

# ADUK QUICK GUIDE



## **Writing an Assistance Dog Policy to welcome assistance dog users to your organisation**

[www.assistancedogs.org.uk](http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk) | Registered Charity 1119538

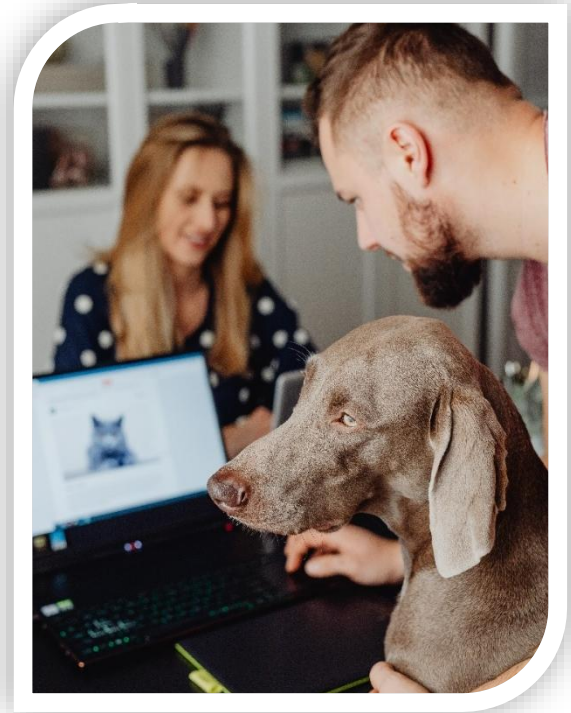
## Assistance Dogs UK

Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) is a coalition of assistance dog charities that have been accredited by one of the two leading global authorities in 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 to support a disabled person or person with a long-term medical condition.

Over 7000 people rely on ADUK member-trained assistance dogs in the UK.

Each one of these could be a potential service user, so it is vital that businesses and their employees understand their legal obligations so that they can be welcoming, inclusive, and accessible.



## The Law

This quick guide can be used alongside ADUK's [other quick guides](#) (available online). ADUK cannot offer legal advice, as such it will not write your assistance dogs policy, but it can review, and fact check a completed policy. When completing an assistance dog policy, it is important to outline the legal obligations and rights of the service user. In the UK disabled people have important rights under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) (Northern Ireland). A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability of the individual to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It is unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably, e.g. refusing services or offering a lesser service because a disabled person has an assistance dog.

Your policy should be clear on the legislation and communicate this to policy users. It should be noted that it is assistance dog users who carry the legal rights and protections, not the assistance dogs.

## Access Rights

Your policy can outline that assistance dog users have the right to access all public areas of an organisation including bathrooms and dining areas, except in the most exceptional circumstance e.g. a surgical or hospital ward (for infection control). If your organisation has such areas, your policy could outline the areas of your premises which may not be able to accommodate an assistance dog accompanying their partner and offer reasonable adjustments. For example, if accessing an infection control area, a waiting place could be provided where the dog can be watched. The specific reasonable adjustments will depend on the unique circumstances of each situation and the service provider's capabilities.



Your policy could highlight that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability and not all assistance dogs look the same. Unless the information is needed to make reasonable adjustments, it is not appropriate to ask questions about a person's disability.

There is no conflict with food hygiene laws in allowing access for assistance dogs. Similarly, allergies and phobias are not reasons to deny access.

## What to include in your Policy

Your assistance dog policy could include the following areas:

- The Law
- Access Rights
- Policy Intent
- Definition of terms
- Types of Assistance Dogs
- How to identify Assistance Dogs
- Expectations
- Assistance Dogs in Training
- Toileting requirements
- Expectations for staff

*N.B. This list is not exhaustive and other headings may be appropriate in your policy.*

## Set a Policy Statement

Your Policy may identify a clear intent for employees and customers of your organisation. It should identify that service users should not suffer any kind of discrimination, meeting the legal obligations of the Equalities Act 2010 or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland). This statement can go further if it meets your service aims.

## Define terms

Your Policy could set out a definition of assistance dogs, so those following the policy have clarity. ADUK defines assistance dogs as 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. In the UK there is no register of assistance dogs, and not all assistance dog users will have ID.

To find out more about defining assistance dogs, visit [‘What is an assistance dog?’](#) on the ADUK website.

It is important to be clear in your policy that the right to access your services applies to the disabled person. It does not apply to the assistance dog as an assistance dog is considered a mobility or auxiliary aid in law. Your policy could identify the assistance dog as a reasonable adjustment to ensure the disabled person can access your business.

## Posters

Posters, such as the one in the image, identify ADUK Member trained assistance dogs. This can be found on the [ADUK quick guides and resources area](#) of our website and is free to print and display.



## Types of assistance dogs

Your Policy could provide guidance on types of Assistance Dogs. ADUK has [14 accredited members](#) and a further [5 candidates](#) working towards accreditation. ADUK members are not the only source of assistance dogs in the UK.

Your policy should illustrate that assistance dogs are trained to support a wide range of needs, and they can provide a variety of services to their partner. Likewise, assistance dogs are not defined breeds and can come in all shapes and sizes.

Your Policy could consider the difference between an assistance dog and an emotional support dog. 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 permit access to someone with an emotional support dog in the same way that they would do 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.

## Assistance Dogs in Training

It is ADUK's understanding that service providers are not legally obliged to give access to someone with an Assistance Dog in training. Your policy may reflect this. However, to prepare a dog for life working as an assistance dog, it is vital that they are exposed to a range of different environments and situations. Your policy could reflect the need to support the training of assistance dogs and set out expectations for assistance dogs in training.



## How to identify assistance dogs

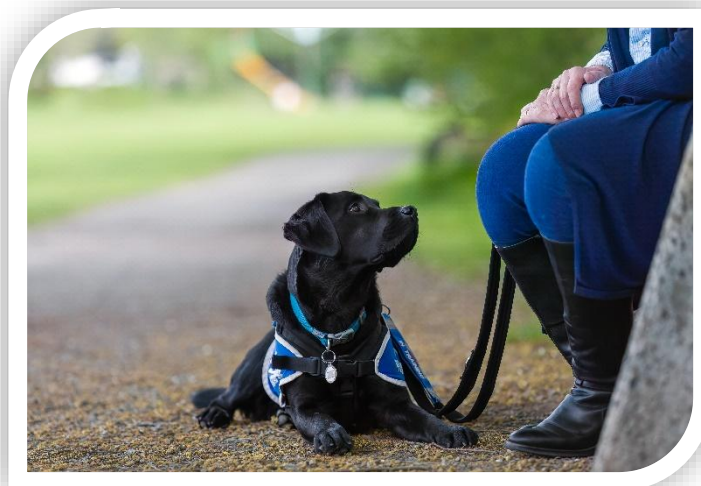
Your policy could provide guidance to employees to identify assistance dogs. However, in the UK there is **no official register or certification process for assistance dogs, so there is no legal 'proof' that you can ask for.**

It is not a legal requirement for assistance dogs to wear a harness, jacket or lead slip, or for a disabled person to provide any identification for themselves or the assistance dog. To protect your organisation and employees it is important for your policy to reflect this.

Assistance dogs trained by member organisations of ADUK will have formal identification in the form of ID tags on the dog's collar, a harness, and an organisation- specific branded dog jacket or harness and lead slip. Handlers will also have a yellow ADUK branded identification booklet although they are not required to always carry this.

ADUK members are not the only source of assistance dogs, and refusing access to a user without ADUK documentation could be discriminatory. For instance, owner-trained dogs or dogs from organisations seeking accreditation may not have ADUK identifiers but may still be highly trained assistance dogs.

Your policy should outline how your organisation will assess owner-trained dogs to ensure they are highly trained. While there is no legal proof, some users may provide evidence of training from classes or professional trainers.



## Expectations

Assistance dogs are highly trained, and your Policy should reflect this. It should be noted that 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:

- Dogs that have not been trained to behave well in public e.g. lunging, constant barking, jumping up or pulling strongly on a lead (however, it must be noted that some assistance dogs may jump to alert their handler).
- 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.

It is reasonable for a policy to specify certain expectations. For example:

- The assistance dog should be always kept on lead and under close control whilst accessing your service.
- The user should, where possible, clean up after their dog.

It is also reasonable to stipulate the need for public liability insurance, pet insurance and up to date veterinary care such as vaccinations, within your policy. Your policy cannot require proof of training; however, many assistance dog users may choose to provide this.

## Expectations for your employees

Your policy might highlight the expected conduct of your staff when facilitating assistance dog users. This could include the requirement that staff are familiar with your policy and should ensure that assistance dog users are not discriminated against.

Your Policy might set out your organisation's expectations regarding treating the customer with respect and without making assumptions about their disability. Depending on the nature of the service provided, your policy may include providing an access plan for regular service users.

Your policy could outline the protocol to be followed if there are questions about the training of an assistance dog. Employees should be guided on how to correctly discuss this with a service user, without discriminating against the assistance dog user.

## Training for Service Providers

When creating an Assistance Dog Policy for your business, it is important to ensure all employees know and understand the policy to ensure it is applied correctly. CPD could be provided for your employees. ADUK can support with this training. Visit the [‘Training for Service Providers’](#) area of our website for more information.

**A template for your policy can be located at the end of this document.**

## Additional Sources of Information

For more 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 Customers with Assistance Dogs
- Welcoming Employees with Assistance Dogs in the Workplace
- Welcoming Tenants with Assistance Dogs in Rented Accommodation
- 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 its members and watch our animation at [www.assistancedogs.org.uk](http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk)

## Contact Assistance Dogs UK

Email: [info@assistancedogs.org.uk](mailto:info@assistancedogs.org.uk)

Web: [www.assistancedogs.org.uk](http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk)

Write to us: Assistance Dogs (UK), c/o Hearing Dogs, The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 9NS.



# ADUK Policy Guidance Document

## ***\*Enter organisation name\** Assistance Dog Policy**

*Use this template to build your policy against the policy checklist suggested by ADUK.*

*ADUK cannot offer legal advice or create your policy. However, we can fact check and review a completed policy.*

### **Policy Intent**

- ✓ Identify why this policy has been created.
- ✓ Specify that people reliant on assistance dogs must not suffer any kind of discrimination, meeting the legal obligations of the Equalities Act 2010.
- ✓ This statement can go further if it meets your service aims.

### **The Law**

- ✓ Be clear on the legislation [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) (Northern Ireland)
- ✓ Communicate legislative requirements to policy users.
- ✓ Identify that it is the disabled person who carries the legal rights and protections, not the assistance dog.

### **Access Rights**

- ✓ Outline that people with assistance dogs have the right to access all public areas of an organisation including bathrooms and dining areas, except in the most exceptional circumstances (e.g. sterile environments)
- ✓ Outline areas of your premises which may not be able to accommodate an assistance dog accompanying their partner and offer reasonable adjustments. For example, if accessing an infection control area, a waiting place could be provided where the dog can be watched. The specific reasonable adjustments will depend on the unique circumstances of each situation and the service provider's capabilities.
- ✓ Highlight that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability and not all assistance dogs look the same. Unless the information is needed to make reasonable adjustments, it is not appropriate to question a person about their impairment or health condition.

## **Definition of terms**

- ✓ Clearly lay out what an assistance dog is.
- ✓ Illustrate that assistance dogs mitigate a range of disabilities.
- ✓ Identify that assistance dogs can come in all breeds; they are not exclusively Labradors.
- ✓ Consider the difference between an assistance dog and emotional support animal.

## **Types of Assistance Dogs**

- ✓ Note, ADUK members are not the only providers of Assistance Dogs. They can be trained by non-ADUK members as well as owner trainers.

## **How to identify Assistance Dogs**

- ✓ Note there is no official register or certification process for assistance dogs.
- ✓ Be clear there is no form of legal proof that a dog is an assistance dog.
- ✓ Illustrate it is not a legal requirement for assistance dogs to wear a harness, jacket or lead slip, or for a disabled person to provide any identification for themselves or the assistance dog.
- ✓ Encourage a position of trust for people with assistance dogs, based on the expectations for assistance dog behaviour.

## **Expectations**

- ✓ Identify that assistance dogs are highly trained, based on expectations for assistance dogs.
- ✓ Consider your duty of care to staff, volunteers and other service users.
- ✓ Provide reasonable expectations for people who rely on assistance dogs accessing your organisation.

*N.B There are no legislative standards.* Remember, these are organisation dependent.

## **Assistance Dogs in Training**

- ✓ Consider whether your organisation will accept assistance dogs in training.
- ✓ If assistance dogs in training are accepted, define the level of flexibility on expectations for assistance dogs.

## **Toileting requirements**

- ✓ Reference toileting arrangements which may be on or off premises.

- ✓ Highlight safe and appropriate access routes to the toilet area that should be wide enough to allow the dog and its owner to pass through together and meet accessibility standards.
- ✓ Ensure they can access this area in a reasonable time frame e.g., if at a football stadium, the partnership should have enough time to access this area and get back within half time.

### **Putting your policy into practice**

- ✓ Set out your organisation's expectations in regard to treating disabled people who rely on a highly trained assistance dog with respect and without making assumptions about their impairment or health condition.
- ✓ Provide an access plan for regular service users, depending on the nature of the service provided.
- ✓ Outline protocol if there are questions about the training of an assistance dog. Staff should be guided on how to raise this correctly, without discriminating against the assistance dog owner.