

12 June 2025

Animal Assisted Therapies

I would like to determine whether Animal Assisted Therapies are offered within the trust/ service as treatments/interventions to NHS patients

Animal Assisted Therapies are offered to BHSCT Mental Health Inpatients in the Locked Rehabilitation Ward

I would like to determine how much is spent on these treatments/interventions

Approx. £2,000 per financial year

I would like to determine who offers these treatments, is it NHS clinicians, or other outside organisations and or volunteers.

Inpatients: Outside organisation

CAMHS: Children's Acute Mental Health Service

Belfast Trust CAMHS have a therapy dog available within the Belfast Community Teams. This dog is funded through Charitable Funds and cost £12, 000. The Belfast Trust Community CAMHS team foster an assistance dog. Assistance Dogs NI take responsibility for the sourcing, training and ongoing monitoring of the assistance dog. An identified staff member is trained by Assistance Dogs NI as resident dog handler in community CAMHS. The dog handler and assistance dog work with selected children and young people whose care plans identify animal assisted intervention as a suitable treatment option. Research evidence highlights the therapeutic benefit of animals for individuals with mental health difficulties.

This has been developed in partnership with Assistance Dogs NI, a registered charity who own and train assistance dogs. In addition, a Belfast Trust protocol and risk assessment in relation to animal assisted assistance in community CAMHS has been undertaken.