

Assistance Dogs policy

DATE OF REVIEW	May 2024
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	May 2026

Introduction

This policy outlines our commitment to supporting customers and members who require an assistance dog when shopping in our stores and the steps that we take to facilitate this.

Importance of Assistance Dogs

An assistance dog is a dog that has been highly trained to assist people with a wide range of disabilities, including those relating to visual, hearing or mobility impairments and conditions, for example epilepsy or autism. They do this both by carrying out practical tasks and supporting the individual's independence.

Assistance dogs are not pets. They are treated as “auxiliary aids”.

The assistance dog may be accredited by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs UK (in which case it will have a formal identification tag). Although we understand there is no requirement for them to wear this or for the individual to provide proof.

The registered organisations include:

- Guide Dogs;
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People;
- Support Dogs;
- Dogs for Good;
- Canine Partners;
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance;
- Dog AID;
- Autism dogs; and
- Medical Detection Dogs

Expectations of Assistance Dogs

We know that assistance dogs are fully trained working animals, not pets, and their owners rely on them for both independence and mobility. Assistance dog owners receive full training on how to manage their animal.

This means that they:

- Will not wander freely around the premises.
- Will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner.
- Are unlikely to foul in a public place.



Democracy



Self help



Equity



Social responsibility



Equality



Honesty



Openness



Self-responsibility



Solidarity



Caring for others

Assistance Dogs policy

Assistance Dogs in training

When Assistance Dogs are in training they are excluded from reference in the relevant legislation and as such ADUK's provides advice to service providers, such as ourselves stating that:

“There is no legal obligation to give access to someone with an assistance dog in training in the same way that they would do a disabled person with a highly trained assistance dog. ADUK members can take up to 2 years to prepare and train an assistance dog. Whilst there is nothing in the law about the age a highly trained assistance dog must be, it would be unlikely that a dog under a year old would be adequately prepared for the role.”

Emotional support animals

Emotional support animals (ESAs) are not defined in UK legislation which means there is no legal obligation to allow access to someone with an ESA or dog. This is because an ESAs and dogs are not highly trained assistance dogs. An emotional support animal and dog offers comfort and companionship by being present, which requires no specialist training.

Emotional support dogs and highly trained psychiatric assistance dogs are not the same thing. A disabled person who relies on a highly trained assistance dog to mitigate a mental health condition will be given access to our stores.

We are committed to making our stores a diverse welcoming inclusive environment. As part of this commitment, we welcome the opportunity to allow assistance dogs onto our premises. We are also mindful of how this commitment also reflects our legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Unexpected behaviour

We understand that no assistance dog, no matter how highly trained and experienced is going to be perfect 100% of the time. Whilst they are trained to focus on their partner, from time to time they may be distracted.

However, there are some behaviours that our colleagues would not expect to see in stores such as:

- Dogs that have been not trained to behave well in public e.g. barking, lunging, or jumping up or pulling strongly on a lead.
- Dogs with aggressive or very fearful temperaments e.g. cowering or showing aggression.
- Poorly cared for dogs that constitute a hygiene risk or
- Dogs that are not toilet trained



Assistance Dogs policy

Health, Safety and Hygiene

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, states that highly trained assistance dogs should be allowed access to restaurants, food retailers and other premises where food is available. They have declared that the very specific training and health tests that assistance dogs trained by ADUK members go through, means they are unlikely to be a risk to hygiene in these premises.

There is no conflict with food hygiene laws in allowing access for highly trained assistance dogs. As such, disabled people with assistance dogs do not have their access restricted in our stores.

Identification of Assistance Dogs

Although we accept that most assistance dogs are recognisable by their jacket, harness, lead slip or bandana we understand there is no legal requirement for them to be worn by the assistance dogs.

We appreciate that some people may choose not to use these visual cues and legally, we respect they are within their rights. Where there is a lack of visible identification this may create challenges for our colleagues to easily distinguish assistance dogs from pet dogs.

Regrettably, some individuals may use this to falsely claim that their pet dogs are assistance dogs.

We follow advice from ADUK and will treat each person as an individual and if they assert that they are disabled and that their dog is a highly trained assistance dog, and the dog behaves as expected, they will be allowed access.

However, in the unlikely event, it becomes evident that the dog is not behaving in line with the list of expected behaviours outlined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, it may be necessary for our colleagues to refuse, or revoke access.



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