POLICY DOCUMENT

The Recharge Club™

Therapy Dog Policy

Safe and Consensual Involvement of Mia, Our Therapy Dog, at The Recharge Club

Document Owner:	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director
Company Name:	NutriDive Ltd
Company Number:	16659858
Trading Name:	The Recharge Club™
Registered Office Address:	39 Coltsfoot Drive, Chorley, PR6 0JP
Therapy Dog:	Mia, a Labrador, with experience around children
Dog Handler:	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director (or another named, trained handler)
Status:	Mandatory Policy — applicable whenever Mia is present at The Recharge Club™
Date Adopted:	1st August 2026
Review Frequency:	Annually, and immediately following any incident involving Mia or change in statutory guidance
Next Review Due:	Twelve months from the date of adoption
Related Policy:	This policy is read alongside the Health and Safety Policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

1. Policy Statement

Mia, a Labrador retriever (born in February 2021) with experience around children, visits The Recharge Club™ occasionally. Many children with special educational needs and disabilities find genuine comfort, motivation, and connection through interaction with a calm, well-trained dog, and Mia's visits are offered as one part of the organisation's wider sensory and wellbeing offer.

> ***No child interacts with Mia unless their family has given specific, written consent, recorded in the child's Individual Support Plan. A child's wellbeing, and Mia's welfare, both come before any planned activity involving her.***

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to every occasion Mia is present at The Recharge Club™, and to every member of staff, child and family involved. It should be read alongside the Health and Safety Policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been written with regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006, under which Mia's welfare needs must be met at all times
- The Control of Dogs Order 1992 and related dog control legislation
- The Equality Act 2010, in respect of children with an allergy or fear of dogs, and the need to ensure Mia's presence never disadvantages a child who cannot safely be around her
- General food hygiene and infection control principles, applied to ensure Mia's presence does not compromise food safety

4. About Mia

Mia is a Labrador with experience around children, kept up to date with vaccinations, flea and worming treatment, and regular veterinary health checks. She attends The Recharge Club™ only when she is well, calm, and being handled by a trained, familiar handler.

5. Consent: Opting In or Out

Involvement with Mia is entirely optional and requires specific, written parental consent before a child interacts with her in any way. This consent is recorded in the child's Individual Support Plan and may be withdrawn by the family at any time.

- At registration, every family is asked whether their child has an allergy to dogs, a fear of dogs, or a cultural or religious reason why contact with a dog should be avoided, and this is recorded clearly
- Where a family does not give consent, or where a child has a known allergy or fear, that child is never brought into contact with Mia, and staff ensure Mia is kept in a separate area or session where that child is not present
- Where consent is given, the family and child are also asked about the kind of interaction the child enjoys, such as stroking, sitting nearby, or having Mia rest beside them, so that Mia's involvement is tailored to what genuinely benefits that child

6. Health and Hygiene

- Mia is groomed and checked for cleanliness before every visit, and does not attend if unwell
- Mia is not permitted in the kitchen or food preparation areas, or present during food preparation or serving
- Children wash their hands before and after interacting with Mia, as a matter of routine hygiene practice
- Mia's bedding, bowls, and any equipment are kept clean and are not shared with food-related items

7. Supervision When Mia Is Present

Mia is supervised by her trained handler at all times while on the premises, and is never left alone with a child, or with any child unsupervised by an adult, under any circumstances. The handler remains responsible for reading Mia's body language and wellbeing throughout, and for ending an interaction if either Mia or the child shows any sign of stress or discomfort.

8. Managing Allergies and Phobias

Where a child attending a session has a known allergy to dogs or a fear of dogs, Mia's visit is planned around this, for example by scheduling her visit for a different session, or by keeping her in a specific area of the premises the child does not need to enter. No child is ever required or pressured to be near Mia, and a child's reluctance is always respected without question.

9. Behaviour and Welfare of the Dog

- Mia has regular access to water, rest, and a quiet space away from the children, and her visits are kept to a length that is comfortable and enjoyable for her
- The handler ends any interaction promptly if Mia shows signs of stress, tiredness, or discomfort, such as lip licking, yawning, turning away, or attempting to move away from a child
- Mia is never forced to interact with a child who is behaving in a way that could distress or harm her, and the handler is responsible for managing this proactively

10. Safe Interaction Rules for Children

Before interacting with Mia for the first time, a child is shown, in a way appropriate to their communication needs, how to approach and stroke her gently, how to recognise when she would like to be left alone, and that she is never to be startled, chased, or handled roughly. Staff remain close by throughout to support this.

11. Incidents Involving Mia

In the unlikely event that Mia scratches, nips, or otherwise causes injury to a child, this is treated with the same seriousness as any other injury under the Health and Safety Policy: first aid is administered, the family is informed immediately, a full written record is made, and the incident is reviewed by the Director to decide whether, and under what conditions, Mia's future visits can safely continue. Mia does not attend further sessions until this review has taken place.

12. Cleaning and Hygiene After Visits

Any area Mia has used is cleaned thoroughly after her visit, including any soft furnishings or sensory equipment she has had contact with, in line with the Health and Safety Policy's general cleaning arrangements.

13. Roles and Responsibilities

Dog Handler	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director, and Mr Michal Cmorej, Deputy Director, trained handlers. Responsible for Mia's welfare, behaviour and supervision at all times she is on the premises.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director. Ensures consent, allergy, and phobia information is recorded and followed for every child before any visit takes place.
All Staff	Support safe interaction between children and Mia in line with this policy, and are alert to any child who has not consented or who should not be near her.

14. Training

The dog handler holds relevant experience and training in reading canine body language and managing safe interactions between a dog and children. Other staff receive a brief induction to this policy, including how to recognise signs of stress in Mia and the consent arrangements in place, before her first visit.

15. Monitoring, Review and Related Policies

This policy is reviewed at least annually, and immediately following any incident involving Mia or change in relevant guidance. This policy should be read alongside the following related policies and documents:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Individual Support Plan template and guidance

This policy has been approved by the Director of The Recharge Club™ and forms part of the organisation's statutory compliance framework.