



Appointment of Trustees

Autumn 2022

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Chairman's letter

Dear Applicant,

I am delighted that you are considering applying to join us on the Board of Trustees at Guide Dogs. For over 90 years we have been transforming the lives of people with sight loss – helping adults, children and their families to live the life they choose. As some of our Trustees come towards the end of their term of office, we are seeking new Board members who share our passion and determination to support more people than ever before.

We are best known for our iconic guide dogs, but our work encompasses so much more. We offer a wide range of person-centred services, including advice and life skills training, our My Sighted Guide service and a wide range of services for children and young people. Each year we support nearly 5,000 active dog partnerships, including guide dogs and our buddy dogs for children with sight loss. This portfolio of services enables us to help a broader range of people with different needs, and our ambitious strategy sees us supporting significantly more people in the years to come.

We are fortunate to have a team of dedicated experts at Guide Dogs, and over 14,000 highly committed volunteers who support our services. Our fundraising performance way exceeds the sector, and our much-loved brand has recently been refreshed to extend our broadening customer and service base. It is an exciting time to join our professional and focused Board, and to help us fulfil our mission to help people with sight loss live the life they choose.

The last word of this welcome belongs to the husband of one of our guide dog owners who also now volunteers with us. He writes: "I don't think I'll ever be able to do enough for Guide Dogs for what they've given us. After my wife lost her sight aged 26 she also lost her friends, her job and her sense of purpose. Guide Dogs helped her piece her life back together." You can read more about Lauren's story on page 5 of this pack, I hope it will inspire you to apply and help us support more families just like theirs.



Jamie Hambro
Chairman



We are Guide Dogs

And we are here to help people with sight loss live the life they choose.

Despite the impact of sight loss, 70% of adults receive no support within the first 12 months of diagnosis, and are likely to encounter poor education, high unemployment, depression, loneliness and financial insecurity throughout their lifetime.

Childhood sight loss is on the increase. There are around 35,000 children and young people living with a vision impairment in the UK. Some 80% of a child's learning takes place using vision and every day they go without support can affect their development. We provide a number of services that help children and young people reach their potential as adults and working alongside our colleagues in the sector, we are here to provide that support from the day they are born.

There are around two million people in the UK living with sight loss, and this figure is expected to double by 2050. Every six minutes in the UK, one more person loses their sight.

Our ambition is a future where every person with sight loss has the confidence and support they need to live the life they choose. Our current five-year strategy, *By My Side*, sets out how we aim to reach and support many more people by 2023. By introducing new services, embracing new technologies, digitising some of the ways we provide services and collaborating with other charities and organisations, we are supporting thousands more people living with sight loss through our:

- Guide dogs
- Buddy dogs
- My Sighted Guides
- Children and young people services
- Family support services
- Information and advice
- Sighted guide training

Our targets for the future are really exciting. But they are also ambitious. So we are making improvements and embracing innovation across the whole charity, from our training to our tech, our services to our sites.



About Guide Dogs

Our people

We are working to maximise and develop our culture of teamwork and inclusivity, through our 1,600 staff and 14,000 volunteers. Our staff are passionate about what they do, as are our incredible volunteers who give more than 18.5 million hours of their time each year. Our volunteers fulfil roles such as: sighted guides, caring for our wonderful puppies and dogs, providing transport, raising funds and so much more.

Guide Dogs strives to be a diverse and inclusive organisation, ensuring our workforce and Board reflects the communities we support. We welcome applicants regardless of age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability or nationality. 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 can be provided in Welsh or in audio.

If there is anything else you are concerned about or think we could provide, please let us know.



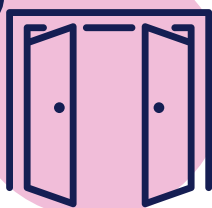
Guide Dogs Academy

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 number of Guide Dog Trainers (GDTs) and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists (GDMS). This important work will help us achieve our commitment to create 1,000 new guide dog partnerships each year.

Our campaigning and influencing

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

1



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

2



Streets and Spaces – to make our streets and spaces safe for people with sight loss. 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.

3



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

4



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 located just outside of Reading, in a village called Burghfield. Many of our central teams are located from this office, including our People Services, Finance, Fundraising and Marketing teams, as well as our South East Regional Centre.

The National Centre near Leamington Spa is our flagship centre for visitors and supporters. The centre integrates breeding and training, 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, Guide Dogs is now a Top 10 UK fundraising income charity, 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 450 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.



You can download our Annual Report and Accounts from:
www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/finance-governance/reports-accounts-and-annual-reviews.



Impact of Covid-19: Resilience and response

In early 2020, the spread of Covid-19 and the legislation introduced to keep everyone safe had a major impact on our ability to deliver our services. At the same time, it became obvious that there was never a stronger or more urgent need for our support.

As the first lockdown kicked in, people with sight loss faced increased levels of isolation, and maintaining their independence became even more difficult than usual.

With the introduction of one-way systems in town centres, our service users' familiarity with their local street layouts disappeared overnight. Shopping for food became difficult for those who simply could not see the socially distanced queue outside their nearest supermarket, let alone find the end of it.

On top of these issues, people who are blind or partially sighted had the added anxiety of having to ask for assistance in public places like shops or on public transport. For the parents of children with a vision impairment, home-schooling brought even more worry and stress as they struggled to adapt generic home-learning materials to meet their child's needs.

By listening to our service users and the wider sight loss community, our staff were able to react quickly to support people and innovated to deliver virtual and digital services.

Another area where we and our amazing volunteers had to adapt quickly was finding a way to continue fundraising. With plans for all types of events cancelled and restrictions on gatherings, we adapted by going digital.



How we responded to the crisis



We developed new virtual training methods so our Guide Dog Mobility Specialists could continue to match and create guide dog partnerships – resulting in 282 partnerships.



We launched our new advice line service, Guide Line, staffed by a team of experts who now offer a wide range of advice on services and much more.



We launched My Time to Play, a free service that helps children with sight loss aged under four to develop a broad range of skills through play in a group setting via Zoom.



We launched our Tech for All initiative to give all children and young people with a vision impairment access to a free iPad or iPhone to support their learning at home and explore interests they enjoy.



More than 35,000 keeping-in-touch phone calls were made to adult service users – many of them between My Sighted Guide volunteers and their partners.



Overall, we provided more than a quarter of a million pieces of information and advice to support service users on everything from internet security to shopping through our website or over the phone.

Our impact

Lauren's story

Although I'd had issues with my sight from birth, including blindness in my left eye, I like to think I'd always been quite resilient and was living a fairly normal life. I had lots of friends. I enjoyed a night out with them. Along the way I also met my now-husband Daniel. By the time I was 24, we had got engaged and bought a house.

Unfortunately, things started to change for me when I was 26. I started to have issues with my right eye, including a cataract, semi-detached retina, scarring and other damage. Things were so bad that I was referred to the specialists at Moorfields Eye Hospital. But there were just so many complications. After 17 different surgeries, they told me there was nothing more they could do, and soon I could no longer see at all.

Needless to say, the impact was devastating, and I experienced a rollercoaster of emotions. I didn't want to go out anywhere. I lost my job at a nursery – they just didn't have any way to support me. I also lost a lot of friends. Partly this was because they didn't know how to react. Partly it was me. I shut myself off.

I was also incredibly frustrated because I felt like I couldn't do anything for myself. I had to wait for my husband to come from work, or friends or other family to come round and give me a hand with the simplest daily tasks I'd previously taken for granted. I had no confidence. I was like a hermit, just living in the dark.

The first step on my road back towards positivity was when my husband and I decided we should get in touch Guide Dogs. We'd tried the local council to see what they could do, but they couldn't provide much for me.

With Guide Dogs it was different. They responded quickly, firstly by arranging for a mobility instructor to come and see me and help me develop my long cane skills. It was a small but crucial step that started to give me the belief I could be more independent."

Guide Dogs then arranged for family to attend the My Sighted Guide Friends and Family course, so they could all get instruction on how to guide me. They had tried before, but they were grabbing me and swinging me around like a rag doll! My husband, parents, sister-in-law and her husband all attended. It was another way of getting my confidence back. I could now do things like going clothes shopping with someone who knows me and what kind of stuff I like.

Things really changed for me though when I decided to apply for my first guide dog. Obviously, the process takes a while. You have to be matched with a dog and go through some training and preparation. When I did get to bring Grace home it was like having all my birthdays and Christmases in one go.

Firstly, she was just such a lovely companion. Then after just a few weeks with her I was able to get out and move at an almost normal human pace – so much faster than when I was using the cane. It was life-changing. I started to feel really confident. I could go out for walks, or to the shop, without having to wait for someone to come round.

On the whole, I'd say my confidence has risen from 3 out of 10 to more like a 9. I'm making new friends, and I'm back in touch with some of my old friends that I lost touch with now that we've had a chance to talk things through. I'm looking forward to the years ahead and what they may hold for me.



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 families and children with sight loss. 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 much 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 Background

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.

There are currently 11 Trustees – including an experienced Chairman – and 6 Executive Directors. We are very keen that our new Trustees actively share the enthusiastic, positive and ambitious commitment of the Board to do their absolute best for people with visual impairment and are prepared to contribute their skills and expertise constructively both in and outside of the formal meetings.

Guide Dogs' Nominations Committee have reviewed the skills currently on the Board and those that will be required to help deliver Guide Dogs' By My Side strategy; the following skills areas have been identified:

- Fundraising, in addition to being a member of the Board, would also sit on the subsidiary Trading Board
- IS, would also sit on the Audit & Risk Committee
- Independent Member of the Audit & Risk Committee with Safeguarding Expertise; this is not a main Board appointment
- Details of our current Trustees can be found [here](#) and details of our Executive Directors can be found [here](#)



Role Description and Person Specifications

All candidates should collectively bring a mix of skills appropriate to the governance of the Charity. Attention will be given to improving our diversity as a Board and we are particularly keen to attract individuals with experience of being a Guide Dog owner or living with a visual impairment or experience of living with somebody with a visual impairment.



Purpose and key responsibilities for all Trustees at Guide Dogs

The key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that Guide Dogs complies with its constitution, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Attending Board meetings and participating fully, considering the views of others and acting in the best interests of Guide Dogs, and upholding all Board decisions.
- Ensuring clear strategic direction and contributing to setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance.
- Approving Guide Dogs' strategic business plan and annual budget.
- Safeguarding the organisation's reputation and promoting its ambition, purpose and beliefs.
- Ensuring financial stability, protecting Guide Dogs' assets, and ensuring the proper investment of funds and effective administration.
- Acting as an ambassador for Guide Dogs.

For general information on the role of Trustees please read the Charity Commission Guidance: The Essential Trustee



All candidates will need to demonstrate:

- Understanding of the role of the Trustee / Director / Independent Committee Member and how this interacts with the Executive to create maximum positive impact.
- Strong evidence of holding a senior oversight or governance role in a medium or large organization.
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of Trustees / Directors.
- A commitment to Guide Dogs' Ambition, Purpose and Values.
- An ability to work at a strategic level and think creatively.
- Good independent judgement, a willingness to speak his/her mind in Board and Committee meetings and determination to do the right thing for Guide Dogs' stakeholders.
- An ability to constructively probe facts, challenge assumptions and identify the advantages and disadvantages of proposals.
- An ability and willingness to work as a member of a team, to support management, to work collaboratively and to meet the obligations of collective decision making; and
- an ability to be an ambassador for Guide Dogs.

It is also expected that all applicants will have an understanding of diversity, safeguarding and health & safety issues.

Time commitment

A Trustee will be expected to attend up to six Board meetings per year, usually during a weekday and one Trustee away session involving an overnight stay. Trustees are also expected to be a member of a Committee and attend four meetings of said Committee each year. It is likely that the role will require at least 12 days per year to fulfil these commitments; in addition, time will be required to read papers before each meeting and to respond to emails in between meetings.

The Safeguarding Expert will be expected to attend 4 meetings a year, usually during a weekday; in addition, time will be required to read papers before each meeting and to respond to emails in between meetings.

Term of appointment

A term is three years. Subject to satisfactory ongoing performance appraisal, this may be renewable for a further 2 terms of three years.

Remuneration

Trustees receive no payment for their services, but approved expenses are reimbursable in line with Guide Dogs' volunteer expenses policy.

Central office location

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Central Office, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG. A willingness to travel is required. Meetings tend to be held either in London, Burghfield Common (Reading) at the Central Office, the National Centre (just off J14 of the M40) in Warwickshire, or in a regional office in the UK.

Criminal Disclosure Check

All roles are subject to a standard DBS criminal record check.



Specialist Skills and Experience

In addition to the generic requirements, the following is provided to give guidance on key requirements for the specific skills areas.

IS Trustee

- Substantial experience of working at a senior level in a digitally focused or major technology organisation ideally with experience of modern technologies such as Cloud, AI, RPA
- Proven experience, and knowledge of methodology, to use technology to unlock business value at scale
- Experience of coaching senior technology and digital professionals
- Experience of risk management either at an advisory or executive role.

Fundraising Trustee

- An individual with senior executive leadership and fundraising experience in a significant UK charity. Of particular interest is experience in direct marketing investments and developing digital strategies,
- Experience of building enduring philanthropic relationships between donors and charities including experience of corporate support/donor recruitment & development.
- Substantial experience gained at a strategic level across a range of channels to support the Board to ensure that the charity's approach to fundraising is in keeping with its purpose, values, and culture and that it is meeting its legal and ethical responsibilities.

Safeguarding Independent Member of Audit & Risk Committee

Proven experience of Safeguarding leadership in a similar size organisation to Guide Dogs to be able to:

- Monitor the organisation's strategic plans to ensure they reflect safeguarding legislation, regulations specific to our activities, statutory guidance, and the safeguarding expectations of the Charities Commission.
- Work with the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) and designated safeguarding lead regularly to review whether the processes that the charity has put in place are creating a safer culture and keeping people safe.
- Champion safeguarding by supporting the Trustees in developing their individual and collective understanding of safeguarding.
- Work with the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee, CEO, designated safeguarding lead and communications team in order to manage all serious safeguarding cases.



Application is by CV and a supporting statement of no more than 250 words outlining the reasons for your interest in the post and why you believe yourself to be suitable. Please include your full contact details including daytime and evening telephone numbers, together with details of two referees.

The preferred method of application is online at www.inclusiveboards.co.uk/opportunities

If you are unable to apply online please email your application to guidedogs@inclusiveboards.co.uk

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. This form will not be disclosed to anyone involved in assessing your application.

The closing date for applications is 13th November 2022

Timetable

First stage interviews with Inclusive Boards ongoing until w/c 28/11/2022

Final panel interview with Guide Dogs w/c 12/12/2022