



Guide Dogs' code of business conduct

1. Relations with Service Users and their Representatives

We will work to ensure that Guide Dogs' services are of high quality that focus on the person using them and that person's needs. We will provide our services in line with the relevant professional and regulatory standards and codes of practice.

1.1 Assessing People's Needs

Together with other voluntary and government organisations that provide services to blind and partially sighted people, Guide Dogs will regularly monitor and quantify their needs in the areas of mobility and access, particularly those groups currently under-represented.

1.2 Listening to Service Users

We will consult both existing and potential users of our services, other professionals and carers. We will encourage them to put forward their views and get involved in discussions about the provision, planning, development and monitoring of services for blind and partially sighted people.

1.3 Equal Access to Services

We will work to make sure all existing and potential service users have equal access to our products and services, regardless of age (bearing in mind there is a minimum appropriate age for guide dog ownership), ethnic origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We



will do this by following guidelines for good practice, making appropriate policies and delivering services fairly.

1.4 Delivering a Quality Service

We will have a comprehensive approach to service evaluation that addresses the need for service provision to be consistent throughout the UK in terms of quality, eligibility and availability.

1.5 Health and Safety of Service Users

We will take all reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of service users while under the care and supervision of Guide Dogs' workers, their agents or volunteers.

1.6 Complaints about Services

We will develop a complaints procedure that protects the interests of both service users and providers. We will deal with problems in line with best practice.

1.7 Withdrawal of Services

We will not tolerate any person abusing our workers, volunteers or any animal related to Guide Dogs.

1.8 Maintaining our Relevance

We will invite and take account of the views of both existing and potential users of our services to ensure that the organisation's direction and governance remain relevant to their needs.

1.9 Communicating with Service Users

We will consult and communicate with existing and potential service users in a choice of formats and languages.



1.10 Service User Confidentiality

We will follow all UK laws on keeping service user's personal information confidential and share it only as necessary with those who have a legitimate right and need to know.

2. Relations with Workers

We recognise that every one of our workers brings something valuable to Guide Dogs, so we aim to create a positive, open working environment where people are expected and encouraged to do their best for blind and partially sighted people and for Guide Dogs.

For the purpose of this Code "worker" includes any individual employed by Guide Dogs under a contract of employment, or any person who is engaged under a contract to provide a personal service to Guide Dogs. It further includes any person engaged via an employment agency. It does not include our volunteers.

2.1 Dignity, Respect and Fair Treatment

We are committed to treating our workers fairly, with dignity and with respect.

2.2 Recruitment and Promotion

We will actively recruit and promote workers on the basis of their suitability for the job, in line with equal opportunities legislation and Guide Dogs' diversity policies and action plans. The overriding principle will be that the best person is appointed to do the job.



2.3 Training and Development

We will provide training and development opportunities for all our workers. We will encourage them to develop or acquire the skills they need to do their jobs (and the jobs they may want to be promoted to) in the most effective way.

2.4 Fair and Just Remuneration

We will operate an open, fair and affordable remuneration policy, measuring against appropriate internal and external benchmarks.

2.5 Health and Safety of Workers

We aim to protect our workers' health and safety at work as far as is reasonably practicable and legally possible, including: consulting them or their representatives on health and safety; and providing training on carrying out their own responsibilities.

2.6 Employing a Representative Workforce

We embrace diversity in all its aspects. We aim to employ a workforce that is complementary and representative at every level. In relation to the employment of blind and partially sighted and other disabled people, Guide Dogs will undertake any positive action the law allows to rectify imbalances that are revealed by monitoring, making sure at all times that we employ the best person to do the job.

2.7 Harassment and Discrimination

We will not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment or discrimination towards or by our workers, of any other worker, service user, volunteer or any other person with whom a worker may deal with in their capacity at Guide Dogs. For the avoidance of doubt, discrimination includes discrimination on grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.



2.8 Communicating with Workers

Guide Dogs will actively encourage our workers to express their views openly and positively on things that concern them. We will communicate with our workers in a range of ways to supply regular, up to date information on our activities and we will make sure we use accessible formats. We will also consult our workers through their nominated representatives about major changes and developments to our organisation, in line with UK legislation in force.

2.9 Conflicts of Interest

Under their contracts, our workers must disclose any potential conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is when the responsibilities of a worker go against any other responsibilities or interests that worker has, so that the worker could be seen to be influencing our decision to benefit themselves, their relatives, friends or another organisation.

2.10 Confidentiality

Guide Dogs will follow all UK legislative requirements about the confidentiality of worker data and share it only as necessary with those who have a legitimate right and need to know.

Our workers, volunteers and trustees must keep our activities confidential in line with the law and their respective duties.

2.11 The Right to Representation

Guide Dogs will respect the rights of any worker or volunteer to join, or not join, a trade union or other recognised representative body.

2.12 The Misuse of Guide Dogs' Assets

Our workers, volunteers and trustees must use our assets properly and in line with their job description and duties. Our assets include:

- information we own;
- financial assets;
- confidential information, and



- equipment and other property we own, lease or rent.

2.13 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is more than an avoidance of becoming physically sick or stressed. It should involve proactive and positive steps by the organisation to actively assist employees to maximise their physical and mental health and as a result ensures Guide Dogs is a productive and satisfying place to work.

Wellbeing initiatives at Guide Dogs will include promoting open and honest two way communications; teamwork and co-operation; clarity of purpose and a balance between work and personal life. It will also involve pro-active recording and management of sickness absence.

3. Relations with Guide Dogs, Other Animals and their Owners and Carers

Guide Dogs has an absolute commitment to ensuring the welfare and quality of life of our animals. We sponsor research into canine health to help us achieve these aims. We therefore expect anyone that has dealings with our dogs, including guide dog owners, volunteers and workers to have the greatest respect, kindness and compassion towards the dogs with which we work, including those who do not qualify as working dogs. We expect other organisations with which we work to have the same standards as ourselves for all animals.

3.1 Guide Dog Owners, Breeders, Boarders, Puppy Walkers and Dog Carers

We will always treat our guide dog owners, breed stock holders, boarders, puppy walkers and dog carers fairly and in line with our policies and with our contractual obligations.



3.2 Procuring Guide Dogs

We will only obtain guide dogs from reputable suppliers that meet, as a minimum requirement, the UK governmental standards for caging condition and husbandry practices.

3.3 Cruelty to Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs will investigate and, if appropriate, remove a guide dog and/or actively support the prosecution of anyone that mistreats a guide dog or any other animal within our sphere of responsibility.

3.4 Sending Guide Dogs to Overseas Organisations

We will only send dogs to approved international schools that have been successfully assessed by the International Guide Dogs Federation (IGDF) and that keep to their standards.

3.5 Research into Canine Health

We will continue to fund research into canine health issues that meet the needs of the organisation. External research will be tendered through open competition. Only research organisations that meet the standards in our Guide Dog Ethical Policy will be invited to tender.

3.6 The Welfare of Animals used in Research

We will not fund animal research that involves invasive experimentation or that deliberately manipulates animal behaviour. Any tests on animals must meet the same standards as nutritional or medical studies on people and be in the best interests of our guide and breeding dogs.

3.7 Best Practice in Canine Welfare

We are committed to following best practice in caring for our dogs' physical and mental wellbeing.



3.8 Improving the Lives of Guide Dogs

We will continue to work within Guide Dogs and with other organisations to improve the welfare of guide dogs throughout their lives in the way they are housed, cared for and transported.

4. Relations with Donors, Sponsors and the Investment Community

Guide Dogs aim to be open, ethical and transparent in the way we raise and use money from donors and sponsors. This includes making sure organisations and people who donate money or sponsor us are aware of the range of work we carry out and how this affects society.

4.1 Our Donor's Charter

Guide Dogs will always endeavour to respect a donor's or sponsor's wishes on the use of their funds in line with the objectives of the Association, our Donors Charter and the requirements of relevant charities legislation.

4.2 Refusing Donations and Sponsorships

We will not knowingly accept donations or sponsorship from organisations or people who break or disregard this code.

4.3 High Quality and Cost Effective Services

We are committed to providing a responsive, well managed, high quality and cost effective service to all our stakeholders.



4.4 Maximising Financial Returns

Guide Dogs will aim to maximise the financial returns on our investments, always bearing in mind the risk parameters and business requirements of the organisation.

We will continually review our investment policy to make sure it is in line with this code.

5. Relations with Voluntary Supporters (Members, Volunteers and Trustees)

We respect and value the individuality and diversity of all Guide Dogs volunteers. Volunteering is a valuable and vital activity and is not a substitute for paid work. We will try to keep a balance between the skills we gain through paid workers and skills we gain through volunteers.

5.1 Volunteering Charter

Our policies and procedures are aimed at ensuring compliance with equal opportunities, health, safety and other legal requirements, and support best practice in volunteering.

5.2 Equipped for the Task

Guide Dogs will work to make sure that volunteers understand their responsibilities and are properly trained, equipped and capable of doing the tasks they are being asked to do.

5.3 Recruitment and Promotion

We will actively recruit and promote volunteers on the basis of their suitability for the task, in line with equal opportunities legislation and Guide Dogs' diversity policies and action plans. The overriding principle will be that the best person is recruited.



5.4 Training & Development

We will actively encourage and assist volunteers to develop or acquire the skills they need to do their tasks, and any they may reasonably hope to do in the future.

5.5 Health & Safety

We aim to protect Guide Dogs' volunteers' health and safety, while they are doing work for us, as far as is reasonably practicable and legally possible. This includes providing appropriate and affordable public liability insurance.

5.6 Harassment and Discrimination

We will not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment or discrimination towards our volunteers, or by our volunteers, in the course of their work with Guide Dogs. For the avoidance of doubt, discrimination includes discrimination on grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

5.7 Expenses

Volunteers are entitled to claim reasonable expenses in line with Guide Dogs' policies.

5.8 Listening to Volunteers

Guide Dogs will actively encourage volunteers to express their views openly and constructively on things that concern them, without fear of recrimination. We will also hold discussions with volunteers' representatives about significant organisational changes and developments as prescribed in the Volunteering Charter.



5.9 Protecting Volunteers

We will protect our volunteers as far as possible when they are doing work for us and we will not pressure volunteers into doing tasks with which they are not comfortable.

5.10 Confidentiality of Volunteer Data

Guide Dogs will follow all UK legislative requirements about the confidentiality of volunteer data and share it only as necessary with those who have a legitimate right or need to know.

We will also require our workers, volunteers and trustees to keep confidential the affairs of Guide Dogs in a manner consistent with the law and their respective duties.

5.11 The Roles of Workers and Volunteers

The roles of paid employees and volunteers within Guide Dogs are distinct and we will not normally ask volunteers to undertake work done by workers or temporary workers.

5.12 Conflicts of Interest

Our trustees and volunteers must disclose any potential conflicts of interest in line with their legal and, if appropriate, contractual obligations. A conflict of interest happens when the official responsibilities of a Guide Dogs' trustee or volunteer go against any other responsibilities or interests they may have, so that they could be seen to be influencing our decisions or affairs to benefit themselves or another organisation.

5.13 The Right to Representation

Guide Dogs will respect the rights of any worker or volunteer to join, or not join, a trade union or other recognised representative body.



5.14 The Misuse of Guide Dogs' Assets

Our volunteers and trustees must use our assets properly and in line with their job description and duties. Our assets include:

- information we own;
- financial assets;
- confidential information, and
- equipment and other property we own, lease or rent.

6. Influencing and Campaigns

Guide Dogs campaigns, both nationally and internationally, to raise awareness of the needs of blind and partially sighted people, including guide dog owners, in relation to mobility, access and rehabilitation; and to ensure that they and other blind and partially sighted people receive equal treatment and can lead the fullest and most independent lives possible. Visual impairment is experienced by many thousands of people and we are campaigning alongside them, in conjunction with guide dog owners, companies, MPs and MEPs, for rights that most sighted people take for granted.

6.1 Influencing Policymakers

We will influence European, national and local government bodies, including the devolved administrations, that develop policies likely to affect the mobility, access and rehabilitation of blind and partially sighted people and we will monitor and measure how effective our campaigns are. We will work with other organisations where this benefits our service users.

6.2 Campaign Aims

Guide Dogs will consult existing and potential service users to make sure its campaigning and lobbying on access and mobility issues reflects their needs and concerns.



6.3 Reasoned Campaigning

We will always campaign in a reasoned and responsible way on behalf of the needs of blind and partially sighted people, for greater mobility and access and will avoid damaging Guide Dogs' reputation.

7. Relations with Suppliers

We aim to create mutually beneficial relationships with our suppliers, encouraging them to match our high standards in respect of product safety, ethical sourcing, working conditions, trading practices, health and safety, environmental protection and animal welfare. These standards will be applied to the selection of all our suppliers. We will select our suppliers based on best value and professional relationships, taking account of the merit of their commercial offering.

7.1 Fair and Honest Treatment

Guide Dogs will treat all its suppliers and subcontractors fairly and honestly and in line with our agreed terms and conditions of business.

7.2 Gifts and Gratuities

Our workers and volunteers must not offer or receive a gift, gratuity or hospitality that could be construed as a bribe, cause undue influence or contravene Guide Dogs' hospitality guidelines.

7.3 Facilitation Payments

By law Guide Dogs is not allowed to make or receive facilitation payments.



7.4 Contracts for Services

We will make sure all supplier contracts entered into by Guide Dogs and its Trading Company are properly structured to make sure the services provided are as set out in the contract.

7.5 Preferred Suppliers

All things being equal, Guide Dogs and its Trading Companies will give preference to suppliers that have ISO 9001 accreditation.

7.6 Confidentiality of Data

We will observe all UK legislative requirements concerning information about Guide Dogs, its Trading Companies and its suppliers and share it only as necessary with those who have a legitimate right and need to know.

7.7 Excluded Suppliers

We will not knowingly work with suppliers that could damage the reputation of Guide Dogs.

7.8 Animal Testing of Products

Guide Dogs and its Trading Company will give preference to suppliers that meet the principles as set out in this Code and do not use animals in the research and testing of their products. Any tests on animals must be consistent with those allowed in nutritional or medical studies on people.

7.9 Product Safety

Guide Dogs and its Trading Company will require all suppliers to provide documentary proof that their products have met all current UK and European safety and recycling legislation.



8. Relations with local communities

We recognise it is important to understand the make up of the communities we work in and from where its clients, workers or volunteers are drawn. We consult members of these communities, respond to their needs wherever possible and aim to ensure that our workforce reflects (wherever possible) the needs of the communities they serve.

8.1 Community Engagement

In all our work, Guide Dogs tries to take into account and respond to the legitimate concerns of the communities we work in and contribute to their wellbeing in a way that is appropriate to our expertise and charitable aims.

9. Relations with Peer and Partner Organisations

Guide Dogs is an independent organisation, committed to delivering high quality guide dog, rehabilitation and mobility services that meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people. We will do everything we can to make sure we apply our Code of Business Conduct in all dealings with other organisations.

9.1 Working with Peer and Partner Organisations

Guide Dogs will continue working with peer disability and partner organisations for the benefit of blind and partially sighted people in line with our charitable objectives.

9.2 Cost Recovery

Guide Dogs will always aim to recover the full cost of any services provided to central and local government and commercial organisations.



9.3 Research

We share a commitment with a number of other charities and health organisations to the preservation of sight. We invest, as appropriate, in vital research commissioned in open competition, into the causes, incidence and treatment of eye diseases and conditions.

10. Relations with the General Public and the Media

In all our dealings with the general public and the media we will be open and honest, in line with our values, our aims and the needs of people associated with us. We will endeavour to enter into a two-way dialogue to ensure we learn as well as communicate.

10.1 Present a Positive Image

In all its communications and campaigns Guide Dogs will always present a constructive and realistic image to the general public of the needs and achievements of guide dog owners and blind and partially sighted people.

10.2 Providing a Regular Flow of Information

We will supply regular, up to date information on our activities to the general public and to highlight our successes.

11. Reducing Environmental Impact

Guide Dogs is committed to reducing the harmful effects of our operations on the natural environment and its finite resources, taking into account the needs of the organisation and the requirement to run it efficiently.



11.1 Compliance with Environmental Legislation

Guide Dogs will fully comply with all relevant environmental legislation in its operations.

11.2 Conserving Resources

We will encourage workers and volunteers to carry out their work in line with the best environmental practices and not to waste resources and recycle whenever possible and sensible.

11.3 Energy Efficiency

Guide Dogs will work to minimise the energy consumption and environmental impact of the transport we use and in the buildings we use incorporating best practice in the design of future premises. Energy efficiency will be one of the key selection criteria when choosing rented accommodation and vehicles.

12. Management Reporting and Internal Controls

Guide Dogs, its trustees and workers will run the organisation smoothly and efficiently in compliance with relevant legislation and best governance practices.

12.1 Reporting Best Practice

We will record all business transactions accurately and openly in line with best practice in the sector.



12.2 Internal Controls

Strong control systems are an essential part of our structure. They make sure we are managed effectively and that we report results accurately.

12.3 Independent Auditing and Risk Management Processes

An independent Internal Audit function monitors and reports to the trustees of Guide Dogs on the effectiveness of internal controls and on the ongoing risk management process for identifying, evaluating and managing significant business risk.

13. Application and Compliance

The Code of Business Conduct relates to all Guide Dogs policies. It serves as a governance document and will form the guiding principles for all Guide Dogs operating policies.

13.1 Breaches of the Code of Business Conduct

This Code of Business Conduct applies to all trustees, workers, volunteers and stakeholders outside our organisation. Failing to follow this Code, or breaking the Code, may result in disciplinary action, including, where appropriate, being dismissed or suspended and ending services or contracts.

13.2 ‘Whistle blowing’

Guide Dogs expect trustees, workers, volunteers and stakeholders outside our organisation to bring to the prompt attention of trustees and management any suspected or actual breaches of the Code of Business Conduct. The procedure to do this is located on the Guide Dogs website with access via internet or intranet.