

# ASSISTANCE DOGS



## Myths and misconceptions

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.

## **Only Labradors can be assistance dogs.**

False! The only legal guidance on breeds is in relation to banned breeds.

## **Assistance dogs must only wear yellow vests.**

False! There are no legal requirements for a dog to wear any gear or carry identification. It is recommended that you use gear, but this can be any colour.

## **Assistance dogs are not allowed in places with food.**

False! Risk assessments should make provisions for assistance dogs under the Equality Act 2010 reasonable adjustments. It may not be reasonable for an assistance dog to go into a sterile area, such as food preparation areas.

## **Assistance dog and service dog is the same thing.**

True and false! While some countries use the term service dog to identify a dog that mitigates disability, in the UK, the term service dog refers to a police or military dog. Assistance dog is the term used in the UK to describe disability mitigation dogs.

## **Assistance dogs never get to play.**

False! Assistance dogs are just like other dogs. They get to play and have down time.

## **Assistance dogs do not need microchips.**

False! By law, all dogs in the UK must be microchipped.

## **Assistance dogs need to be registered.**

False! There is no legal requirement for registration. Any organisation registrations are optional.

## **Assistance dogs must carry ID cards.**

False! While some organisations provide dogs with identification, it is not a legal requirement.

## **Assistance dogs need special vaccinations to go into shops.**

False! Assistance dogs need the normal vaccinations for any pet dog. Please speak to your vet for their recommendations.

## **Assistance dogs are not allowed to leave the country.**

False! Assistance dogs, just like pet dogs, are allowed to travel abroad. To travel in the cabin, there may be additional requirements. Always check the designation laws regarding assistance dogs.

## **Assistance dogs are not allowed in hospital.**

False! But you must be able to provide adequate care for the dog during your visit/stay. If the area is sterile, it may not be reasonable to allow an assistance dog.

## **Assistance dogs can be refused due to allergies.**

False! Assistance dogs are reasonable adjustments and allergy (or potential allergy) is not a reasonable adjustment. Taxi and private hire vehicles may refuse an assistance dog if they have a medical exemption letter.

## **Assistance dogs are not allowed in Ubers or taxis.**

False! Assistance dogs are reasonable adjustments and provisions are made for private hire vehicles in the Equality Act 2010. Drivers may refuse an assistance dog if they have a medical exemption letter.

**Assistance dogs can be fully trained by 6 months old.**

False! While the dog may appear to know all of the behaviours, they should not be considered fully trained until they have passed their teenage years.

**Assistance dogs can do mobility work without a vet clearance.**

True and false! While there is no legal requirement, it would be unethical to do mobility work with a dog that had not been cleared by a vet.

**Assistance dogs must be trained by an organisation.**

False! It is the decision of the handler if they would like to be affiliated with an organisation.

**Giant dogs cannot be assistance dogs.**

False! There are no legal requirements for an assistance dog to be any shape, size or colour.

## **You need a doctor's letter to be qualified for an assistance dog.**

False! You do not need a doctor's letter, however it is good practice to discuss with your doctor if an assistance dog is a good choice for you.

You must have a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) to be entitled to reasonable adjustments (e.g. assistance dog).

## **If you have an assistance dog, you can distract other teams.**

False! Every assistance dog team is working. Where possible, give them space and do not distract.

## **You can only have an autism dog if you are a child.**

False! Autism assistance dogs can help handlers of any age.



## **Assistance dogs cannot wear headcollars.**

False! There are no legal requirements regarding gear that an assistance dog must/must not wear. Regulations that apply to pet dogs will also apply to assistance dogs. Please check your area.

## **All owner trained assistance dogs must do a public access test.**

False! These are optional, but strongly encouraged to help ensure and maintain training levels.

## **X breed cannot be an assistance dog.**

False! Only banned breeds cannot be assistance dogs.

## **Life is easier with an assistance dog.**

True and False! While they can mitigate your disability, working an assistance dog presents its own challenges, e.g. access refusals or dog illness.

## **Assistance dogs can work in any temperature.**

False! For welfare reasons, you must consider the temperature when working your dog – especially if traveling abroad.

## **Assistance dogs must remain on lead at all times.**

True and false! Laws relating to keeping dogs on lead also apply to assistance dogs.

## **Allergen detection dogs must eat the food to detect the allergen.**

False! They may need to be closer to smell it, but they do not need to eat it.

## **Seizure dogs can only respond to seizures, not alert to them.**

True and False! Some types of seizures or health condition cannot be alert trained, but many can be trained for alert.

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

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