

ADUK QUICK GUIDE



Welcoming Students with Assistance Dogs

www.assistancedogs.org.uk | Registered Charity 1119538

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 assistance dogs, namely Assistance Dogs International and The International Guide Dog Federation.

Assistance dogs are dogs that have been highly trained to perform 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, a medical alert dog that alerts a person to an oncoming medical episode, an assistance dog that alerts someone with a psychiatric condition to take medication.



Medical Detection Dogs

Students with Assistance Dogs

Some disabled students may rely on highly trained assistance dogs in order to access their further and higher education and to live full and independent lives.

These students should not be discriminated against because they rely on assistance dogs and colleges and universities should ensure that they make reasonable adjustments to enable the student to access all their services.

There is no official route to getting or training an assistance dog.

Some students may have an assistant dog trained by an internationally accredited charity, some may have used a non-accredited charity and others may have trained the dog independently.

It is important to remember that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability and not all assistance dogs will look the same.

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. In the context of the law, when it comes to providing access, an assistance dog should be treated as an auxiliary aid e.g. wheelchair or white cane, rather than as a pet dog.



The law states that anyone offering a service, including an educational establishment 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

Reasonable adjustments for a disabled student with an assistance dog could include:

- Giving full access to buildings, classrooms, campuses, and accommodation even if there is a 'no dogs' policy.
- Allocating a dedicated outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself (ADUK has additional resources on this)
- Educating staff and students as to the needs and rights of disabled students who rely on assistance dogs and addressing concerns directly.
- Allowing students appropriate breaks to allow the assistance dogs needs to be met.

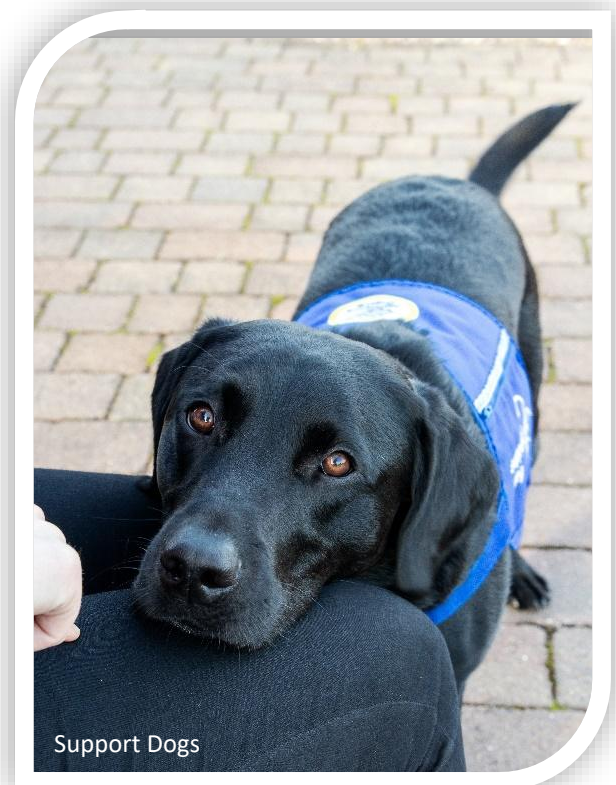
Accommodation for students with Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs should not be treated as pets, so even if student accommodation operates a 'no dogs' policy, this should not apply to a disabled person's highly trained assistance dog.

ADUK members encourage anyone who is partnered with one of their trained assistance dogs to talk to their accommodation provider in advance and discuss how access can be best provided.

If you are unsure about the training the dog has received or have any concerns about the dog's behaviour it is reasonable to talk with the person and explain to them that you may need to carry out a risk assessment to determine how to proceed.

Throughout the UK, ADUK member organisations have many successful placements of partnerships in educational institutions with either disabled students or teachers. Our members have navigated complex environments and scenarios to find workable solutions for all parties.



Assistance Dogs around Food

Assistance dogs should be allowed access to premises where food is available.

Due to the very specific training and health tests that highly trained assistance dogs go through, certainly by dogs trained by ADUK members, they are unlikely to be a risk to hygiene in such premises.

This would not include areas where food is prepared for sale such as professional or commercial kitchens.

Policies and Risk

Alongside meeting the needs of an individual student, colleges and universities also have a duty of care to all students, staff and visitors and it is good practice to carry out a risk assessment to ensure that they can meet that duty of care to everyone.

Many colleges and universities have a policy that states that a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog that has been trained by an ADUK member will be given access. Colleges and universities can be confident that these dogs will have been trained to a high standard and will not pose a risk or public nuisance.

It may be unlawful to refuse access to a disabled person with a highly trained assistance dog because it has not been trained by an ADUK member. It could be considered reasonable, as part of meeting their duty of care to students and staff, for education establishments and university accommodation provider to seek reassurance that the assistance dog is highly trained and that it has been appropriately insured.

Student and Staff Allergies and Concerns

Allergy to dogs is sometimes given as a reason to not admit assistance dogs.

Where a clear allergy risk to a specific individual is identified, steps should be taken to reduce this risk, the most effective way to do this is by cleaning.

A refusal of access for assistance dogs based on the possibility that other students 'may' be allergic is unlikely to be classed as a justifiable response.

Disabled people should not bear the cost of any additional cleaning or staffing that would result in reducing risk.

Refusing access to an assistance dog user in the workplace due to fear of dogs amongst other students or staff is unlikely to be considered a justifiable response.

What to Expect

Assistance dogs are trained to wait quietly until they are needed. On average, dogs sleep/rest between 12 – 14 hours per day so once a dog has settled into its routine then you will most likely find that it will be in its bed resting or sleeping until it is called upon to respond.

Not all assistance dogs are trained by an ADUK member charity, but all assistance dogs should be highly trained by whoever does train them, whether that be a non-accredited charity, a professional trainer or individual.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that assistance dogs should be highly trained and will

- be trained to behave well in public
- have safe and reliable temperaments
- be healthy and do not constitute a hygiene risk
- be fully toilet-trained
- be recognisable by the harness, organisation-specific 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 pulling strongly on a lead
- dogs with aggressive or very fearful temperaments e.g. cowering or growling
- poorly cared for dogs that constitute a hygiene risk
- 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 them to wear these. 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.

It is important to remember that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability and not all assistance dogs will look the same.



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 may 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.

Refusing Access

It may be unlawful to refuse access to a disabled person with an assistance dog because it has not been trained by an ADUK member. However, it could be considered reasonable, as part of meeting their duty of care to students and staff, for a provider to seek reassurance that the 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 acts as expected, it may be unlawful to deny them access. If it becomes evident that the dog is not behaving in line with the list of expected behaviours outlined above, refusing, or revoking access or access may be justifiable.

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 environments and situations.

Assistance Dogs in training are not referenced in the relevant legislation. It is ADUK's understanding that service providers are not legally obliged to give access to someone with an Assistance Dog in training in the same way that they are a disabled person with a highly trained assistance dog.

ADUK members can take up to 2 years to prepare and train an assistance dog. Whilst there is nothing in the 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.



Emotional Support Dogs

An assistance dog is a highly trained dog that is prepared and 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 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 in the same way that a physically disabled person with an assistance dog would.

Additional Sources of Information

For further details about welcoming disabled people who rely on assistance dogs see The Equality and Human Rights Commission's [Assistance dogs: A guide for businesses and service providers](#)

Other ADUK Quick Guides and Resources

- Welcoming Guests with Assistance Dogs in Holiday Accommodation
- Welcoming Employees with Assistance Dogs in the Workplace
- Welcoming Tenants with Assistance Dogs in Rented Accommodation
- Welcoming Assistance Dogs in Schools
- Welcoming Customers Assistance Dogs
- 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



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