Changing lives
An overview of Guide Dogs
We will not rest until blind and partially sighted people can enjoy the same freedom of movement as everyone else.
Getting out, getting on – together

If you want to live a full life and contribute to your community, you need to be able to get out and about. At Guide Dogs, we’re in the business of making sure that losing your sight doesn’t mean losing this vital ability.

To do this we are continuing to build our world-class guide dog service. But dogs aren’t the answer for everyone, so we are also developing a range of services that will give many more people who are blind or partially sighted freedom of movement.

We can’t do this on our own. We’re working with like-minded groups and organisations to enhance the impact we are making and to achieve our joint aims.

And we need your help. The guide dog service receives no government funding and relies entirely on public generosity for funding - at a cost of around £50 million a year. It also relies on the thousands of hours of time given by our volunteers. Quite simply – we cannot function without you!

Together, we can empower thousands more people who are blind or partially sighted to live the lives they have the right to expect.

Richard Leaman
Chief Executive

Fact
Every minute of every day, Guide Dogs spends more than £100 to make independence possible for people who are blind or partially sighted.
Having Trudy has helped me to focus on the things I can do rather than those I can’t.

Claire Rush and her guide dog Trudy
Guide dogs start their lives in the home of a brood bitch holder (a volunteer who looks after guide dog ‘mums’) before going to live with a volunteer puppy walker. At just over a year old, the young dogs start six months of specialist training before being carefully matched with a prospective owner. Together they complete three to five weeks of intensive work before qualifying as a working guide dog partnership.

We tailor the training to each individual’s circumstances, and work with other assistance dog charities to provide dual-purpose dogs, for example where the person has hearing loss or uses a wheelchair. We’re also working with black and ethnic minority communities, to increase understanding about the benefits of guide dog ownership.

In May 2011, we proudly opened our new world-class National Breeding Centre, near Leamington Spa, to enable us to reach our target of creating a third more guide dog partnerships by 2020. It represents a huge investment but enables us to change the lives of so many more people who are blind or partially sighted.

To apply for a guide dog, contact us on: 0845 372 7499

Fact
Our guide dog service has transformed the lives of more than 30,000 people who are blind or partially sighted* and this number continues to grow each year.

*As at end of 2011
“Since Guide Dogs started working with Hussain, his confidence has grown. He is more independent; can accept responsibility at school; can make decisions for himself and play with friends.”

Lisa Petrie, Guide Dogs young persons worker
Providing a young person with a guide dog can have a life-long effect, increasing their confidence and self-esteem and giving them a positive start to adult life and all its opportunities. That’s why we don’t have a minimum age for guide dog ownership. Specially trained staff work with the young person and their family throughout – assessing the person’s ability to get around, preparing the family for the responsibilities of owning a guide dog, and training the person with their new canine companion.

Not every child we help needs a guide dog. We’re also changing the lives of hundreds of visually impaired children and young people by providing mobility and independence training through contracts with local authorities.

Our mobility specialists work with children - and their families - to help them develop body and spatial awareness, core physical mobility, as well as mobility and orientation skills, so they can live life to their full potential and enter adulthood with confidence.

**Fact**

In 2011 we worked with around 500 children and young people, 25 per cent of whom were from black and minority ethnic communities.
“We can see a huge benefit to our service users and we’re keen to engage with potential service users who don’t currently access our organisation’s services. My Guide has also enabled our volunteers to learn new skills and gain recognition for these.”

Lorraine Howes-Wright, Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Thousands of people who are blind or partially sighted are isolated by their vision problems; leaving home alone is inconceivable, visits out are rare.

Guide Dogs is developing sighted guiding services through our My Guide programme. Currently at pilot stage, our mobility teams are working with local blind societies and community groups to provide trained My Guide volunteers to assist people who are visually impaired, regularly guiding them to shops, community events or other activities.

The service is not offered indefinitely to any one individual – a key part of the My Guide volunteer’s role is to identify other people or groups within the community that can continue to support the individual.

Research has shown that this sort of reduction in social isolation is a vital first step in encouraging physical and mental wellbeing, and helping people who are blind or partially sighted rebuild their confidence and regain their independence.

For the volunteers, there’s a real reward in seeing people’s confidence return. They’re also adding new skills to their CV and the training they receive is endorsed by VISION 2020.

**Fact**

It is estimated that 180,000 people who are blind or partially sighted rarely leave their home alone.
“Nowadays, as soon as Max wakes up in the morning, the first thing he says is ‘Mummy, I want to walk my dog today’.”

Buddy dog owner Max’s mum
Buddy Dogs

Following a successful pilot, Buddy Dogs was launched as a full service in January 2012 and supports blind and partially sighted young people.

Buddy dogs are guide dogs that haven’t quite qualified and are placed with young people, their families, or in schools or organisations. They can improve the quality of life of blind and partially sighted young people by developing their confidence, communication and mobility skills.

Buddy dogs also help young people counter the isolation and depression that is often associated with sight loss. The service provides the opportunity for young people to experience the responsibility of caring for a dog, and can help us assess their suitability for future guide dog ownership.

Fact

We currently have 23 active young people and schools buddy dog partnerships in place.
“Guide Dogs’ commitment to ophthalmic research has made huge strides forward possible.”

Professor John Marshall, King’s College London
Guide Dogs funds a hugely important research programme that helps provide sound evidence on which to base our working practices, policies and campaigns, ensuring that the services and support we provide are appropriate to the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

Our research programme covers four key areas:

**Canine research:** to improve the effectiveness of our dogs throughout their working life and enhance their general health and wellbeing.

**Ophthalmic research:** to increase our understanding of eye conditions, and to preserve or enhance residual sight which is an aid to mobility, ensuring blind and partially sighted people can get out and about on their own terms.

**Psycho-social research:** to identify the social and psychological factors that impact on the ability of blind and partially sighted people to get out and about.

**Technology research:** To maintain and enhance the mobility of blind and partially sighted people through new technologies that will increase freedom and independence.

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**Fact**

By 2050, it’s predicted that nearly four million people in the UK will have sight loss. If you’re one of them, we want to be there for you.
“Thanks to Holly I can go wherever I want, when I want, and that feels incredible. I’ll always be grateful to Guide Dogs for their support and it means so much to me to be able to give something back by volunteering.”

Kelly Cronin, guide dog owner and volunteer
Volunteering

There’s something for everyone

You can give your time in so many different ways – from raising pups and boarding dogs to raising cash or driving for us. Volunteers are essential to funding and delivering our services – whatever your skills or interests, we have an opportunity for you to use them!

We value our volunteers – that’s why we’ve created volunteer management training to ensure staff are developing their skills in best practice and that all volunteers are well supported when volunteering with us. We also offer an online forum (the volunteer information point) to give volunteers the opportunity to share information and ideas.

Volunteer for us:
Call the National Volunteering Office on 0845 371 7771
volunteer@guidedogs.org.uk
www.guidedogs.org.uk/volunteering

Fact
Our volunteers engage in more than 14,800 activities a year in the community.
“With my husband’s gift I have been able to name two guide dog puppies – Jed and Morrie – who I hope will make a big difference to people’s lives.”

Gill Haddow, donor
The guide dog service receives no government funding. Leaving a gift in your Will, no matter how large or small, can help us create more incredible guide dog partnerships.

There are many other ways in which you can fundraise for us – sponsor a puppy, fundraise in your community, school or at work, organise a Go Walkies event or take on a Guide Dogs challenge – and you'll get great support from us too.

Life-changing gifts

“My husband, Morrie, left a gift in his Will to Guide Dogs in memory of our two dogs and because he felt the cause was so worthwhile. When we married 37 years ago, my mother was already blind and we took a great interest in Guide Dogs.

After our own dog died, we adopted a retired guide dog, Jed, from a friend of ours; he was a real godsend and gave us so much happiness. With my husband's gift I have been able to name two guide dog puppies – Jed and Morrie – who I hope will make a big difference to people's lives.”

Gill Haddow, wife of the late James Charles Morrison Haddow.

Fundraise for us:
www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/fundraising or call 0870 600 2323

Fact
Without gifts in Wills, two out of three guide dogs wouldn’t exist.
“People who are blind or partially sighted are still facing challenges or discrimination on a daily basis, which is why it’s vital we continue to campaign for their rights.”

David Cowdrey, Campaigns Manager
We campaign passionately on issues that affect the independence and mobility of people who are blind or partially sighted. We lobby and work with the Government, local authorities and other organisations on access rights, for example with our Talking Buses campaign, where we’re asking the Department of Transport to change regulation on audio-visual announcements on new buses.

Our Streets Ahead campaign provides local people, planners and designers with guidance on how to make streets more accessible to people with sight loss. We’re also working to ensure proper legislation for dangerous dogs after an increase in attacks on guide dogs.

Electric cars are making today’s vehicles quieter, which poses a real risk to blind and partially sighted people who rely on hearing vehicles to cross the road. We are campaigning for the introduction of a sound level that is audible on these vehicles.

**Help make a difference:**
www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns

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**Fact**
Research shows that on average, eight guide dogs are attacked each month by other dogs.
“As an Engagement Officer, I promote Guide Dogs’ services to organisations and individuals, including establishing community relations and raising our profile in black and minority ethnic communities. It’s not just a job but a way of life for me. I love the support I’ve had from Guide Dogs and I wear my staff shirt with pride.”

Dave Kent, Engagement Officer and guide dog owner
If you want to work for an organisation that makes a real difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people, Guide Dogs may have a great opportunity for you. We have more than 1,000 staff working across the UK in a wide range of roles, all motivated by knowing that, whatever their job, they are playing their part in helping our clients get around independently and safely.

With a Central Office near Reading in Berkshire, four regional guide dog training schools, a workshop, National Breeding Centre and mobility teams throughout the UK, we offer many varied and rewarding careers. As one of the UK’s leading charities, the experience you gain will be second to none.

We welcome applications from all sections of the community and we actively encourage diversity. The skills and abilities that we are looking for are as diverse as the range of jobs we have to offer.

Descriptions of the various job roles and current vacancies are listed on our website.

www.guidedogs.org.uk/aboutus/workingatguidedogs

Fact

We commit to providing a guide dog for life. A guide dog owner may have eight or more dogs in their lifetime, which costs £400,000 plus.
How we spend our money

65%
Provision of guide dogs and other mobility services

23%
Cost of generating income

5%
Campaigning

4%
Trading

2%
Governance

1%
Research

Figures based on 2011 financial year.
How much does it cost?

£50.8m
Provision of guide dogs and other mobility services in 2011.

£20m
Our new state-of-the-art breeding centre.

£400,000
Eight or more guide dogs for each owner’s lifetime.

£50,000
One guide dog from breeding through to retirement.

£35,000
Breeding and training guide dogs.*

£13,000
Supporting working partnerships.*

£100
Spent every minute making independence possible.

£5
To support each guide dog partnership every day.

All above costs are approximate.
* Out of the cost of one guide dog (£50,000).
Get in touch

T: 0118 983 5555
W: www.guidedogs.org.uk
E: info@guidedogs.org.uk

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Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG

To apply for a guide dog
T: 0845 372 7499