



Guide Dogs glossary

Introduction

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What's this glossary for?

The language we use to describe ourselves, our services and our people has an instant impact on how people feel about us and whether they want to connect with us.

We know that in the past, some of the language we've used can come across as too technical or clinical. Some of our volunteer titles haven't changed in decades and no longer reflect the essential role they play in helping our dogs become confident, secure guide dogs.

That's why we've developed this new glossary of terms - to make sure we're all using the same warm, approachable and accessible language.

We've carefully considered each name and description, using our own expert insights and looking to our partner organisations at home and abroad to develop the language. Where appropriate we've also tested the language with groups of staff, service users and volunteers.

This glossary covers:

- Our services
- The people we support – our partnerships
- Our dogs
- The volunteers who care for our dogs
- Our staff – canine roles
- Our locations

Our services

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Information and advice

Browse information online

Visit [guidedogs.org.uk](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk) for answers and advice about living with sight loss.

Speak to an expert

Call our Guide Dogs Information Line on **0800 781 1444** to speak to an expert who can provide information and advice for yourself, your child or a family member.

Information and advice for adults:

- Finding the right services for you
- Care and welfare advice for your Guide Dogs puppy or dog
- Advice on guide dog access refusals

Information and advice for children and families:

- Family support
- Technology and sensory equipment
- Education support

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Help for adults

Guide dogs

Our guide dogs give people with sight loss the confidence to get out and about safely. They provide life-changing practical support every single day.

Companion dogs

Our companion dogs bring a canine friend into the lives of adults with sight loss, improving their health and wellbeing, and reducing feelings of isolation.

My Sighted Guide

Our sighted guiding service connects people with a trained, local volunteer to get out and do more of the things they like. We can also provide sighted guiding training for family and friends.

My Life Skills

Our online and face-to-face training can teach practical, easy-to-use tips to adapt to sight loss.

This service is currently
under development.

Help for children and families

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Guide dogs

Our guide dogs give young people with sight loss the confidence to get out and about safely. There is no minimum age for a guide dog partnership.

Buddy dogs

Our buddy dogs help children and young people build confidence in themselves and trust in their surroundings. These dogs can have a hugely positive effect on the whole family's wellbeing.

My Time to Play

These fun and supportive online and face-to-face sessions help children aged 0-4 develop through play, and parents can also connect with other families.

My Life Skills

We offer practical training that will build confidence and provide children with invaluable skills for life.

CustomEyes Books

We produce books in large print, tailor-made to suit each child's eye condition.

Family Events

Our UK-wide programme of activity days provides the opportunity for children and parents to meet other families and access advice from our specialist team.

Also known as
habilitation.

The people we support

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Canine services

Guide dog partner or guide dog partnership or guide dog owner

Someone who has been partnered with a guide dog to help them get out and about, and live the life they choose.

Buddy dog partner or buddy dog partnership or buddy dog family

A child and their family who have been partnered with one of our buddy dogs to give them companionship, confidence and help build their physical and emotional wellbeing.

Companion dog partner or companion dog partnership

Someone who doesn't quite need the level of support a guide dog provides and has instead been partnered with one of our companion dogs, to give companionship and confidence, and help build their physical and emotional wellbeing.

Ambassador partner or ambassador partnership

Our ambassador partners accompany our ambassador dogs out and about at events and public engagements. Together, they raise funds and awareness of our work, showing how we help those affected by sight loss and allowing us to reach more people.

Skills, information and support services

My Sighted Guide partnership

Someone who is partnered with one of our trained sighted guide volunteers.

We prefer language that describes people as working in partnership with our dogs. But we also understand the term 'owner' is well recognised and understood.

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Our dogs

All the dogs we're responsible for, from our puppies to our retired dogs.

Our dogs in partnership

All our dogs who support someone with sight loss, either as guide dog, buddy dog or companion dog partnerships.

Our guide dogs

Guide dogs give people with sight loss the confidence to get out and about safely. Whether it's getting to work, to a regular exercise class or just down to the shops and back, our guide dogs provide life-changing practical support every single day.

Our buddy dogs

Buddy dogs bring a canine friend into the lives of children with sight loss. By helping them build confidence in themselves and trust in their surroundings, these well-trained dogs have a hugely positive effect on a child and their family's wellbeing.

Our companion dogs

Companion dogs bring a canine friend into the lives of adults living with sight loss, improving health and wellbeing, and reducing isolation. We've seen how this support can help people change their lives – building new relationships and feeling more confident in themselves.

Our ambassador dogs

Ambassador dogs represent our cause and help volunteers to tell our stories. As part of the Guide Dogs family they help raise funds, build awareness of our work, and reach more supporters and beneficiaries.

Terms we want to avoid:
Stock, units, herd, inventory.

When talking about our
guide dogs, buddy dogs or
companion dogs we always
use lower case. Upper
case is used for our charity
name, Guide Dogs.

The collective name
for buddy dogs and
companion dogs is 'our
companion dogs'.

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Our guide dog mums and dads

Guide dog mums and dads produce the next generation of our life-changing puppies. These special dogs are partnered with volunteers who care for them and make sure they are always in top health and condition for their vital role.

Our puppies

Until they're around 18-months-old, our puppies are placed with a volunteer puppy raiser who will introduce them to lots of early experiences to build their skills and confidence – and prepare them for guide dog training.

Our dogs in training

No longer puppies but not yet ready to go into partnership, these dogs are working with our trainers to learn all the skills and experiences they need to become life-changing guide dogs.

Our guide dog mums

Guide dog mums are handpicked because they have a great temperament and all the right characteristics to produce the next generation of guide dog puppies.

Our guide dog dads

Guide dog dads are handpicked because they have a great temperament and all the right characteristics to produce the next generation of guide dog puppies.

We want to avoid language that is too clinical, such as breeding stock, brood bitch or stud dog. For professional audiences the terms breeding dogs, brood or stud may be more appropriate.

Terms to avoid: Puppies at walk, puppy in training.

Our puppy jackets will still say 'Puppy in training' as this can help with access to public places.

The term 'brood' may be more suitable for a professional audience.

The term 'stud' may be more suitable for a professional audience.

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Career change or new career path

Most of our puppies go on to become guide dogs, but some dogs are better suited to one of our other important partnerships or may be selected as one of our guide dog mums and dads. Others are specially selected to work with our guide dog partner organisations abroad or with other working dog organisations in the UK.

Retired dogs

When our dogs reach retirement age, they've earned a rest. Where possible our retired dogs stay with their partnership family, or we find another loving home. We continue to support the health and welfare of all our dogs, long after retirement.

Rehomed dogs

Our rehomed dogs are adopted into loving homes with carefully selected members of the public. Whether these are young dogs who aren't suited for a career change or older dogs reaching retirement age, they will become a well-loved member of their new family.

Terms to avoid: Withdrawn from training, failed, unsuccessful.

We can use the terms rehomed and adopted interchangeably, however 'Rehoming' remains as the name of the service.

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Canine volunteer roles

Puppy raiser

Our puppy raisers play a vital role in the early development and education of our dogs, providing a loving home as they grow towards the next stage of their training.

Fosterer or foster family

Our guide dog foster families provide a home for our dogs and help develop their social skills while they're in training or in need of special care.

Breeding dog holder

Our breeding dog holders provide a home for one of our guide dog mums and support her during birth and helping care for her puppies during their first few weeks of life.

Breeding dog holder

Our breeding dog holders provide care and a home for one of our guide dog dads.

Dog Wellbeing Volunteer

These volunteers provide day-to-day care for our dogs whilst they are housed at one of our sites, supporting their overall wellbeing whilst they are on down time from training activities.

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Puppy Development Advisor

Our puppy development advisors provide expert advice and practical support to our puppy raiser volunteers so we can raise well-behaved and confident young dogs ready to start guide dog training.

Previously known as:
Puppy Training Supervisor

Breeding Dog Advisor

Our breeding dog advisors provide expert advice and practical support to the volunteers who care for our guide dog mums and dads and our puppies through their first eight weeks.

Previously known as:
Brood Bitch Supervisor
and Stud dog supervisor.

Guide Dog Mobility Specialist (GDMS)

Our guide dog mobility specialists create life-changing partnerships between our dogs and someone with sight loss and provide life-time support and advice.

Previously known as:
Guide Dog Mobility Instructor.

Guide Dog Trainer (GDT)

Our guide dog trainers provide expert training for our dogs so they are ready for a partnership with someone with sight loss.

Canine Assisted Partnership Specialist (CAPS)

Our canine assisted partnership specialists provide expert advice and support to our companion dog and buddy dog partnerships.

Rehoming Officer

Our rehoming officers make sure our dogs who aren't suited for a career change, or our older dogs reaching retirement age, are adopted into loving homes.

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Training and Behaviour Advisor

Our training and behaviour advisors provides expert training and behaviour advice and practical support to our partnerships, staff and volunteers.

Training and Behaviour Consultant

Our training and behaviour consultants provide professional and expert knowledge across the organisation on dog welfare, puppy socialisation, training and the human-canine relationships.

Dog Health and Wellbeing Specialist

Our dog and health wellbeing specialists provide professional and expert support and advice to our partnerships, volunteers and staff to improve our dogs' health and wellbeing.

Dog Health and Wellbeing Technician

Our dog health and wellbeing technicians provide expert day-to-day health and wellbeing care for our dogs whilst they are housed at one of our sites.

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UK offices

Guide Dogs UK Centre

Our Central Office is located just outside of Reading, in a village called Burghfield. Many of our central teams are located from this office, including our People Services, Finance, Fundraising and Marketing teams.

National Breeding Centre

The National Breeding Centre is our flagship centre for visitors and supporters. The centre integrates breeding and training, and our workshop where the iconic guide dog harness and leads are made.

Regional Centres

Regional centres

Our regional centres are welcoming spaces for supporters, volunteers and paying members of the public. Each centre has the capacity to train the number of dogs required for the region, with indoor training areas and a modern dog day care facilities.

- Guide Dogs Regional Centre Scotland
- Guide Dogs Regional Centre North West
- Guide Dogs Regional Centre North East
- Guide Dogs Regional Centre South East
- Guide Dogs Regional Centre South West
- Guide Dogs Regional Centre Midlands

Devolved centres

- Guide Dogs Northern Ireland
- Guide Dogs Cymru

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Community Teams

Community teams

Our community teams are located near the regional centre and extend our reach into communities. These teams have outdoor and indoor training space, but have a greater focus on matching guide dog partnerships rather than dog training.

- Guide Dogs Edinburgh
- Guide Dogs Glasgow
- Guide Dogs Liverpool
- Guide Dogs Shrewsbury
- Guide Dogs Hull
- Guide Dogs Newcastle
- Guide Dogs Maidstone
- Guide Dogs London
- Guide Dogs Welwyn
- Guide Dogs Southampton
- Guide Dogs Exeter
- Guide Dogs Reading
- Guide Dogs Birmingham
- Guide Dogs Nottingham

Community outreach

Our community outreach sites extend the reach of our community teams even further so we can support our services users in their local community.

- Guide Dogs Sheffield
- Guide Dogs Brighton

Contact

If you have any questions about this glossary or need help and advice, please contact the Content Team at ContentTeam@guidedogs.org.uk.