

An Introduction to

# Guide Dogs Travel Charter



The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association wants a world in which all people who are blind or partially sighted enjoy the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as everyone else.

Help us achieve that goal and demonstrate your commitment by signing up to the **Guide Dogs Travel Charter**.

Increasingly, guide dog owners are enjoying the benefits and freedom of travel, both at home and abroad. Guide dog owners and their guide dogs undergo intensive training, preparing them to use public transport. They are taught a different set of procedures for each mode of transport and are advised not to use a particular type of transport until they have been given appropriate instruction.

In most cases, guide dog owners do not experience problems and enjoy the same level of customer service as sighted people. Unfortunately however, there are still occasions when guide dog owners receive inferior service from transport providers and, in the worst cases, are even left stranded. We recommend that all staff acquire appropriate National Vocational Qualifications in customer care.

Now, Guide Dogs is working together with the transport industry towards a better future, in which all guide dog owners can expect to travel safely and without restrictions.

**Pledge your support by emailing [guidedogs@gdba.org.uk](mailto:guidedogs@gdba.org.uk) or by contacting Guide Dogs on 0118 983 8242.**

Access for all  
travel

## Guide Dogs Travel Charter

Ensuring reliable travel services for guide dog owners is not difficult. By following a few easy steps and making your staff aware of guide dog owners' needs, your company can ensure that they are not discriminated against.

### When booking or boarding

- Encourage staff to approach a guide dog owner if the handle on the dog's harness is lying on the dog's back – introduce yourself and offer assistance.
- Do ask guide dog owners whether they need any special assistance in the course of their journey.
- To aid service providers, guide dog owners are issued with an ID Card carrying a photograph of the dog and owner.

### General advice

- "Open your doors". Allow access to guide dog owners and their guide dogs.
- Remember that guide dog owners and their dogs undergo extensive training to prepare them for travel on public transport.
- Please do not charge an additional sum for the carriage of a guide dog.
- If embarking on a long journey, guide dog owners may not have the guide dog in harness, but they carry the ID card and the leash bears a flash which says "Guide Dog".
- Guide dogs are trained to remain calm in the event of a stressful situation and will rarely panic.

### Taxis

- Guide dogs are trained to sit between their owners' feet and not to distract the driver.
- Airbags can be dangerous – if your passenger seat has an airbag, encourage the guide dog owner to sit in the back with the dog at their feet. There should be sufficient room for this, if the passenger seat is moved forward.

### Buses, coaches and trams

- Use your public address/information systems to announce the next destination and ensure that the speaker system is audible.
- Please ensure the guide dog owner is seated before setting off.
- Encourage the guide dog owner to sit away from the door.
- Park as close to the curb as possible and warn the alighting guide dog owner of any potential obstacles in the road.
- Where buses do not meet modern specifications, operators should be clear about how they will accommodate guide dog owners.



## Trains

- Use your on-board public address systems to announce the next destination and ensure that the speaker system is audible.
- Make your staff aware that guide dog owners may require assistance. Don't be afraid to approach them with an offer of help if the handle on the dog's harness is lying on the dog's back – introduce yourself and offer assistance.
- When reserving seats for guide dog owners do not segregate them from other passengers but do offer them priority booking for disabled seats.
- Guide dogs are exempt from the usual health and safety rules concerning the presence of dogs in areas where food is served or prepared. You should, therefore, allow access to the buffet area.

## Ferries

- Allow guide dog owners and their dogs the same freedom of movement as that enjoyed by all other passengers. Please do not confine guide dog owners and their dogs to a cabin for the duration of the voyage.
- Guide dogs are exempt from the usual health and safety rules concerning the presence of dogs in areas where food is served or prepared. You should, therefore, allow access to restaurants, cafes, bars, etc.

## Aeroplanes

- Regular fliers will receive special training to ensure they are equipped to handle the demands of the flight.
- Please communicate your service charter to potential travellers who use assistance dogs or guide dogs. Use your website for communicating your charter.
- Ensure that guide dogs are allowed to remain with their owners in the passenger cabin if the flight duration is less than four hours and on all European flights.
- Please do not charge an additional fare for the carriage of a guide dog.

## Underground trains

- Remember that you should have information about travelling with a guide dog on file – please circulate it amongst your staff.
- Use your on-board public address systems to announce the next destination and ensure that the speaker system is audible.
- Make staff aware that guide dog owners may require assistance. Don't be afraid to approach them with an offer of help if the handle on the dog's harness is lying on the dog's back - introduce yourself and offer assistance.
- Ask drivers to double-check that guide dogs are on board before the doors are closed.





Guide Dogs is keen to help you keep your staff informed and can arrange for staff briefings – simply contact 0870 600 23 23 for further advice.

## Health and Safety Guarantee

Guide dog owners carry a card issued by the Institute of Environmental Health Officers which confirms that guide dogs are not a risk to hygiene. Guide Dogs are regularly groomed by their owners, and the health and condition of every dog is checked regularly by a vet. It is the responsibility of guide dog owners to ensure that their dogs meet the highest standards of hygiene.

Guide dogs are trained to be well behaved wherever they are taken.

If a problem does occur, please discuss it with the owner, who will be keen to ensure that his or her dog is not a nuisance. If the problem is not resolved, contact your nearest Guide Dogs District Team for help and advice on 0870 600 23 23.

For more tips and information, please visit:

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

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