



Keeping Things Transparent - AGDMS

We are so pleased you are interested in joining Guide Dogs as an Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist.

Guide Dogs Academy is a world class training programme providing individuals with the skills, knowledge and experience to become a highly professional Guide Dog Mobility Specialist. Being a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist is an incredibly rewarding job, as you play a vital role in changing the lives of people living with sight loss and giving them the independence to live the life they choose. A Guide Dog Mobility Specialist is a vital role within Guide Dogs. The key objectives of this role are: to assess our client's needs for a guide dog, prepare our dogs in training to meet the needs of each client, match each client with a dog to meet their needs, deliver client and dog training to create new partnerships as a group and provide ongoing partnership support throughout the life cycle of the partnership. Through the Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist learning programme, you will develop the specialist skills, knowledge and ability to provide assessment, advice and support to service users.

And of course you get to work with our life-changing dogs! Training in Academy gives you access to our rich and challenging world class training programme, meaning you are learning from the best.

We want to make sure you understand some of the key practical considerations of being an Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, and becoming a qualified Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, to ensure you can make an informed choice as to whether this role is right for you.

Please carefully read the information below. You will be asked to confirm you have read, understood and can commit to the below requirements when making your application.

If you would like to discuss any of the information below, please email gdacademy@guidedogs.org.uk and we will be able to help





you. We understand that applying for a new role and thinking about a new career are big decisions and sometimes require a deeper understanding of how this could impact your life. So please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

The Learning Programme

Your learner journey has been designed in stages to build your knowledge and skills as you work toward full competence in your role. Assessed activities, observations, reflections, engagement, and participation in your learning will be measured throughout each stage of your journey. Our Competency Framework measures the technical and behavioural competencies you'll need to reach at each stage. You'll be continuously reviewing this against your learning achievements.

You'll need to be prepared and motivated to learn a lot of new skills! While it is a practical role, you'll also be documenting your progress digitally on our interactive learning platform Guide Dogs Learning (GDL). It's a lot to juggle, but we don't expect you to know what you're doing from the start - that's why it's a training programme.

Physical demands of the role

It's a very active role and on average, our current teams can complete around 20,000 steps per day - whether that's in our centres, out on training walks with fellow learners, or engaging in active lessons within the training rooms themselves. And you'll be doing so in all weather conditions.

As you'll be handling large dogs or varying speeds, you'll need to have a suitable level of physical strength and fitness. It's important that you let us know at the appropriate time if you have any pre-existing injuries that we need to discuss to ensure we are working safely and that we provide the appropriate level of support for you.



Working with our dogs

The Academy learning programmes are designed to increase both your confidence and independence in training a guide dog until you are fully competent and able to work independently.

As an Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, you will learn to train a guide dog from different stages of their own training journey. You will train some dogs from the very start of their formal training all the way through to matching them with a service user and creating a partnership.

You will also learn to train some dogs who have already completed the first part of their training. You will then continue their training through its later stages, match them with a service user and create a new partnership. You will continue to provide ongoing support to partnerships throughout their life cycles.

The number of dogs you will be training and matching at any one time will also increase, starting with one and building up to four dogs at a time. It will seem daunting at first, but we will ensure you are fully supported and confident at each stage.

Our dog welfare principles

As working dogs, the way our dogs live and work with people is different to a pet dog.

We are here to help people with sight loss to live actively, independently and well. Our methods balance what's best for the dog with meeting the needs of people with sight loss.

We take our welfare responsibilities very seriously, and everyone involved in looking after our dogs - from volunteers to staff and the guide dog owners themselves - is provided with the skills and knowledge to deliver the best care and training possible.



This helps to keep our dogs' lives consistent, supports them through times of transition and enables them to build secure and trusting bonds with the people around them.

Having the right mindset

As you can imagine, working with dogs and people creates lots of unknowns and challenges! You will encounter some difficult and sometimes emotional situations. Not everything will go to plan. You'll encounter setbacks as some dogs progress and some don't. Some partnerships will work and some won't. You'll need to be able to cope with the ups and downs of life in Guide Dogs as it has its hard moments, as well as its life-changing ones.

You'll need to be adaptable and resilient to deal with an often challenging and changing working environments. You'll also need to be a natural problem solver and logical planner and have the ability to be objective about a dog or partnership's progress, particularly when it doesn't progress as you hoped.

Geographical location

The Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist role is a full-time traineeship where you will be taught all the elements of becoming a fully trained Guide Dog Mobility Specialist. This is a permanent, full-time role. Once you've completed your training, you move out of Guide Dogs Academy (we call it graduating!) and become part of the local team based at the same location where you completed your training (unless otherwise stated on the job advert information).

So you will need to be committed to living in the area stipulated on the job advert for the foreseeable future (unless otherwise stated on the advert). We do understand that life plans change, but it is essential that your current medium and long-term plans are to stay within this region, as this is where we need our trained staff to be based





to ensure we are meeting the needs of the people that require our services in that area.

Working location

The role is office-based, and will require a regular commute to your office and at times to other locations. Later in your training, you will be working more frequently from different locations with service users in various settings, including their homes, covering a wide geographical region. There may also times when you are required to stay away from home overnight, or for multiple nights in a week if you are supporting a partnership in a remote location or a long distance from the training centre.

Due to its practical nature, this is not a role that can be done from home or in a hybrid way. If you are planning on relocating for the role, you will need to ensure you have your new accommodation in place by the start date detailed in the job advert.

Driving

There is a lot of driving involved as a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, including when you're training. You will be working with Service Users covering a large geographical region, and you will need to take your dogs to different places to facilitate their training. This could be to a local supermarket, a busy city centre, another Guide Dogs office or to a service user who lives in a rural location. Driving is an important part of the role and one you must be willing to undertake. You must hold a current UK/EU driving licence when applying for this position.

We would only be able to consider an application from someone without a driving licence if they were unable to drive due to disability. In this instance, we may be able to provide an Access Assistant to undertake the driving elements of the role. Please get in touch with us if you would like to discuss this further.



Your allocated vehicle

In order to facilitate the driving element of the role, we will allocate you a large vehicle suitable for the safe transportation of dogs and people. You may have seen them on the road - they often have a big Guide Dogs logo on them with 'Life changer on board' written on the side!

It is a mandatory requirement for safety purposes that you are allocated a Guide Dogs vehicle. You don't need any prior experience of driving vans, as we will provide all the training needed to help you feel skilled and confident.

The vehicle can also be used for personal use, and you just pay for any personal mileage separately. Car insurance and all regular maintenance of the vehicle is paid for by Guide Dogs. As such, the vehicle is treated as what is called a 'Benefit in Kind' by the HMRC; you will pay tax on it each month through your salary of approximately £160 per month, subject to vehicle type and HMRC guidelines. It will also need to be kept at your home address, not the office, at night. We like to mention this early as it important for candidates to realise that, if they are successful, they will have a Guide Dogs van on their driveway!

Training costs

Guide Dogs covers the full cost of your training, investing in you to ensure you are receiving the highest quality training . Should you leave your training early, or within a set period of time once your training is completed, you may be required to make a repayment to cover some of that cost. It is not unusual for organisations who pay a substantial cost for the training of new staff to do this. The policy is in place to protect the investment of charitable funds being made when training new staff. It's very unusual for people to leave and each situation is looked at on a case-by-case basis, but again we just want to make you aware of this at an early stage.



Taking holiday & working with flexibility

Guide Dogs provides 25 days of holiday, plus 8 bank holidays. Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialists spend time supporting our Service Users at critical points in their Guide Dog partnership journey. Because of this, there will be some restrictions on when you are able to take annual leave. Although we will aim to support any personal circumstances, restrictions may include school holidays - this will depend on the needs of our service users.

This is a full-time, permanent position, working 35 hours per week. Typically, this is worked from 9am to 5pm but there are occasions when you will need to work outside these hours, therefore being able to be flexible is important. Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) can be taken when convenient for these occasions.

Availability for assessment

Before you apply for the role, you will need to ensure you are available for any Interview or Assessment Day dates published on the job advert. Unfortunately, there is little flexibility for us to move these dates, so please make sure you are free and keep the dates clear in case your application progresses to the next stage.

Summary Checklist

So, to summarise! Here is a checklist of all the important things to consider before you apply:

- ✓ The Learning Programme
- ✓ Physical demands of the role
- ✓ Working with our dogs
- ✓ Our dog welfare principles
- ✓ Having the right mindset
- ✓ Geographical location
- ✓ Working location





- ✓ Driving
- ✓ Your allocated vehicle
- ✓ Training costs
- ✓ Taking holiday & working flexibly
- ✓ Availability for assessment day

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you have any questions at all, please do get in touch with us at gdacademy@guidedogs.org.uk and we'd be delighted to help.

If you do choose to apply, we wish you the very best of luck!

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