, reducing loneliness and increased opportunities for meeting others via their pets. In addition, caring for pets encourages nurturance, responsibility, and adherence to a daily schedule. It can also stimulate hidden deep memories of pets from the past and this, in turn , can help with longer term memory recall.

3.2	<b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ May improve fine motor skills (filling food trays, water etc.)</li><li>➤ May improve wheelchair skills (the need to move in order to support the pet)</li><li>➤ May improve standing / balance</li><li>➤ May lower blood pressure, risk for stroke or heart attack and decrease depression (clear evidence that stroking a cat or dog reduces blood pressure and heart rate)</li></ul>
3.3	<b>Mental</b> <p>A 2007 meta-analysis found that animal assisted therapy is associated with moderate effect sizes in improving outcomes in autism spectrum symptoms, medical difficulties, behavioural problems, and emotional well-being (Nimer et al 2007). The area of emotional well-being is of greater interest in the care of older people on their journey through dementia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Increase verbal interactions between group members</li><li>➤ Increase attention skills (i.e. paying attention, staying on task)</li><li>➤ Develop leisure/recreation skills</li><li>➤ Increase self-esteem</li><li>➤ Reduce anxiety</li><li>➤ Reduce loneliness</li></ul> <p>In all studies conducted since 2005, the sample group tested has been able to conclude that AAT has had a beneficial impact.</p> <p>Perhaps the most interesting study conducted was in relation to loneliness.</p>
3.4	<p>A study in the U.S called The Effects of Animal-Assisted Therapy on Loneliness in an Elderly Population in Long-Term Care Facilities was conducted by Marian R Banks and William A Banks.</p> <p>The study was conducted using three groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. No animal contact</li><li>2. Animal contact once per week</li><li>3. Animal contact 3-4 times per week</li></ol> <p>AAT was shown to significantly reduce the loneliness of people who had regular contact with animals compared to any other group in the study.</p> <p>This is clearly proof positive that interaction with AAT has a beneficial effect in a residential care setting.</p>
3.5	<b>Motivational</b>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ May improve willingness to be involved in a group activity</li><li>➤ May improve interactions with others</li><li>➤ May improve interactions with staff</li></ul> <p>Many of our Resident's will have enjoyed taking care of pets within their own home for many years and this will have been a source of great enjoyment which has helped towards meeting both comfort and attachment needs.</p> <p>Where a home has pets living at in the home or in the garden area, please ensure that the relevant risk assessment has been completed and that the Pets Policy is followed.</p>
3.6	<p>Studies in the UK that looked at the effect on mood of Pets as Therapy or as part of the living environment demonstrated that there was a significant positive effect of any form of interaction with pets, either as therapy or as a regular feature in the home.</p> <p>There are a number of organisations who will come into the home with therapy dogs, cats and other animals. A few of these are listed below.</p>
3.7	<p>Pets as therapy: <a href="http://www.petsastherapy.org">www.petsastherapy.org</a> for Regional Contacts</p> <p>Zoolab: <a href="http://www.zoolabuk.com">www.zoolabuk.com</a></p> <p>The Donkey Sanctuary Eccup Lane Leeds LS16 8AZ</p>