

Doors 1of3

## PHOTO-STORY

### **Theresa May MP opens-up House of Commons bar to guide dogs!**

Theresa May MP is taking action after a recent survey showed more than half of guide dog owners have been turned away by a service provider such as a pub, restaurant, hotel, shop or bank in the last five years.<sup>1</sup>

The Member of Parliament for Maidenhead has placed a parliamentary motion – signed by over 125 MPs – encouraging businesses to not only welcome guide dog owners through the door, but to make their services fully accessible to blind and partially sighted people.

Joined in the House of Commons' Belamy's Bar by guide dogs Danni and Reuben; Theresa May MP explains: "I am extremely concerned that: Two in five guide dog owners have been turned away by a restaurant and that one in ten hotels state they are not able to accommodate visually impaired people at any time.



"It is not only inconvenient but also very embarrassing for a visually impaired person to be refused access to a restaurant or pub because of their guide dog. I fully support Guide Dogs' vision of a world in which all guide dog owners receive first class customer service."

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has launched a pocket sized reference guide, entitled Opening Doors, for everyone who works in the service industry. It outlines the obligations of pubs, restaurants, hotels, shops and banks, and gives practical advice and tips on how to provide a quality service for visually impaired people and assistance dog users.

Free copies are available by phoning **0118 983 8379**. A new microsite has also been launched on Guide Dogs' website, which can be found at [www.guidedogs.org.uk/access](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/access)

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Guide Dogs plans to reward good practice by presenting Opening Doors certificates to service providers, nominated by blind and partially sighted customers, who have been particularly pleased with the service they have received. These will be presented to winning businesses in the coming months.

End

### **Note to Editor**

**For further media information and photos, please phone Chris Dyson or Vicky Bell in Guide Dogs' Press Office on 0118 983 8281 or 8379 (mobile: 07768 523996).**

### **Top five tips for service providers**

- Explain the layout of your premises and offer to help the customer to a table or to locate the items they plan to purchase.
- If handling cash, explain the denomination of the notes or coins you are handing over. When the customer is paying, tell them the cost and give guidance, if necessary, on where the signature should be written.
- Consider introducing Braille signage, labels and menus (in pubs and restaurants), letting the customer know this is available.
- Advise your staff that guide dogs are highly trained and should not cause any disruption to staff or customers in premises where food and drinks are sold.

- Offer the guide dog a bowl of water.

**/more**

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### Open Your Doors survey: Key Results

- 52% of guide dog owners have been refused entry to a service in the last five years. Two in five guide dog owners (39%) have been turned away by a restaurant.
- One in ten hotels state they are not able to accommodate visually impaired people at any time.
- 40% of guide dog owners say they have had a particularly good experience in one of the services.
- 12% of businesses surveyed said they did not understand their legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act,<sup>2</sup> which makes it unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability.
- 50% of service providers, and seven out of ten restaurants, have concerns about accepting guide dogs.
- <sup>1</sup> *Research carried out with 400 businesses and 100 guide dog owners by Buckingham Research Associates, September 2004.*
- <sup>2</sup> *The Open Your Doors campaign coincides with new rights for disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act, which from October 2004 will require service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their premises. They will need to ensure that there are no physical barriers stopping or making it unreasonably difficult for guide dog owners, and other blind and partially sighted customers, to use their services.*