Information on allergies and fear of guide dogs
The information in this leaflet may apply to other assistance dogs. This document has been designed to address the fear or dogs and allergies which sometimes can be confused as one issue.

The fear of dogs can sometimes produce an emotional or psychological reaction which can sometimes be confused as an allergic reaction e.g. panic attack.

There are different factors which can bring on an allergy. Research has shown that dogs are less likely to bring on an allergic reaction, than dust mites, pollen, paint and cleaning products. However, if it is identified that there is a legitimate allergy towards dogs, it is advisable to have written medical confirmation to support putting management practice into place.

**Fear of dogs**

Guide dogs are working dogs and their owners rely on them for both independence and mobility. Guide dogs have up to two years of intensive training and receive further training and professional support throughout their working lives. In addition, guide dog owners are given training on how to maintain high standards of grooming and cleanliness and the dogs are checked regularly by vets.

In practical terms, guide dogs do not disrupt the everyday operation of businesses or premises. They are trained to sit at their owner’s feet at all times, not to climb on furniture and not to bother other people.

**Due to their standard of training guide dogs are not seen as a hygiene risk to food premises and establishments e.g. restaurants, hotels etc.**

**Allergies**

Allergies to dogs are caused by a reaction to certain proteins found in oils secreted from a dog’s skin and in their saliva - it is not the hair itself that causes allergies. When a dog sheds hair, or its skin flakes off, these proteins are carried into the immediate environment where they may cause an allergic reaction.

Frequent pet grooming, such as bathing and brushing, can greatly reduce dog allergies; it helps prevent loose hair from getting into the air. At least once a week is good, more often is better still. Guide Dogs are groomed regularly by their owners.
Managing allergies

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to guide dog owners and other assistance dogs. Management procedures can be put in place in hotels and guest houses to ensure that customers who have an allergy to dogs are not allocated accommodation that has previously been used by guide dog owners. When a person who is allergic to dogs has to share the same room with a guide dog owner e.g. in a classroom, they both should be accommodated by assigning them if possible (depending on the activity or size of the room) to different areas within the room or a different room within the facility.

Being careful is the key to dealing with allergies.

• It is a good idea to let the guide dog owner know that you suffer from dog allergies.
• It is advisable to avoid physical contact with the dog if you have an allergy.
• Wash your hands after you touch the dog
• Never touch your face or eyes after you’ve touched the dog.
• You may want to restrict your dog’s access to certain areas where there is restricted space or an activity involving contact with others in unavoidable. The dog can be kept in a room with a member of staff and sighted guide provided.

Care within the facility

• Wipe down smooth surfaces in the room regularly and vacuum frequently.
• Use air sterilisers and vacuum cleaners with filters.
• Frequently wash any bedding that the dog sleeps on.
• An ozone machine could be used in areas regularly used by a dog when it is vacant.
List of useful contacts

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Equality Advisory Service (EASS)

for England, Scotland and Wales

Telephone: 0800 444 205
Textphone: 0800 444 206

Northern Ireland (Equality Commission)

Telephone: 028 90 500600
Textphone: 028 90 500589
www.equalityni.org

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

RNIB Legal Rights Services
Telephone: 0303 1239999
Email: LegalRights@rnib.org.uk

RNIB Helpline

Telephone: 0303 123 9999
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
www.rnib.org.uk

Law Centre Network

The Law Centre Network is unable to give advice, but can help you find a local Law Centre that can: www.lawcentres.org.uk

Contact details for Guide Dogs

For further information, please contact Guide Dogs
Guide Dogs,
Hillfields, Burghfield Common,
Reading, RG7 3YG.

Telephone: 0118 983 5555
Fax: 0118 983 5433
Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk
Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk/accessallareas
Contact details for assistance dog organisations

Assistance Dogs

The information provided in this booklet about access for guide dogs and their owners, also applies to other registered assistance dogs.

Assistance Dogs (UK),
C/o Hearing Dogs for Deaf People,
The Grange, Wycombe Road,
Saunderton, Princes Risborough,
Buckinghamshire, HP27 9NS

Telephone: 01844 348 100
Fax: 01844 348 101
Website: www.assistancedogs.org.uk

Assistance Dogs UK Member Organisations

The seven registered charities that form Assistance Dogs (UK) are:

• Guide Dogs
• Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
• Dogs for the Disabled
• Canine Partners
• Support Dogs
• Dog A.I.D
• Medical Detection Dogs

Information and contact details for individual organisations available from Assistance Dogs UK www.assistancedogs.org.uk/member-organisations

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