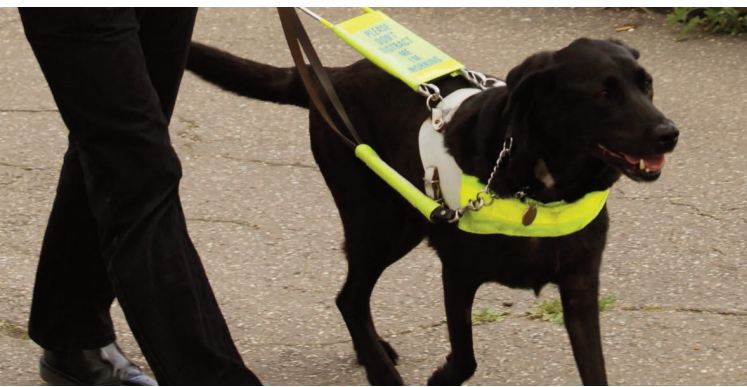


Briefing Note on Guide Dog Owners in Police Custody



December 2010

This document provides information for police forces and officers dealing with guide dog owners in police custody. It has been produced by the National Policing Improvement Agency in partnership with The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Guide Dogs). Appendix 1 of this document provides a suggested form of words that can be used as poster in custody suite offices.

Guide dogs are working animals, not pets, and are relied on by their blind or partially sighted owners for both independence and mobility. Guide dogs undergo up to two years of intensive training and receive additional training throughout their working lives. In addition guide dog owners are trained to maintain the dogs' extremely high standards of grooming and the dogs are checked regularly by vets. Separating a guide dog owner from their dog will cause distress to both person and animal.

The Equality Act 2010 provides the legislative framework within which the Police Service must operate in order to ensure disabled people are not discriminated against by their treatment. Section 3.20 of Code C to Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides general information relating to blind and partially sighted people in custody.

If information or assistance is required in specific cases Guide Dogs has a network of district teams, and a national out of hours duty manager who can provide advice on 0870 609 2219. To contact the local Guide Dog district team see <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/adviceandservices/local-district-teams>

Officers should always speak with the guide dog owner to identify requirements for their treatment with regard to both their disability and the welfare of their dog. This should reduce unnecessary additional stress to the owner.

Wherever operationally possible, the wishes of the owner should be taken into account. This will normally mean the guide dog should remain with its owner at all times, including when in a cell, detention room or interview room. This should reduce additional stress for the owner and also relieve custody staff from caring for the dog.

When the detainee and their guide dog are placed in a cell, the detainee should be provided with an additional blanket and a bowl of water for their dog. Arrangements will need to be made to allow the dog to relieve itself at regular intervals.

When the guide dog is placed in a cell, the harness and lead are not required. They should be removed and kept outside the cell to prevent use as a ligature. The harness should be returned to the detainee when they are removed from the cell for purposes such as interview, finger printing or legal consultation.

The guide dog should only be given food supplied by the detainee. This may need to be collected from the detainee's home or work address. Should the detainee be unable or unwilling to provide food for their dog, it can be obtained from the local Guide Dogs district team.

If the detainee's condition means that it would not be safe to keep the dog in their cell, the dog should be kept in an office where staff are present. The dog's lead should be attached to a table leg, or similar, and the dog provided with a blanket and water bowl. Such arrangements should only be used in the short term. Under no circumstances should a guide dog be placed in police kennels or with other dogs.

If a guide dog is removed from a detainee, care must be taken to provide them with appropriate support when they are required to move around the custody area. Information on how to provide this can be found on the poster **Sighted Guiding** produced by Guide Dogs in 2008 and available at http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/fileadmin/gdmain/user/Advice_and_services/How_to_guides/Guide_Dog_Week_Poster.pdf

As for all blind and partially sighted people, written information should be provided to a guide dog owner in accessible formats such as large print, braille or audio.

If it appears likely that:

- the detainee's condition means that it will not be possible to place the guide dog in the cell for some hours;
- the detainee will be in custody for more than twenty-four hours or;
- a remand in custody is being sought;

Long term arrangements should be made for the care of the dog. Contact should be made either with the detainee's family or friends or the relevant Guide Dogs district team for the dog's long-term care.

If the person is remanded in custody by a court, the relevant Guide Dogs district team should be notified by the police officer on the case.

Transport

If a guide dog owner is being transported in a police vehicle, their dog should be kept with them wherever possible. If a cellular vehicle is used, the dog should be placed in the cell. If a police car is used, the dog should travel in the footwall at the feet of the detainee. The dog will be used to travelling in such a space.

The decision to handcuff a guide dog owner should be based on a risk assessment in line with local force policy. If a guide dog owner is handcuffed, officers may need to assist them while moving around and also in getting the guide dog in and out of vehicles.

For further information, please contact:
Specialist Operations Centre, Wyboston Lakes, Great North Road
Wyboston, Bedford MK44 3AL

Telephone 0845 000 5463
Email: soc@npia.pnn.police.uk Website: www.npia.police.uk

Guide Dog Owners in Police Custody

- Guide dogs are not pets. They are a mobility aid.
- Wherever possible the dog should remain with the owner. This includes when the owner is placed in a cell.
- Harness and leads should be removed when the detainee is in a cell.
- The dog should be provided with a blanket and water bowl and arrangements should be made for the dog to relieve itself.
- The dog should only be given food provided by the owner or the local Guide Dogs district team.
- In exceptional circumstances where the guide dog cannot be kept with the owner, it should be kept in an office and the owner informed of the arrangements. Under no circumstances should guide dogs be placed in kennels or with other dogs.
- If the dog does not remain with the detainee, sighted support must be provided.

For further assistance or information contact the local Guide Dogs district team.

Details can be found at:

**[http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/
adviceandservices/local-district-teams](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/adviceandservices/local-district-teams)**

Outside normal office hours contact the National Duty Manager on 0870 609 2219



Guide Dogs