



Candidate Pack, Association Secretary

September 2025

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We are Guide Dogs

We're here to help people with sight loss live the life they choose. Children and adults. Friends and family. Whoever you are, our expert staff, volunteers and life-changing dogs are here to help people with sight loss live actively, live well and live independently with sight loss.

There are two million people living with sight loss in the UK, and this number is expected to double by 2050. But the inequalities among people with sight loss start early and can have lifelong consequences.

Getting the right support is life changing. We're best known for our incredible guide dogs, who change people's lives every day. But there is much more to us – we're here to help people with sight loss in so many ways. We give people the tools and confidence to get out and live life on their own terms – whether that's with a guide dog or one of our other services.

Our expert staff can also help adults with a whole range of skills and ambitions, from improving cane skills to understanding how technology can help with everyday tasks. And we're making the world more inclusive by training individuals, businesses and community groups to guide people with sight loss if needed.

For children and young people with a vision impairment, getting early support is crucial. We're proud to be the UK's largest employer of Habilitation Specialists, who are dedicated to helping children develop important life skills. We also have a wide range of services to support families at every life stage. From our My Time to Play sessions for babies and toddlers, to help getting the right support at school, to our family events and buddy dogs.

Our vision is a future where every person with sight loss has the confidence and support to live life to the full. We believe in a world where people with sight loss should have the same opportunities as their sighted peers, and we are determined to make it a reality. But we can't do this without our incredible volunteers, supporters and staff.

Be a part of it.



About Guide Dogs

Our people

We're working to maximise and develop our culture of accessibility, inclusion and teamwork, through our staff and volunteers. Our staff are passionate about what they do, as are our incredible volunteers who give more than 12 million hours of their time each year. Our volunteers fulfil roles such as: caring for our wonderful puppies and dogs, providing transport, raising funds and so much more.

We are three years into the journey to become a diverse and inclusive organisation, ensuring our workforce and Board is representative of the communities we support. We welcome applicants with a wide range of lived experience. We are a Disability Confident Employer and guarantee an interview to candidates who declare a disability and meet the essential criteria for the role. Our [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategy](#) is available on our website as an accessible PDF, audiobook and in Welsh. If there is anything else you would like us to provide please let us know along with your preferred format.

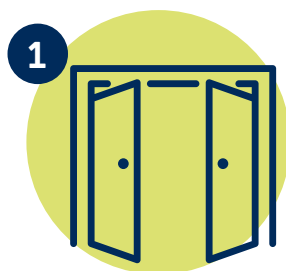


Guide Dogs Academy

In 2021 we launched our Guide Dogs Academy to transform and accelerate the way we recruit, retain, and develop our technical staff, and grow the Guide Dog Trainers (GDTs) and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists (GDMS) workforce. Our Academy now supports all the technical skills development for the Guide Dog Service teams from puppies to partnerships, enabling this team to create 750-800 new guide dog and buddy dog partnerships every year and support existing service users.

Our campaigning and influencing

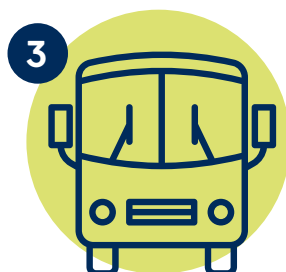
We strive for a world where guide dog owners and people with a vision impairment feel able to fully participate in society. We engage extensively with people with lived experience and members of the public to ensure our campaigns reflect the issues that are important. We currently have four priority areas:



Open Doors – to prevent people with assistance dogs being refused access to services, places and vehicles.



Streets and Spaces – to make our streets and spaces safe for people with a vision impairment. This area includes our 'Scoot Aware' campaign which calls for more regulation and law enforcement on the use of e-scooters. It also includes our campaign for a new law on pavement parking which we know has a negative impact on the lives of people with sight loss.



Transport – to make sure people with a vision impairment can travel independently and with confidence.



Children and Young People – to make all things equal for children and young people with a vision impairment.

Our places

Our central office, known as the Reading Hub, is in the village of Burghfield, just outside Reading. Many of our central teams are based at this office, including our HR, Finance, Fundraising and Marketing teams as well as one of our Guide Dog training teams, and our new veterinary practice.

The National Centre near Leamington Spa is our flagship centre for visitors and supporters. It is the centre for excellence in guide dog breeding and our workshop where the iconic guide dog harness and leads are made.

We have six regional centres which are welcoming spaces for service users, supporters and volunteers. Each centre has the capacity to train the number of dogs required for the region, with an indoor training area and a modern dog day care facility. We also have two further devolved national centres in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Our fundraising and income

Without the generous support of the public, Guide Dogs would not exist. 95% of our income comes from fundraising, the other 5% from grants, charitable and trading activities. Due to investment into fundraising in recent years, we are among the UK's top 10 charities by fundraising income, with growth at double the rate of the market over the last five years and exciting plans to diversify our income streams further.

The foundation of our fundraising success is the sustained investment in our incredible products – such as Sponsor and Name a Puppy, Lottery, Raffles and Legacies – coupled with our inspiring local fundraising branches, events, and partnerships with leading organisations such as Citigroup and Swiss Re. We are also embracing new digital forms of fundraising and developing our commercial offering.

Download our
[Annual Report
and Accounts](#)



Our impact

Caitlin's story

Caitlin's two passions are music and judo. She writes her own songs and has performed to hundreds of people at music school, she's in a band, has her own YouTube channel, and she also trains with the British judo visually impaired team as part of the Para-Potential Programme.

Caitlin was born with congenital glaucoma and underwent almost 50 operations before her fifth birthday. Growing up with a serious vision impairment wasn't easy for her. Starting school was particularly difficult as she did not have the confidence to join in activities and getting lesson materials adapted was always time-consuming.

When Caitlin was five, her family first received support from Guide Dogs. Caitlin's mum Claire says: "It wasn't until we needed Guide Dogs that we realised how much support they offer. They really have been a lifeline to us."

Caitlin was appointed a Guide Dogs habilitation specialist who was able to teach her skills to find her way around school and, as she got a bit older, training to use a long cane. The family also received advice from our education team on the additional support available and they attended our events to meet other vision impaired families and children. Caitlin also loves our CustomEyes service, where she can order her favourite books in the print size she needs.

Despite the fearlessness Caitlin has in her music and judo, as she reached her teenage years she still did not feel confident going out on her own. She desperately wanted more independence to do the things other teenagers could do. Luckily, help was at hand from Guide Dogs Habilitation Specialist, Emma Foster.

Emma explains: "When I first met Caitlin she was self-conscious about using her cane and wasn't taking it out with her. She avoided going to busy places, going out in the dark, and meeting up with her friends. I helped her realise she can still do the things other teenagers do; she just has to do them in a slightly different way."

Emma and Caitlin practised cane training on the walk to her music lesson once a week, as well as travelling into town to meet friends. She gave her tips such as using zebra crossings and identifying landmarks to help with her orientation. In the school holidays they also worked on independent living skills, such as baking, using an oven and washing up.

Caitlin says: "I felt more confident after working with Emma. I was able to go out at night, which I couldn't do before. The new mobility skills improved my judo performance too!"

This newfound confidence fuelled Caitlin's drive to do even more and she decided it was time to apply for a guide dog. In July 2019 Caitlin was partnered with a gorgeous black Labrador cross retriever called Honey.

Caitlin says: "I knew a guide dog could help me be even more confident and independent, but I never expected to gain a best friend as well. Honey puts a smile on my face every day with her puppy eyes and wagging tail. She's my reason to get out of bed in the morning and have a great day. We're a perfect match."

Caitlin's Mobility Specialist, who helped train guide dog Honey says: "It's great to be part of a wider team from Guide Dogs that has helped Caitlin get to where she is today. With Honey, Caitlin can now go anywhere she wants and meet up with friends just like every other teenager. Honey has given her the independence that she wanted and deserved."



Board culture

Guide Dogs has an effective and established governance system in which Trustees and executive members work together constructively to develop, oversee and implement the strategy. The Board culture is positive and collaborative; challenges are made appropriately when needed, and there is a strong and varied mix of skills and perspectives around the table to ensure wide-ranging debates and carefully considered decisions.

We currently have 13 Trustees, led by our Chair. Our Executive Board consists of six Executive Directors including the CEO, and a wider Executive Leadership Team – of which this role is part. Our Trustees actively share the enthusiastic, positive and ambitious commitment of the Board to do their absolute best for people with a vision impairment and contribute their skills and expertise constructively both in and outside of the formal meetings

Details of our current Trustees can be found [here](#) and details of our Executive Directors can be found [here](#).



The role of Association Secretary

Thank you for your interest in our Association Secretary role.

Guide Dogs is one of the most iconic charities in the UK with the people we serve at the heart of all we do. Our guide dog service has been the cornerstone of the organisation for over 90 years, providing independence to thousands of people through unique partnerships, but we also serve many thousands more through our growing habilitation and rehabilitation services.

As we look to our future and the services that will be needed to support people to live the lives they choose, Guide Dogs is looking for a person who is able to provide support and guidance to the Trustee Board, as well as being a key link and advisor to the Executive Team.

Whilst the role has many affinities with that of a company secretary within the commercial sector, as the Association Secretary for Guide Dogs you would be in a position to help shape and sustain an organisation that holds a special status not only in the UK, but across the world. This is not a run-of-the-mill assignment, but one that supports the delivery of something truly special.

As we look to the ambition of the Trustees in helping people to live the life that they choose, it is clear that this role will be instrumental in helping the Board to continually adapt the strategic direction to the realities of the day, whilst ensuring that legal obligations and regulatory requirements continue to be met.

In exchange for delivering this key work, you will be rewarded by observing the genuinely life-changing impact a guide dog makes and see first-hand how the dedication of thousands of volunteers and staff enable this magic to happen. Every day brings new challenges and rewards, and we would want the successful candidate to bring a drive to understand the experience of the people we support, ensuring that every day brings new learning and insight to the role.

We look forward to being inspired by your application.

Isabel Hudson, Chair
Andrew Lennox, CEO



Job profile

Job title: **Association Secretary**

Directorate: **Office of the CEO**

Reports to: **Chair of Trustees (Governance matters & Performance)**
CEO (Operational matters)

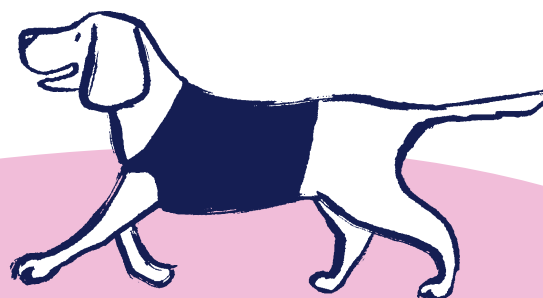
Location: **Remote based with designated office of Hillfields, Reading**

Overall role purpose

The Association Secretary helps people with sight loss to live the life they choose by ensuring that the charity remains compliant with company, charity and regulatory requirements, so that it can continue to provide services to the sight loss community. The association secretary ensures that Trustees are adequately advised in order to lead, govern and manage the organisation.


Key responsibilities as Association Secretary

- The Association Secretary plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth operation of the Guide Dogs board and governance framework.
- The role involves advising the Chair and Trustees on relevant Board and corporate governance matters, and supporting them to deliver effective Board papers and Board meetings. It also involves ensuring compliance with relevant Board-related statutory and regulatory requirements, including the Charity Commission, maintaining high standards of corporate governance, including identifying and implementing future governance and regulatory changes, and providing administrative support to the Board of Trustees.
- The Association Secretary supports the efficient implementation of decisions made by the Board of Trustees, ensuring Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and any subsidiary companies, and the Pension Trust, act in compliance with relevant legislation and the regulatory requirement of reporting and public accountability.
- Act as the formal named contact (in compliance with statutory requirements) to various regulatory bodies supporting the Chair, Trustees and Chief Executive in developing and maintaining key external relationships for Guide Dogs, including, but not limited to: the Charity Commission, Companies House, Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- In collaboration with the chair, CEO and with committee chairs, prepare agendas and minutes for board meetings, committee meetings, and annual/other general meetings, distributing meeting notices and minutes in a timely manner.
- Prepare and publish meeting packs, working with the Executive team to deliver high quality Board and Committee meeting papers.
- Support the administration of the Defined Benefit (DB) Pension Trust – including meeting preparation and ad-hoc requests, particularly cash disinvestments.



- Enable the proper conduct of meetings of the Board, the Annual General Meetings of the Members, and all other Committee meetings. This includes ensuring that all meetings meet the requirements of Guide Dogs' charitable objects and articles, providing assurance for the Chair and Trustees that their decision making is at all times legitimate, sound and practicable, undertaking or overseeing agenda preparation, minute writing to the required standard and follow up of agreed actions for all Board and committee meetings.
- Act as membership secretary in relation to Guide Dogs' formal membership to maintain and administer the register and all applications.
- Support the recruitment, training, appraisal of, and succession planning for Trustees including the delivery of the annual Board Effectiveness evaluation.
- Maintain and complete Trustee attendance schedules for the annual report.
- Oversee maintenance of the statutory registers, and the completion and filing of all annual returns and other notifications to statutory bodies as required, bearing the accountability and liability for any failures to comply with statutory requirements.
- Provide legal and regulatory advice and support to the Directors of the Pension Fund Trust and to manage their specialist external advisors.
- In partnership with the Communications team, ensure effective communication between the board and relevant third parties.
- Draft Board-related external communications for review, and support their issue following approval.

Key accountability as Whistleblowing Officer

- To serve as the point of contact for receiving whistleblowing reports, ensuring that complaints are managed confidentially and securely.
 - To assess the nature and seriousness of the complaint to determine the appropriate course of action.
 - To protect the identity of whistleblowers, especially in cases where anonymity is requested.
 - To ensure that whistleblowers are protected from any form of retaliation or discrimination as a result of their disclosure.
 - To oversee any independent investigation, ensuring it is thorough, impartial, and conducted within a reasonable time frame.
 - To ensure that all aspects of the investigation are properly documented.
 - To be responsible for reporting findings to the CEO and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee or other relevant stakeholders within the organisation and where necessary, be responsible for reporting to external regulatory bodies or law enforcement agencies.
 - Monitor the implementation of corrective actions or changes in policies based on the investigation's findings.
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- Develop and maintain the policy and procedure for whistleblowing; deliver training programmes to educate employees about the whistleblowing process, including how to report misconduct and their rights as whistleblowers.
- To advocate for a positive ethical culture within the organisation, encouraging open communication and ethical behaviour.

Guide Dogs is a learning organisation and we are committed to fostering a positive climate for continuous learning. We expect all our people to demonstrate commitment and actively participate in continuous professional development (CPD).

Breadth/scope of accountability

People accountability

Number of direct reports: **1**

Number of indirect reports: **0**

Application of this job profile

All employees are required to carry out other such duties as may reasonably be required to fulfil their role and support functional and organisational objectives.

All employees must also:

- Comply with all organisational policies
- Promote the vision and values of the organisation
- Engage in continuous personal development

This job profile is accurate as at the date shown above. It does not form part of contractual terms and may be varied to reflect or anticipate changes to the role.

Working at Guide Dogs

As well as other services to enhance the lives of people who are blind and partially sighted, we breed and train guide dogs and buddy dogs. Staff and volunteers in all our locations support this work. Therefore, all employees must be comfortable working in environments where dogs may be present.

Guide Dogs is a volunteer-involving organisation and as such all staff are required to support volunteers in their roles. This may or may not mean the direct supervision of volunteers but will require all staff to play a supporting role. From time to time you may be asked to support / volunteer your time at Guide Dogs events that take place outside of normal working hours.

Guide Dogs is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom we work. We expect all of our employees and volunteers to demonstrate this commitment.

Guide Dogs will require proof of identity and the right to work in the UK.



Person specification

Education/qualifications

Essential

- Fully qualified CGI practitioner, or qualified legal or financial practitioner with relevant extensive Company Secretarial experience.
- The jobholder will be expected to maintain membership of the relevant professional bodies and to demonstrate commitment and active participation in continuing professional development (CPD)

Job-related experience

Essential

- The technical content of the role is high, requiring substantial experience of working as a company secretary at a senior level. Sound knowledge and experience of effective corporate governance and best practice, legal and regulatory requirements including data protection.
- Proven track record of challenging and advising at Chair/Board/CEO level.

Knowledge

Essential

- Sound knowledge and practical application of Company Secretarial governance and compliance function.
- Experience of the application of Data Protection law into business processes

Desirable

- Knowledge of company secretarial governance and compliance function in the charitable sector.
- Experience of pensions and investment committees and associated governance.

Skills and competencies

Essential

- Ability to influence and advise Trustees and senior managers, balancing legal and governance requirements against the practical application and implementation of strategic decisions, without compromising or undermining Guide Dogs' strategy.
- An ability to use personal judgement and influencing skills to highlight and challenge issues.
- Ability to work unsupervised, retaining high self-motivation, initiative, and drive, as well as working effectively in teams across all levels.
- Ability to communicate complex and technical information in an easy and accessible manner both verbal and written to others as detailed above, instilling confidence throughout.
- Ability to conduct whistleblowing/fraud/corruption investigations.
- Excellent committee support skills including minute writing.

Mobility

This role requires regular participation in Trustee and Board meetings. Trustee meetings are primarily held in London, with occasional sessions at other organisational locations. Board meetings take place approximately 50% of the time in our London office, with the remaining meetings hosted at various other sites. Some meetings may require overnight stays.

In total, there are 23 scheduled meetings annually. In addition to attending these, the successful candidate will be expected to work from our Hillfields location 1-2 days per month.

Behaviours

Our behaviours capture the essence of what it is to be Guide Dogs people, whether staff or volunteer. They describe the experience we expect everyone – the people we support, donors, partners, our volunteers and staff – to have while working with us. Guide Dogs people are:



Person-centred – We are a group of people working to help each person affected by sight loss. We listen, and recognise that every individual is different in where they've come from and where they're going. We are open, empathetic and inclusive. We place the person at the centre of every decision.



Expert – We are specialists in what we do. We are committed to excellence and will never stop innovating. We respect our history, but seek out ways to adapt and improve, and are always willing to learn.



Optimistic – We are relentless in our belief that people with vision impairment can lead the life they choose. We are passionate about helping each person, committed to challenging barriers, and proud of who we are and what we achieve.

So, we:



Partner – We only change lives when we collaborate. We build valued relationships with donors. We work together with our service users and colleagues, volunteers and partners – and our dogs, of course – to deliver great outcomes. We support and develop each other.



Lead-by-example – We can all be a guide. We take the lead and then hand it over, empowering people to make progress independently. We gain trust by having faith in others, and influence by example. We do what we say we will.



Engage – We cannot change lives if we look on from the sidelines. We get involved, take ownership, and feel responsible for all we do, think and say. We celebrate wins big and small, and we hold ourselves and each other to account.

Remuneration and benefits package

- Competitive salary and benefits package
- Location: Home-based.
- 26 days holiday plus bank holidays.
- Defined Contribution Personal Pension Plan (matched contributions up to a maximum of 9%).
- Life assurance.
- Comprehensive range of flexible benefits incl. annual benefits allowance (equivalent to 3% of salary).
- Generous life-friendly policies including enhanced family leave.
- We are a Disability Confident Employer and we are committed to accessibility and workplace adjustments.

Key dates

- Applications open 12th September 2025
- Applications close 13th October 2025
- Week commencing 20th October – First stage interview
- Week commencing 27th October – Second stage interview

How to apply

- Applications should be made to Adam Skalsky at BWW Recruitment.
team@bwwrecruitment.com
- Guide Dogs and BWW are committed to supporting candidates who are disabled or have additional needs. If you require any support with your application, please contact team@bwwrecruitment.com or 020 7593 0010





The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is a registered charity in England and Wales (209617), Scotland (SC038979) and Isle of Man (1334). D013 09/25