

# ASSISTANCE DOGS



## Challenges whilst working

by PAWtected CIC

# Introduction

## Who are we?

PAWtected CIC is a non profit organisation in the UK supporting owners to train and work their own assistance dogs. We were founded in 2017 and have worked with many teams during this time. More information about our services can be found on our website at [www.pawtected.co.uk](http://www.pawtected.co.uk)

## About this booklet

This information booklet refers to British law. Please be aware that information relating to the handler's rights and responsibilities will differ in other countries.

We have designed this booklet to be accessible and easily understood. For further information, please consider our "Assistance Dog Awareness" course which goes into more detail.

# Challenges

There are many challenges that assistance dog handlers regularly face whilst working their assistance dog. These can be categorised as follows:

1. Access refusals
2. Inappropriate questions/comments
3. Distraction
4. Children
5. Other animals

# Access refusals

Unfortunately, a lack of awareness and education means that access refusals are more common than they should be.

Top tips for preventing and managing refusals:

- Ensure that you are using professional gear with appropriate terminology.
- Remain calm and explain that your dog is an assistance dog and that they are an auxiliary aid under the Equality Act 2010.
- Provide information leaflets which help with understanding and education.
- Ask to speak to a manager.
- If you become overwhelmed, take a step back, calm down, and try again later.
- If access continues to be refused, follow it up with an email to the company.

# Inappropriate questions/comments

A person's disability is their private medical information, and it isn't appropriate for the general public to ask about it.

Top tips for managing inappropriate questions and comments:

- Explain that their behaviour is inappropriate and why.
- Say that you do not feel comfortable disclosing the information they requested. If needed, you can relate the question to them to help understanding, e.g. "That is private, just like the results from your last medical tests".
- If a member of the public will not leave you alone, speak to a member of staff.
- Give your dog a firm "Leave" cue (even if they don't need it).

# Distraction

There are many ways that people will distract working assistance dogs. This can be incredibly frustrating and dangerous.

Top tips:

- Use clear, positive language on your gear. “Ignore me” often works better than “Do not distract” as it gives the public a clear instruction.
- Ensure that your gear is simple and easy to read from a distance.
- Teach your dog to heel on both sides so you can place yourself between the dog and other person.
- Give your dog a firm “Leave it” (even if they don’t need it).
- Explain that your dog is working and that distraction can be dangerous.
- Provide information leaflets or cards.

# Children

Children can be a big problem for handlers, especially if the parent is not taking responsibility.

Top tips for managing children.

- Give the dog a firm “Leave it” (even if they don’t need it).
- Place the dog in a sit on the other side of your body.
- Explain to the child in simple language that your dog needs to focus and distraction can be dangerous.
- Provide a child-friendly leaflet with more information.
- Ask a member of staff for help.

# Other animals

Working around animals, especially wild animals like birds, is unavoidable. It is important to be prepared.

Top tips:

- Ensure that you have a strong watch cue.
- Work on impulse control and focus around animals.
- Do not allow your animal to approach any dog on leash, regardless of if they are working.
- Teach your dog to heel on both sides and place yourself between the animals (if safe to do so).
- Place your dog in a sit stay and take the collar of the other animal until the owner is able to regain control.
- Turn around and walk calmly in the other direction.



This publication and more are available for  
download at:  
[www.pawtected.co.uk](http://www.pawtected.co.uk)

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