



Applying for a guide dog

To help us assess whether a guide dog is right for you, we will talk to you in detail to listen to your story and understand your mobility needs and aspirations. We ask you for a self-declaration medical, and may need to speak to your GP. We follow this up with two assessments:

1. A **Mobility Assessment** which assesses your current vision and ability to move around safely and with confidence
2. A **Guide Dog Assessment** which assesses your suitability for a guide dog including observing you out and about in your local area

After each assessment, a panel from your local Guide Dogs team will review your application and make its final decision based on facts gathered from you during the assessments.

We treat all applications for a guide dog fairly and equally, by considering each application on an individual basis. And we apply the same set of eligibility criteria to every application, regardless of whether this is a new or replacement guide dog application.

What criteria do I need to meet for the assessments?

We use the following criteria to assess whether someone is suitable to have a guide dog.

Identity

You must be able to provide proof of your identity. For example, a passport, birth certificate, bank statement or council bill with your name and address on it.

Language

You must be able to follow instructions in English throughout your assessments. If you have dual sensory loss, e.g. impaired hearing and vision, we will provide a sign language interpreter or equivalent – or you can provide your own registered interpreter.

Safeguarding

You must not have any safeguarding issues which may prevent us working with you now or in the future. We need to ensure safe working for our staff, for our dogs and for other clients.

Data Protection

You must agree with Guide Dogs' data protection statements, which are in line with the current data protection laws and regulations.

Residency

You must be able to prove:

- you have been a UK resident for a continuous period of at least 12 months
- you have the right to remain in the UK for a further 18 months at the point of application
- you have the right to remain in the UK for at least 12 months at the point your training with a guide dog starts

Guide dog agreement

You must confirm that, if you are accepted for training with a guide dog, you will sign the Guide Dog Partnership Agreement at the start of your training.

Animal disqualifications

We are unable to accept your application for a dog if either you, or anyone else in your household, has been or is currently subject to any type of animal ban - or has had a guide dog or any other animal removed due to animal welfare issues.

Vision

To ensure you will benefit from having a guide dog, we need to determine whether your vision impairment has a significant impact on your ability to move around safely, efficiently and confidently, and is restricting your general mobility.

Orientation and mobility skills

You must demonstrate that you have sufficient orientation and mobility skills to navigate routes independently and to give direction to, and be an active partner with, a guide dog.

Walking ability

You must be able to walk for around 40 minutes (around a mile) each day. You may use a single walking aid, e.g. a stick or crutch. If you use a wheelchair, it must be electric.

Health and fitness

You must be fit and healthy enough to be able to work with, and care for, a young and active guide dog.

Workload

To maintain a guide dog's skills, you will be expected to work the dog for a minimum of five days a week, for at least 30 to 40 mins (or a one-mile walk) a day. Ideally, you will work the guide dog seven days a week, using a combination of at least three routes.

Application of skills

You must agree to handle a guide dog in line with Guide Dogs' Ethical Training Policy. This includes applying your current orientation and mobility skills, and any remaining vision you have, to enhance your partnership with a guide dog.

Personal development

You must have completed all training plans that have been recommended by Guide Dogs to enable you to reach the minimum standard for guide dog ownership.

Dog welfare

You must ensure that the guide dog will receive a good quality of life while in your care including meeting the essential “**Five Welfare provisions****”. Any other pets in your home must not compromise the well-being, safety or working ability of the guide dog. If you decide to keep your guide dog after it retires, you must be able to guarantee the dog's welfare long-term.

The waiting list

You must be available to train as soon as you're added to the waiting list. Children and young people may need to train in the school holidays.

If your circumstances change and you no longer meet the criteria for having a guide dog, we may suspend your application or remove you from the waiting list.

What happens if I don't meet the criteria?

A guide dog is not always the right solution for someone's mobility needs. We will always explain why you didn't meet the criteria and, if appropriate, work with you to help you meet the criteria in future. We will also suggest alternative services such as sighted guiding (My Guide) or services provided by other organisations.

**The Five Welfare Provisions:

- 1. Good Nutrition:** Access to fresh water and a good diet.
- 2. Good Environment:** Provide a smoke-free, safe and comfortable resting area and bed - at the correct temperature for a dog. This includes a safe and secure area for the dog to live inside and out of the home.
- 3. Good Health:** Take the dog to the vet for health checks every six months.
- 4. Appropriate Behaviour:** Provide sufficient space, mental stimulation and exercise as appropriate for the age of your dog.
- 5. Positive Experiences:** Avoid leaving your dog alone for more than four hours in a 24-hour period. Give your dog appropriate toys to play with.