



Volunteer's FAQ: Branded clothing and polo shirts

General clothing questions:

Why are volunteers only able to get a light blue polo shirt when some staff have inky blue?

The majority of roles in Operations that are required to wear uniform generally deal with dogs so dark blue is more practical. As volunteers you are not required to wear uniform and can instead select your own suitable clothing depending on the task at hand.

What is the difference between this clothing and the clothing available to buy from the online Guide Dog shop?

The clothing available on the portal is only available to staff and volunteers and the clothing from the shop is available to the general public.

Are we doing different clothing for the devolved nations?

No, a decision was taken that the clothing would be the same for everyone as we are all part of the Guide Dogs family.

Can I still wear the old branded clothing?

Yes, the two brands currently co-exist, so all staff and volunteers can continue to wear old branded clothing. Where possible, we encourage you to wear the new brand for consistency as all volunteers will have a polo shirt featuring the refreshed brand.

Can I return clothing that doesn't fit?

As clothing items are customised and printed to order, they are not able to be returned. We encourage you to consult the size charts in the catalogue and on the Arco website to ensure you select the best size, particularly when ordering items from different brands.





Polo shirt specific questions:

Is it mandatory for all volunteers to have a polo shirt?

It is not mandatory, but we would like to provide a polo shirt to as many volunteers as possible. There is a pro-active opt-out option for people who do not want the polo shirt, which allows us to track separately against people who have not responded.

Are Guide Dogs getting good value for money on the polo shirt?

The discounts across the whole range of clothing are significant compared to the high street and online. All of the garments (most of which are branded items) are significantly discounted from the RRP.

Why are Guide Dogs making this investment?

Despite the financial cost, branded clothing is likely to deliver a range of benefits which provide a good return on investment for the organisation:

1. Research indicates that the provision of clothing to staff and volunteers means they are likely to feel more connected to the brand, and act as an ambassador.
2. The Guide Dogs brand is more visible to members of the public. This is particularly important in roles where dogs are not present, to challenge the perception that Guide Dogs only provides guide dogs.
3. Our volunteers are more visible and easily identifiable both on and off-site. This is helpful for anyone wanting to enquire further about our services, volunteering, and donating. Our ambition is also to ensure that volunteers are recognised for the great work they do on site and in the community. The provision of clothing is a small step which helps us to build a volunteer-positive culture by visibly evidencing volunteer involvement in each area of our business.
4. We do not believe our volunteers should be out of pocket for wearing our brand whilst volunteering.





Who was consulted about issuing clothing to volunteers?

This project has been ongoing since 2019, with discussions happening between Volunteering and several staff and functional leads from different parts of the business. We also conducted a survey with our volunteers to ask about their thoughts - 90% of respondents said they would like to be provided with a branded polo shirt.

Why are all volunteers not being issued with a polo shirt at the same time?

The data collection from volunteers is currently a manual process managed by the Volunteering Office. We currently have over 14,000 volunteers - with new volunteers joining us every day - therefore we had to adopt a phased approach to allow us to respond in a timely manner. Arco can currently produce and distribute around 500 garments for Guide Dogs per week so we have agreed timescales with them that allow an acceptable turnaround time on orders.

Why are Fundraising and Events volunteers being provided with a polo shirt first?

Feedback from the volunteer survey (January 2020) indicated that many of our volunteers felt our Fundraising and Events volunteers would benefit the most from having a branded polo shirt due to increased visibility at collections and at community events. Many of our canine, operations and administration volunteers told us they would like the polo shirt for occasional use but would not wear it all the time.

Will I get multiple polo shirts if I complete more than one role?

No, polo shirts will be issued one per person.

Can I order additional clothing items?

All volunteers can access and register on the [Arco](#) volunteers portal - once registered and validated you will use your username and password to access the portal. There is further information and a full user guide on [VIP](#).





I have already purchased a polo shirt - do I need to be issued with another?

No - if you have already purchased a polo shirt you can either choose to receive another one or can claim back the original item cost (not the shipping cost) via the [expenses process](#). Expense claims for the polo shirt can only be approved by the Volunteering Office and therefore must be submitted separately from other expenses, and sent directly to volunteer@guidedogs.org.uk

Can I choose to have a different message on the polo shirt?

No, the message will be the same on each polo shirt. The rear of the polo shirt features the people-paw logo and “Guide Dogs” wording, with the message; “Life-changing support, skills, and dogs.”

Can I choose a different item instead of a polo shirt?

No, volunteers will only be issued with a polo shirt for consistency. However, you can choose to purchase additional or alternative items via the Arco portal.

Do I need to wear my polo shirt every time I volunteer?

No. You will be able to choose when it is appropriate to wear your polo shirt. This is likely to be different for different roles - for example, a Collection Box Coordinator may wish to wear their polo shirt every time they collect funds from local shops, whereas a My Sighted Guide volunteer (or service user) may not want to draw attention to the Guide Dogs brand when they are out in their partnership.

Can I wear my polo shirt when I am not volunteering?

We ask that you only wear your polo shirt when you are actively representing Guide Dogs. We understand that for many people, volunteering fits in with other day-to-day activities and therefore there may be occasions where they are completing personal errands whilst wearing their Guide Dogs polo shirt. If





this is the case, we ask that you give consideration to your actions or cover the branding as you will still be representing the organisation to members of the public.

What happens when the polo shirt needs to be replaced?

Replacements of the polo shirts will not be issued. However, we will review the current provision as we near the scheduled completion of the “Inspiring Connections” strategy in 2023.

What happens if I leave the organisation?

You will ordinarily be able to retain your polo shirt but it must not be worn in public. If you are asked to leave the organisation (e.g. Under the Behaviour, Attitude and Ability - BAA - policy) your polo shirt may be requested to be returned.

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