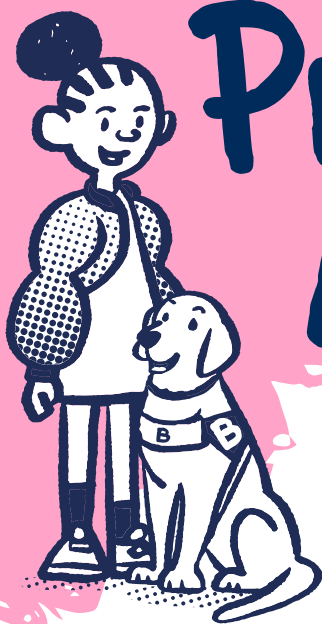


Active Citizenship: Project Access



Aims

To explore the community issue and campaign work on guide dog access refusals. Learners will develop understanding of where assistance dogs, including guide dogs, are allowed; the impact of access refusals; and how the local community can make guide dog owners feel welcome, including knowing how to behave around working dogs.

Outline

- Starter – discussion and photo sorting
- Starter – [Open Doors video](#)
- Group activity – busting the excuses
- Group activity – raising awareness
- Individual activity – in the community
- To finish – recall and discussion



Starter: what's the issue?

Discuss – what do you know about guide dogs?

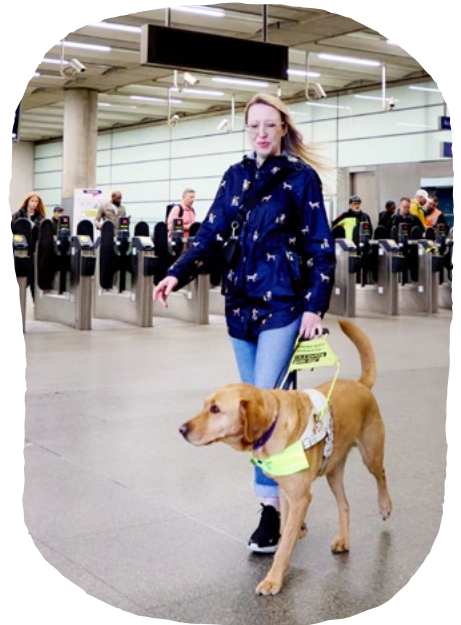


You may want to use some of our other learning resources to ensure everyone is clear on the role of a guide dog, the special two-year intensive training they have that distinguishes them from a pet dog, and the various skills guide dogs use to help people with sight loss.



Access refusals don't just happen to guide dogs. There are 14 members of Assistance Dog UK, alongside Guide Dogs, including Hearing Dogs and Medical Detection Dogs. Ask: Has anyone seen other

assistance dogs besides guide dogs? More information on these dogs is available at www.assistedogs.org.uk



Activity



Print resource sheet for each group



Group activity



Group discuss and order

Where can guide dogs go?

Learners should work together in small groups to sort the photos from the 'Where can guide dogs go?' resource sheet, collectively agreeing for each location whether this is somewhere where guide dogs can or cannot go. Ask groups to explain their decisions.

Reveal that by law, apart from some very limited exemptions, guide dogs – and other assistance dogs – can actually go anywhere that's open to the public because they are vital in helping their owner to be independent. However, guide dog owners are still frequently told they can't go into a place or access a service because they have their guide dog with them.





Nearly 9 out of 10 guide dog owners have been told they can't go into a place like a restaurant, taxi or shop, because they have their guide dog with them.

Discuss – what if it happened to you?



How would you feel if you were walking into a shop with your friends and the shop worker shouted that you couldn't come in? Angry? Upset? Scared to go out again? How would it affect your decisions next time?

Hear about a real experience

Play the video where Bhavini shares her experiences of shopping with her guide dog Colin. Ask learners to discuss Bhavini's experiences and the ways in which shop workers made it a positive or negative experience for her.



What can we do?

Guide Dogs campaigns against access refusals by asking decision makers to strengthen the law, but also by helping the general public to understand the importance of allowing entry to guide dogs, raising awareness about refusals, and providing information to business owners about how to make guide dog owners feel welcome. Learners today are going to help the campaign by completing activities on these latter three aspects. If you wish for more background information on the campaign, please access this link: [guidedogs.org.uk/opendoors](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/opendoors)



Activity 1



Print resource sheet for each group



Group activity



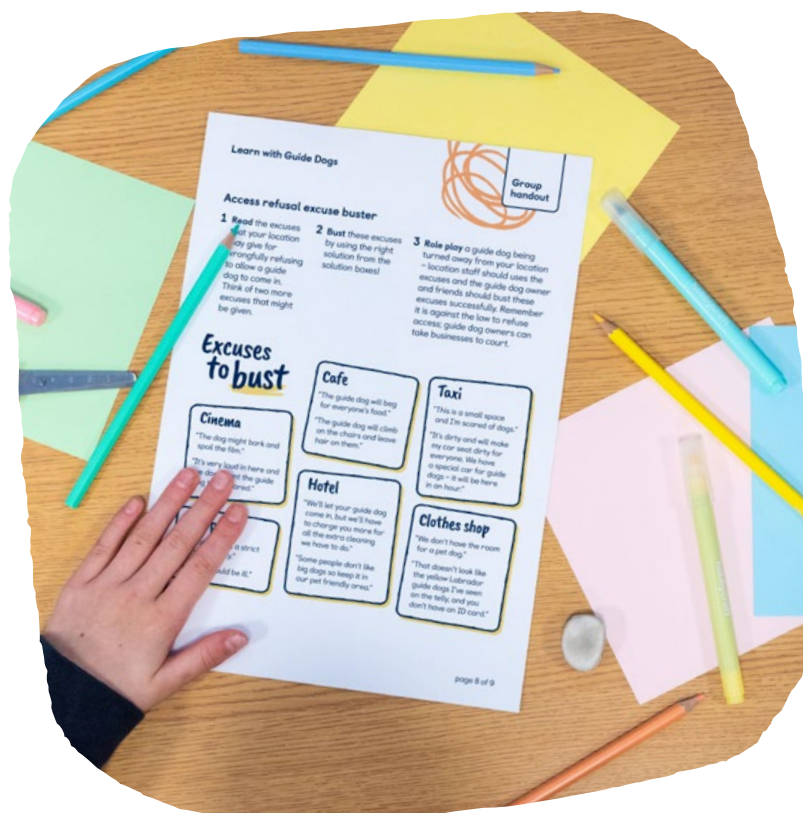
Group discussion



Access refusal excuse buster

Split learners into small groups and allocate each group a location from the following: cafe, taxi, clothes shop, aeroplane, cinema, and hotel. Groups should use the 'Access refusal excuse buster' resource sheet as a prompt to help them think of excuses that each location may give for wrongfully refusing to allow a guide dog access.

Solutions on the resource sheet can then be used to bust the excuse. Groups then role play an access refusal at their location, with the guide dog owner successfully arguing against the excuses given. The whole group can discuss their reactions to this role play.



Activity 2



Group
activity



Share
presentation



Raise awareness

Groups can create a presentation about the access refusal issue – this might be a PowerPoint, a leaflet or simply a prepared talk.

The presentation should include:

- information about the importance of guide dogs
- the law around assistance dog access to public places
- locations where guide dog owners may experience access refusals
- busted excuses from Activity 1
- why it is important that other people understand these problems facing guide dog owners
- the most important thing they have learned on this issue. What key piece of information do learners want others to know about this issue?

Share these presentations virtually or face-to-face in assembly / at other youth groups' sessions / with family.



Activity 3



Group discussion



Individual activity



Paper and pen each

Citizen action

Discuss - how could we improve this issue for people with sight loss in your local community?



What creative ideas do learners have on how local businesses could make guide dog owners feel welcome?

Remind them of the things that Bhavini shared in the video that made her shopping experience a positive one. Some suggestions may be an information poster for staff break rooms or a member of staff specially trained to help guide dog owners.

Ask learners to write a letter or a leaflet to inform and persuade local business owners of an action they can take to improve experiences for guide dog owners.



To finish

Discuss – what are some other ways we could help people with guide dogs when we see them out and about?



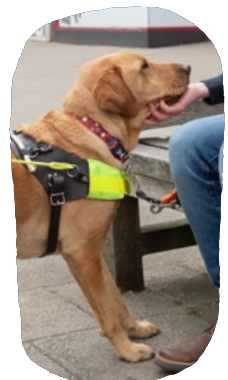
Should we pet guide dogs? Offer them treats? Although guide dogs are highly trained, they are still dogs and not 100% perfect, so it's important that all members of the community support them to do their vital job.

Five key things to remember about our behaviour around guide dogs:

- 1 Don't feed, pet, play with, or talk to a working dog.
- 2 Do keep your own pets away from a guide dog.
- 3 Do give way to a guide dog partnership and let them have plenty of room.
- 4 Don't interfere with the guide dog owner giving commands.
- 5 Do speak to the guide dog owner and not the guide dog.



You can identify a qualified guide dog as they wear a white harness, dogs in training wear a brown harness and our puppies wear a blue coat. All feature our logo. However, not all assistance dogs wear harnesses and their owners don't have to carry ID.



Where can guide dogs go?

Can guide dogs go into these places? As a group, sort them into two piles – yes or no.

Why have you decided that guide dogs can or cannot go into that location?



Access refusal excuse buster

- 1 Read** the excuses that your location may give for wrongfully refusing to allow a guide dog to come in. Think of two more excuses that might be given.
- 2 Bust** these excuses by using the right solution from the solution boxes!
- 3 Role play** a guide dog being turned away from your location – location staff should use the excuses and the guide dog owner and friends should bust these excuses successfully. Remember it is against the law to refuse access; guide dog owners can take businesses to court.

Excuses to bust

Cinema

"The dog might bark and spoil the film."

"It's very loud in here and we don't want the guide dog to be scared."

Aeroplane

"The airline has a strict 'no pets' policy."

"Your dog could be ill."

Cafe

"The guide dog will beg for everyone's food."

"The guide dog will climb on the chairs and leave hair on them."

Hotel

"We'll let your guide dog come in, but we'll have to charge you more for all the extra cleaning we have to do."

"Some people don't like big dogs so keep it in our pet friendly area."

Taxi

"This is a small space and I'm scared of dogs."

"It's dirty and will make my car seat dirty for everyone. We have a special car for guide dogs – it will be here in an hour."

Clothes shop

"We don't have the room for a pet dog."

"That doesn't look like the yellow Labrador guide dogs I've seen on the telly, and you don't have an ID card."

Solutions

Guide dogs are trained to sit at their owner's feet or under their legs, the table or the chair.

Guide dogs are very highly trained and from being a puppy, they are introduced to all sorts of environments and noises.

Not all guide dogs are Labradors. Some can be German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, or Labradoodles. Guide dog owners don't have to carry ID with them.

Guide dog owners have to maintain extremely high standards of grooming for their dogs.

It is against the law to refuse entry to a guide dog just because you don't like dogs or are frightened of them.

Guide dogs are not pets. They work to support people with disabilities and may be vital to them being independent.

You are not allowed to add on extra charges for a guide dog or restrict them to areas.

Guide dogs are trained not to climb on furniture or to bother other people.

Guide dogs are regularly checked by vets.

