



## Keeping Things Transparent - AGDT

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

Guide Dogs Academy is a world class training programme providing people with the skills, knowledge and experience to become a highly professional Guide Dog Trainer. The role of Guide Dog Trainer is an incredibly rewarding and vital one; it forms an important part of the wider Guide Dog Service operational team, which provides world class training for our dogs to a very high standard and within a set timeframe, in preparation for them to be partnered with a person living with sight loss, giving them the independence to live the life they choose.

We want to make sure you understand some of the key practical considerations of being an Academy Guide Dog Trainer, and becoming a qualified Guide Dog Trainer, 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 [academy@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:academy@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 regularly handling large dogs of varying speeds, you'll need to have a suitable level of 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 Trainer, you will learn to train a guide dog from the start of its own training journey through to it being ready to be matched with a service user.





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 or more 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. You'll see some partnerships that work and some that don'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 environment. You'll also need to be a natural problem solver and logical planner and have the





ability to be objective about a dog's progress, particularly when it doesn't progress as you hoped.

## Geographical location

The Academy Guide Dog Trainer role is a full-time traineeship where you will be taught all the elements of becoming a fully trained Guide Dog Trainer. 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 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 daily commute to your office and at times to other locations. 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, you will need to ensure you have your new accommodation in place by the start date detailed in the job advert.

## Driving

You will need to take your dogs to different places around the region 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.





To do this, you would be driving one of our branded Guide Dogs vehicles - which could be a small or large van - to ensure the safe transportation of our dogs and people. 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. 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.

## 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 Trainers spend time supporting our service users at critical points in their Guide Dog partnership journey. Because of this, there may 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 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 and agreed with your manager 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.

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 [academy@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:academy@guidedogs.org.uk) and we'd be delighted to help.

## 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
- ✓ Training costs
- ✓ Taking holiday & working flexibly





- ✓ Availability for assessment day

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

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