

# ADUK QUICK GUIDE



## **Welcoming Tenants with Assistance Dogs in Private Rented Accommodation**

## Assistance Dogs UK

Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) is a coalition of assistance dog charities that have been accredited by one of the two leading global authorities in the assistance dog industry, namely Assistance Dogs International and The International Guide Dog Federation.

Assistance dogs are dogs that have been highly trained to carry out a range of tasks and alerts that support a disabled person or person with a long-term medical condition.

Examples include a guide dog that guides a visually impaired person or a medical alert dog that alerts a person to an oncoming medical episode.

Everyone deserves a place to call home. With over 7000 people who rely on ADUK member-trained assistance dogs in the UK, it's vital that landlords, letting agents and housing associations understand their legal obligations to disabled people who rely on assistance dogs.



## The Law

In the UK disabled people have important rights under the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland). It is unlawful for public services, service providers and local authorities to treat disabled people less favourably, e.g. refusing services or offering a lesser service because a disabled person has an assistance dog.

The law states that anyone offering a service, be that private business or public service must make reasonable adjustments for disabled people so that they can access their venue, goods and services.

Except in the most exceptional circumstance e.g. a surgical or disease control hospital ward, this would mean allowing access to a disabled person and their assistance dog, even if you do not normally accept pet dogs.

## Reasonable Adjustments

A landlord or housing provider is legally required to make reasonable adjustments to enable a tenant with an assistance dog to live in their property.

This could include:

- making changes to any 'no dog' policy or clause in the tenancy agreement which may disadvantage a tenant who uses an assistance dog as an aid to living independently
- allocating a dedicated outside space or 'spending area' where possible so the dog can relieve itself

It is important to remember that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability. Unless the information is needed in order to make reasonable adjustments, it is not appropriate to question someone about the nature of their disability.



## Additional Charges

A landlord, letting agent or housing provider cannot increase rent or charge additional fees to assistance dog owners, even if a contract states they charge extra for tenants with pets.

Asking an assistance dog user to pay additional fees or deposit to cover any damage that 'may' happen to the property as a result of owning an assistance dog, could be deemed unreasonable and/or discriminatory.

Charges for actual damage caused by the dog could be taken from a deposit. These charges would be made at the end of a tenancy through the relevant tenancy deposit scheme, in the same way that other deductions for any damage would be made.

## What to Expect

Assistance dogs should have been prepared and trained in a variety of environments and situations so that they are capable and confident when out and about.

Not all assistance dogs are trained by an ADUK member charity, but the Equality and Human Rights Commission does state that all assistance dogs should be **highly trained**. This is regardless of who trains the dog.



Landlords, letting agencies and housing associations can be confident that highly trained assistance dogs from one of ADUK's member organisations will

- be trained to behave well in public
- have safe and reliable temperaments
- be fully toilet-trained, be healthy and not constitute a hygiene risk
- be recognisable by the harness, organisation branded coat, lead slip or ID (though this is not a legal requirement)

## Unexpected Behaviour

No assistance dog, no matter how highly trained and experienced is going to be perfect 100% of the time. Whilst they are trained to focus on their partner, from time to time they may be distracted. However, there are some behaviours that you would not expect to see from a highly trained assistance dog such as

- dogs that have not been trained to behave well in public e.g. barking, lunging, or jumping up or pulling strongly on a lead
- dogs with aggressive or fearful temperaments e.g. cowering or growling
- poorly cared for dogs or dogs that are not toilet trained

## Identifying Assistance Dogs

Although most assistance dogs are recognisable by their jacket, harness, lead slip or bandana there is no legal requirement for these to be worn. Some people may choose not to use these visual cues and legally, they are within their rights.

This lack of visible identification can create challenges in easily distinguishing assistance dogs from pet dogs. Regrettably, some individuals may use this to falsely claim that their pet dogs are assistance dogs.

All assistance dogs trained by an ADUK member organisation are issued with an ADUK ID Booklet containing details about the dog and the charity that trained it. Some owners may also have the Assistance Dogs International App on their phone.



Not all assistance dog owners have trained their dog through a charity or carry specific ID, nor are they required to by law. There is no official register or certification process for assistance dogs in the UK so there is no legal 'proof' that you can ask for.

## Refusing Access

It may be unlawful to refuse a tenancy to a disabled person with an assistance dog because it has not been trained by an ADUK member. However, it could be considered reasonable, to seek reassurance that an assistance dog is highly trained and appropriately insured.

ADUK recommends treating each person as an individual and if they assert that they are disabled and that their dog is a highly trained assistance dog, and the dog acts as expected, it may be unlawful to deny them access.



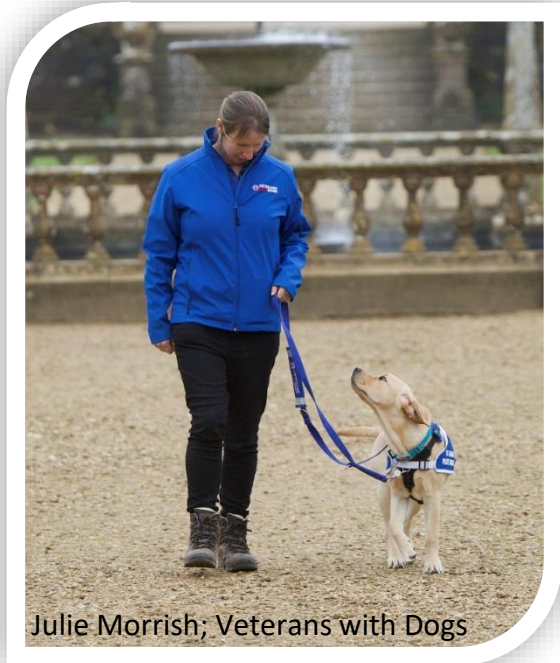
## Assistance Dogs in Training

In order to prepare a dog for life working as an assistance dog, it's vital that they are exposed to a range of different environments and situations.

Assistance Dogs in training are not referenced in legislation. As such, it is ADUK's understanding that service providers, housing providers or landlords are not legally obliged to give access to someone with an assistance dog in training/puppy.

Some disabled people will train their own assistance dog, and housing providers can consider such requests on a case-by-case basis.

ADUK member organisations can take up to 2 years to prepare and train an assistance dog. Whilst there is nothing in law about the age a highly trained assistance dog must be, it would be unlikely that a dog under a year old would be adequately prepared for the role.



Julie Morrish; Veterans with Dogs

## Emotional Support Dogs

An assistance dog is a highly trained dog that is trained to carry out tasks and alerts to mitigate a person's disabilities or life threatening health condition. An emotional support dog is a dog that offers comfort and companionship by being present, which requires no specialist training.

Emotional support dogs are not referenced in law, so it is ADUK's understanding that service providers are not legally obliged to allow access to someone with an emotional support dog in the same way that they are for a disabled person with a highly trained assistance dog.

Emotional support dogs and highly trained psychiatric assistance dogs are not the same thing. A disabled person who relies on a highly trained assistance dog to mitigate a mental health condition should be given access.

## Additional Sources of Information

For further details about welcoming disabled people who rely on assistance dogs see The Equality and Human Rights Commission Guide

[Assistance Dogs: A Guide for All Businesses](#)

## Other ADUK Quick Guides and Resources:

- Welcoming Guests with Assistance Dogs in Holiday Accommodation
- Welcoming Employees with Assistance Dogs in the Workplace
- Welcoming Customers with Assistance Dogs
- Welcoming Assistance Dogs in Schools
- Welcoming Students with Assistance Dogs in Further & Higher Education
- ADUK Member Trained Dogs Poster
- 'What is an Assistance Dog' Animation
- 'Service Providers & Employers Guide to Assistance Dogs' Animation

Find out more about ADUK and our members and watch our animation at [www.assistedogs.org.uk](http://www.assistedogs.org.uk)



## Contact Assistance Dogs UK

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