



**Guide
Dogs**



One Voice

September 2024

Key messages for staff and volunteers

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Who we are and why we exist



We are Guide Dogs. And we're here to help people with sight loss live the life they choose.

Children and adults. Friends and family. Whoever you are, our expert staff, volunteers and life-changing dogs are here to help you:

Live actively. Our people and dogs can help you get out and about with confidence, going wherever school, work, or play takes you – and knowing that your sight loss won't hold you back.

Live well. Our experience and understanding can help you through the emotional challenges of sight loss as well as the practical ones, introducing you to an inspiring community of people with similar experiences and giving you the support you need to be your best self.

Live independently. The advice and skills we provide will give you the freedom to live life on your own terms, in your own way, so that you can achieve your hopes and ambitions, and do all the things that make you... you.



The scale of the challenge we face

- There are **2 million** people living with sight loss in the UK and this number is set to double by 2050. (Deloitte, 2017)
- **1 in 5 people** will live with sight loss in their lifetime. (Deloitte, 2017)
- Every day **250 people** start to lose their sight in the UK. This is equivalent to one person every six minutes. (Deloitte, 2017)
- Nearly **three quarters** of people who are registered blind or partially sighted of working age are unemployed. (Slade et al, 2018, Employment and Sight Loss)
- There are **28,000** children (under 18) who are blind or partially sighted in the UK. (RNIB, 2022)
- Every day around **four children** in the UK are registered blind or partially sighted.



Facts about sight loss

- **More than half of people with sight loss say they feel anxious about the future.**

Adjusting to life with sight loss can be incredibly difficult. We're here to help people make sense of what is happening, to talk and listen, and provide practical advice and support.

- **Nearly half of people with a vision impairment can feel isolated and cut off from the people and places around them.**

Feeling isolated has a huge impact on a person's mental health and confidence. For many people our guide dogs and our services are the key to a life of independence and freedom.

- **More than half of people with significant sight loss say they've experienced negative attitudes or discrimination.**

While our specialist staff and life-changing dogs provide practical support every single day, we're also working for a more inclusive and accessible society where people with sight loss are free from barriers and judgement.



- **Two thirds of parents say there isn't enough support at the point of diagnosis.**

Discovering your child has a vision impairment can be a worrying and confusing time. Our experienced and caring Family Support team is here to listen and help, whenever a family needs support or advice.

- **80% of parents feel their child's vision impairment has a negative impact on their ability to form friendships.**

Our Guide Dogs My Time to Play sessions and Family Events provide a space where children can build their confidence and make life-long friends. Our habilitation specialists also work with children and schools to put in place a wide range of support to promote friendships.

- **Nearly 4 out of 5 parents are concerned that their child's future career will be limited by their vision impairment.**

Reaching key milestones is much harder for children with a vision impairment. Every day a child goes without support can affect their development. For children and their parents, early intervention is life-changing.



How we can help



Our services

Help for adults

- Information and advice
- My Life Skills
- Guide dogs

Help for children and families

- Information and advice
- My Life Skills
- Guide Dogs My Time to Play
- CustomEyes Books
- Tech for All
- Family Events
- Guide dogs
- Buddy dogs



Help for adults

Information and advice

Our experts can help you to live actively, independently and well with sight loss.

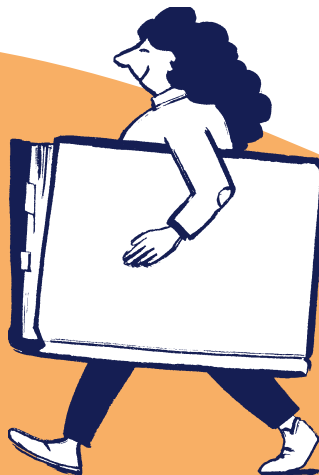
Whether you're asking for yourself or a member of your family, call **Guide Line** on **0800 781 1444** to speak to someone from our friendly team today.

We can help you with:

- Finding the right services for you.
- Dog care and welfare if you're partnered with one of our dogs.
- Advice on guide dog access refusals.

54,599

In 2023 we answered 54,599 calls providing expert information and advice.



Visit our website [guidedogs.org.uk](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk) for a wide range of helpful resources, including information about eye health and eye conditions, advice on technology for a vision impairment, and useful life skills such as tips for getting around, managing your home and making the most of your vision.



2 million

We provided support through digital information and advice 2 million times in 2023.

My Life Skills

It all starts with a conversation. Our experts will work with you to develop a package of support that's just right for you.

After developing a plan together and agreeing our services are right for you, one of our specialists may visit you at home. If you're considering applying for a guide dog and need to improve your cane skills,

we may be able to offer some top-up training. If you haven't had any cane training before, we can make a referral on your behalf to your local authority.

We can also help you to navigate the wealth of information and advice that Guide Dogs offers, and recommend other services and organisations that might be helpful.



Guide dogs

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

3,478

In 2023 we created 469 new guide dog partnerships and supported a total of 3,478 partnerships.



Vision Rehabilitation Specialists

We know it can take time to find your guide dog partner. But waiting for a guide dog doesn't have to mean waiting to get the most out of life. Our team of Vision Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) is here to support you while you wait.

Your VRS can help you with a whole range of skills and ambitions, from getting out and about

more easily, to managing around the house and understanding how technology can help with everyday tasks.

And they'll work with you to understand your needs and help you prepare for your dog. So when we find the guide dog for you, we can be absolutely sure they're right – and you're ready.



6,177

In 2023 our Vision Rehabilitation Specialists provided 6,177 training sessions covering tech, travel and life skills.

Help for children and families

Information and advice

Our experts can help you to live actively, independently and well with sight loss. Whether you're asking for yourself, or your child, speak to someone from our friendly team today for more information. Call Guide Line on **0800 781 1444** or visit our website guidedogs.org.uk

Our information and advice service can help you with:

Family Support

Our team is here to give advice and emotional support from the moment your child is diagnosed with a vision impairment. Our experts can share their experience to build your whole family's knowledge and confidence and provide tools that are right for your child's specific needs.



Education Support

Our specialist team can offer independent and tailored advice to help your child receive the educational support they are entitled to. From supporting you when you are choosing the right nursery, school or college, to working with teachers and special education staff or advising on assistive technologies.



790

We supported families 790 times through our Family Support and Education Support services in 2023.

My Life Skills

We're here to help your child learn and practise skills that are important to daily life, confidently and safely. Our Habilitation Specialists support children and young people of all ages with a vision impairment.

We can support their physical development and learning in the early years. For older children, we help with navigating streets safely, getting around at home or school, preparing food, handling money, using technology and managing their appearance as they

grow older. This training will give your child invaluable practical skills and improved mobility for life.

We also offer tailored courses for children with additional and complex needs. These include early motor skills, sensory development and body awareness. And we can also support them to understand and move around different environments.

Please note that this service is commissioned through local authorities, or parents can use a child's personal budget for this service.

4,933

In 2023 we helped children with a vision impairment to learn essential life skills 4,933 times, so they can navigate the world around them confidently and safely.



Guide Dogs My Time to Play

Our Guide Dogs My Time to Play service helps children with a vision impairment aged 0-4 develop a broad range of skills through play. It provides parents with the opportunity to network, share experiences and pick up skills and knowledge to support their child's development. We

offer in-person and virtual programmes led by our habilitation specialists, where you can join other families for structured fun and supportive group sessions. In-person sessions are held in community venues across the UK and virtual groups allow families to attend from their own home via Zoom.

1,065

In 2023 we delivered our My Time to Play sessions to children and family members 1,065 times.



CustomEyes Books

No child should miss out on the joy of reading. We can produce custom-made books, with font size, spacing, paper colour and more all tailored to suit your child's individual needs. We have a range of books available, including non-fiction and popular fiction titles. We can also provide National Curriculum revision guides for home and school.



6,779

In 2023 we delivered 6,779 tailor-made books, enabling children with sight loss to enjoy reading just like their friends.

Tech for All

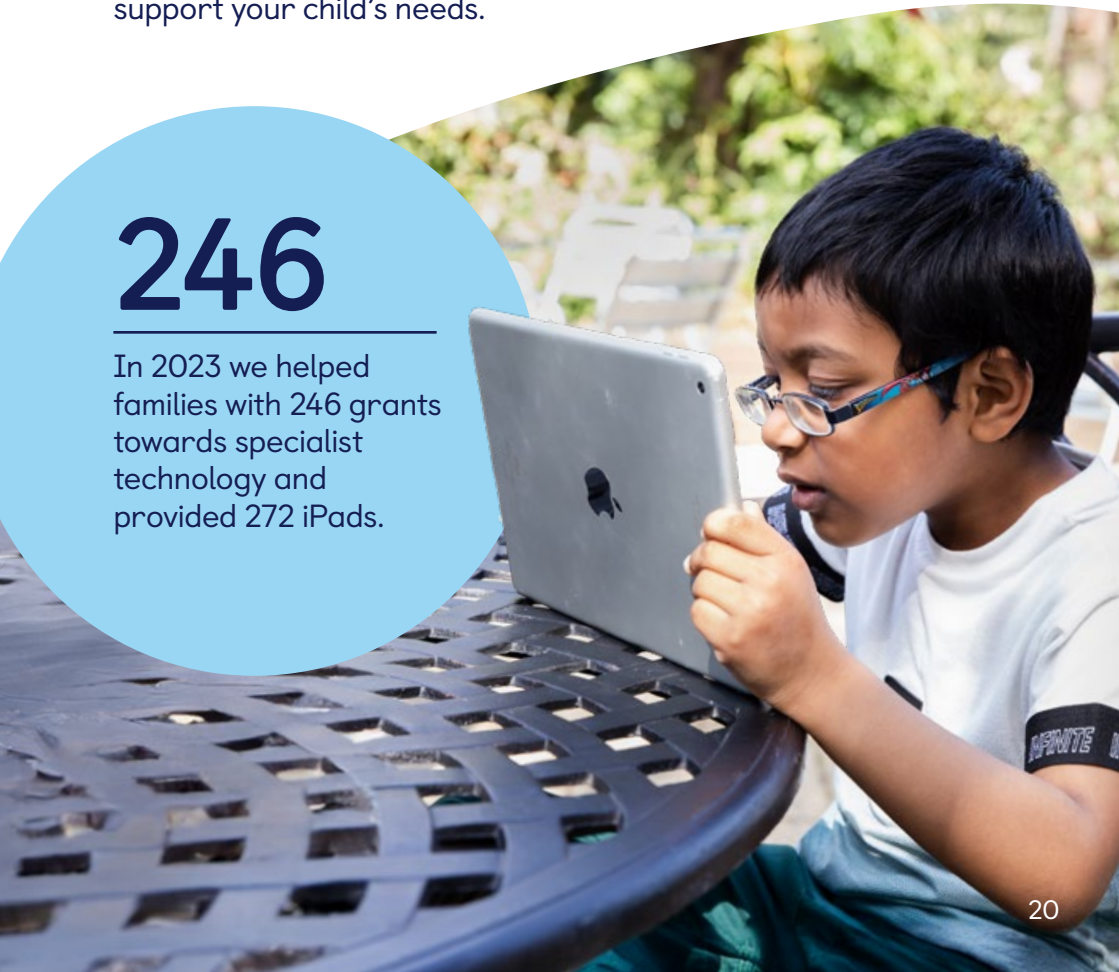
For children with a vision impairment, technology and sensory play is vital. It develops learning, creativity, life skills, confidence and independence.

We believe all children with sight loss should have access to the technology they need – both to support learning at home and to just have fun exploring the activities and interests they enjoy.

That's why we provide grants for a wide range of devices, technologies, software and sensory toys to use at home. Our expert team can also provide personalised advice on the best technology to support your child's needs.

246

In 2023 we helped families with 246 grants towards specialist technology and provided 272 iPads.



Family Events

Every year we host a UK-wide programme of family activity days. Here your child and their siblings can play and take part in activities together – alongside other children with sight loss. Meanwhile, parents can share experiences, support each other and access specialist advice from our Children's Services Team. We also host an early diagnosis weekend to support families at this critical time.

Guide dogs

Our guide dogs give people with sight loss the confidence to get out and about safely. Whether helping young people to get to school or college, a sports club or to meet their friends, they provide life-changing practical support every single day.

1,036

Our Family Events were attended by 1,036 children and family members in 2023.



Buddy dogs

Our 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 dogs have a hugely positive effect on a child and their family's wellbeing.

311

In 2023 we partnered 64 children with a buddy dog and supported a total of 311 partnerships.



How the public can support us



Donate

We rely on donations to continue our life-changing work and there are many ways for you to donate. These include:

- **Sponsoring a guide dog puppy** from just £1 a week, watching them grow from a six-week-old bundle of fur to a fully-qualified guide dog.
- **Leaving a gift in your Will** helps us provide guide dogs of the future, as well as expand other services such as our Vision Rehabilitation Specialists, so thousands more people can lead confident, independent and fulfilling lives.
- **Playing the Lucky Lottery or Guide Dogs Raffle**, which give you the chance to win big whilst making an amazing difference to people with sight loss.
- **Raising funds to Name a Puppy**, whether for a school, business or in memory of a loved one.
- **Shopping online at the Guide Dogs Shop** where we have a wide range of Guide Dogs merchandise and inspiring gifts.
- **Making a simple one-off donation** by visiting our website. We have a range of ways that you can raise funds while at work, home or school.

Find out more at:

[guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help)



Volunteer

Volunteering with Guide Dogs is life-changing – and not just for the people we support.

We have an amazing community of **17,000** volunteers, who gave around **20 million hours** of their precious time in 2023.

Our volunteers get to have amazing experiences that you genuinely couldn't find anywhere else. Get involved by:

- **Nurturing and caring for our amazing dogs**

Our young puppies and our dogs in training need loving homes while they learn their vital skills. And our guide dog mums and dads need care and support to help them provide the next generation of guide dogs.



- **Support your local community**

Help at your local Guide Dogs centre, join our community campaigning for the rights of people with sight loss, or share your own personal experience of sight loss as a Speaker to help raise awareness.

- **Raising the funds that make it all possible**

Meet new people by joining one of our fundraising groups, host your own fundraising event or take on a sponsored challenge. In **2023** our groups and community fundraising team raised over **£7.1 million**.

We have almost **80** different volunteering roles and we're so grateful for any time you can give us whether it's months, days or hours. However you choose to get involved, you'll be making a real difference.

The Volunteer Information Point (VIP) is the place for volunteers to find out all the relevant information about their role, their team and news from the wider charity including any urgent updates. guidedogs.org.uk/vip

[Sign up here to help promote volunteering in your community.](#)



Campaign

We campaign to make sure children and adults with sight loss can live actively, independently and well. We work to remove barriers to this, and champion best practice when we see it.

Our campaigning work covers a range of issues, from making sure children with sight loss are able to access the services they need, to ensuring public transport and streets are as accessible as possible.

We couldn't do this without our **35,000** campaign supporters across the UK. From signing petitions and sharing posts on social media, to writing to their MPs and going out to collect signatures on our behalf, our campaigns community help us to drive change.

To get involved visit guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns

62,248

In 2023 our campaigners took 62,248 actions on a range of issues, including signing petitions around access rights for guide dog owners and emailing MPs.

Learn how to guide a person with sight loss

We provide free training to people who are interested in learning how to guide an adult with sight loss – teaching them how to guide with confidence, skill and empathy.

Much like learning how to perform first aid, sighted guiding is a useful life skill. It gives people the confidence to know how to act when they meet someone who is blind or partially sighted, and the guiding techniques to help them if they need it.



We deliver four training programmes:

- Introduction to Sighted Guide Training – live, online training with one of our experts, for anyone wanting to learn how to guide someone with sight loss.
- Friends and Family Sighted Guide Training – a live, online session, specifically for those who want to help a friend or family member with a vision impairment.
- Top 10 Tips for Sighted Guiding – a short, on demand video for people who want to learn the basics quickly.
- Community and Corporate Sighted Guide Training – tailored, in-person sighted guide training for workplaces, community groups, universities and charities that provide services to the public.

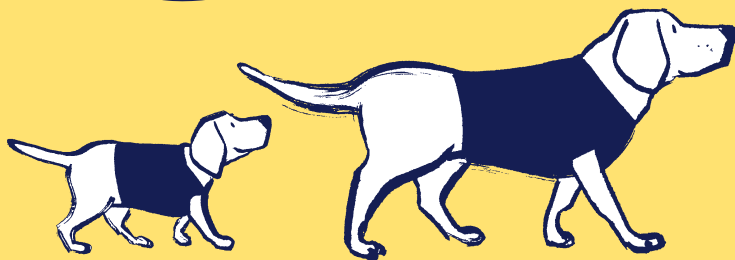
To help us make the world a more inclusive place by learning this simple skill visit:

guidedogs.org.uk/SightedGuiding



How every £1 raised is spent by Guide Dogs

- The UK's first guide dog partnerships qualified in **1931**. Since then, thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters we have matched more than **37,500** guide dog partnerships and transformed the lives of thousands more through our other services.
- In **2023** we provided support **15,383** times for children with a vision impairment and their families.
- **£38,110** could provide all the expert training needed to train a guide dog, transforming them from a pup into a partnership.*



*This covers all the direct costs of the expert training a dog will receive from their first day at Guide Dogs school until they are matched with someone with sight loss and qualify together as a new partnership. This calculation is based on staff salaries, and the amount of time they will spend with our different specialist staff throughout the training period, which, on average, takes a total 37.3 weeks.



59.2p Providing guide dogs and other adult services

25.3p Generating income, including trading activities

8.6p Campaigning and raising awareness

6.6p Providing children and young people's services

0.3p Research and development

Fast facts about Guide Dogs

- ▶ You don't need to have lost all your sight or be registered as blind or partially sighted to be partnered with a guide dog or benefit from our services.
- ▶ We are the largest employer of specialists dedicated to helping children and young people with sight loss learn, grow and access the same opportunities as everyone else.
- ▶ We are world leaders in puppy socialisation, breeding and training more dogs than any other organisation in the world.



- ▶ We're the world's largest assistance dog organisation and in 2023 we were responsible for over 7,400 dogs across the UK.
- ▶ We've trained over 37,500 guide dogs. That's more than one new guide dog every day since our first partnerships were created in 1931
- ▶ In 2023, 1,323 pups started their journey to become guide dogs.
- ▶ We generally have two main breeds, Labradors and golden retrievers, which we cross to gain the best characteristics of each breed. These make up almost 80 per cent of our dogs. We also have German shepherds, curly coat retrievers and labradoodles.



What your donations can buy

£8



could support a working guide dog partnership for a day.

£16



could buy a 'puppy in training' jacket for one of our pups.

£59



could pay for a child to attend a Guide Dogs My Time to Play session, where they can learn important skills through play.

£141



could buy a starter kit for a guide dog partnership, providing everything they need to start their new life together.

£29



could pay for an hour of specialist training for a guide dog.

£45



could pay for a one-to-one online session with a Family Support Specialist, providing vital emotional and signposting support.

£251



could buy a Fine Motor Skills sensory bundle, providing a package of toys carefully selected by our experts.

£1,800



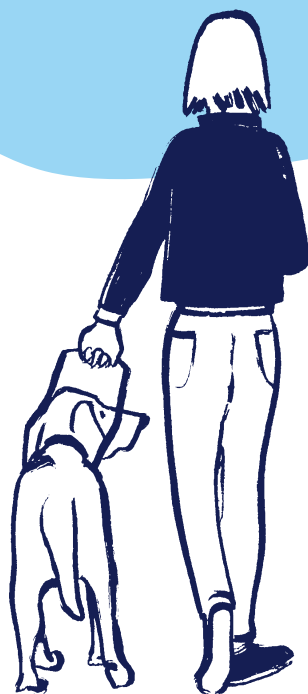
could buy a young person a laptop kit, complete with assistive technology such as Supernova magnifier and speech.



How to contact us

For help and support visit
[guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support)
or call our Guide Line on **0800 781 1444**

To find out how you or your
company can support us visit
[guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help)



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