

You and the law

Customers with sight loss



Blind and partially-sighted people come from all walks of life. Anyone can have sight loss – from busy young parents to retired people, bankers to gardeners, students to professors. You may not realise that only four per cent of people who are registered blind can see nothing at all – most have some useful sight. Blind and partially-sighted people use various methods to help them get around – guide dogs, for instance, or long canes.



What the law says

Guide dog owners and other blind or partially-sighted people have important rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The DDA provides for blind and partially-sighted people to have the same right to services supplied by shops, banks, hotels, libraries, pubs, taxis and restaurants as everyone else.

Service providers also have to make “reasonable adjustments” for guide dog owners and other people with sight loss. And in 2004 the law was extended to state that service providers have to consider making changes to “physical features” which make it unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use their services.

What the law means

It is against the law for service providers to treat blind or partially-sighted people less favorably because of their disability, or because they have a guide dog with them.

Making “reasonable adjustments” might mean giving extra help, such as guiding someone to a restaurant table, or making some changes to the way you provide your services to make it easier for blind and partially-sighted people to use them.

Making changes to “physical features” might mean department stores ensuring they have audible announcements in lifts, so blind people know which floor they are on, or shops with rotating doors/turnstiles ensuring there is an alternative entrance.



Looking at your services

One of the best ways to find out what changes you need to make to your services to meet the requirements of the law is to talk to your blind and partially-sighted customers!

Meeting guide dog owners and other people with sight loss will give you invaluable information about how the design of your premises affects their ability to use your services.

Getting feedback

You may find it useful to canvas the views of customers with sight loss about:

- Steps, stairways and kerbs; paving and parking areas;
- Entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes);
- Toilets and washing facilities;
- Lighting and ventilation;
- Lifts and escalators;
- Public facilities (such as telephones, counters and service desks).

The law on access to services also applies to people who use other types of assistance dogs provided by the charities Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Dogs for the Disabled, Canine Partners and Support Dogs.



For more information visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/access or call 0845 241 2178

Pull out
and down



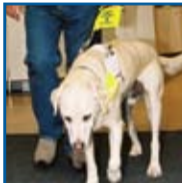
INK
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High quality services – for everyone

We want you and your colleagues to have the confidence to give your blind and partially-sighted customers the best possible service. We've set out a few of the basics here, which we hope will help.

Two things everyone can do to enhance the service they provide is ensure staff receive disability awareness training, and learn a few simple guiding techniques (call 0845 241 2178 to order a copy of our 'Sighted guiding' booklet).

Guide dog owners' responsibilities



In shops

- Explain the layout of your premises and offer to help find the right department and products.
- Offer assistance with packing purchases.
- When the customer is paying, tell them the cost and give guidance, if necessary, on using the PIN terminal or where they should put their signature.
- If handling cash, explain the denomination of the notes or coins you are handing over.



In banks, building societies and post offices

- If help is required, offer the use of a customer service desk or interview room – it can be awkward talking to someone behind glass.
- When discussing finances, ensure the customer's confidentiality.
- Offer help with using cashpoints and paying-in machines.
- Ask the customer their preferred denomination when handing over cash, and give notes of different denominations separately for easy identification.
- When providing information, ask what format is preferred, e.g. large print, Braille or audio.



In pubs, restaurants and hotels

- The customer may appreciate being guided to their table, or to their hotel room.
- Explain details of items on the menu and any daily specials, including prices. If you have a Braille or large print menu, let the customer know.
- Make sure all the circulation routes are free of hazards, e.g. planters, freestanding wine coolers.
- Provide guide dog owners with seating areas that have room for the dog to lie under the table, as it will have been trained to do.
- Offer assistance with paying the bill if required.

- A guide dog is highly trained, and its owner will have had specialised training in the safe and effective use of their dog. The dog's behaviour is a key part of this training – it will have been trained to lie quietly under tables or in the footwell of vehicles, and it should not cause any disruption.
- The dog is the owner's responsibility. In the rare event that a guide dog misbehaves, please inform the owner who will be keen to control their dog.
- If the guide dog owner plans to be a regular customer, your premises may be included in their training programme so they become familiar with the surroundings.
- If a guide dog's harness handle is down, this means the owner would like help.
- Guide dog owners carry a card advising that guide dogs should not be a risk to hygiene. Guide dogs are groomed daily and their health and condition is checked regularly by a vet.