

Assistance Dogs at Work

UK Employer Policy Pack (2026)

Free practical templates for UK employers, HR teams, line managers and equality leads.

This pack includes

Document 1 – Assistance Dogs at Work Policy Template

Document 2 – Onboarding Checklist & Individual Plan

Document 3 – Manager Briefing Notes

Document 4 – Team Announcement Template

How to use this pack

These are template documents. Adapt the wording, approval details and operational arrangements for your organisation before use. This pack provides general guidance only and does not constitute legal advice.

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DOCUMENT 1 OF 4

Assistance Dogs at Work Policy

Template – adapt for your organisation before use

Document name	Assistance Dogs at Work Policy
Organisation / Company name	_____
Version	_____
Responsible officer	_____
Approved by	_____
Date approved	_____
Next review date	_____

1. Purpose

[Organisation / Company name] is committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including considering reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, workers and applicants. This policy explains how the organisation will handle assistance dogs in the workplace in a lawful, consistent and practical way.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees, workers, contractors, agency staff and, where relevant, applicants and visitors. It applies to all premises operated by or on behalf of [Organisation / Company name].

3. General position on animals

Animals are not generally permitted on [Organisation / Company name] premises during working hours. Assistance dogs are considered separately under the organisation’s equality obligations and the individual assessment process set out below.

4. Assistance dogs: definition and training routes

An assistance dog is a dog trained to assist a specific disabled person with tasks related to their disability. In the UK there is no single official register or mandatory proof scheme for assistance dogs. Dogs may be trained and placed by established organisations, trained by independent trainers or specialist providers, or trained by the disabled handler themselves.

Note for HR teams

Focus on the employee’s needs and the dog’s working role – not the logo on a harness or the training provider alone. Avoid rigid paperwork rules where the real issue is whether a reasonable workplace arrangement can be planned and managed safely.

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Assistance Dogs at Work Policy

5. Individual assessment and onboarding

When an employee notifies the organisation that they work with an assistance dog, HR will:

- Meet with the employee to discuss the dog's working role and the adjustments needed.
- Arrange a practical workplace assessment covering rest space, water access, toileting, evacuation and shared-space considerations.
- Complete the Assistance Dog Individual Plan (Document 2) with the employee and their line manager.
- Brief relevant colleagues and operational staff as appropriate.
- Record the arrangement and schedule a review within six months.

6. Handler responsibilities

The handler is responsible for ensuring that:

- The dog is vaccinated, wormed and in good health.
- The dog is under control at all times in the workplace.
- The dog does not disturb colleagues or cause damage to property.
- Toileting is managed appropriately and hygienically.
- Any legal requirements relating to the keeping of dogs are met.
- If the dog is unwell, they inform their manager and agree temporary arrangements.

7. Employer responsibilities

[Organisation / Company name] will make reasonable adjustments to support the handler. Depending on the circumstances, these may include:

- Providing a rest space and water access for the dog.
- Allowing additional short breaks for toileting.
- Providing manager guidance and practical awareness information where needed.
- Including the dog in emergency evacuation planning.
- Checking insurance and risk arrangements with the appropriate internal lead or broker.

8. Behaviour and workplace standards

[Organisation / Company name] will assess assistance dogs on behaviour, safety, hygiene and workplace practicality – not on whether the dog was trained by a particular provider. Where a dog creates a genuine and unmanageable risk or serious operational issue, workplace access may be reviewed or withdrawn on a case-by-case basis.

9. Colleague concerns

Concerns such as allergies or fear of dogs will be taken seriously and managed through practical workplace adjustments. Neither concern is an automatic reason to exclude a disabled employee's

assistance dog. Where competing needs exist, both will be considered carefully and proportionately.

10. Review and escalation

Arrangements will be reviewed at least every six months, or earlier if circumstances change. Concerns about the arrangement should be raised with the named HR contact or line manager and handled through normal equality or workplace-adjustment processes.

11. External resources

- Equality and Human Rights Commission – Employment Statutory Code of Practice
- ADUK workplace guidance and policy resources
- Assistance Dog Registry – practical employer and handler resources

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Onboarding Checklist & Individual Plan

Complete this with the handler and their line manager before the dog's first day.

Part 1: Handler and dog details

Employee name _____

Line manager _____

HR lead / contact person _____

Dog name _____

Breed / sex _____

Working role of the dog _____

Date plan completed _____

Date for first review _____

Part 2: Day-to-day working arrangements

Where will the dog rest during the working day? _____

Will the dog remain on lead during rest periods? Yes / No Details: _____

Where will water be available for the dog? _____

What equipment will the handler bring? (bowl, bed, lead, etc.) _____

Where will the equipment be stored? _____

Toilet-break schedule and location _____

Routes through the building – any special considerations? _____

Part 3: Meetings and movement

Will the dog attend internal meetings? Yes / No Arrangements: _____

External meetings or site visits – arrangements for the dog _____

Will the dog make any alerts or signals during the day? Yes / No

What colleagues need to know: _____

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Onboarding Checklist & Individual Plan

Part 4: Interaction rules

Can colleagues speak to the dog? Yes / No / Ask the handler first Details: _____

Can colleagues touch or pet the dog? Yes / No / Ask the handler first Details: _____

Are food or treats prohibited? Yes / No Details: _____

How will these rules be communicated to the team? _____

Part 5: Emergency arrangements

If the handler becomes unwell at work and cannot travel as normal, what happens? _____

If the handler is taken to hospital, should the dog go with them? Yes / No

If not, who takes temporary care of the dog? _____

Emergency contact name and number _____

Evacuation plan for the dog – any differences from standard procedure? _____

Has this been communicated to the Fire Marshal? Yes / No

Part 6: Communication plan

Which colleagues and teams need to be notified before day one? _____

Has anyone raised an allergy or phobia concern? Yes / No Plan: _____

Date team communication sent: _____

Part 7: Review and sign-off

First review date _____

Issues to monitor from day one _____

Sign-off – handler _____

Sign-off – line manager _____

Sign-off – HR _____

DOCUMENT 3 OF 4

Manager Briefing Notes

Welcoming an Assistance Dog into Your Team

What your job is here

Your role is to make the arrangement work practically – not to decide whether the dog is “valid”, not to quiz the handler about training, and not to manage team opinion alone. Your job is day-to-day operations, escalation, and making sure agreed arrangements are actually followed.

The key legal point (short version)

The Equality Act 2010 means the organisation must consider reasonable adjustments. A blanket “no dogs” rule does not settle the issue. There is no single UK certificate that makes a dog “legal”, so focus on what the employee needs and how to make the workplace work in practice.

Before day one – manager checklist

- Complete the Individual Plan with the handler and HR.
- Brief reception and security – dog expected, handler name, no avoidable challenges.
- Send team communication using the template in Document 4.
- Check the dog has a rest spot and water access.
- Confirm toilet-break location and schedule.
- Brief the Fire Marshal on evacuation arrangements.
- Note the first review date in your calendar.

Handling team concerns

Allergy concerns: take them seriously, speak privately, look at seating, routes and ventilation, and document what you considered.

Fear of dogs: use the same calm, practical approach. If the concern is serious, involve HR early.

“Do we have to allow this?”: do not make that call alone. Refer to HR where there is a specific health or safety issue to assess.

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Manager Briefing Notes

Common mistakes to avoid

- Asking the handler repeatedly to “prove” the dog is legitimate.
- Treating the dog’s training route as the deciding factor by itself.
- Making the handler feel the dog is a workplace problem rather than a reasonable adjustment issue.
- Failing to brief reception, facilities or security before day one.
- Forgetting to schedule the first review.

What to do if things go wrong

If the dog is repeatedly misbehaving, causing a hygiene issue, or creating a genuine safety concern, speak to HR and document the specific incidents. Do not try to resolve this through gossip, team pressure, or informal side arrangements. Any decision to modify or withdraw the arrangement should be based on documented facts and a structured review.

The six-month review

This is usually a short conversation with the handler and HR. Ask whether the arrangement is working as planned, whether any issues need resolving, and whether the Individual Plan needs updating. Record outcomes clearly.

Practical reminder

The aim is not to make the dog the centre of attention. The aim is to make the workplace arrangement feel normal, calm and workable from day one.

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Team Announcement Template

Send this to the relevant team before the handler's first day. Adapt the placeholders before sending.

Subject line [Dog name] joining our team

Hi team,

I wanted to let you know that from _____, _____ will be bringing their assistance dog, _____, into the workplace.

This dog is a working assistance dog and is with the employee as part of an agreed workplace arrangement.

A few things to know:

- The dog is working. Please _____ approach or pet the dog – particularly when the handler is busy or the dog appears focused.
- Please do not offer the dog food or treats.
- The dog will usually be resting near _____ during the day.
- Add any relevant alert-behaviour note here if applicable: _____

If you have any concerns – including allergy or other considerations – please speak to me or _____ privately before _____. We want to make this work well for everyone.

If you have any general questions about assistance dogs in the workplace, our policy is available from HR / the shared policy folder.

Thanks,

Notes on using this template

Send this to the immediate team – not the whole organisation unless operationally needed.

Send at least 48 hours before day one so concerns can be raised privately in time.

Keep the tone calm and factual – not apologetic and not over-excited.

Do not include medical details about the handler's disability unless they have explicitly agreed to this.

If anyone responds with a concern, deal with it before day one where possible.

Optional reception / security note

From _____, _____ will be attending with their assistance dog, _____. The dog is part of an agreed workplace arrangement. Please allow entry without avoidable challenge. If you have questions, contact _____ at _____.

Need a practical employer-facing resource?

This pack is designed to be shared internally and adapted locally. For related guidance and resources, visit assistancedogregistry.co.uk.