



# Guide Dogs

## By My Side

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### The future direction and strategy

#### Overview

#### 2018 - 2023

A charity registered in England and Wales (209617) and Scotland (SC038979). 9893 06/18

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## Introduction

Guide Dogs exists to provide life-changing services to the 360,000 people who are registered blind or partially sighted, and the two million people in the UK living with sight loss.

We've been on this journey since our first guide dog partnerships were formed in 1931. In recent years, we have expanded our services beyond our dogs to help thousands more people with different needs lead confident, independent and fulfilling lives.

But we know we must do more to help the increasing number of people living with sight loss, and those who love and care for them.



## Developing our strategy

We have spent the last 12 months developing our strategy for the next five years, looking at how best we can reach and support thousands more people living with sight loss.

We consulted widely – seeking input and opinions of many of our stakeholders - Trustees, service users and their families; senior management and volunteer representatives; other sight loss charities; partner organisations and public bodies. And we conducted research to validate our thinking and make informed recommendations.

Our consultations culminated in 32 engagement sessions in May 2018, held at 10 different Guide Dogs' locations, engaging with nearly 1,000 staff and volunteer representatives, where the Executive Directors presented our outline strategy 2018 – 2023.

We received many constructive comments and ideas from attendees, along with requests for more information and detail, but overall, the feedback from everyone was overwhelmingly positive.

The next pages summarise our strategy for the next five years.

## The problems we are here to solve

Despite the devastation caused by sight loss, 70% of adults receive no support within the first 12 months of diagnosis, and are likely to encounter poor education, high unemployment, depression, loneliness and financial insecurity throughout their lifetime.

The rise in the UK's elderly population continues to impact social care. With shortages in funding, local authorities have prioritised the services they provide, leaving the third sector under great pressure to plug gaps.

Childhood sight loss is on the increase. There are around 35,000 children and young people living with a vision impairment in the UK. Some 80% of a child's learning takes place using vision, and every day they go without support can affect their development.

Yet we know that the public does not find our charitable cause as engaging as other causes; people fail to relate to the issue and consequently we need to work much harder to build emotional connections with the public.

The majority of individuals with sight loss are likely to encounter high unemployment, depression, loneliness and financial insecurity throughout their lifetime.

## Our ambition, purpose and values

**Our ambition:** a future where every person with sight loss has the confidence and support to live their lives to the full.

**Our purpose:** to provide life-changing services for the independence of people living with sight loss and their friends and family.

**Our values:** are rooted in the needs of people with sight loss. We aspire to be:

**Open**

We listen to and work with others, and we are inclusive in everything we do. We share our expertise and experience with anyone who can benefit from it and always seek to learn from others.

**Passionate**

We are positive and passionate about our life-changing work and will challenge everything that prevents people with sight loss living full and rewarding lives.

**Innovative**

We strive to continuously improve the services we provide and will never stop innovating. The only way we can change the world for even more people with sight loss is by embracing new technologies and new ways of working.



# Our future direction

Guide Dogs wants every blind or partially sighted person to have the confidence and support they need, but currently, we are only reaching a small percentage of those who could benefit from our services.

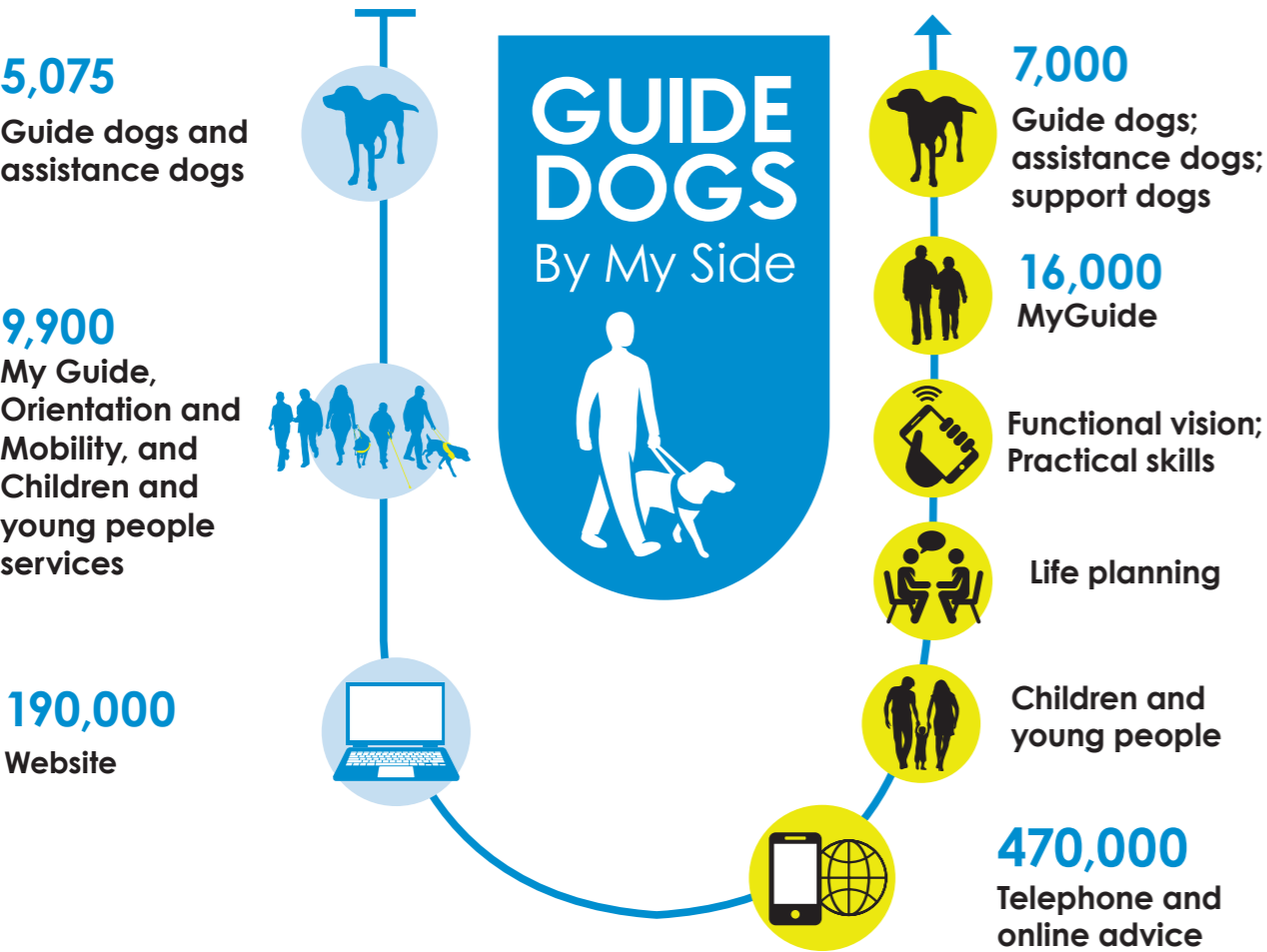
We aim to reach many more individuals and their families over the next five years, increasing the number of people we help from approximately 200,000 a year to half a million a year.

**Our purpose:** To provide more life-changing services for people with sight loss

From **c200,000 people**  
(15,000 face to face)



To **c500,000 people supported**  
(23,000 face to face)



# More services for our customers

We will be led by the needs of our customers and will deliver services and support tailored to their specific needs.

By introducing new services, embracing new technologies, digitising some of the ways we provide services and collaborating with other charities and organisations, we will be able to support thousands more people living with sight loss than we do today.

“Our wonderful dogs will remain at the heart of our organisation, and we will ensure we make the best use of each and every one of them by expanding the type of canine support we offer.”



# 1. Canine services

Our full-service **guide dogs** will continue to provide people with serious sight loss the means to get out and about safely and confidently.

Our **assistance dogs** will be trained to do a more limited number of tasks than a full-service guide dog, helping people to make the most of their remaining vision.

We will also provide **support dogs** to children and adults with vision impairment. Support dogs help build confidence and self-esteem but are not trained to perform any specific tasks as required by assistance dogs.

# 2. In-person services

Through a network of local teams, we will provide the following services:

- **Life planning** – we will work alongside individuals to develop a life plan tailored to their specific needs and help them understand what services they will need now and in the future.
- **Functional vision** – this service will help people with sight loss make the most of their remaining vision to increase confidence and wellbeing.
- **Practical skills** – our peer supported group training for adults will support people to understand what services could best assist them as well as introducing basic mobility skills, equipment and technology.
- **Family experience events** – will enable children and their families to meet, share experiences and have fun in a relaxed environment, while accessing expert advice from our children's specialists.

- **My Guide and My Active Guide** – our volunteer-led sighted guiding service introduces a trained volunteer to a person with sight loss to help them do the things they most need and enjoy such as going shopping, attending a class or a walk in the park.
- **Stepping out and Movement Matters** – our self-guiding services ensure that children and adults have the mobility and orientation skills that will last for life, giving them the confidence they need to navigate the world around them.

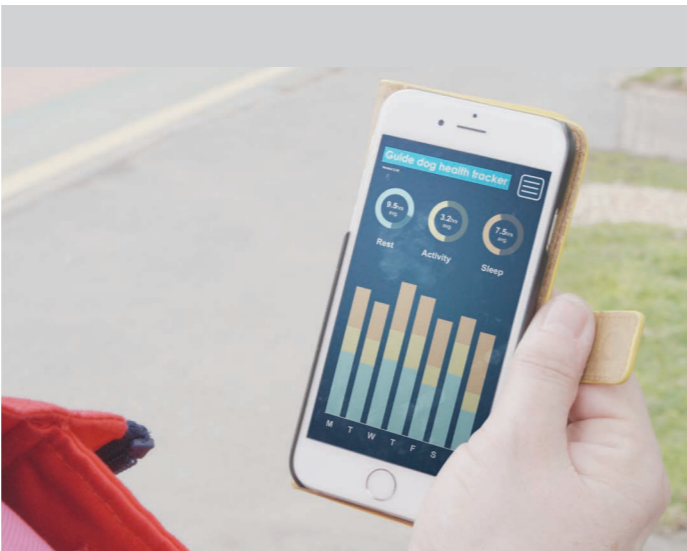
### 3. Online and telephone service

Through our online and telephone services, and where appropriate, in partnership with other organisations such as the RNIB Sight Loss Advice Service, we will reach significantly more people:

- **Basic information** – our online information service will be interactive and answer questions in real time, with online assessment tools, chatbots and 'how to' guides.
- **Technology skills** – we will help people access information and support on the most appropriate technology for their needs.
- **Advice** – we will provide access to our professionals who can provide expert advice to people with sight loss and their loved ones such as education advice from our qualified teachers for the visually impaired (QTVIs).
- **Support networks** – our listening service will help adults with sight loss, parents and family members connect with others in the sight loss community, enabling them to share experiences, skills and information.

### 4. Influencing and campaigning

- We will continue our effective influencing agenda, working with commercial organisations and public bodies to help shape an inclusive society.
- Our policy and campaigning work will continue to strive towards a world where people with sight loss can take a full and active role in everyday life and where streets, public spaces, services and buildings are designed with the needs of everyone in mind.



### The way ahead

To help us turn our ambitious strategy into reality and support approximately half a million people by 2023, we will:

#### 1. Develop and continuously improve our services for all our customers

We will continue to embrace reward-based training to ensure our dogs are trained using the very best methods available. We will also work in partnership with the sight loss, disability and aging sectors to better meet customer demand.

#### 2. Develop a UK-wide community-based network of support

We will establish regional hubs to support our community service centres, ensuring all our sites showcase our brand and reflect the values of our organisation. We will develop Guide Dogs' centres to be fit-for-purpose, so that we make the most of our current UK-wide footprint.

#### 3. Make sure our staff and volunteers feel supported and engaged

We will create a culture of teamwork and inclusivity. We will ensure all our staff and volunteers are equipped with the skills and behaviours required to deliver the strategy and ensure we have effective leaders and managers.

#### 4. Continue to diversify our fundraising

We will continue to grow our income through our legacy and Sponsor a Puppy programmes. We will devise new fundraising products to broaden our appeal, reflect our services and reduce risk.

#### 5. Invest in a more compelling and engaging Guide Dogs brand

We will develop the Guide Dogs brand to be more compelling and engaging among wider audiences and raise the awareness and support for the work we do. This will include increasing our relevance to people with sight loss and their families and friends, increasing understanding of the breadth of our services and demonstrating how Guide Dogs enables greater social belonging.

#### 6. Improve our performance by becoming more efficient and productive

We will ensure Guide Dogs is truly efficient, utilising technology to free up resources and improve the way we deliver our services. This will include the use of robust and centralised data to inform decision-making, ensuring that the organisation follows best practice in all it does and makes every pound count.

#### 7. Transform how we use technology in all that we do

We will use technology to become more efficient and effective. We will capitalise on technology to provide more life-changing services and transform the way we interact with, and deliver services to, our customers.

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## By My Side

We know that by changing the way we work, becoming ever more diverse, embracing new technologies and collaborating with other forward-thinking organisations, we can significantly increase the number of people we support.

With Guide Dogs by their side, every person with sight loss should have the confidence and support they need to live their life to the full.

[www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

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