



Assistance Dogs UK

A voluntary coalition of assistance dog organisations

ADUK QUICK GUIDE

ASSISTANCE DOGS IN THE WORKPLACE

Assistance Dogs UK is the umbrella body for assistance dog organisations that have been accredited by an international training standards body. Assistance dogs from ADUK member organisations are highly trained to support an individual's disability or condition by carrying out specific trained responses and tasks.

More and more employers are considering making their place of work dog friendly. Alongside this, it is important to distinguish between allowing employees to bring their pet dogs to work, and the legal obligations that employers have regarding employees with a disability who rely on an assistance dog.

If an employer is considering becoming more pet friendly, they might want to consider how having multiple dogs in the workplace will impact on an assistance dog and their handler. This guide aims to introduce employers to the topic of welcoming assistance dogs to the workplace.

The Law

People with disabilities have important rights under the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (Northern Ireland). It is unlawful for employers to treat people with disabilities less favourably because of their disability, or because they have an assistance dog.

It is unlawful to refuse access to a person with a disability, except in the most exceptional circumstance. This includes those accompanied by an assistance dog.

It is important to remember that not every person with an assistance dog has a visible disability. Unless the information is needed in order to make reasonable adjustments, it is not appropriate to question an employee about the nature of their disability.



Find more resources by visiting www.assistedogs.org.uk

Assistance Dogs UK is a registered charity no: 1119538



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Reasonable Adjustments

An employer is required to make reasonable adjustments to enable an employee with an assistance dog to attend their workplace and carry out their job.

This could include:

- Making space for the dog and its bed, potentially moving a workstation to a quieter part of the office/space.
- Providing or allocating an outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself (if outside space is available).
- Making changes to working hours to accommodate short breaks to allow the dog to have a comfort break.

'Proof'

All assistance dogs trained by an ADUK member organisation are issued with an ADUK ID Booklet containing details about the dog and the charity that trained it.

Not all assistance dog owners have trained their dog through a charity or carry specific ID, nor do they require to by law. There is no register or certification process for assistance dogs in the UK so there is no 'proof' that you can ask for from an employee.



Other Employees, Allergies and Concerns

It is good practice to speak with employees about the introduction of an assistance dog and how to appropriately interact with a dog.

Allergy to dogs is sometimes given as a reason to not admit assistance dogs. While the prevalence of allergies generally is increasing worldwide, the incidence of allergies to dogs may be less than perhaps commonly thought. In the UK it is estimated that only 8% of adults are sensitive to dog allergens.

Where a clear allergy risk to a specific individual is identified by an employer, steps should be taken to reduce this risk, but a refusal of access for assistance dogs based on the possibility that other people 'may' be allergic is unlikely to be classed as a reasonable response.

Refusing access to an assistance dog user in the workplace due to fear of dogs amongst other employees is unlikely to be considered a reasonable response.

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What to Expect

Assistance dogs are trained to wait quietly until they are needed. On average dog's sleep/rest between 12 – 14 hours per day so once a dog has settled into its routine then you will most likely find that it will be in its bed resting or sleeping until it is called upon to respond.

Not all assistance dogs are trained by a charity, but employers can be sure that dogs that are trained by an ADUK member organisation:

- have been trained to behave well in public
- have safe and reliable temperaments
- are healthy and do not constitute a hygiene risk observed over a considerable period of time and are regularly checked by experienced veterinarians
- are fully toilet-trained
- are accompanied by a handler who has been trained how to work alongside their assistance dog
- are recognisable by the harness, organisation specific coat or ID

Case Study 1: Tash

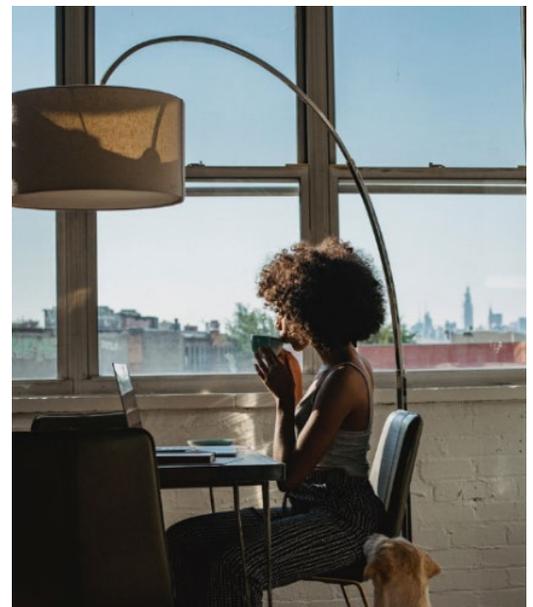
Tash works in a design office in the city. She was recently partnered with an assistance dog and plans for the dog to accompany her to work.

Reasonable Adjustment: Her employer is aware of their legal obligations and makes the reasonable adjustment necessary for Tash to be accompanied by her assistance dog. Tash's desk was right by a busy entrance, so her desk is moved to a quieter space that has ample room for a dog bed.

However, the employer does not allow Tash adequate breaks to toilet the dog and there is no spending area provided nearby. Tash uses all her breaktime meeting the dog's needs and is unable to meet her own needs properly, such as taking a proper lunch break.

Being more flexible about Tash's break times would mean that she has more time to meet her own needs and thrives at work.

Employers should consider the wider needs of the person and their assistance dog and make reasonable adjustments wherever possible.



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Assessing Risk

An employer may want to complete a risk assessment when welcoming a new dog. This is an example of a very simple risk assessment that employers can carry out to identify and minimise any risks.

Risk	Controls in Place	Risk Rating	Allocated Person
<i>Assistance Dog in the office</i>	<i>e.g. Training provided to staff e.g. Employees desk moved to quieter area</i>		
Recommendations and notes			Review Date
Action	Sign when complete	Date	Overseen by
<i>e.g. fenced toilet area</i>			

Case Study 2: Tom

Tom has started a new job as a data analyst in a large office complex. Tom has a medical alert dog and needs to be accompanied by his dog at all times.

Reasonable Adjustment: Tom's employer allows Tom to bring his medical alert dog into work and even arranges for Tom's colleagues to undergo training so that they know how to interact with assistance dogs.

However, the office building management company tell Tom that he cannot take his medical alert dog into the staff canteen, so Tom ends up buying lunch from a local convenience store and eating outside. Tom is now unable to take advantage of discounted food and a warm inside space to spend his breaks making connections with new colleagues.

There is no reason for Tom and his assistance dog to be refused access to the staff canteen and this refusal puts Tom at a disadvantage to his colleagues.



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