



Becoming a Life Changer

- How to write or change your Will
- How gifts in Wills change lives
- Why we need your help

Free
Will
Advice
Inside



“

Thanks to a gift
in a Will, Pippa
changed my life.

”

Lynette and Pippa

Lynette was diagnosed with Nystagmus, a serious eye condition, at birth. When she was 19 and at university, her sight suddenly deteriorated. As a result, she was forced to move back home. Depending on friends and family to help her get around, she lost all her confidence. “I was treating each day as if it were a chore”, says Lynette. “I had no dreams or goals.”

“That all changed when I met Pippa. She is more than my guide dog, she is my best friend. With Pippa by my side I know I can do anything. Travelling the country in a job I love, spending time with family because I want to rather than I need to. I’m so grateful to those I’ve never met who chose to help me.”

Lynette now has her life back thanks to Pippa, and you could do the same for someone else with sight loss by leaving a gift to Guide Dogs in your Will.

Any questions? We’re happy to answer them.

A gift of any size can change someone's life.

In this booklet hopefully you'll be inspired by the work a gift in your Will could support, and the life-changing impact it will have. People who are blind or partially sighted like Lynette can feel trapped in their own homes, often depending on friends or family as guides.

Every six minutes in the UK, one more person loses their sight.

That's why Guide Dogs aims to continue increasing the number of guide dog partnerships we create, year on year.

And why gifts in Wills are so vital in helping us achieve this ambitious target. You can make a real difference to those living with sight loss, while still making sure your family and loved ones are taken care of first.



Call our team on freephone **0800 953 0113**
or visit **[guidedogs.org.uk/lifechangers](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/lifechangers)**

A legacy to be proud of

The need for our services is growing. There are 2 million people living with sight loss in the UK and this number is set to double by 2050. By including a gift to Guide Dogs in your Will you can leave a legacy to be proud of.

In just one year we are able to help thousands of people with our range of services. The number of people who need our help will only increase and with your support we can ensure that Guide Dogs can continue to provide these vital services long into the future.



We supported

3,789

guide dog and buddy
dog partnerships.

We produced
6,779
custom large print
books enabling
children with sight loss
to enjoy reading just
like their friends.



We delivered
sighted guide
training to

5,934

people.



We supported
families

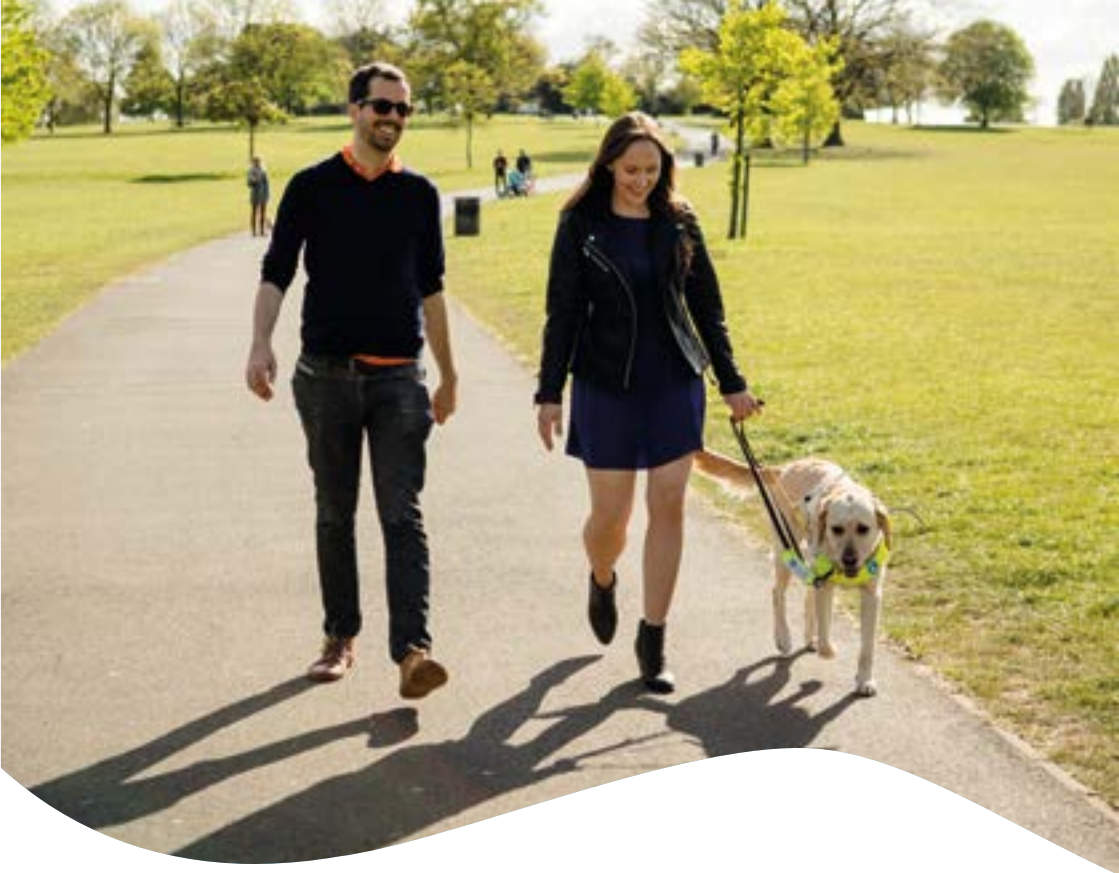
15,383

times through our
services for children
and young people.

We provided
6,177
training sessions
on tech, travel and
life skills delivered
by our Vision
Rehabilitation
Specialists.



Based on 2023 figures.



Training a guide dog. Where does your money go?

Behind the scenes, a lot of time and expertise goes into turning an adorable puppy into a fully qualified guide dog – from our canine research and world-class breeding programme to an incredibly skilled matching process and intensive training.

It takes three years to train a specialised Mobility Instructor too, so they have all the knowledge they need to work with every kind of guide dog partnership.

We can only breed, train and support our life-changing guide dogs now and in the future, thanks to the support of people like you. In fact, nearly two out of every three guide dog partnerships are made possible by gifts in Wills.

Every part of a guide dog's journey depends on support like yours

Are guide dogs born or made?
It's a bit of both. Everything
starts at our National Centre
in Warwickshire, where
world-class research helps
make sure the puppies being
bred have the best possible
health and personality traits
to become incredible life-
changers. With over 1,000
puppies born each year, that's
a lot of mouths to feed, paws to
train and promises to keep.

Visit the National Centre
and see our puppies socialise,
grow and learn.

Email

NBCvisitors@guidedogs.org.uk
or call 0345 143 0216.



1 Life begins at home

After being carefully
chosen, one of our 'guide
dog mums' gives birth to
her litter of pups in a
volunteer's home or at
our National Centre.

Then at around seven
weeks old, all the puppies
will come into the centre
for health checks,
microchipping and lots
of specialist playtime to
assess their temperament.

Any questions? We're happy to answer them.

2 Learning to walk

From around six to eight weeks old, the puppies will live with one of our amazing volunteer puppy raisers. They will teach them basic social skills and take them to busy places like shopping centres and on public transport.

It takes time but it's the only way to help them become familiar with the big wide world.



“

It's been so rewarding. I've helped turn a little bundle of fluff into a confident dog ready to move on to the next stage.

”

Elizabeth, puppy raiser

3 Starting school

At around 14 months, a puppy heads to one of Guide Dogs' centres where they go through a comprehensive curriculum, learning basic guiding skills like stopping at kerbs and avoiding obstacles. Through these stages of training, our dogs evolve into confident and capable companions, ready to be partnered with someone with a vision impairment, usually when they're around two years of age.



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4 Finding the perfect partner

A childhood condition meant Kimberley had been left with just 8% of her sight in one eye. At school, she became withdrawn. “Classroom bullies shattered my confidence,” she explains, “I felt they had robbed me of my dream of studying for an art degree.” The turning point came when Kimberley was matched with her guide dog, Tami. Since then, Tami’s loyalty, skill and support have been instrumental in helping transform Kimberley into the self-assured and award-winning illustrator she is today.

But behind the joy and emotion of success stories like this, there’s a lot of work to ensure a perfect match. Towards the end of training, a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor starts considering the personality, lifestyle and age of the potential owner. Each guide dog partnership is supported with regular visits to make sure they get off to the best possible start.

“

The day I heard I was matched with Tami was the most magical of my life.

”

Kimberley and Tami

5 Rehoming after retirement

Most guide dogs retire at around ten years old, although it depends on the individual partnership. Many stay with their owner, family or friends, and some even stay with a puppy raiser. But if that's not possible, we will rehome them with new owners, where they can enjoy a well-earned rest.



6 Opening up the world for a new generation

Your legacy will support people of any age with sight loss, including children. 80% of a child's learning takes place using their vision. So we work with children, young people, and their families, to tackle the challenges of sight loss. We offer emotional support, advice on technology and education, mobility and life skills training, as well as large print books.

The children we help gain confidence and independence, and we're here for them every step of the way.



Supporting families of children with sight loss – Caitlin's story

Family Support is a crucial service we provide which focuses on delivering practical and emotional support, as well as advice and information, to families or carers of children with a vision impairment.

One inspiring young person who has been assisted by Family Support is Caitlin. Caitlin is no ordinary 15-year-old. Her two passions in life are music and judo – she's performed her own songs to hundreds of people, and been invited to train with the British judo visually impaired team as part of the Para-Potential Programme.

Caitlin also has a severe vision impairment. Growing up with sight loss hasn't been easy and starting school was particularly challenging.

However, Guide Dogs has supported Caitlin from the age of five, starting with the use of mental mapping (a technique to visualise and geographically navigate an environment) to find her way around school, and eventually progressing to long cane training.

Caitlin won gold at the first national visually impaired judo competition in London in 2018

Any questions? We're happy to answer them.

and, one day, hopes to compete at a Paralympic Games.

Despite this, as she reached her teenage years, she needed extra support to develop her independence. She was assisted by Guide Dogs Habilitation Specialist, Emma. Habilitation Specialists teach vital skills to enhance confidence and increase independence.

Emma explains: "When I first met Caitlin she was self-conscious about using her cane. She avoided going to busy places, going out in the dark, and meeting up with friends. So I helped her come to terms with her sight loss and realise she can still do the things other teenagers do."

Emma and Caitlin practise cane training, as well as travelling into town to meet friends. They also work on independent living skills such as baking and washing up. Caitlin says: "I definitely feel more confident since I started working with Emma. I wouldn't have gone out at night if it wasn't for her." Claire agrees: "Caitlin is doing normal teen stuff, which I don't think would have happened otherwise."

With a gift in your Will, we can ensure that we will always be here for people like Caitlin and her family.

“It wasn't until Guide Dogs became involved with Caitlin that we realised how much more they could offer than just the guide dog. They really have been a lifeline.”

Claire, Caitlin's mum



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A lifetime of freedom

A guide dog owner may have as many as eight guide dogs throughout their lifetime. Every gift, no matter what the amount, is incredibly important and appreciated – even a small percentage of your estate, for example, could make a huge difference. You'll be leaving a legacy of freedom and independence for people like Elizabeth.



Elizabeth has been a guide dog owner for 50 years, and says she can't imagine life without a guide dog. She was just seven years old when she lost her sight due to a brain tumour. As you can imagine, it was an incredibly difficult time for her and her family, but Elizabeth was very determined.

For a while she was happy getting around with her white cane, but after coming home with bruises after an incredibly scary situation where she fell into a hole by some roadworks, Elizabeth decided she needed extra support. She applied for a guide dog and was matched with her lovely black Labrador, Cleo, who gave her so much more confidence.

"Having a guide dog changed my life. Just having that feeling of freedom that I could go where I wanted without worrying about falling down a kerb."

Cleo was there for Elizabeth when she met her husband – and of course was there for the wedding!

Elizabeth and Scooby

Elizabeth has had seven guide dogs over the years, and says even though they had their own unique personalities, they all helped her to make the most of life's milestones.

“

My second guide dog, Wanda, was there for me when my children were little. It's amazing what she made possible – I remember going everywhere with a toddler in one hand, a baby in the sling, and Wanda on the other side, guiding us all along.

”

Elizabeth



Elizabeth and her first dog, Cleo



Elsa



Fergus



Elizabeth and Wanda



Elizabeth with her husband Ian



How do you leave a gift in your Will?

You will find a simple guide placed within this pack giving you more details about leaving a gift in your Will. It's full of practical advice and answers to frequently asked questions. You can also find out how to write or amend your Will without it costing you anything in legal fees. Guide Dogs is part of the National Free Wills Network which gives you the opportunity to have a simple Will written or updated for free by a solicitor in your local area.

You can find out more by calling us on freephone **0800 953 0113** or by visiting **[guidedogs.org.uk/freewills](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/freewills)**

Thank you

If you have any questions about leaving a gift in your Will, or want to know more about how these gifts change the lives of people with sight loss, we're always happy to chat. Just give us a call or come and meet us – we'd love to show you the difference gifts in Wills make throughout the UK.

Tel: **0800 953 0113**

Email: **giftsinwills@guidedogs.org.uk**

Visit: **guidedogs.org.uk/lifechangers**



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