

Support Dogs' charity magazine

Aura

Spring / Summer 2023

Edition 42

“We cannot put into words the effect that Raife has had on our lives!”

Alison, autism assistance client

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Seizure alert dog Cobble brings a brighter future for police officer Nicola

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Marathon Mand celebrates faithful support dog Jupiter as he retires

Find out more on page 14

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For Autism, For Epilepsy, For Disability

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MESSAGE FROM RITA...

The importance of volunteering

One unexpected impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis has been a decline in volunteering.

The Government's Community Life Survey shows the lowest levels of volunteering in the UK on record. This is felt most heavily by smaller charities that are so so reliant on volunteering, but do not have the resources to launch a large national campaign to promote it.

During the pandemic, many volunteers stopped and reprioritised their time, or relocated. For others, cost of living increases have meant they are no longer able to retire or volunteer while also working part-time.

Volunteers are vital to our charity. Last year, our volunteers collectively provided over 300,000 hours of support. Simply put, without this we would not be able to train any dogs or provide any of our life saving services.

Volunteering with Support Dogs not only benefits the lives of the families we support but also has a positive impact on the lives of our volunteers. People often have preconceptions about why they don't think they can volunteer and we are really keen to change these and encourage more people to get in touch.

Puppy socialising is one of the main ways that people can volunteer for us. As a volunteer puppy socialiser you help home

and look after a support dog puppy during their first 12 months. We are desperately seeking more people living within 1 hour of Sheffield to help with this.

Did you know?

- We **provide holiday cover** if you need time away from your puppy at any point.
- The majority of **training takes place at your home** with you receiving one on one support from our training team. Volunteers include those who work regularly from home, parents of children of all ages and individuals and couples who have retired.
- We **pay the costs** for all food, equipment and vets.

You can stay in touch with the puppy once it leaves you and see it go on to change someone's life.

You will find more information about volunteering in this magazine. Please do get in touch if you would like to volunteer your time to help our charity continue to save and improve more lives.

Rita Howson
Chief executive

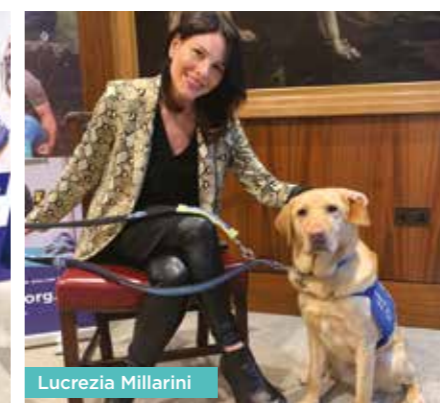


Celebrating 30 years of Support Dogs

Support Dogs has just celebrated the 30th anniversary of its pioneering, life-changing work as a registered charity.



Angela Ripon CBE



Lucrezia Millarini

As part of our celebrations, we were delighted to be the guests of The Kennel Club in London, which hosted a reception for our charity to mark the exceptional impact of our work.

The event was co-presented by our charity's President, **Angela Rippon CBE**. Angela has been involved with the charity since its very beginning after meeting and being inspired by the charity's founder Val Strong, over 30 years ago at Crufts.

Angela was joined on stage by our

patron **Lucrezia Millarini**. Together they interviewed clients from all three of our autism, disability and epilepsy programmes. This included Toni Brown Griffin, who has epilepsy and is also blind. Her support dog Wolfy provide her with a 42 minute warning before all epileptic seizures and is also dual trained to work as her guide dogs.

We were delighted that over 100 guests were able to join us for this event including our patrons Lord & Lady Scarbrough and Roger Jefcoate CBE DL.

About Support Dogs

It's Support Dogs' passion and commitment to ensure that people affected by autism, epilepsy and physical disability can enjoy a greater level of independence. We aim to do this by providing, training and supporting registered assistance dogs.

We provide:

Autism assistance dogs for autistic children. The dogs are trained to provide safety for the child and reduce stress in social environments.

Seizure alert dogs for people with epilepsy. The dogs are trained to provide a hundred per cent reliable, 10-55 minute warning prior to the onset of an epileptic seizure, which enables them to get to a place of their choosing and take control of the situation.

In some instances it has been reported that seizure alert dogs have also been shown to reduce seizure frequency.

Disability assistance dogs for people with physical disabilities. The client's own pet dog is trained to perform tasks which are specifically tailored to their individual needs; examples of these tasks include:

- Opening and closing doors
- Raising the alarm
- Fetching the post
- Loading and unloading the washing machine
- Assisting with dressing and undressing

Support Dogs is a registered charity and does not charge for its services. However we rely entirely on voluntary donations and receive no government funding.

Chief Executive: Rita Howson

Chair: David Hobson

Honorary President: Angela Rippon CBE

Patrons: Roger Jefcoate CBE DL
The Earl & Countess of Scarbrough
Elaine Paige OBE
Lucrezia Millarini

Contact

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Sheffield S9 2RX
Registered Charity Number: 1088281

info@supportdogs.org.uk
www.supportdogs.org.uk

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To learn more or donate call

0114 261 7800

or Whatsapp us on

07852 010229



Could you volunteer with Support Dogs?

Volunteering is vital to our charity and we are reliant on the kindness of so many to provide our services. It is also fun, hugely rewarding and there are lots of ways you can get involved. Here are just four..

1. Become a Puppy Socialiser.

Puppy socialisers look after a puppy in training from their home over its first year. Holiday cover is provided and we provide all food, equipment and medical costs for free.

2. Become a bed and breakfast foster carer.

Foster carers provide loving homes in the evenings and at weekends for a support dog who is now in full time training. We can transport the dog to and from the training centre every day.

3. Adult dog socialisers.

These volunteers provide a loving home for an older dog to build its confidence before it starts full time training. This can vary from a few weeks to a couple of months.

4. Dog toy making.

When a new puppy or dog in training joins Support Dogs,



Deena and Regis

we love to give them a whole load of goodies so that they can settle into their puppy socialiser's or foster carer's homes, learn, relax and importantly play! Could you make snuffle mats or pull toys so that each of our pups has something new of their own? Find out more at www.supportdogs.org.uk/maketoysforourdogs.

Please note: All volunteers must live within 1 hour of our Sheffield centre so that our dogs can be easily transported.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like to find out more please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/volunteer, phone 0114 261 7800 or email info@supportdogs.org.uk

Why I volunteer as a puppy socialiser



Janet and Frank

Janet and Peter Dyson had always had dogs but when they lost their last one, they decided to have a break. However, when they heard that Support Dogs were looking for puppy socialisers to look after young pups before they start their formal training, they quickly changed their minds.

Within weeks, fox red Labrador puppy Frank had arrived. "What we are doing is so worthwhile - we are helping to give a puppy who will go on to be a life-saving assistance dog the very best start in life," says Janet, aged 63. "It can be hard work - he's a puppy after all - but Frank is the most loving, sweetest dog, and very sociable."

Janet says being a puppy socialiser is ideal for recently retired dog-lovers who don't want the long-term commitment of their own pet. Peter is a retired bank manager and Janet took voluntary redundancy from Sheffield University during the pandemic so for them it's a win-win.

"It keeps us active, and we get lots of support from the charity, and I'd really recommend it to others in a similar situation," she adds.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like to find out more please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/volunteer, phone 0114 261 7800 or email info@supportdogs.org.uk

YOU can be AMAZING in 2023!

Now more than ever, we need the support of people like you to help us change the lives of people with autism, epilepsy and disabilities by taking part in our exciting fundraising challenges. We are here to support you throughout your fundraising journey and can assist you in finding the right event for you.

Get in touch for an informal chat: fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk or 0114 2617800

Parallel Windsor Sunday 2nd July 2023

Parallel Windsor is an in-person national celebration of disability inclusion. A hybrid mass participation event and festival of inclusivity set against the stunning backdrop of the Windsor Great Park. Choose from a range of fully accessible distances with no cut off times: 10km, 5km, 1km, Sensory 360 1km and 100m. A great event for the whole family. Get active, get social, with no barriers for age or ability! Contact us or visit our website to find out more and register your interest.



Fundraising target: £60

Skydive for Support Dogs Any date that suits you

Skydiving is back! The ultimate thrill for adrenaline junkies and a great way to raise funds to transform someone's life. You'll freefall skydive while strapped to a fully qualified BPA instructor allowing you to enjoy the exhilarating feeling of flying through the clouds from over 10,000 feet at up to 120 mph! It is a truly unforgettable experience. You can jump from a number of airfields across the UK, on any date of your choosing and you can jump for FREE if you raise a minimum of £395 in sponsorship for the charity.



Fundraising target: £395

Yorkshire Marathon Festival Sunday 15th October 2023

2023 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Yorkshire Marathon Festival. Be part of this incredible festival of running in the beautiful city of York. Choose from the full marathon or 10 mile route. Capturing the Yorkshire Spirit with its charitable causes and the support of thousands of cheering locals, this year is set to celebrate the qualities of what makes Yorkshire so great: inclusivity and community spirit. Visit our website to find out more and register your interest.



Fundraising target: £325

Inflatable 5km Challenge Throughout the year

The world's largest and best fun run the 'Inflatable 5K' has got even bigger and bouncier! With 32 gigantic obstacles and five pumping music zones to keep you motivated around the course, this is a fun filled event for the whole family, suitable for ages 5+. Events are held across the country with distances from 2.5k to 15k between April and October. To find an event near you, visit our website or get in touch.



Fundraising target: £50

SUPPORT DOGS LOTTERY

Support Dogs has teamed up with Donr to launch a weekly lottery - win up to £10,000 each week.

The money raised will help our life saving work for children and adults affected by autism, epilepsy and disability.

To enter simply text **Dog to 88000** and follow the link.

Alternatively visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/lottery

The lottery takes place each week and payment for your lottery tickets is charged to your mobile phone. You can cancel simply by text at any time. Tickets are £2 each and you can register to have up to five tickets a week (so up to a weekly donation of £10 to our charity) You then get texted your numbers each week and contacted if you win.

This is a great way to support our life-changing work on a regular basis. So please do enter and share with your friends.

A BIG THANK YOU

for your fantastic fundraising

We are continually delighted by people who choose to fundraise for us in such fantastic and inventive ways. As always, there are so many more people we wish to thank than there is room on the page.

Brickhouse Youth Club in Osset.

Paul Winterbottom rowed the length of Britain on his rowing machine and **raised £4000.**

St Clements Golf Club Ipswich for **raising £200** through their ladies group.

Emma Rick raised **£205** through her three day triathlon challenge.

Charlie Cutts for **raising £180** through his charity boxing match.

Lynn Jacobs for the collection of **over £1000** in donations at the funeral of her

mum Wendy Humphreys.

Travelling with Pets for donating **over £1000** from profits made from sales over the past year.

Brenda Cuppit and Friends for **raising £2000** from their annual Easter and Christmas sales.

Barden Clayshoot committee for **raising £15,109** through their annual Clayshoot.

Cambridge University One Health Society for **raising £280** through selling Valentines roses.



An un-ben-lievable year

A huge thank you to the amazing Benjamin Sinclair. He is taking on a year of incredible challenges to raise funds for Support Dogs, after being inspired by his friend Zack Bull who is currently in training with an epilepsy seizure alert dog.

Benjamin has already taken on the Seville and Barcelona Marathons, plus the length of Hadrian's Wall, London Sprint Triathlon, the Richmond Ultra Duathlon and a challenge to lift 1,000,000kg in 24 hours planned for later this year. You can support Benjamin's efforts with a **£10 donation to his appeal by texting BENS to 70085.**

Other ways you can help

Stamps

Did you know? You can donate used postage stamps and albums and we'll recycle and sell them to collectors. Phone **0114 261 7800** or visit **www.supportdogs.org.uk/stamps**

Jigsaws and Lego

Second-hand jigsaws and lego sets and pieces have helped us raise vital funds through our charity's ebay store. If you have a large amount you would like to donate we can even help with postage. Phone **0114 261 7800** or visit **www.supportdogs.org.uk**

Give as you shop

Sadly, Amazon Smile has now closed. Good news - there are other websites that still allow you to raise funds for charity while you shop - at no extra cost to you. You can raise funds for Support Dogs while using the website **www.easyfundraising.org.uk** or **www.giveasyoulive.org.uk**. All major retailers are featured on their sites and it is a really easy way to raise vital funds.

Make toys for our dogs

When a new puppy or dog in training joins Support Dogs, we love to give them a whole load of goodies so that they can settle into their puppy socialiser's or foster carer's homes, learn, relax and importantly play! Could you make snuffle mats or pull toys so that each of our pups has something new of their own?

Find out more at **www.supportdogs.org.uk/maketoyforourdogs**

Support Dogs Retirement and Bereavement Project

In our last magazine we spoke of our work to better understand and support clients as they go through significant life stages with their support dogs. We are so grateful for the response we have received from supporters to this project.

Sadly, a time will come when a dog's working role will end, whether through retirement or passing away. The transition to a support dog's retirement can be difficult for our clients, with multiple feelings of loss and grief. Even though the support dog may not have died, the essence of the partnership has ended. Once retired, the dog will remain living with the client until its life comes to an end, when of course the client experiences a second period of grief.

We are currently seeking funding not only to develop the resources we have to better support clients through these difficult stages, but also to better mark the lives of retired and passed support dogs, and indeed other dogs that have made a significant impact on the lives of our clients, volunteers and supporters. We look forward to updating you as this project develops.



Providing greater support for siblings

The positive impact of a support dog isn't limited to the individual the dog has been matched to work with, but can greatly improve the health, happiness and independence for the wider family.

Adults on our epilepsy and disability programmes talk about the positive impact their support dog has had on their partners. From improving mental health and reducing their care role, to enabling them to do more as a couple, and even allowing partners to return to work.

For the autism programme, the impact on the siblings of the children with autism has also been shown to have huge benefits. For siblings, our autism programme can help to:

- Make the home environment less stressful
- Enable children to more easily access after-school activities
- Reduce care needs of the parents, so then can focus more on their other children
- Encourage joint play and activity between the child with autism and their siblings.



These benefits have previously been unplanned and simply consequential of the support dog being placed with the child with autism.

Support Dogs has now partnered with Yorkshire based charity Sibbs, the only UK charity supporting people who grow up with a disabled brother or sister. This

aims to better maximise the impact that the introduction of a support dog has on any other children or siblings living within that household. We are currently seeking funding to develop this project to provide training, workshops and a more comprehensive package of support to ensure siblings are very much a part of the Support Dogs journey.



Seizure alert dog Cobble hits the beat to a better life

The Metropolitan police officer and formerly fit and active mum of two developed epilepsy out of the blue in 2015. Life as she knew it stopped as she suffered several major seizures a week which led to numerous serious injuries.

Last November Nicola graduated through Support Dogs, epilepsy seizure alert programme. The years of undetected seizures and severe depression have been overtaken by a new sense of optimism and reassurance provided by life-changing dog Cobble, who gives her a 100 per cent guaranteed warning of an oncoming seizure.

"I'd been a Met police officer since 2002," recalls Nicola, aged 41. "If you've seen Road Wars, I was a typical cop that drives fast cars, chases baddies and jumps over fences – that was me.

"Then one day I was off duty and fell and banged my head in the supermarket. Two weeks later I went into the same supermarket with my mother-in-law, and woke up on the floor with her standing over me in a state of panic. That was my first tonic-clonic seizure.

"A paramedic who attended said it was probably a one off. I felt fine and drove back home.

"A week later as I was getting changed at work I apparently collapsed again and had a second seizure. I felt fine afterwards but was taken to Queens Hospital in Romford. I had an MRI scan and they found bleeds on my brain from the fall. From then on, the seizures didn't stop, and got progressively worse.

"My life literally turned upside down."

At that time Nicola had two young children aged three and ten and was a full-time mum.

"I did all the shopping and driving, but suddenly I couldn't drive or work," she says. "I was having about six seizures a week, and about eight temporary absences, and it was getting unmanageable. The kids were terrified."

As well as the seizures, which left her weak and disorientated, Nicola also suffered serious injuries from falling during the seizures. She fell down the stairs on numerous occasions, broke her hand when she fell through the oven door, and had to have four skin grafts after falling on to a hot iron.

She has both tonic-clonic seizures



Life-changing support dog Cobble never misses a seizure

(formerly known as grand mal) when she goes rigid and convulses, and absences (formerly petit mal), plus complex partial seizures which are a combination of both. In all cases, she is oblivious of her surroundings for several minutes, and can take up to an hour to recover.

Nicola was on anti-depressants and was wondering what the point of life was when her husband Mick saw a programme about Support Dogs on TV.

Nicola was accepted on to the Support Dogs epilepsy seizure alert programme, and qualified in late 2022. Cobble gives her a 37-minute advance warning of every oncoming seizure, enabling Nicola to sit on the sofa or lie on the bed. Cobble often lies on the bed with her as she recovers.

Nicola admits that as someone who had never had a dog before, being in the company of a working dog for 24 hours a day, even one as beautiful as Lab Retriever cross Cobble, took some getting used to. Fortunately, husband Mick had been a dog handler in the Marines so was

able to give her a few pointers.

"I'd been an OCD houseproud person, but I soon got used to hair everywhere," she says cheerfully. "Our partnership has really strengthened over the past year that we have been together. He is so obedient – he used to be slightly distracted by my two boys but now he is definitely more focused on me all the time. And he keeps me company during my working day."

Happily, after an eight-month break Nicola was able to return to work as a policewoman, working remotely from home. In fact, she was awarded her 21-year long service award this year. *"I live an hour and a half away from the nearest police station, so if Cobble were to alert me I wouldn't be able to get somewhere safe, so I work via Zoom and teams," she explains.*

Since getting Cobble, Nicola's seizures have reduced to one tonic clonic seizure a week and two temporary absences. *"Just having him there is so reassuring," she says.*

"Thankfully, since having my beautiful 'Wobbsey,' I've not suffered any more serious injuries and now have an amazing

alert time. It's not only reassured me and improved my confidence, but massively given our sons confidence that they can seek help from an adult if they feel worried at all.

"They know I have got him and if I am home alone Cobble is there. That reduces stress – knowing when a seizure is going to happen is one of the biggest benefits of having a dog – it's definitely far better than waking up on the floor!"

"He has never missed a seizure, which is quite amazing"

Cobble alerts Nicola of an oncoming seizure by *"following me like a piece of Sellotape! I can't move without tripping over him, almost strapped to my leg. That's my cue to check in with him and if I don't respond he gives me a head butt. He has never missed a seizure, which is quite amazing," she says.*

Nicola's two sons, Oliver aged 11, and Callum, who is 16, both adore Cobble, who is now an important part of the family. And she makes sure he has plenty of down time on their walks which can take a while as so many people want to stop and chat about him when they see his Support Dogs jacket.

The placid, handsome dog is the perfect ambassador for Support Dogs. Recently he attended a black-tie event on a Thames riverboat for the Met Police Federation with Nicola and Mick. She adds: *"Cobble stole the show and was exceptionally well behaved – the Met's senior ranks didn't get a look in!"*

Nicola's confidence has grown so much since having Cobble that the family are thinking of planning a holiday abroad. *"That I have the confidence to even contemplate that shows how far I've come," she says. The only thing that she can't do is drive – which used to be her passion – but Nicola says she is now much more accepting of life as it now is.*

"I'm in such a better place than before.

Looking back, I wonder how on earth did I cope mentally? I lost my driving licence, had so many injuries from falling when I had a seizure, but now I have got Cobble it makes so much difference," she says. "Everything is so much brighter than before. I can't thank Support Dogs enough for what Cobble has done for me. He has completely changed our lives."

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions in the world

600,000 = 1 in 100 people in the UK are living with epilepsy people (approximately)

21 epilepsy related deaths a week

£1.5 billion the cost of epilepsy on the NHS

100,000 emergency hospital admissions due to epilepsy each year

Our support dogs are able to provide a 100% reliable warning up to 50 minutes prior to a person's seizure

For more information about Support Dogs' epilepsy programme go to www.supportdogs.org.uk

Raife the fox-red Labrador is proving a vital lifeline for the Dolman family

Our autism assistance programme is life-changing for both the autistic child and their family. Autism assistance dogs are trained to provide safety and to facilitate a more independent and socially inclusive life for both the autistic child and their family.

Before autism assistance dog Raife joined the Dolman family it was difficult for them to leave the house with son Noah, who is autistic. Noah's autism means that he can be very rigid in his routines and has very limited awareness of danger. Family days out, walking to school or going shopping were often filled with stress and worry and often ended in Noah becoming overwhelmed and having a meltdown.

The family were most concerned about Noah's safety. Approximately 1 in 100 children in the UK are diagnosed with autism. Half of these children will have a tendency to bolt and wander off from their parents or care givers, which of course can be very dangerous if not fatal. Noah who is now 7, was diagnosed as autistic at 3 years of age and would regularly try to bolt off when out in public, often near busy roads and some times near lakes and rivers. He had no understanding of the danger he was putting himself in. It was difficult to stop and left his parents feeling worried every time they went out.

Fox-red Raife began living with the Dolman family in Spring 2022 to begin supporting them and complete the final stages of what had been for Raife a prolonged training programme due to the delays that Covid brought to the charity.

Mum Alison explains "When Support Dogs first matched Noah with Raife it was easy to see this was the beginning of a special friendship. They both share a very playful nature and love nothing more than playing and having fun together. They love running through the woods together, going to the park or to the beach. That bond was immediate."

The improvements with day to day life were also obvious for the family. Alison tells us "Before Raife we would try to go



Noah and Raife have a very special friendship

out for meals and had to leave halfway through. We also really struggled to walk to school as I'd have to carry him as well as his little sister Summer."

Noah will now walk with Raife attached alongside him, walking nicely and stopping at the roads with Raife to

wait to cross. So we can finally walk to school!

They run with each other whilst on walks, he very rarely tries to run away now when Raife is with him as they are too busy playing with the ball or playing fetch in the water. If he feels any kind



of anxiousness or gets upset Raife is straight away there distracting Noah to play with him or just laying his head on Noah's lap so he can be calm and stroke him.

Mum Alison says: "We now go for days out and meals as a family and Noah will happily sit nicely the whole time, knowing Raife is there. In the restaurant Noah will often take his shoes off and just sit feeling him under his feet."

Noah was also struggling a lot with sleeping and would wake many times through the night. Bedtime routines are now much calmer for the family. Every evening Raife will go and lay with Noah before bed.

"It is amazing how Noah has changed over the past year. We are so grateful to Support Dogs for changing Noah's and our lives. We cannot put into words the effect that Raife has had on our

lives, only to say that he is absolutely and truly a member of the family and is loved by all of us. We couldn't imagine life without you now Raife. Thank you!"

Support Dog's autism programme is our most in-demand programme and space on it is limited due to the charity's resources. The charity provides this support entirely free of charge.

"We cannot put into words the effect that Raife has had on our lives"



For more information about Support Dogs' autism assistance programme go to www.supportdogs.org.uk or phone 0114 261 7800

Whole Lottie love

Buying a puppy and having it successfully trained as a disability assistance dog by Support Dogs has given client Sydney a reason to look to the future with confidence.

When Sydney Lamb had got to the point where she didn't want to get out of bed in the morning, she knew she needed a dog.

The former management accountant had to give up work after being diagnosed with ME and functional neurological disorder which caused cognitive problems, pain, severe exhaustion and vertigo.

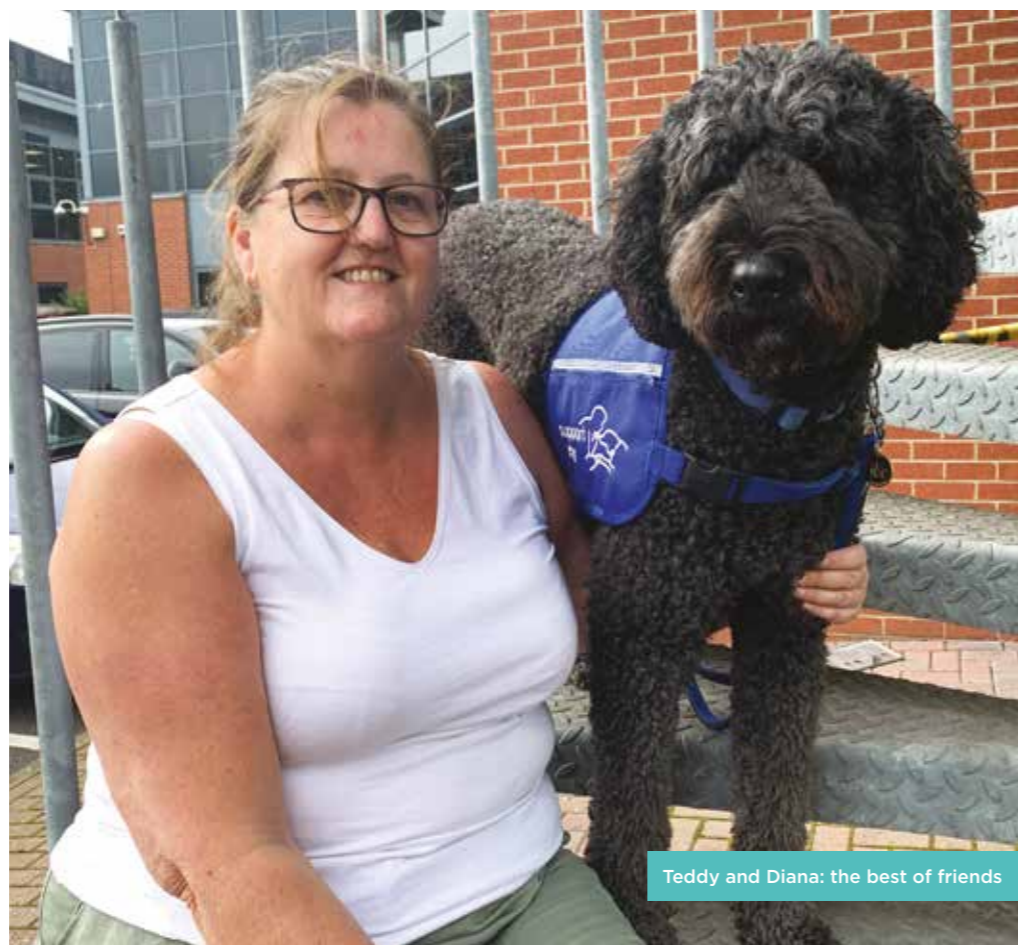
"It was when my neurologist told me that I could not go back to work that I rang up and bought Lottie," says Sydney, aged 52, from Bristol. *"I just wanted some company, and I'd always wanted a dog. I was very down and had got to the stage where I thought: 'what's the point of getting up', but if you have a dog you have to get up."*

Lottie is a large 'Newfipoo' - a calm, cuddly cross between a standard poodle and a Newfoundland and it's fair to say that she has transformed Sydney's life. From being at a very low ebb to coming to terms with a very different lifestyle to the previously busy one she was used to, Sydney acknowledges that Lottie has helped her slowly regain some independence and to rebuild her life.

"My condition means that every week or so I will feel very disorientated and ill and end up on the floor and can't move, and then I feel sick, sweaty, exhausted and in pain for some time afterwards," she explains. *"I also have cognitive problems. I was forgetting things, and it gradually got worse until I was very unwell."*

"I had always worked in managerial or financial jobs and had a maths degree so thought I was fairly intelligent and in control; but all of a sudden, I couldn't remember things or do simple things like call phone numbers."

"I used to work long hours and all my contacts were at work; I didn't have



Teddy and Diana: the best of friends

"Having Lottie means I can go out of the house with more confidence"

time to see friends so had few local friends as any spare time was spent with my husband and children. When I had to give up work, I went from having no spare time to having nothing to do."

Doctors suggested that gentle walking might help certain aspects of Sydney's condition, and having a dog was an ideal solution. *"We had a big garden,*

so even if I couldn't walk the dog I could throw a ball for her, or my husband and daughters who were still living at home at the time could take her for walks for me."

Sydney noticed that Lottie helped to keep her in a straight line when they walked together and wanted her to get formally trained to do that consistently, but had reservations. *"I found Support Dogs and thought that was exactly what I needed. I love Lottie and she is such a massive part of my life, but I was worried it might take away all her personality by training her."*

Her fears were unfounded. Lottie has proved to be incredible around the house and when they are out in public,

but put her in a field without her jacket and she is like a spring lamb running all over the place, just enjoying being a dog.

Sydney says: *"Lottie has proved to be incredible around the house; she picks things up for me off the floor - if I am dizzy, bending down is a nightmare - or if I am on the sofa feeling rotten, she will fetch my slippers, my socks or a blanket. She opens doors for me but is yet to do the ironing or washing up!"*

"Outside the home she is absolutely fantastic. Dogs are usually trained to walk to heel but I wanted her to walk slightly in front of me and that keeps me propelled forward and in a straight line."

Sydney says that the bond is even stronger with an assistance dog than with a pet dog.

"She knows when I need her, and she is absolutely glued to my side when I start feeling unwell. I am very vulnerable when I'm on the floor outside, so she sits down next to me and braces to help me get up."

Sydney now lives alone, so Lottie's support is even more essential. She

says: *"When we go out to the shops and she has her jacket on, people come and talk to me. She is a stunning-looking dog, and always attracts attention. Having Lottie means I can go out of the house with more confidence."*

Sydney used to be very nervous about going out on her own but now, with Lottie, she travels to see her daughters in London on the Tube, bus and train, and Lottie keeps her safe and in a straight line. The pair have been to the theatre, cinema, and comedy clubs.

"When we are in a shop, she gives me that little bit of stability. Having Lottie with me means I can concentrate on her and she will get things off the shelf for me," she adds. *"She has given me confidence when I am out, and she is a lovely companion."*

"Support Dogs are so flexible and understand our needs, and I have been amazed at how much they can get dogs to do! They have been wonderful."

Find out more about our disability programme at www.supportdogs.org.uk

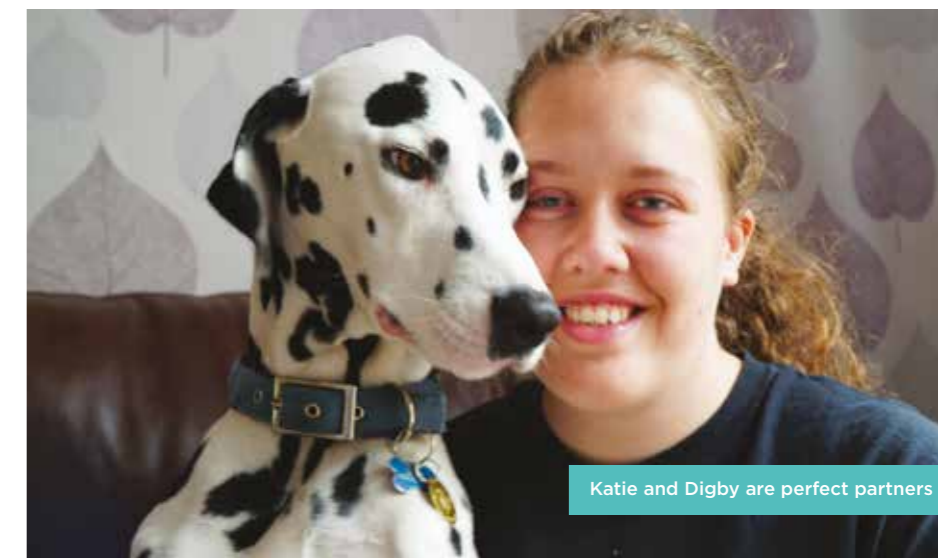


Digby & Katie are winners!

Digby the Dalmatian disability assistance dog has been an absolute life saver for his young owner/client Katie Baldock, who has a rare genetic muscle disorder which means she has to use a wheelchair much of the time.

Last year, it was Digby who needed a helping paw from Katie. Digby really struggled after Katie was hit by a car reversing late in 2021 and knocked out of her wheelchair.

Digby became really anxious about leaving the house and being around roads. Since then, Katie has been having lots of extra training with Support Dogs client services team to help Digby return to his old self and has done amazingly. After lots of hard work both Digby and Katie we back our working together and enjoying the independence a support dog partnership brings. We were delighted to announce Katie and Digby as winners of our annual partnership of the year.



Katie and Digby are perfect partners

Marathon Mand

In April Amanda Davidson took on the remarkable challenge of completing the London Marathon in her wheelchair in aid of Support Dogs.

Amanda did this to mark the retirement of her loving support dog Jupiter at 10 years of age.

Amanda explains the impact that Jupiter has made on her and her family's life.

"Since I was two years old I only had one true dream - to be a Police Officer. Apparently, our backyard gate was no challenge to me and I could be regularly found at the local station colouring in recruitment brochures and eating Smarties!"

"At 19 I joined the Metropolitan Police in 1988 and was assigned to Southwark in South London. Unfortunately, my career was to be short lived when I received a back injury protecting a young woman in a domestic dispute call. I have no regrets about this incident as they took me to where I am now."

"After 10 years I was retired having received multiple commendations - including one for Bravery following an armed robbery where I tackled a 6'6" male with a gun. On the day I left London I met my husband, Mark, and we now have two brilliant kids - Tasha, 23 and Tyler, 20."

"Eventually I joined the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) as a 999 call taker and then after four years in



Faithful support dog Jupiter is ready to retire

the Control Room I became a Serious Incident Investigator for EMAS where I looked at unexpected deaths, or severe injury incidents, to identify what had happened so that action could be taken to try and prevent them from happening again."

Healthwise I was not lucky - I had developed Lupus, had a small stroke at 38 and my back deteriorated resulting in me having to use a wheelchair. Even

with these I managed 13 years with the Ambulance Service but it became too much for my system and I had to leave."

"There is one important family member I have not yet mentioned - Jupiter, my Support Dog. He's a wonderful black lab, a slow plodder and a dog that just takes everything in his stride. It was not until I got him that I realised how often I drop things, and how much energy it costs me."

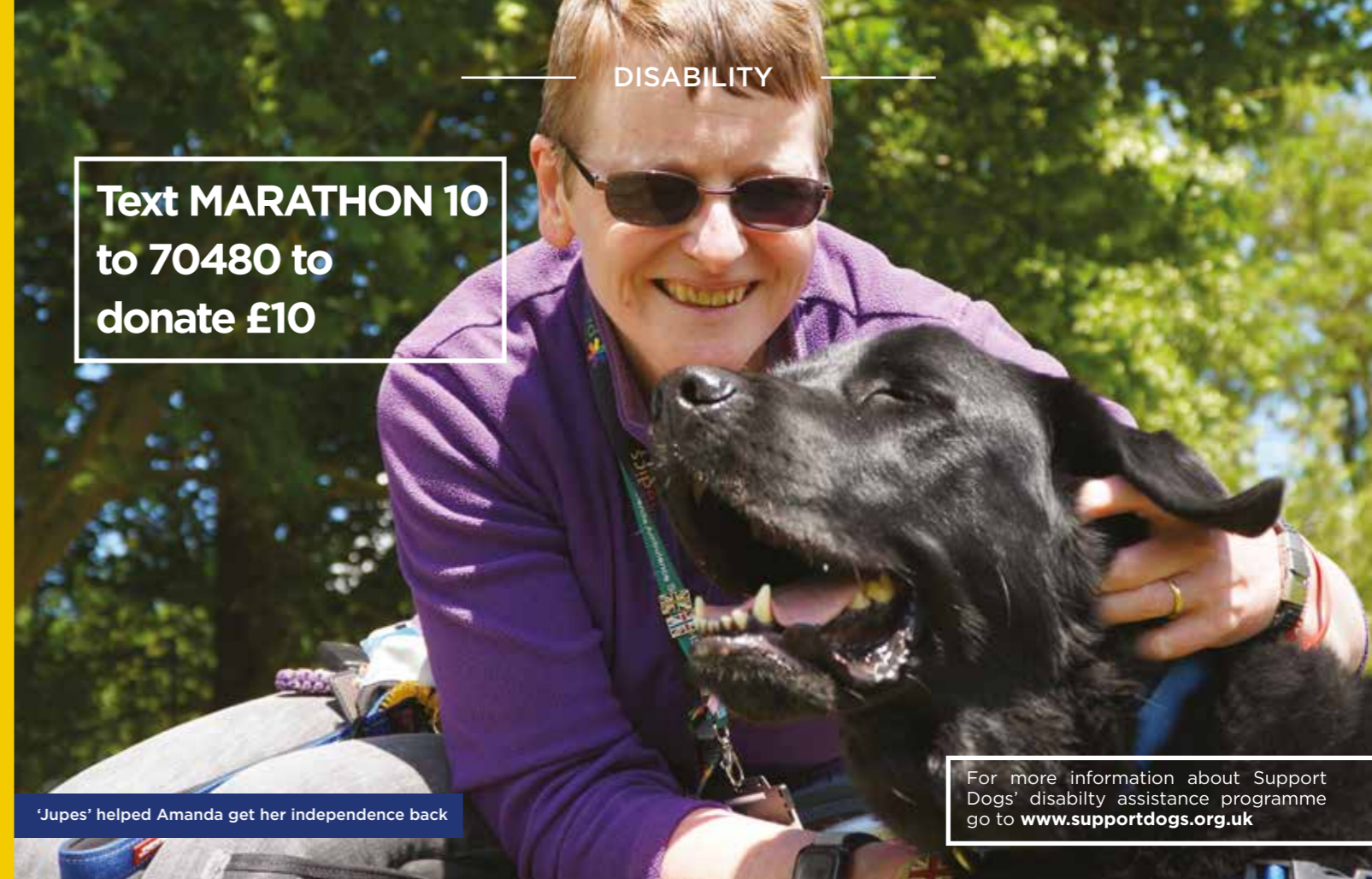
"I had always been determined that my kids would not be my carers and because of Jupiter they never have been. I do not have the words for how much I owe Support Dogs and Jupes for changing my life. Because of Jupiter I had found me again. Because of Jupiter I have climbed a mountain, and become an archer who has taken two UK records!"

Amanda first contacted Support Dogs in 2013 to enquire if her pet black Labrador Jupiter could be trained to support her as a disability assistance dog."

"Jupiter was my pet dog and the charity's amazing team trained him up to become my support dog and meet my specific needs. He fetches my phone or crutches or anything else



**Text MARATHON 10
to 70480 to
donate £10**



'Jupes' helped Amanda get her independence back

For more information about Support Dogs' disability assistance programme go to www.supportdogs.org.uk

I need, opens and closes doors, drags the laundry basket around the house, and loads the washing machine. He pushes buttons for me - the list is extensive," explains Amanda.

"Over the past 8 years he has given me back my independence and my ability to care for myself without needing to depend on my family. That meant so much to me."

"Jupiter and I are a team and now as he retires it is my time to care for him. Support Dogs will be providing me with a new dog to take over but we don't know how long that will take."

"So while I am waiting I thought I should take on a new challenge and an opportunity came up with the London Marathon. I have taken on a few challenges over recent years in both

my chair and my adapted trike, but nothing like a marathon!"

*"Support Dogs is a charity where every penny counts so I am taking on the London Marathon in my wheelchair with Tasha joining me to help raise vital funds for the charity. **If anyone would like to support us in this challenge please text MARATHON 10 to 70480 to donate £10.**"*

Don't miss our superstar support dog Tinks on CBeebies!



Our little support dog, Tinks is currently starring on CBeebies' Dog Squad. Tinks provides client Charli Colquhoun with invaluable help as a

disability assistance dog.

Tinks is one of five working dogs selected by the BBC to take part

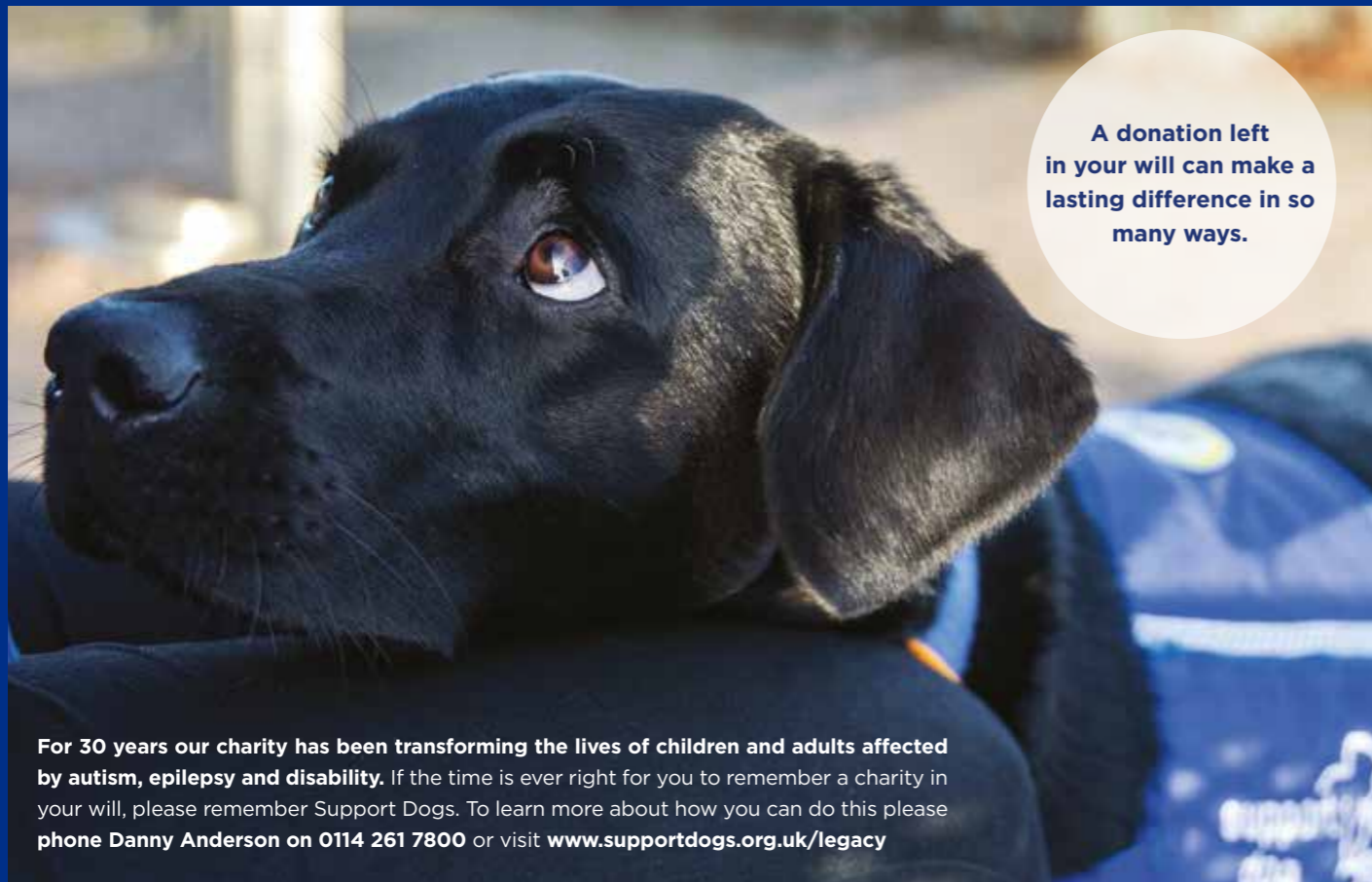
in the 15-episode series which combines live action with animation and follows the pooches and their owners or handlers on a series of missions in which they show off their life-changing abilities. We're delighted that Tinks and Charli have been able to shine a light on the life-transforming work of assistance dogs, and charities such as Support Dogs.

You can watch all episodes of the series now on BBC iPlayer.



Could you leave a gift in your will to Support Dogs?

One in every three support dogs only exists thanks to the wonderful kindness of donations left to our charity in wills.



A donation left in your will can make a lasting difference in so many ways.

For 30 years our charity has been transforming the lives of children and adults affected by autism, epilepsy and disability. If the time is ever right for you to remember a charity in your will, please remember Support Dogs. To learn more about how you can do this please phone Danny Anderson on 0114 261 7800 or visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/legacy



Support Dogs' merchandise

CUDDLY DOGS IN SUPPORT DOG JACKETS



Collie £20



Bull dog £20



Husky £20

BEST SELLER

SUPPORT DOG PIN BADGES £2 EACH



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Water Bottle £16



Fox Terrier Key Ring £5



Lab Key Ring £5

Visit our website www.supportdogs.org.uk/shop for more gifts and merchandise.

Free will writing services

As gifts donated to us in wills are so important to our charity, we offer a free will writing service for those interested in supporting Support Dogs.

We are members of the National Free Wills Network and can provide you with details of a number of solicitors in your local area who will be able to support you in writing a will, either in person, by post or by phone at no cost to you.

If you are interested in learning more about this, please complete the contact form opposite and we will send you an information pack via the Free Wills Network.

Alternatively, please phone **0114 261 7800** or visit www.supportdogs.org.uk

We will not share your details with any solicitors, and the pack will allow you to contact your chosen solicitor when you are ready.

Free will writing services form

I would like more information to be sent to the following address.

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Please return this form to:
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Dog key rings <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow lab <input type="checkbox"/> Fox terrier	£5 each		
Water Bottle	£16		
Christmas cards - pack of 20	£6		
Postage	£2.99	N/A	£2.99
Total:			

Or order online here: supportdogs.org.uk/shop

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Payment method Cash Cheque
(Please tick)

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Support Dogs
21 Jessops Riverside, Brightside Lane
Sheffield, S9 2RX



Sponsor a support dog

From **£5 a month** or a one-off yearly payment, you can **sponsor any of the dogs** below, or visit our website **www.supportdogs.org.uk** for other dogs you can sponsor.

£5

Your £5 a month could **train a support dog** to be able to search, bring life-saving medication and call for help if its client becomes ill.

£10

Your £10 a month could provide **24 hours of vital care** by a support dog for someone affected by epilepsy.

£20

Your £20 a month could enable the **first visit for a child with autism** to meet their future support dog at their home.



TINKS

As seen on CBeebies!

Breed: Lhasa Apso **Job:** Disability assistance
Home: London **Birthday:** 13th July



MARKY

Breed: Labrador **Job:** Autism assistance
Home: South Yorkshire **Birthday:** 26th March



IGGY

Breed: Labrador **Job:** Autism assistance
Home: East Yorkshire **Birthday:** 6th April



LOTTIE

Breed: Newfipoo **Job:** Disability assistance
Home: Bristol **Birthday:** 28th December



COBBLE

Breed: Labrador **Job:** Seizure alert
Home: Essex **Birthday:** 1st July



PUPPIES

Meet our HEROES in training!

These **amazing pups** are currently in their first stage of training to become a support dog.



A wonderful gift!

When you decide to sponsor a dog for Christmas, for a birthday or at any time, you'll receive...

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TINKS MARKY IGGY LOTTIE COBBLE PUPPIES

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Signature:

Thank you for your support. Make your donations worth more at no extra cost to you!

giftaid it

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*Which? Magazine, voice of the Consumers Association, brand dog food survey 2020