

In 2006, the inaugural year of the Aaron Boyce Memorial Greater Birmingham 7's, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association also celebrated its 75th Anniversary.

Guide Dogs 75th Fact Box:

- One of the earliest known examples of the partnership between a dog and a blind person is depicted in a first-century AD mural
- The formal training of guide dogs was started in Germany during the First World War by Dr Gerhard Stalling to help soldiers blinded at the Front
- Mrs Dorothy Eustis, an American trainer of police and army dogs, established her own centre called "L'Oeil qui Voit" (*The Seeing Eye*) in Vevey, Switzerland in 1928
- In 1930, two British German Shepherd enthusiasts, Muriel Crooke and Rosamund Bond contacted Eustis to see if a similar scheme could be set up in Britain
- In 1931 Allen Caldwell with Flash, G W Lamb with Meta, Musgrave Frankland with Judy and Thomas Ap Rhys with Folly became the first qualified guide dog partnerships in the UK
- In 1932 Russian Captain Nikolai Liakhoff, a trainer from L'Oeil qui Voit, arrived in the UK and was instrumental in the successful development of guide dog training in the country
- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was founded in 1934
- The first official Guide Dogs training centre was opened in Leamington in 1941
- In 1965 millions of people were introduced to Guide Dogs through the popular BBC children's television programme Blue Peter
- A purpose-built breeding centre was opened at Tollgate House, near Warwick in 1970
- In 1981 and 1986 pups born to Blue Peter dog Goldie were also donated and the programme followed their progress
- Over the past 75 years, the lives of over 21,000 visually impaired people have been transformed by the life-changing level of independence a guide dog provides
- Today there are currently around 4,700 working guide dog partnerships in the UK
- Guide Dogs is the world-leader in the breeding and training of guide dogs
- Around 1,000 guide dog pups are born every year
- It costs £10 per day to breed, train and care for each guide dog

- The average working life of a guide dog is around six years

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- Guide Dogs requires over £40 million a year to continue its work
- Guide Dogs receives no government funding, and so relies entirely upon the generosity of the public, companies and other organisations to continue bringing freedom, confidence and independence to visually impaired people
- Around 75% of guide dog pups complete their training and go on to transform the life of a visually impaired person. Those that don't quite make the grade are found alternative careers with other organisations such as Hearing Dogs, Dogs for the Disabled and Police Dogs – or placed as a pet in a loving home
- Local Fundraising Branches raise £3 million a year through organising events such as raffles, sponsored walks and concerts
- The charity has a dedicated army of volunteers including over 200 brood bitch holders, over 1,000 puppy walkers and many thousands of local branch fundraisers
- Guide Dogs is the UK's main provider of professional staff trained to work with visually impaired people
- Guide Dogs is respected as an influential charity campaigning on behalf of its service users particularly in the areas of access and mobility
- Guide Dogs is acknowledged for its eye health information and education campaigns and regarded for its prevention and care programme of ophthalmic (eye-care) research
- Guide Dogs' mission is to provide guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services that meet the needs of blind and partially-sighted people
- Guide Dogs' vision is a world in which all people who are blind and partially-sighted enjoy the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as everyone else

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