



GUIDE DOGS'
ANNUAL REVIEW
2009



Guide Dogs

Introduction

2009

Welcome to Guide Dogs' 2009 Annual Review. We hope you enjoy reading it and that it helps you learn more about the valuable work we do to support blind and partially sighted people across the UK.

Guide Dogs exists to promote the health, equality and independence of blind and partially sighted people. We are best known for achieving this through the training of guide dogs and the work we do to support the guide dog partnership. This is, and will remain to be, at the very heart of our work – but we encompass so much more.

For example, we offer other mobility services such as white cane training, and we support research into the relief, prevention and cure of visual impairment. We also campaign on behalf of blind and partially sighted people to ensure that they are able to lead independent lives and fulfil their potential. Two of our key campaigns in 2009 – Say NO to Shared Streets and Talking Buses – were aimed at making the built environment and public transport as accessible as possible. You can read more about these campaigns on page 12.

We receive no government funding for our guide dog service and depend wholly upon public generosity, relying on our network of loyal supporters to help us turn our vision into reality. If you would like to help us and get more involved in our work then there are many things you can do, including fundraising, volunteering and getting involved in our campaigns. More information on how you can help us can be found on pages 18 to 21.

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Chairman's welcome

Throughout 2009 we have made real progress in enabling more blind and partially sighted people to get around and lead active and independent lives. We have steadily increased investment in the guide dog service. We have fundamentally reviewed the way we recruit, train, and thank our volunteers. We have made significant strides in our campaigning and fundraising activities, which are now delivering tangible results.

Having led us through our 2005-2009 strategy, our Chief Executive, Bridget Warr, decided that it was time to move on. For six years, Bridget made an invaluable contribution to Guide Dogs and we wish her every success in her future career.

We welcomed our new Chief Executive, Richard Leaman, in March 2010. Richard has had a very successful military career, and has extensive experience in all aspects of strategic leadership – planning, execution, budgeting and communications. He was awarded an OBE in 1994, and the CB (Companion of the

order of the Bath) in 2010 for his work with NATO. Richard joins us just as we begin to implement our new strategy.

Our research tells us that 180,000 blind and partially sighted people rarely, if ever, leave their homes. Far too many people are leading lonely, isolated lives; this is simply unacceptable. We have the same right as everyone else to get about and so Guide Dogs, working collaboratively with other organisations, will take the lead to address this major issue. Consequently, we will be widening the scope of our activities. However, those who use a guide dog – I trained with my fourth dog in October 2009 – know that the guide dog is the best means of independent travel for blind and partially sighted people; growing the guide dog service will therefore remain at the heart of our strategy.



Tony Aston OBE DL



A message from the CEO

I am genuinely privileged to take on my new responsibility as Chief Executive at Guide Dogs. I remember learning about the work done by Guide Dogs as a boy, and have had huge admiration for the organisation ever since. As part of my induction, I have spent two months touring the UK, meeting many clients, staff and volunteers – it has been a humbling and energising experience, and confirmed my view that Guide Dogs is a national treasure we must protect at all costs.

I have joined at a very exciting time. We have come to the end of the Moving Forward Together strategy and, whilst there is still much to do, it is very clear just how much progress has been made in championing the rights of blind and partially sighted people, and how many successful partnerships we have built over the years.

As our Chairman, Tony Aston, has already indicated, our ambitious new strategy covering 2010 to 2020 builds on Moving Forward Together,

and is based on extensive social research. It aims to provide blind and partially sighted people with the services they need on their journey to independence, so whilst the guide dog service will continue to be our signature activity, we will be exploring ways to extend our support to other areas and tackle other obstacles faced on the mobility journey.

Fundamental to our new strategy is the ethos of listening to those we serve, and building the mobility support we provide around their specific needs and aspirations. It is crucial in the years ahead that we collaborate far more closely with like-minded charities – it is the only way we will reach more blind and partially sighted people, and I am personally committed to it.



Richard Leaman CB OBE

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Highlights and review of 2009



In 2009, Guide Dogs continued to address the five strategic objectives in our Moving Forward Together strategy (2005 to 2009):

- **Improving and expanding the guide dog service** – in 2009, we trained 762 guide dog owners, of whom 34% were new clients.
- **Extending services to children and young people, especially those from black and minority ethnic communities or with disabilities in addition to their visual impairment** – in 2009, 19.5% of children to whom Guide Dogs provided Vision Support Services were from black and minority ethnic communities (an increase of 2.5% from 2008).



- **Defining and campaigning for better rehabilitation services for all blind and partially sighted people** – in 2009 we completed the first phase of pilots of the new Middle Step service: a programme of emotional support for individuals recently diagnosed with permanent sight loss.
- **Campaigning for equal access for guide dog owners and other blind and partially sighted people** – two key campaigns for us in 2009 were Say NO to Shared Streets and Talking Buses.
- **Helping to reduce or slow down the onset of blindness, and promoting eye care** – in 2009, as part of our research activities, we awarded three new grants to research teams at leading UK universities, at a total cost of £263,000.