

Release: 07CDY089

Date: October 2007

## **Charities announce Year of the Assistance Dog**

Five charities have announced plans to designate 2008 Year of the Assistance Dog, campaigning for the rights of guide dog and other assistance dog users.

Canine Partners, Dogs for the Disabled, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Support Dogs will work together as Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) to promote rights of access to services for assistance dog users.

Assistance dog users will nominate retailers, leisure facilities, public premises, parks and transport operators for Dog Star awards, giving service providers an incentive to make their premises assistance dog friendly.

Dog Star Awards will be symbols of service excellence, given in recognition that premises and services meet the needs of all assistance dog users. For example, provision of Braille menus for blind and partially-sighted people, induction loops for customers with hearing impairment, wheelchair access, and of course - water bowls for the assistance dogs.

Alan Brooks, Chairman of ADUK, explains: "Although there are many examples of good practice, assistance dog users continue to encounter problems accessing a variety of environments from shops, hotels, pubs, and restaurants, to public transport and high street pedestrian areas.

"This discrimination is both unacceptable and against the law, so by highlighting good practice, we hope it will become the norm, and that in future, our vision of doors always being open to all assistance dog users will become reality."

Assistance dogs should not be a risk to hygiene. These dogs are regularly groomed to the highest standard and the health and condition of every dog is checked regularly by a vet. It is the responsibility of assistance dog users to ensure that their dogs meet the highest level of hygiene.

## **Background**

Since December 1996, it has been unlawful for hoteliers and restaurant owners to refuse to serve a disabled person or offer a lower standard of service for reasons related to the person's disability. Since October 2004, The law also requires that service providers make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome the barriers to access.

Taxi drivers-since 31 March 2001 (31 March 2003 in Scotland) – are required to carry, free of charge, all registered assistance dogs travelling with their owner. A similar duty has applied since 31 March 2004 to drivers and operators of private hire vehicles (private hire cars in Scotland).

Additionally, since 4 December 2006, under Part 3 of the DDA, it has been unlawful for them to refuse service to a disabled person, or offer a lower standard of services related to the person's disability. The law also requires them to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way that their services are provided - although that does not include physical alterations to the vehicles.

**End**

## **Note to Editors**

For further media information, please contact one of the following press offices:

Canine Partners – Isabel Campbell: 08456 580480  
[isabelc@caninepartners.co.uk](mailto:isabelc@caninepartners.co.uk)

Dogs for the Disabled – Sarah Watson: 01295 252600  
07876 597331 [Sarahw@dogsforthedisabled.org](mailto:Sarahw@dogsforthedisabled.org)

Guide Dogs – [Chris.Dyson@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:Chris.Dyson@guidedogs.org.uk)  
0118 983 8281 or 07768 523996

Hearing Dogs – [jenny.moir@hearingdogs.org.uk](mailto:jenny.moir@hearingdogs.org.uk)  
01844 348108 or 07769 901309

Support Dogs – Angela Gregory: 07917 801079  
[angela@support-dogs.org.uk](mailto:angela@support-dogs.org.uk)