

Assistance Dogs Policy

Season 2026/27

As a Club we want all supporters to be able to come and enjoy football and support the Club at home and away matches. We recognise that for supporters with a registered disability, this may not always be possible, and some supporters may not be able to attend football on their own without the support of an assistance dog. The Club therefore welcomes disabled supporters who wish to attend with an assistance dog, subject to the guidance below.

The Law

The Equality Act 2010 recognises disability as a protected characteristic. An assistance dog is defined as a dog that has been trained to assist a disabled person with their day-to-day activities. Assistance Dogs are considered a form of mobility or auxiliary aid, and disabled individuals have the legal right to be accompanied by their assistance dogs in most public places.

What is an assistance dog?

An assistance dog is a dog which should be specifically trained to a high standard to assist the disabled person. The training can be undertaken by a recognised organization or undertaken privately.

Emotional Support and Therapy Dogs

While we recognise the benefits emotional support and therapy dogs provide, they are not trained to perform practical assistive tasks or medical alerts that mitigate a disability.

As a result, they are not classified under disability laws and there is no legal requirement to grant emotional support and therapy dogs access to London Stadium or Victoria Road Stadium.

Expected behaviours of an assistance dog

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that Assistance Dogs:

- Are 'highly' trained.
- Will not wander freely around the premises.
- Will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner, unless performing a task or alert behaviour.
- Are trained to go to the toilet on command and so are unlikely to foul in a public place.

Coming to football with an assistance dog

To bring an assistance dog on a matchday, you would firstly need to provide evidence that you have a registered disability. You can find out more about this in our Access Statement.

You should then get in touch with the Accessibility team to let the Club know that you would like to bring an assistance dog. Whether you are purchasing a season ticket or a match ticket, we want to assist in providing the best possible matchday experience for you and your assistance dog.

Some of the questions we may ask are:

- What assistance the dog provides and whether it performs any specific tasks.

- What seating you require – ambulant/wheelchair and whether a PA is accompanying you.
- The size and breed of the dog, so we can find the best available seating for you, your dog and a PA if attending.
- Whether the dog meets the criteria of being highly trained and has attended sporting venues before with you.
- Although not a mandatory requirement, it is helpful if you do share with us any accredited training your dog has received as well as any registration/I.D Cards issued to you.

Although not a requirement, we would recommend that your dog wears a recognisable jacket or harness that identifies it as an assistance dog. You can find out more information at <https://www.assisteddogs.org.uk/>

Hygiene facilities are available to assistance dogs on Bridge 4, opposite turnstile D and down the staircase ahead (lift access is available). Space for assistance dogs is available in the accessible viewing areas to the side of the supporter.

Visting away clubs

Please contact our Accessibility Team at accessibility@westhamunited.co.uk if you are intending to travel to an away fixture with your assistance dog. We ask that you get in touch with them as soon as possible, so that they may work with the host club where appropriate.

Handler expectations

We ask that the handler ensures the assistance dog:

- Is always kept on a lead.
- Uses the designated spending area and is not allowed to foul on paths or other non-designated areas.
- Has their feeding and toilet needs met.
- Behaves in an appropriate manner by sitting or lying quietly on the floor next to its owner, unless performing a task or alert behaviour.

As a general rule, supporters and staff should:

- not pet, call, or distract an Assistance Dog, **without the handler's permission; and**
- advocate for handlers by discouraging others from feeding or distracting the dog **without the handler's permission.**

Unexpected behaviours of an assistance dog

We appreciate that even though assistance dogs are highly trained, there may be times where they are distracted from their handler. However, the following undisciplined behaviours may pose cause for concern for the handler, the assistance dog and other people in close proximity.

- Lunging, pulling strongly on a lead, or barking and jumping up (unless these behaviours form part of an escalated alert and are directed at their handler).
- Displaying aggressive or very fearful temperaments e.g. cowering or showing aggression.
- Poorly cared for dogs that constitute a hygiene risk.
- Dogs that are not toilet trained.

If the Club is made aware of concerns, we will work with the supporter where possible, to try to resolve these issues. However, if the assistance dog is not presenting the expected behaviours then the Club may be required to revoke the assistance dog's access to the stadium.