# Travelling with a guide dog in volunteer, community and hospital transport

A provider of voluntary, community or hospital transport must make reasonable adjustments to their service under the Equality Act 2010, or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland), to accommodate a guide dog when travelling with their owner.

The information provided here can also apply to other disabled people with assistance dogs.

Any service provider, whether providing a service that is paid-for, subcontracted or free of charge to the end user, must make reasonable adjustments to their service so it is accessible to all.

## Reasonable Adjustments

‘Reasonable adjustments’ is a phrase used within law to give some flexibility and allow different solutions in different situations.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

* Amend any “no dogs” policy to allow access for guide and other assistance dogs.
* When picking up a customer from their home or other premises, you should knock on the door to announce your arrival and introduce yourself. Use the customer’s name if known.
* Offer to guide the customer and assist them to enter the vehicle. At the end of the journey, assist the customer with exiting the vehicle and guide them to a safe location/destination point before departing. Follow this link to the Guide Dogs website for information on sighted guiding: [Sighted guide training](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/)
* When collecting a customer from pick up points other than their home, you will need to approach the customer rather than expecting them to come to you, as some customers with sight loss may not be able to see your vehicle.
* If using a car, ask the passenger where they would prefer their dog to be accommodated.
* In most cars, air bags are fitted to both the passenger and driver’s side front panel. In some cases, in the rear passenger area. In such vehicles, it is essential that if guide dogs are carried in the front footwell they are lying down, at all times. Drivers should make the guide dog owner aware if that applies. If the front footwell is not large enough to accommodate the dog, the guide dog owner should be advised to travel in the rear of the vehicle with the dog in the footwell behind the front passenger seat. The front passenger seat should be pushed forward to make space for the dog. In an estate car, if the guide dog owner agrees, the dog may travel in the boot space.

## Policies and procedures: What to consider

Service providers should have policies, procedures, and training in place to make sure that paid staff and volunteers are aware of their own and their organisation’s responsibilities under equality and disability legislation. This should include the transportation of a person travelling with their guide dog.

* The transport provider should make sure there is room for a guide dog in the vehicle being used.
* It would be reasonable for the transport provider to request a passenger travelling with their guide dog to inform them ahead of time, to allow the provider to make appropriate plans.
* A transport provider should consider a standard training programme to include disability awareness for all staff and volunteers. This training should include guide and assistance dog awareness.
* A transport provider may have a harness designed to secure a dog when travelling in their vehicle. This ensures the dog is secure on the journey. Alternatively, the provider could ask the passenger to provide a vehicle harness for their dog if they are likely to use the service frequently. There are different sizes of vehicle harness to fit different sizes of dog: guide dogs will usually need a medium or large harness.
* If staff or volunteers use their own vehicles as transport for the service, they should be aware that they may be asked to transport a person with their guide dog.
* If an employee or volunteer is reluctant to transport a person with their guide dog in their own vehicle, the transport provider could consider one of the following:
* They must make sure that they have enough staff or volunteers who will take a guide dog in their vehicle.
* They should not allocate staff or volunteers who will not take guide dogs in their vehicle.
* They could provide vehicles for staff and volunteers to transport guide dogs.
* They could provide equipment for staff and volunteers like blankets or ground sheets to cover surfaces in vehicles.
* It is the responsibility of the provider to arrange alternative transport for a guide dog owner, if this is required.

## What can be done if the service provider does not make reasonable adjustments?

a. Every attempt should be made, in the first instance, to resolve the problem with the service provider, as they may not be aware of their responsibilities under equality or disability legislation.

b. If the issue cannot be resolved with the provider, the next step would be to talk to the contractor of the service. This may be the local health service or local authority that must make reasonable adjustments for people like guide or assistance dog owners, when finding a provider for a service.

c. If the suggestions above do not work, there are people called ombudsmen responsible for making sure that health authorities and local authorities make reasonable adjustments to their services, including supporting people with a guide or assistance dog.

d. If there are problems with Community Transport, this may be something that the local parish, district, borough or county authority can help with, as they may fund part or all of the service.

## Open Doors Campaign

Guide Dogs ‘Open Doors’ campaign aims to end access refusals faced by people with guide dogs. We want to educate businesses and empower guide dog owners to put an end to this form of discrimination. You can find out more on the Guide Dogs website by following the link to: [**Guide Dogs current campaigns Open Doors**](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/opendoors)

## Useful Resources

#### Equality Act guidance for charities

Please follow this link to the website [**The Equality Act Guidance for Charities**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance-for-charities/equality-act-guidance-for-charities)

#### Equality and Human Rights Commission

Please follow this link to the website [**Equality Human and Rights Commission the Equality Act 2010**](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010)

#### Northern Ireland Equality Commission

Please follow this link to the website [**the Northern Ireland Equality Commission**](http://www.equalityni.org/)

#### Provision and use of transport vehicles (Northern Ireland)

Please follow this link to the document [**12647 disability transport code booklet pdf**](https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/TransportDisabilityCodeofPractice2011.pdf)

## Further information

Visit our Useful Resources document.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission have issued helpful information for businesses regarding welcoming assistance dog owners. ‘Assistance Dogs; A Guide for all Businesses. Please follow this link to the website [Equality Human Rights Assistance Dogs: A Guide for all Businesses](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/assistance-dogs-guide-all-businesses)

The information given in this document was correct as of May 2024. This document provides basic information and is not a substitute for legal advice.

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