



## Guide Dogs needs your support

Guide Dogs new service, My Guide supports people with sight loss to get out and about. Research has shown over 180,000 people who are visually impaired never or very rarely go out alone. My Guide helps people with sight loss get out of their homes and back into the community, rebuilding confidence and independence.

This service is now available and we are especially seeking support from people in the Northampton area.

Local visually impaired person Harriet Smith explains how the My Guide service is helping her.

“My name is Harriet Smith and I am twenty-four years old. I recently enquired about applying for a guide dog, and they suggested the My Guide service. The way the service works is that a visually impaired person is matched to a sighted volunteer in their local area who is willing to take them out and about. Before I met my volunteer, I had a meeting with a member of staff from Guide Dogs who explained the service to me in more detail. I found this useful because it gave me the opportunity to ask questions and express any possible concerns before anything went ahead. A couple of weeks later I was introduced to my guide volunteer Diane for the first time. The purpose of this meeting was to see how well we got on together.

I am still in the early days of using the My Guide service, but I feel it is going well. I have been on two outings with Diane, and I enjoyed both of them. I live in a rural area, so help with catching the bus is something that I feel Diane will help me to build my confidence. I enjoy cooking, so I am planning to write a shopping list and go with Diane to a supermarket. As time goes on I am looking forward to exploring the local area and perhaps visiting some different places. I think the My Guide service will benefit me because it will help to increase my independence when I am out and about. It will also be a good way of developing my confidence towards getting a guide dog. I am also looking forward to the companionship it will offer, and to have the opportunity to go out with someone different other than my family.

Guide Dogs are seeking volunteers who may have a couple of hours to give on a regular basis to help a person who is blind or partially sighted? Almost



anyone can become a My Guide Volunteer, as long as you are over 18 and agree to a Criminal Records Bureau check.

There are two training sessions which are interesting and great fun. The first gives you the skills to safely and confidently guide a person. The second deals with the knowledge, boundaries and safeguarding around delivering My Guide to a service user. Each session lasts around 2 to 3 hours. When the training is completed you will receive a Certificate endorsed by Vision 2020. For further information about how you can get involved please contact Jackie

Elshaw, My Guide Ambassador, on 0771815579 or e mail her on

Jackie.elshaw@guidedogs.org.uk

Notes to editor:

About The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association:

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is a British charitable organization founded in 1934 in Wallasey, Merseyside. Guide Dogs provides independence and freedom to thousands of blind and partially sighted people across the UK through the provision of guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services.

For media enquiries please contact Community Engagement Officer Robert Jinks telephone 01189 838204 or email [robert.jinks@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:robert.jinks@guidedogs.org.uk).

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