



# Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group

## Guidance for Everyone When Guide Dogs Are on Walks (2013)

This Group strives to enable as many visually impaired (VI) people as possible to walk in the countryside. Some VI members have guide dogs and we want to ensure safe walking for dogs as well as their owners.

Although guide dog owners are responsible for their own dogs at all times, the following points will, hopefully, help the owners and give guidance to everyone else.

1. In general, VI members who are guide dog owners prefer their dog to accompany them on walks. Both for the exercise and because they need the dog to get them to and from the starting point of the walk. In addition, the Guide Dog for the Blind Association (GDBA) recommend that dogs are not left at home on their own for more than three hours. Therefore, all official walks should be suitable for guide dogs and other VI members, walk leaders and guides should be prepared to tolerate them.
2. All dogs rush into water, roll in mud and eat animal droppings. As guides cannot be held responsible for preventing these actions, the guide dog owner must decide whether to bring their dog on the walk.
3. No dog can run loose on Access Land between the beginning of March and the end of July. Land owners can also specify restrictions at other times of the year and have the right to shoot any animal that is harassing their livestock without paying compensation. Dogs must, therefore, be on a non-expandable lead which does not exceed two meters in length.
4. All official walks should be planned with opportunities for free running in mind. The leader of the walk is the only person who can say when it is suitable for free running to take place. If someone else thinks that it is appropriate for dogs to run free, they should ask a member of the Executive Committee or the back marker to negotiate with the leader.
5. The guide dog owner is the only person who can decide whether to allow their dog to free run. No one else should release a dog which does not belong to them even if the guide dog owner has asked them to take their dog on the lead. When free running is taking place it is helpful if guides let their owners know what their dog is doing. When free running is over it is the responsibility of the owner to call their dog and replace the lead.

6. Guide dogs should only work in harness when the walk leader has said that it is safe for guide dog owners to walk independently. When in harness the guide dog is working and no one should distract it.
7. Guides should always walk on the right hand side of guide dog owners as guide dogs have been trained to walk on the left hand side.
8. During any period when food is being consumed, guide dogs must be on a short lead immediately at the side of its owner to prevent it from reaching people's food. Equally, everyone should keep their own food away from dogs. Guide dogs must only receive food from their owners.
9. When approaching a stile, the guide owner should instruct their dog to 'wait' whilst they go over first. A guide should hold the lead or collar to ensure that the dog does not try to climb the stile until the owner is safely on the other side. When the owner gives the command for the dog to follow, the guide must then watch the dog as it climbs over the stile and guide its legs if necessary to ensure its safety.
10. Dog owners are responsible for carrying water, first aid supplies and healthcare book for their dogs on all walks.



Thank you for taking the time to read these guidelines. We greatly appreciate your help and cooperation.

We hope that this document answers some of your queries but do not hesitate to contact us if you want to know more.

**Chairman:** Christine Hewitt. **01142366685** or **hewitt.c4@sky.com**

**SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS** We gratefully receive support from the following organisations:

**SHEFFIELD ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND** - who provide us with facilities for meeting and sending out information to members.

**SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL** - The Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Service. Who organise training for guides, and refer and provide information to registered VIPs.

**THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION** - who provide leaders and guides for our walks. Each VIP will have at least one guide.

**[www.sviwg.co.uk](http://www.sviwg.co.uk)**