

Guide Dogs Seek Equality

Always great to see Guide Dogs in Parliament and I have offered my support for their campaign to ensure taxi and minicab drivers receive disability equality training once they receive their licence.

Guide dog owners shared their frustrations regarding how taxi and minicab drivers refused to carry them because of their guide dog. Experiences included, owners being left stranded, told "you'll need to pay extra for the dog" and "I don't carry pets".

Although the Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal for a taxi or minicab driver to refuse to carry an assistance dog, Guide Dogs research found that 42% of people living with sight loss were turned away by a taxi or minicab in the last year because of their guide dog. The research also uncovered that 38% of assistance dog owners have illegally been asked to pay an extra fare for carrying their dog.

Guide Dogs is calling for disability equality training to be made a requirement for all taxi and minicab drivers to help them understand the rights and needs of disabled people and how to welcome assistance dog owners.

Despite the Equality Act being in force, I am disappointed to learn that so many people are illegally turned away from taxis and minicabs because they travel with an assistance dog. I'm asking the Government to ensure all taxi and minicab drivers receive disability equality training so they are aware of the law and how to assist their disabled customers in the right way.

James White, Senior Campaigns Manager at Guide Dogs, commented:

"Imagine you were turned away by a taxi driver or asked to pay an extra fare, for no good reason. Despite legal protection, this regularly happens to people living with sight loss because they are travelling with a guide dog.

"This discrimination is not only illegal, it knocks people's confidence and can stop them doing everyday things that most people take for granted."

"We were encouraged by the Government's supportive comments and hope they will take action to introduce training for all taxi and minicab drivers."

For more information about Guide Dogs and its Access All Areas campaign, contact Jennifer Keen on 01189 838388 or Jennifer.keen@guidedogs.org.uk