

Equality and Diversity Assistance Dog Briefing 2018

This document is intended to provide helpful information for students, staff and visitors to the university of Bradford about how best to interact with assistance dogs and their handlers.

What is an assistance dog?

Assistance dogs are trained to aid or assist an individual with a [disability](#). They include 'guide dogs', 'hearing dogs' as well as other trained dogs who carry out a wide range of tasks. They are instantly recognisable by the harness or identifying dog jacket they wear. The University of Bradford welcomes assistance dogs and recognises its legal responsibility to support their access and well-being.

What do assistance dogs do?

Assistance dogs carry out a variety of practical tasks for disabled people in order to support their health and independence. Assistance dogs are specially trained to behave appropriately in public places such as hospitals, restaurants, schools and universities. They are legally entitled to accompany their handlers almost everywhere and have undergone thorough training to ensure their suitability for this.

What is the handler's role?

Handlers (who may include the dog's trainer, fosterer, or a disabled person) are expected to follow strict rules about hygiene; the dogs are vaccinated, groomed, and checked by a vet regularly. They are tested for the correct temperament and highly trained to behave

well around people. The dog is the handler's responsibility; in the rare event that an assistance dog misbehaves, please inform the handler, who will be keen to control their dog.

What does the law say about this?

Assistance dogs and their handlers have important rights under the Equality Act 2010. This states that reasonable adjustments must be made to avoid discriminating against people with disabilities; for example, this might include waiving a "no dogs policy" in order that a disabled person may be accompanied by their assistance dog. Religious or cultural beliefs have sometimes been cited as a reason for non-admittance of assistance dogs. However, service providers should permit access to assistance dogs and such beliefs are not a reason for non-compliance to legislation. This is a sensitive aspect of the access issue and tact should be used by all involved. For any queries regarding this contact the [Equality & diversity team](#).

How should I behave around assistance dogs?

- Talk to the individual, not to the dog.
- If you are helping an individual with a dog to get somewhere, focus on the individual not the dog, the handler will give the dog appropriate commands.
- Do not call the dog.

- Do not pet or praise the dog without asking first. Praise is a reward for assistance dogs, and people who work with the dogs provide it when it is appropriate. Nice comments are always welcome however!
- Do not feed the dog. Assistance dogs are on strict, healthy diets to keep their working lives long, and it can break the dog's training if they learn that they get food in a public place.
- Generally, when admiring a working dog, it is best to keep eyes averted, comments directed to the user, and voice modulated appropriately.
- Do not be surprised if the owner does not want to stop to talk about their dog. They might be on their way to an appointment or heading off home!
- Please do not forget that the dog is working. It can be confusing and even dangerous if the dog is distracted.
- Please be aware that making negative comments about the dog or obstructing its work could be considered harassment or discrimination and may result in action being taken under our disciplinary procedures.
- Assistance dog day is celebrated annually on the 4th of August this day recognises the amazing work of assistance dogs and their handlers.
- We acknowledge that some staff may have phobias or allergies. Allergies and fear of dogs are not lawful reasons for refusing service or access to assistance dogs and their handlers. However, the university does have signs that indicate where an assistance dog is usually located, and we support staff informing meeting chairs if they need to raise any issue.
- If you have any questions or queries about assistance dogs sensitively speak to their handler, or visit the website of the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) or the [Office for Disability Issues](#).

Where can I find out more?

[Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#)
[Office for Disability Issues](#)

Where can I go for further support?

If you have any questions about assistance dogs, please arrange a discussion with your line manager or contact/ consult the following:

[n-able: Network for Promoting Disability Equality](#)
[Student & Academic Services](#)
[Human Resources](#)
[Disabled Employee Guide](#)
[The Equality and Diversity team](#)
[Estates & Facilities Directorate](#)
[Equality Advisory and Support Service](#)

We'd like to thank thank colleagues at the n-able staff network for promoting disability equality and the EHRC for input and content included in this document and enabling us to adapt it to fit our institutional context.