

# ASSISTANCE DOGS ADMISSION POLICY

## Introduction

This policy has been developed to address and clarify matters relating to the admission of assistance dogs at the organiser's events. It is also intended to raise awareness for event staff, volunteers and visitors of the considerations relating to assistance dogs.

The organisers value the diversity of all participants, delegates, exhibitors, sponsors, vendors, volunteers, venue staff and service staff and are committed to providing an environment which is welcoming and safe for all.

This policy aims to outline:

- the organiser's policy on the admission of assistance dogs and therapy dogs at events.
- the arrangements made to provide a welcoming and safe environment for assistance dogs and their owners.
- the responsibilities of the owners of assistance dogs at the organiser's events.

## Policy Statement

Assistance dogs are trained to perform specific tasks to help a disabled person (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) and are usually qualified by one of the charitable organisations registered as members of Assistance Dogs UK, having undergone a specific and thorough training programme.

Under the Equalities Act, appropriately verified assistance dogs are "legally permitted to accompany its client, owner, or partner, at all times and in all places, within the United Kingdom".

**The organiser permits appropriately verified assistance dogs to accompany their owners at the organiser's events.**

Therapy dogs or emotional support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. They are not, under UK law, currently considered assistance animals. Evidence from a medical practitioner supporting the need for a therapeutic dog (or any other animal) does not mean that the dog is considered an assistance animal. A therapy dog does not have the same legal privileges as an assistance dog.

**Therapy dogs/emotional support animals are not permitted at the organiser's events.**

## Definition of Assistance Dog

For the purpose of this policy, an assistance dog must:

- Be trained and registered by a member of Assistance Dogs UK – a coalition of Assistance Dog organisations (or an equivalent organisation in another country) or have undergone an equivalent program of training; and
- Have the yellow ID booklet from the Assistance Dogs UK member organisation. This ID book contains information about the owner and their dog, details of the training organisation that trained the dog and its owner, or ensure that the equivalent information is readily available upon request; and
- Have a formal identification in the form of a suitably marked bib, jacket, lead slip, harness or equivalent.

On the grounds of Health and Safety responsibilities to its participants, delegates, exhibitors, sponsors, vendors, volunteers, venue staff and service staff, the organiser reserves the right to refuse access for a dog that:

- is not qualified by one of the accredited member organisations of Assistance Dogs (UK); or
- is from another nation, and which does not meet the full membership criteria of the established international assistance dog organisations (Assistance Dogs International, Assistance Dogs Europe, International Guide Dog Federation) or other such international bodies that may from time to time be recognised.

At the time this policy was prepared the 10 charitable organisations accredited as members of Assistance Dogs (UK) are Autism Dogs, Canine Partners, Dog Assistance in Disability, Dogs for Good, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Medical Detection Dogs, Service Dogs UK, Support Dogs and The Seeing Dogs Alliance. The latest list can be found at [www.assistedogs.org.uk/members](http://www.assistedogs.org.uk/members) and is subject to change.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

By exception, the organiser may consider requests to permit admission to an event for a dog that does not meet the above definition. Requests for such **permission may only be granted before the event**. If permission is granted it must be shown at the entrance to the event.

The organiser will consider requests for permission where the owner of the assistance dog has provided:

1. A copy of a letter dated within the previous 6 months from a medical practitioner supporting the medical need for an assistance dog and stating its purpose in assisting the owner; and
2. Proof of appropriate public liability insurance cover which identifies the dog and its role as an assistance dog (please note that typical household pet insurance policies are not suitable in this respect).
3. Photographic identification of the dog.

### **Owner's Responsibilities**

Owners with their dog at the organiser's events are responsible for ensuring that their dog is:

- Clearly identifiable as an assistance dog by the use of an appropriately marked bib, jacket, lead slip, harness or equivalent.
- Covered by full public liability insurance – a copy of which should be made available to the event staff.
- Under their control and on a lead at all times.

In the unlikely event that the dog does foul whilst at the organiser's event, the owner must report this to an appropriate member of the event team so they can make arrangements to clean and sanitise the area. The owner may be held liable for the costs of repairing any resultant damage to the flooring of the venue.

Preventing and correcting an assistance dog's misbehaviour is the owner's responsibility. Owners must ensure that their assistance dogs do not cause harm or injury to others or cause damage to the venue or other property.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Can I pet an assistance dog?**

Assistance dogs are not pets and are at work, performing tasks to assist the disabled person. Therefore, you should always talk to the handler, not the dog.

Event staff and volunteers should not:

- Feed, pet or praise assistance dogs.
- Deliberately distract or startle an assistance dog.
- Separate or attempt to separate an assistance animal from the person using the animal's service unless given express permission.

It is useful to note that seizure-alert dogs are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure, which can make them appear as though they are misbehaving.

### **What about objections from staff/volunteers/visitors etc.?**

Other people in the proximity of the assistance dog may raise a reasonable objection due to allergy, medical condition, mental health issues and other reasons. If this occurs, the organiser will seek to make alternative arrangements for the person objecting. If there is an identifiable person with an allergy to or fear of dogs, then reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that person has minimal or no contact with dogs; in these instances, the situation will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

### **What are some examples of assistance dogs?**

**Guide Dogs** assist people who are blind or are visually impaired.

**Hearing Dogs** assist people who are deaf or are hearing impaired.

**Support Dogs** can be trained to do many other tasks, which their owner may find difficult or impossible for example:

- Opening and closing doors,
- Calling an ambulance
- Picking up objects
- Assisting with dressing and undressing.
- Accompanying their owner whilst shopping etc.
- Acting as a physical support
- Raising the alarm
- Operating control buttons
- Switching lights on and off
- Carrying items
- Loading and unloading the washing machine
- Fetching the telephone and other items

**Seizure Alert Dogs** are trained for people with Epilepsy. Seizure Alert Dogs are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure, which may make them appear to be misbehaving.

### **How else are assistance dogs different to pet dogs?**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that assistance dogs:

- are highly trained.
- will not wander freely around the premises.
- will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to its owner and are trained to go to the toilet on command and so are unlikely to foul in a public place.
- Most are instantly recognisable by the harness or identifying dog jacket that they wear.