



Resolving Service User Appeals

**A guide for service users
and their families / carers**



As a service user, you may disagree with a decision we have made relating to the service we provide you. We seek to continuously improve our services and promote equality, fairness and transparency in everything we do. You have a right to expect that all decisions made about the service we provide to you are made properly and fairly. If you are not happy with a decision we have made relating to our service, please let us know straight away.

This leaflet tells you what to do if you need to raise an appeal relating to a service provided by us and it provides a brief overview of the stages in our appeals process.

Q: What is a service user appeal?

A: A service user appeal is a specific type of concern which is raised when a service user disagrees with a decision made by Guide Dogs about one of the following:

- an application to Guide Dogs for a service (including re-application)
- specific decisions relating to individual service delivery to a service user
- the end of a service (including the withdrawal of a service or a dog)

The appeal reviews the original decision. If your concern is about any other matter it will be dealt with under our complaints resolution process (see our 'Customer Feedback and Complaints: your right to be heard' leaflet.)

We aim to make our appeals process as straightforward as possible and to resolve issues as quickly and locally as possible.

Q: How do I raise an appeal?

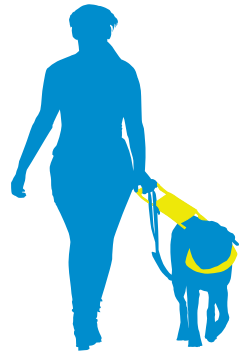
A: You must raise your appeal within 15 working days of receipt of Guide Dogs' decision. You can raise your appeal by contacting your **local mobility team** or the Customer Feedback and Complaints department:

Customer Feedback and Complaints
 Guide Dogs
 Hillfields
 Burghfield Common
 Reading
 RG7 3YG

By phone: 0845 241 2536*

By email: complaints@guidedogs.org.uk

*Calls cost 2p per minute plus your phone company's access charge



Q: What will happen to my appeal?

A: The first stage of our appeals process is that we encourage all service users to informally discuss any concerns directly with the member(s) of staff involved in making the original decision. This provides a positive opportunity for both parties to openly discuss and understand the reasons behind the decision. If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the manager dealing with the first stage, you can ask for another manager to look into the matter. This is the second stage of our process. In the rare cases where resolution at the second stage is not possible, and there are valid grounds for continuing the appeal, then a third and final appeal may be made. This is the last stage of the appeal and the decision is final.

Q: How will my appeal be dealt with?

A: We promise to respond to all appeals in a professional, consistent and transparent manner and we aim to resolve appeals as swiftly as possible. In return, we expect a similar level of courtesy from our service users including:

- mutual respect and courtesy
 - commitment and cooperation
 - patience and understanding, particularly when progress is slow and/or difficult
 - behaviour which is neither abusive nor threatening
 - behaviour which is tolerant and non-discriminatory
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Q: Is the process confidential?

A: Yes. Only those staff directly involved in resolving your appeal will have access to the information you provide. We will handle information in line with data protection legislation.

Q: Can someone else appeal on my behalf?

A: In certain circumstances, yes. For the majority of service users we would hope to deal directly with you. For those of you under 18 years of age (under 16 in the case of Scotland), or for those who have an impaired mental capacity, we would liaise with the parent or carer. If you are 18 (or 16 in the case of Scotland) or over and wish someone else to act on your behalf, you will need to inform us in writing (including email) so that we can speak to that person about you as your appointed representative.

Q: Are there any situations where there is no right to appeal?

A: Yes. An appeal may be refused if it is identified as potentially vexatious or where Guide Dogs is advised that a service should be withdrawn or withheld on the grounds of public interest. In either of these circumstances there is no right to appeal the decision made by Guide Dogs and we would advise you accordingly.

Q: Are there any situations when my appeal may not be investigated in the given time frames?

A: Yes. We aim to respond to you within fifteen working days at each stage of the appeal process. Occasionally we need to discuss an appeal with an individual who is unavailable due to holiday/illness. In this situation the given timescale may need to be extended. If this happens we will advise you of this fact and confirm the new time scales in writing.

Q: Can I be accompanied while I discuss my appeal?

A: Yes. You have the right to be accompanied by a person of your choice at any meeting. If you are under 18 years of age (under 16 in the case of Scotland) this must be a parent or guardian. If you are an adult service user this could be a friend or family member or a Mobility Team Service User Representative. You can also contact your local Mobility Team Service User Representative for advice or to help mediate between yourself and the Mobility Team. Your representative will listen to your concerns and will act in complete confidence on your behalf.