

PRESS RELEASE
Tuesday, 09 March

Guide Dogs launches A-Z Guide to Obstacles at Westminster Reception
(see attached image)

Advertising boards and hedges, scaffolding and wheelie bins; these all feature in the A-Z Guide to Street Obstacles. The publication was launched at Westminster by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association as part of its campaign 'Safer Streets for Blind and Partially Sighted People', on Tuesday, 09 March.

The A-Z Guide includes a pop-up pavement, with three-dimensional pedestrian obstructions - Slalom Street **(see attached image)**. It offers practical suggestions for an obstacle-free environment. These include cutting back overhanging hedges, and avoiding blocked walkways by removing badly positioned A-boards and wheelie bins **(see attached image)**.

Today's often cluttered street scene is a real hazard to the country's 1.4 million vision-impaired people. Tom Pey, Guide Dogs' Director of Policy, explains:

"We know of cases where vision impaired people have received serious facial injuries from sharp, overhanging branches, or have stumbled on uneven pavements. Frequently we hear of clients walking into A-boards, whilst others have been forced into the road - close to traffic they cannot see - because cars are parked, blocking pavements."

The launch event for Members of Parliament took place at Portcullis House, Westminster, and was sponsored by Edward Davey MP. It follows an Early Day Motion presented by Dr Rudi Vis MP to the House of Commons, which has been signed by over 100 MPs who are backing the Safer Streets campaign.

Guide Dogs is also working with local authorities, retailers, drivers and other residents to reduce pedestrian hazards, and has launched a web-page <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/saferstreets> where people can find out more about the campaign.

Suggestions for an obstacle-free environment include:

Regularly trimming back branches that overhang pavements.

Finding an alternative parking area that doesn't involve blocking walkways.

Leaving wheelie bins in driveways where possible, ensuring pedestrian areas remain clear. Reflective white stripes on bins highlight them to people with limited vision.

A-boards and shop displays should be positioned in designated areas, which don't obstruct pedestrians.

The Guide appeals to litter-louts: broken glass might cut guide dogs' paws and chewing gum can stick in dogs' hair.

Contractors should ensure pavements are level and that barriers surround roadworks, whilst ensuring alternative safe walking routes.

Cyclists should use bicycle tracks where available, avoid riding on the pavement or abandoning their bikes outside the entrance to shops.

For further information about Guide Dogs' Safer Streets campaign, including copies of the A-Z Guide to Street Obstacles, phone Chris Dyson on 0118 983 8281 or log-on to <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/saferstreets>

Guide Dogs' A-Z Guide to Obstacles are:

A = A-boards
B = Bollards
C = Cyclists on pavements and cycles discarded outside shops
D = Debris ... from building work, e.g. piles of sand
E = Electric and other cables
F = Food (discarded food can distract guide dogs)
G = Gum (discarded chewing gum can stick to guide dogs' hair)
H = Hedges overgrown
I = Irregular walking surfaces
J = Jagged glass - broken bottles (broken glass can cut guide dogs' paws)
K = Kerb stones
L = Lampposts
M = Mess from other dogs
N = Narrow walkways as a result of obstructions
O = OBSTACLES
P = Pot-holes in badly maintained pavements
Q = Queues
R = Roadworks - badly fenced
S = Scaffolding
T = Trash - discarded bin bags and loose rubbish
U = Umbrellas
V = Vehicles parked on pavements
W = Wheelie bins
X = X-ings (Crossings) - lack of aids for vision-impaired people
Y = Youngsters on roller-blades and skateboards
Z = Zig-zagging around unnecessary street obstacles

End

Note to Editor

For further media information, please contact Chris Dyson or Alison Wade in Guide Dogs' Communications Department on 0118 983 8281 or 8380 (mobile: 07768 523996) or log on to our website:

<http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/saferstreets>