

Support Dogs' charity magazine

Auna

Autumn / Winter 2023

Edition 43



“Rodney has brought us closer together as a family.”

Miles, father of autism assistance client Betsy

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Increasing understanding in schools
See page 7

The wonder of ‘hound dog’ Elvis
Find out more on page 8

supportdogs

For Autism, For Epilepsy, For Disability




WE CAN DISSOLVE HAIR FUR-REAL!

The advertisement features a central product box for 'VAMOOSH PET HAIR DISSOLVER'. The box is light blue with a yellow 'NEW IMPROVED' sticker in the top right corner. It displays a washing machine with a dog and a cat inside, and a pink banner that says 'NO MORE PET HAIR'. Two polaroid-style photos show a 'BEFORE' state with a dense mat of dark hair and an 'AFTER' state with a clean surface. A purple banner at the bottom of the box reads 'FOR HAIR-FREE PET BEDDING AND WASHING MACHINES' and includes a 'PATENTED TECHNOLOGY' logo.

To find an official stockist near you, visit vamooshcleans.com

or follow our Instagram:

 [vamooshcleans](https://www.instagram.com/vamooshcleans)

PROUDLY PARTNERED WITH

supportdogs

For Autism, For Epilepsy, For Disability



MESSAGE FROM RITA...

Dogs, lives and statistics

The wide extent of the extraordinary impact that a support dog has on the individuals and the families we support has again been highlighted in our most recent survey of our charity's service users.

The results show that our support dogs allow children and adults to live more safely, healthily and independently, resulting in them relying on health services and other family members less.

The responses we received show that the provision of a support dog directly impacts on a client being able to lead a comprehensively more healthy life.

90% of our clients told us they are more physically active and 86% stated they are more socially active. One service user told us: "People actually talk to you when you are out if you have a support dog. Without my support dog it would be very difficult to live alone, plus my dog gives me the confidence to go onto public transport and talk to more people."

67% of our clients say they feel more motivated to take care of their own health since the arrival of their support dog. 43% even say they have started eating more healthily.

Two thirds of our clients live with multiple disabilities and so often have complex varying medical conditions. This positive intervention of a support dog is absolutely vital to their long term health, but also reduces the impact on the NHS and other health and social service providers.

In this survey of 50 support dog clients, two thirds said they would class their support dog as their main medical aid, with 100% saying their care needs have reduced. 67% of our disability clients have reported a reduction in emergency calls, a reduction that increases to 100% of our epilepsy clients. 100% of our parents on our autism programme said they felt their child is safer since having their support dog, with 66% saying their care needs



Epilepsy seizure alert dog Cobble and his client Nicola



Rita Howson and Rodney


have reduced. 50% of our disability clients reported a reduction in home visits by health workers. We have previously reported on our estimated saving of over £20 million a year to the NHS and this perhaps gives some explanation of the reasons for this.

In addition, 50% of clients said that they avoided making medical appointments before getting their support dog due to restrictions to their mobility and lack of confidence and independence when leaving the house. If a support dog enables someone to attend a medical appointment earlier, then future health prospects will potentially improve further.

A support dog can also have a positive financial impact on the families we support. 80% said that family members have now been able to accept paid work and 63% said it has resulted in a reduction in costs related to medication or travel to health appointments.

Awareness of the work of our charity was highlighted as an issue. Over 80% of clients said they would have applied sooner for support from the charity if they had known about our work and over 50% of clients with an autism assistance dog wished their school understood more about the work of the charity.

We ask you to please share our magazine and the stories with people you know and with your community to create greater awareness of our work. If you would like further copies please do let us know.


Chief executive

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 100% 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 Scarborough
Elaine Paige OBE
Lucrezia Millarini

Contact

Support Dogs
Riverside Works,
9-12 Jessops Riverside,
Sheffield S9 2RX
Registered Charity Number: 1088281

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

-  FOLLOW US @supportdogsuk
-  LIKE US supportdogsuk1
-  INSTAGRAM @supportdogsuk
-  TIKTOK @supportdogs.uk

To learn more or donate call

0114 261 7800

or Whatsapp us on

07852 010229



Five ways to volunteer with Support Dogs

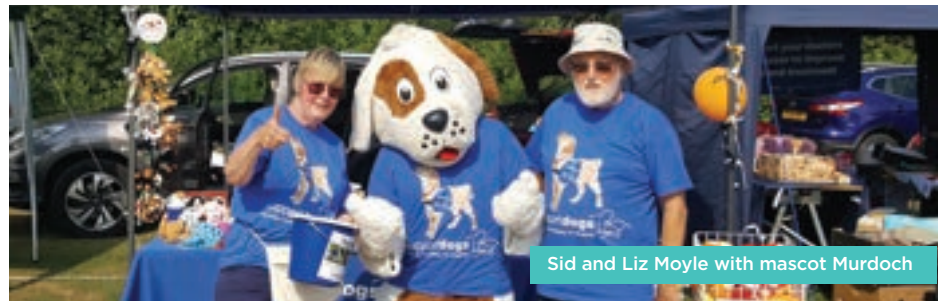
We really couldn't carry out our life-saving work without the help of our incredible volunteers, who donate more than 100,000 hours annually to help change someone's life for the better. There are numerous ways you can play a part and here are just five...

1. Become a Puppy Socialiser

Could you provide a good start to a puppy in training for the first year of its life? If you have some spare time, plenty of space and live within an hour of Sheffield, this would be the perfect role. Food, equipment and medical and insurance costs are covered by the charity and holiday cover is provided.

2. A game-changer

Did you know that Support Dogs can benefit from the sale of second-hand jigsaws or Lego sets? They help us to raise vital funds through our charity's eBay store. If you have a large amount to donate we can even help you with postage. Please call us on 0114 261 7800 or send an email to fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk if you have items to donate.



Sid and Liz Moyle with mascot Murdoch

3. Look after a collection tin

Looking after and placing a collection tin in a community venue near you is a great way of volunteering without taking up too much time. We will provide the tins, seals and everything else you need. We will provide more details about banking arrangements. Email fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk for more details.

4. Stick by us by donating your stamps

Whether loose, single, albums, first day covers, presentation packs, used or whatever class they are, donating stamps helps to raise vital funds for Support Dogs. Drop them into our centre or find out more on the

volunteering section of our website.

5. Become an event volunteer

We arrange a variety of fun events and collections throughout the year, ranging from bucket collections to attending Crufts. We are always on the lookout for people to help us to ensure they run smoothly. Could you plan, attend and fundraise at these events?

Feeling inspired? If you'd like more information on volunteering with Support Dogs, please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/volunteer, call **0114 261 7800**, or email info@supportdogs.org.uk

Providing the right foundations for life-changing dogs



Fiona and Otis

To find out more, please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/puppy-socialiser or call **0114 261 7800**.

Fiona Foster and her family had wanted a companion for their dog, Merlin, but didn't want to commit long-term or have the associated costs.

So when they heard about Support Dogs' volunteer puppy socialiser roles, which look after young pups before they start their formal training, with expenses covered, they jumped at the chance to get involved.

Now, Otis, a Red Fox Labrador puppy, is very much a part of the family.

"We are also providing a puppy with the best start in life before he goes on to change lives," said Fiona, a 42-year-old software engineer and mum-of-two.

She added: *"Otis has added a lot of fun and a lot of laughter to our family. It also means we get exercise by getting out and about with him – because we both work from home, other than the school run we didn't tend to go out for a walk."*

"It's quite fun to be involved with Support Dogs and having a support dog with you – when you take them out, people stop you and ask you questions and you get a chance to explain about the charity."

Fiona went on: *"The kids know we love him and we wanted him, but there's a family out there that really needs this dog and we are lucky that we don't need his help."*

Her advice to anyone thinking about becoming a puppy socialiser? "Definitely do it – it's a lovely thing to be part of."



YOU can be AMAZING in 2024!

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. Need some inspiration or help finding your perfect event? We're here to help.

Contact us on: **0114 261 7800** or **fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk**

Millers Dale Bridge Abseil 18th May

Could you take on a 90ft abseil drop? Launching yourself from an old railway bridge into a narrow gorge, hanging over the arch of the bridge with 20 metres free hanging. The lower age limit is 9 years old and there isn't an upper age limit - Could you do the DROP?



Fundraising target: **£50**

Ride London 26th May

Saddle up and join us for 100 traffic-free miles through London and Essex. It will start and finish in the centre of the capital, with 60 miles of rolling roads through some of Essex's most beautiful countryside and villages in between.



Fundraising target: **£500**

Great North Run 8th September

Grab your place in the world's biggest and best half marathon! Be on the start line with 57,000 amazing runners starting in Newcastle, running over the Tyne Bridge to finish by the sea in South Shields. A must-do for new and seasoned runners alike.



Fundraising target: **£375**

Action Challenge Walk Throughout the year

Are you a keen walker or runner looking for a challenge? Ranging from 10km, 25km, 50km, to 100km, whether it's along a stunning coastline, or on trails in the best of Britain's countryside, there is an Ultra Challenge® for you!



Inflatable 5km Challenge Throughout the year

Get ready to bounce your way through The World's BIGGEST and most EPIC Inflatable 5k Obstacle Course! With 32 gigantic obstacles on the 5km distance you'll be jumping, sliding, and bouncing your way to the finish line. Suitable for 5yrs+ this is the perfect family event.



Tee-rific partnerships!



When Ray Hartley chose Support Dogs as his charity for his year as captain at Corhampton Golf Club in Southampton, he didn't anticipate the generosity of his fellow golfers.

Ray wanted to help as his daughter, based in New Zealand, has Multiple Sclerosis and has seen first-hand the benefits of having an assistance dog.

He was delighted to raise a terrific £9,000, including £1,500 from playing four rounds in a day in midsummer.

He and the club are now proudly following the progress of the Support Dog puppy he named Corey, after his club, Corhampton.

"Following such an enjoyable year fundraising, it is great to continue the connection with Support Dogs with updates on Corey's training progress. I look forward to seeing her placed with a suitable client," said Ray.

Support Dogs has received wonderful support from golf clubs across the country and we would love to be involved with more in the future. If you are a Captain, Vice Captain or member of a club that would be interested in working with us, please email Tess Thompson at **tess.thompson@supportdogs.org.uk** or call **0114 261 7800**.



A BIG THANK YOU

for your fantastic fundraising

Our fantastic fundraisers continue to surprise and delight us with inventive, kind and generous ways to raise funds. As always, there are so many more people we wish to thank than there is room on the page.

Bessie and Sabrina who set up a yard sale with their old toys and books **raising a brilliant £50.**

Isla, Sachin, Ziad, Priasha, Scarlett and Roy from Greenfield School who made and sold finger puppets **raising an amazing £188.87**

Karen and the ladies of Bromborough Golf Club who **raised £400** from her year as captain.

Diana Heald who **raised an egg-cellent £71** selling apples and eggs from her home!

The lovely members of **Millicroft Court Coffee Morning Group** who **donated £130.**

The woof-tastic organisers of **St Peters Willersey fun dog show** for **donating £500.**

Members of the Rotary Club of Chepstow who **donated £500.**

Our amazing team of runners who took on the **Great North Run** raising a **staggering £5,000!**

Kelly Baker raised a **hair-raising total of £530** by taking on a skydive!

Jessica Lowe who took to the waters of Lake Windermere in the Great North Swim to **raise a fantastic £703.**

The 19 people who braved the drop at Millers Dale Bridge **raising over £1,500.**



A big thank you to Bessie and Sabrina for raising funds through their yard sale!

Pets Foundation is the cat's whiskers for Support Dogs

Support Dogs is thrilled and hugely grateful for the wonderful support the charity has received over the past 12 months from the Pets Foundation (formerly The Pets at Home Foundation).

They have funded a new vehicle for the charity to assist us with the daily travel needs of our dogs in training and their daily school run to and from our training centre to the homes of their foster carers.

Pets Foundation has also donated to support our autism assistance programme over the next 12 months. Support Dogs began the UK's first autism assistance dog programme in 2008 and it remains the charity's most in-demand service. As with all Support Dogs' services, this is provided entirely free of charge and so donations such as this from Pets Foundation are vital to its continuation.



Increasing understanding within schools



Ambassador dog Derek

While the impact of a support dog is extraordinary, it can often be invisible. The fact that someone is autistic or has epilepsy can be invisible to the public. When a dog is with their client, helping them to feel less anxious or assuring them that there is no immediate risk of a seizure, there are often not any visible signs that they are actively working.

Support Dogs are developing a project to increase greater awareness amongst schools of the work of our charity and the wider work of assistance dogs. We are particularly keen to do this with schools where we have clients, the families of clients with support dogs or those hoping to benefit from a support dog in future. However, we are keen to hear from any schools who would be interested in having a talk from our charity.

Our talks can be tailored to all age groups and often involve us bringing either a working support dog or one of our ambassadors like loveable Derek. We are also keen to develop further educational resources for schools, following on from the success of the schools pack we created in partnership with The Snowman and Penguin Random House.



If you would like to learn more about this project, get a copy of our schools pack or organize a school talk please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/schools

SUPPORT DOGS LOTTERY

PLAY NOW

Text 'DOG' to 88000

1st Prize £10K

£2 per ticket

supportdogs LOTTERY

For Autism, For Epilepsy, For Disability

Did you know that Support Dogs runs a weekly lottery, where you can win up to £10,000 every week?

Our weekly lottery was launched last year in partnership with Donr. The money raised will **help our life-saving work for children and adults affected by autism, epilepsy and disability**, while also giving supporters the chance to **win between £10 and £10,000 every week**. A ticket costs £2 and is charged to an entrant's mobile phone.

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

Alternatively visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/lottery



The wonder of hound dog Elvis

Support dog Elvis has rocked the world of Eli Wilson and his family – not only has the pooch brought comfort to the autistic youngster, he saved his life. Plus, the pair have just featured in a popular children’s programme.

Just like the Presley hit, support dog Elvis is most certainly Eli Wilson’s “*Good Luck Charm*”.

Up until recently, the seven-year-old boy, who is autistic, had been non-verbal and struggled with violent ‘meltdowns’.

But the bond between Eli and the Black Labrador, provided by our autism assistance programme, is so strong, he has worked wonders by helping to calm and reduce his meltdowns and even facilitating speech and language development.

This has brought more harmony to the lives of Eli and his family.

But another reason Eli’s family are even more grateful for the arrival of three-year-old Elvis is the dog recently saved Eli’s life.

The youngster had run into the path of an oncoming car, having been spooked by something on the way home from school.

Around one percent of UK children are diagnosed as autistic, half of which tend to bolt and wander away from their

parents or carers, which could prove fatal.

Thankfully, Elvis, had been trained to ‘brace’ – and stopped the unthinkable from happening, by preventing Eli from stepping into the road, while the driver slammed on the brakes just inches away.

Eli was attached to Elvis via a strap connected to the dog’s jacket.

Eli’s mum Rebecca Wilson, 32, who had been with Eli and her two other children, Reuben, 10, and five-year-old Arlen, at the time, said: “*Had we not had Elvis, it would have been a very different outcome. There were certainly a few tears.*”

“*That’s the thing with Eli,*” added the full-time carer, who lives in York with her children and their father, Karl Dawson.

“*He can be okay one minute and then he’s not. There was something he didn’t like on the way home from school and his instinct was to run away.*”

Since Elvis’ addition to the family, meltdowns have reduced from being daily after school to occasionally.

Now, if Eli is nervous about

going somewhere or doing something, his mum ‘talks’ through Elvis, with Eli asking “*what does Elvis think?*” and Rebecca replying: “*Elvis says it looks exciting.*”

Last year, Eli was able to go to the dentist for the first time without having a meltdown – thanks to Elvis’ presence.

He used to struggle going in and out of school, with the amount of people and noise, but now he looks for Elvis – who was named by Global Radio listeners – and runs for a cuddle.

Rebecca first noticed Eli was different when he was a baby.

“*He didn’t look or smile at me and didn’t look interested in anything,*” she said.

“*He never slept either, and as he got older he never spoke. He made screeching noises and everything used to upset him.*”

Rebecca took Eli to a GP when he was two, and he was put on a waiting list to see various clinicians, including speech and language therapists.

He was diagnosed with autism when he was



three and life was difficult, with Eli becoming violent and lashing out.

Just before the pandemic, in early 2020, when Eli was non-verbal and not wanting to interact with anyone, Rebecca became aware of Support Dogs after searching online for something which included animals.

"Whenever we took him to a farm with animals, he was a different kid - he wanted to be around them and was calmer," she said.

"It has honestly changed our lives so much - I'm so grateful."



Due to lockdown, an initial Zoom call explaining how the charity works was followed by two support dogs visiting the family, to assess how they were with dogs.

In July 2021, Rebecca went to the charity's headquarters in Sheffield for dog handler training.

The following March, Eli was matched to Elvis and two months later, Rebecca went to meet him.

"I loved him straight away and thought he would fit in perfectly," said Rebecca.

The following day Elvis went to the family home and met everyone.

He has spent a year in training and has just graduated from the Support Dogs course.

Rebecca said: *"It's fantastic to have graduated - I'm so proud of Eli and Elvis and the how strong their bond is."*

She added: *"That's what I find fascinating - Elvis is totally in tune with Eli, he can sense if he needs comforting."*

"I can't imagine him not being here now - he's very much part of the family."

"Eli is more likely to speak to other people now, because he is really proud of Elvis."

"He has started to become more aware that he is slightly different to other people, but Elvis isn't a negative reminder."

"I think it's amazing what Support Dogs does. I applied because I wanted to improve our lives, but I didn't realise how much of a difference Elvis would make. He has helped massively."

"It has honestly changed our lives so much - I'm so grateful."

Elvis joins Dog Squad

Elvis, Eli and Rebecca have followed in the footsteps of support dog Tinks by appearing on CBeebies show, Dog Squad.

The programme follows the adventures of superhero working dogs and how they use their superpowers to help their owners in their everyday lives.

Rebecca said filming took place in Glasgow in July, and she had been apprehensive of how Eli would take to the new experience.

But she added: *"The whole production team was absolutely amazing with all of us. Before we went, they sent us a social story, with pictures of everyone and explaining what they would be doing."*

"They were so patient and couldn't do enough to ensure everyone was happy and calm."

"Eli still talks about the director now - he came into the chillout room after dinner, sat down with Eli and showed him some magic tricks. Eli absolutely loved it."

Eli, Rebecca and Elvis got to meet Tinks and her owner, fellow Support Dog client Charli Colquhoun, who Rebecca said was "lovely".

She added: *"Eli started watching the first series last year, with Tinks on it. It was nice to show him the other types of assistance dogs."*

Rebecca said Eli is starting to become aware that he's a little different to his peers, and that it's extra positive that his school planned to watch Eli's episode, which features the assistance dogs teaching a non-working dog a special 'power', together.



To find out more about Support Dogs' autism assistance programme, please visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/autism or call 0114 261 7800.

Charlie is a real lifeline for ex-NHS worker Chris

Having a pet dog trained on our disability assistance programme has helped to give former NHS worker Chris his life back and he no longer has to rely on his family as much for everyday tasks.



Chris Beddowes and Charlie

Chris Beddowes remembers the day his world turned upside down.

On August 5, 2015, the then 33-year-old collapsed while working as a senior healthcare assistant within the medical assessment department at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital – a job he'd had for 16 years.

"I was making up an A&E trolley and reaching over to do the far corner and collapsed before waking up on the trolley in terrific pain," said Chris.

The dad-of-two was left with chronic back pain, and was eventually diagnosed with muscular-skeletal disease.

The devastating condition is inoperable and is causing his spine to crumble away. All medics can do is prescribe painkillers.

Chris, 42, began using a wheelchair in 2016 and his home became a virtual

prison, as he couldn't go anywhere on his own. Even getting dressed was a struggle.

But since having his pet dog Charlie trained by Support Dogs, his outlook has greatly improved.

Now Charlie, a four-year-old black Labrador which Chris has nicknamed 'Charlie Chaplin', is helping Chris back to independence.

Before Charlie, Chris relied on his wife Clare and sons Jack, 17, and 16-year-old Daniel to do everyday tasks.

But Clare has her own health issues, including autism, anxiety, agoraphobia

and curvature of the spine, making it extremely difficult for Chris to rely on his wife.

"I used to go out in the wheelchair but had to have someone with me and I couldn't dress myself," said Chris, who lives in Kidderminster.

"It used to be quite frustrating, because I like to go out and be occupied."

"When the lads were at school, it was more difficult to do."

"From being a fully independent, mobile, active person to not being able to work or go out, was quite a shock."

But that's where Charlie comes in.

The pooch helps Chris with dressing and undressing, picks dropped items up, lifts Chris' legs up on to his bed, fetches the post, opens and closes doors and raises the alarm if Chris gets into difficulty.

Charlie even pays for things with Chris' debit card, and gets groceries from supermarket shelves.

"Now I go out as much as I can, really," said Chris. *"He helps me keep independent."*

Thanks to Charlie, and Chris' mobility car, he can do activities with his sons, as well as take Charlie for a walk on his own.

Chris had looked into getting an assistance dog and he discovered that Support Dogs can train family pets.

The Beddowes bought Charlie when he was just two months old and he had his first assessment seven months later.

Due to delays during the pandemic, Charlie underwent his six-week training in May 2022, followed by the family having two weeks of training.

Charlie recently graduated from the course.

Asked whether he could imagine life without Charlie, Chris said: *"Definitely not. He's my left arm, my right arm, my left leg, my right leg and everything in between. He helps me with absolutely everything."*

He is full of praise for Support Dogs:

"I think Support Dogs are invaluable, especially the way they train up their own dogs, as well as pet dogs."

"I really don't know how they do it all – and it's all voluntary and all thanks to people giving donations to enable them to do all this exceptional work."

"It's life-changing, really – being able to go out and do stuff and get that independence back."

"There is no miracle drug for my condition, it's just going to get worse, making what Charlie does even more vital. Support Dogs are absolute life-savers."

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



Ruby is the ‘paw-fect employee’

The help of a support dog extends beyond the home and tasks like shopping – many of our clients are enjoying the freedom to continue in their careers thanks to their canine colleagues.

Support dog Ruby is a real jet-setter.

In recent years, she has accompanied her owner, Andrea Jack, on many flights to work conferences as part of Andrea’s role as a customer experience manager for global precision medicine company Diaceutics.

Once, at an All-Company meeting of the 170-employee firm, the Labradoodle even had her own delegate badge.

She was included in the company photos and had her own profile photo taken.

Ruby has enabled Andrea to continue and excel in her role, despite the 51-year-old living with a painful condition.

She has an inflammatory form of arthritis called ankylosing spondylitis, which up until around a decade ago, had been controlled by anti-inflammatory drugs.

Andrea, of Wigan, had been an award-winning volunteer with Support Dogs before she came to need our help herself.

Just three months after getting Ruby as a pet, she suffered a painful flare-up and shortly afterwards, was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, a severe, chronic condition which affects the joints and skin.

She set about applying to Support Dogs to have Ruby trained to help her with day-to-day tasks, such as picking items off the floor, emptying the washing machine, opening doors and helping her to get dressed.

And Ruby’s help extends to the workplace – although Andrea works mainly from home, Ruby has accompanied her to Ireland and Northern Ireland, home of Diaceutics’ headquarters, to attend various meetings.

“Having Ruby with me when I travel for work has enabled me to manage independently staying in hotels,” said Andrea.

“She helps me to get undressed, for example pulling off my socks and trousers, plus she picks up dropped items for me, including my walking stick/pole.”

“Ruby has travelled to Ireland on the ferry



Andrea Jack with Nikey and Ruby

and has even been trained to fly with me in the cabin of the aircraft, which entailed extra training provided by Support Dogs.”

It would be very difficult for her to travel for work without Ruby.

“I will be forever grateful to Support Dogs for training Ruby for me”

“I wouldn’t be able to be independent,” said Andrea.

“I mean who would want to have to ask a colleague to help them get undressed? With Ruby with me I don’t have to do that, so I can travel to meetings just like my colleagues and just like I used to do before I got my diagnosis.”

Andrea has been working for Diaceutics for nine years and she says the company has been “unbelievably supportive” since her most recent diagnosis and throughout Ruby’s training process.

“The company culture of Diaceutics is such that Ruby is not just accepted, but

fully integrated and embraced, often literally! I have always felt that I am seen for my abilities not my disabilities, and that Ruby is seen as an asset not an inconvenience,” said Andrea.

Ruby is doted on by her colleagues, who often want to see her on video calls, and is spoiled with treats at HQ meetings.

“Ruby has been described by one colleague as our ‘pawfect employee’,” Andrea added.

Ruby, 10, is coming up to retirement age, and Andrea has been matched with another support dog, Nikey.

Ruby will get to put her paws up as Andrea’s pet while Nikey, who recently went to live with her after a period of training at our centre, takes over as her assistance dog.

“Everybody I’ve spoken to wants to know what happens to Ruby when she retires and have been relieved to hear that she gets to put her paws up in her retirement as my pet dog, getting treats for not doing the tasks that Nikey will do instead,” said Andrea.

“I will be forever grateful to Support Dogs for training Ruby for me, and I will be forever grateful that Diaceutics fully embraced her into our Diaceutics community and culture.”



Support Dog Rodney has brought family closer together

Rodney the “super dog” has brought comfort to young Betsy Charlton and her family.

Betsy, 10, was diagnosed with autism and global development delay at a very young age.

With limited communication skills and complex sensory needs, simple everyday tasks and outings can result in major challenges for the Charltons.

Like many autistic children, Betsy is a bolter with no sense of danger.

She is classed as non-verbal and has difficulty communicating her needs or expressing her feelings. She can articulate a range of words and sing songs in her own way, but would have numerous meltdowns a week that could happen any time and anywhere.

However, since welcoming her furry friend, meltdowns have reduced, and when they do happen, they're often more manageable.

Now, four-year-old support dog Rodney is not just a constant comfort to Betsy, but also to her parents, Miles and Laura.

Miles said: *“This is one of many unexpected benefits that Rodney has brought since his arrival - not only does he provide unconditional emotional support to Betsy, he provides it to the rest of the family as well.”*

“He has brought a level of harmony and togetherness back to the family which was becoming more disjointed caused by challenges of parenting a non-neurotypical child.”



Betsy and Rodney

Rodney moved in with the family in July last year and after intensive training, Miles, Betsy and Rodney qualified as a partnership earlier this year.

“Things have definitely improved since having Rodney; Betsy is much more accepting and amenable in more circumstances and environments due to Rodney’s calming and supportive nature,” said Miles.

“We don’t get the number or severity of meltdowns we used to get and with

Rodney, it’s easier to distract Betsy.

“The most common distraction technique is for Betsy to feed Rodney, which helps her to regulate herself.”

Betsy’s bedtime routine was often really difficult, with the youngster taking hours to settle, before finally dropping off to sleep, sometimes not until the early hours.

But since Rodney the yellow Labrador entered the lives of the Nottinghamshire family, their outlook is a lot more



positive – Rodney has a calming effect on Betsy, leading to quieter evenings and enjoyable family trips.

Miles says Rodney has made being away on holiday less stressful and allows easier access to places including theme parks and restaurants as a family, which had previously been more difficult because Betsy was prone to getting distressed or having meltdowns.

“So far we have stayed in the UK but we may look to go abroad in the next few years, which is an exciting prospect,” he added.

Betsy was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, after the owner of her nursery noticed some developmental delays.

She has no real sense of danger and she could unexpectedly bolt away from her parents.

But when out and about, she is attached to the dog’s jacket with a belt and with a handle to hold, while Miles holds the lead and gives commands.

Miles, 46, of Radcliffe-on-Trent, added: *“No doubt, having Rodney has made*

going out with Betsy so much easier in that we’re not physically holding her hand or grabbing her to keep her off the road.

“On occasions if we go out and haven’t got Rodney, she is more disciplined now and she hasn’t tried to run out onto the road. One of the commands is to get Rodney to sit at the kerb before crossing, and Betsy has started to say ‘stop’ as we approach the end of a road.

“When Betsy is at school, Rodney stays at home where at least one of the family is usually in so he has company and goes for walks.

“He’s brought us closer together as a family, we all love him to be around so he’s never short of a fuss,” said Miles.

Miles admits that he and Laura had never been ‘dog people’, but after Laura stumbled across Support Dogs during an internet search, and following further research into positive outcomes for other families, they were in no doubt about taking the ‘massive leap of faith’.

They made a Support Dogs application

in the hope of being accepted and eventually matched with a ‘life-changing canine’.

“Fast forward three years and we were overjoyed to have been matched with Rodney, our super dog!”, said Miles.

Praising the incredible work of the charity, he said: *“It’s amazing, it really is.*

“We were so lucky to get Rodney as we were on a waiting list for nearly four years and in that time, they reduced the age range eligibility due to a backlog arising from Covid.

“Everyone I’ve met at Support Dogs has been great, they do a fantastic job and the support we have had from my instructor Rebecca has been superb.

“The transition from not ever having a dog to having a dog has been easy; it’s like we’ve never been without Rodney.”

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

The support never ends

When a support dog retires, or dies, it can be an upsetting time. But Sally Burton, a seizure alert client, knows that the charity will always be on hand to ensure her lifeline is constant.

Sally Burton was 28 before she was able to go out unaccompanied – and she had never made a cup of tea.

Having been diagnosed with epilepsy aged 10, she was enduring up to 70 seizures a day and life was limited due to the possibility that she could hurt herself.

She and her husband, Philip, even had Sally's mum living with them, as Sally couldn't be left alone.

Her condition left her frustrated, which brought on more seizures.

But it all changed, thanks to support dog, Star.

Star, a rescue Collie cross, was Support Dogs' 'Dog 49' – trained by our now-chief executive, Rita Howson – and the charity had been in existence for just three years when the pooch and Sally met, in 1995.

Having exhausted most avenues, including unsuccessful brain surgery, Sally had been sceptical as to whether a dog could help.

But she went along to an open day and she saw for herself the incredible power of a seizure alert dog – which can give a warning of up to an hour in advance of a seizure, enabling the person to get to a place of safety and privacy.

"There was a lady there with a dog and the dog was behaving differently," said Sally.

"They took her into another room and I wondered why they had done that. They said 'Did you see the dog warning her? She was warning her she was going to have a seizure'. I said 'put my name down for one, please'."

Recalling the first time Star alerted her to a seizure at home, Sally said: *"It was amazing. She pulled at my jeans and pulled me away from the cooker and I was able to get into a safe position on the couch."*

Sally found a new confidence and was able to go into town with just Star for company, or meet friends and also found that the number of seizures drastically reduced, to two a day.

Fast forward 28 years and Sally is now 56 and living and working with her third support dog, Maisie, a two-year-old Labrador/Golden Retriever cross.

Her previous support dog, Robbie, died aged 13 in March 2022 and Star reached the same age before succumbing to old age and passing away in 2006.

She noticed differences in the ways each dog alerted her: *"Star would give a high-pitched bark for 45 minutes, Robbie could be anywhere and then shoot out and sit in front of me and stare and wouldn't let me touch him, while Maisie sits in front of me and nudges my hand."*

"It's so reassuring to know there's always some support there. The staff are brilliant"

"They're all marvellous in different ways."

Each time she has had to say goodbye, she and Philip have never had an overlap of having two dogs, partly due to a lack of space at their two-bed bungalow in East Markham, Nottinghamshire and also out of



respect for their dogs.

"It's hard," said Sally. *"They are part of the family. It's heartbreaking – like losing a child."*

While waiting to be matched with another dog, Sally finds her life on hold: *"I sit on the couch and do nothing. I can't cook, I can't clean, I can't do anything."*

But she knows during that period, Support Dogs is there to support her and is working hard to find and train her next dog for her – a support dog that will keep her safe, give her independence and provide a 100% reliable warning before every epileptic seizure every day throughout a working life of around eight years.

"It's so reassuring to know there's always some support there. The staff are brilliant," said Sally, who is now enjoying the next stage of her Support Dog journey with Maisie.

To find out more about Support Dogs' seizure alert programme, visit www.supportdogs.org.uk/epilepsy

Cleo is a superstar!

Disability assistance support dog Cleo and her owner Natalie have an unbreakable bond.



Natalie Hibberd with Cleo

Natalie Hibberd was almost 22 when she was first able to get undressed without another person in the room.

That's because Natalie, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, now had the help of Cleo, her disability assistance dog.

The Labradoodle had been trained by Support Dogs - with life-changing results for Natalie.

"She helps me put on my clothes," said Natalie. *"That was big for us."*

"For me it was emotional, for Cleo, it was 'this is fun, we do clothes'. I was crying."

It's just one way in which Cleo has transformed Natalie's life.

"Her favourite job is to pick things up for me when I drop them - which happens a lot," added the 25-year-old, who won a special recognition award for promoting Support Dogs during lockdown.

"She can do that with something as small as 5p."

Cleo also opens doors for children's novelist Natalie, and will run and get help if she falls over.

Before Cleo, Natalie felt isolated, as she didn't like going out in her wheelchair, due to "hostile" people.

"I was very depressed and anxious," said Natalie, who lives with her parents, Carol and Mark in Petersfield, Hampshire.

Cleo came to Natalie from the Doodle

"They were chatting to us about how amazing the dogs are and what a difference they make."

Trust rescue dog charity, as a pet, six years ago.

Six months later, Natalie saw a Support Dogs flyer and the pair set about getting trained.

A year later, they were qualified.

Asked whether she could imagine life without Cleo, Natalie said: *"I can imagine it, but I don't like to, because it's very, very unhappy."*

"I'm a different person - I've become more confident. If it wasn't for Cleo, I wouldn't do half the things I do now."

And Natalie has also transformed Cleo's life - as a two-year-old pooch in a rescue centre, the future was uncertain.

But it's certainly bright for the pair, who have appeared on Channel 5's 'Puppy School for Guide Dogs' and ITV's 'Love Your Weekend' with Alan Titchmarsh.

"I'm going to have to devote myself to being her agent, now she's in demand!" joked Natalie, who is working on the third book in her Inside Out series, which will be out early next year.

Cleo had a medical setback recently, when she was diagnosed with Addison's disease, a condition which happens when the adrenal glands stop producing two steroid hormones.

But Natalie said Cleo is back on the mend, following medication, and her hair is growing back and *"looking as luscious as ever"*.

Natalie and Cleo plan to eventually live on their own - another feat Natalie wouldn't have dreamed of without Support Dogs.

Angela Rippon on Strictly



"I am still in awe of how they do it".

Those are the words of legendary broadcaster Angela Rippon, our charity's President, when describing the incredible work of Support Dogs.

And the compliment is returned from us to the 79-year-old, who has been wowing us all with her age-defying performances on BBC1's 'Strictly Come Dancing'.

Angela, who has been associated with Support Dogs from the very beginning, has been impressing judges and audiences alike with her flawless dance skills and flexibility - even extending her legs into a standing splits position during Week 1 of the show.

We're so grateful for her support throughout the years and have dug out a 2015 interview in which she sang our praises.

Describing our revolutionary seizure alert programme, Angela said: *"I have seen first hand the incredible difference these dogs make to people's lives."*

"When it started out it was dogs for people with disabilities but over the years it has expanded and developed to include seizure alert dogs for people with epilepsy. I am still in awe of how they do it."

Check out our social media pages to see our dogs-in-training, who have been honing their own dance moves in tribute to Angela's Strictly run.

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

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

Family days out
donated by
Kathleen Walker
September 2022

Relaxed mum
donated by
Sylvia Snape
January 2023

Trained autism assistance dog
donated by
Graham Cyster
August 2023

Safety harness
donated by
Robert Portman
November 2021

1 in every 3 support dogs would simply not exist without the wonderful kindness of donations left to our charity in wills. 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

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.

Name

Address & Post code

Please return this form to:
Support Dogs, Riverside Works, 9-12 Jessops Riverside, Sheffield, S9 2RX.

Support Dogs' merchandise

CUDDLY DOGS IN SUPPORT DOG JACKETS



Schnauzer
£20



Tinks
£20

BEST SELLER



Husky
£20

SUPPORT DOG PIN BADGES £2 EACH



Dalmatian

Tinks

Yellow Puppy Lab

CARDS IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS £6 pack of 20



CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATIONS



Spaniel with antlers £8



Sleeping dalmatian £9.50



Dalmatian holding Christmas pudding £8

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

Order Form Please TICK BOX options

Item	Price	Qty	Total
Cuddle puppy in Support Dogs jacket			
<input type="checkbox"/> Schnauzer	£20		
<input type="checkbox"/> Tinks	£20		
<input type="checkbox"/> Husky	£20		
Support Dogs pin badge			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dalmatian	£2		
<input type="checkbox"/> Tinks	£2		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Lab	£2		
Christmas decorations			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping Dalmatian	£9.50		
<input type="checkbox"/> Dalmatian holding Christmas pudding	£8		
<input type="checkbox"/> Spaniel with antlers	£8		
Christmas cards - pack of 20	£6		
Postage	£2.99	N/A	£2.99
		Total:	

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel

Email

Payment method Cash Cheque
(Please tick)

Please complete the form and return with cash or a cheque payable to Support Dogs to:

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

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



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.



Breed: Lhasa Apso
Home: London

Job: Disability assistance
Birthday: 14th July



Breed: Dachshund
Home: Gloucestershire

Job: Disability assistance
Birthday: 27th March



Breed: Yellow Labrador
Home: Sheffield

Job: Autism assistance
Birthday: 26th March



Breed: Black Labrador
Home: York

Job: Autism assistance
Birthday: 7th March



Breed: Labrador
Home: Essex

Job: Seizure alert
Birthday: 1st July



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

New for Winter 2023



WITH YOUR SPONSORSHIP YOU'LL RECEIVE:

- A fabulous **new gift box**
- Access to **EXCLUSIVE** content and behind the scenes insight with our training team featuring footage of our dogs and puppies in training via our 'training tails' online portal
- Brand-new **sponsorship certificates**

You'll also receive...

- **Three pup-date cards a year**
- **A sponsorship pack;** including a special photo certificate of your new pal
- Plus to say a massive thank you, a **free cuddly Support Dog toy**

I WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR A SUPPORT DOG

TINKS CHORIZO MARKY ELVIS COBBLE PUPPIES

FOR MYSELF AS A GIFT Giftee Name and Address

Name

Address

Postcode Tel

Email

Monthly Amount:

£5 £10 £20 Other

Bank Name & Address

Acc No. Sort Code

Date

Make a Difference with a One-Off Donation

£25 £50 £100 Other

I'd like to donate by: Debit/Credit Card Cheque (Payable to Support Dogs)

Card No.

Card Holder Name

Valid From Exp. Date CV2 No. (3 digits)

Payable to: Lloyds, 14 Church Street, Sheffield, S1 1HP.

The account of **Support Dogs Ltd** A/c No. **03938225** Sort Code: **30-97-51** or please send a cheque payable to Support Dogs to the address below.

Signature:

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

giftaid it

Simply fill out the declaration below and we can claim the tax back on your subscriptions and donations.

To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year (currently 25p for every £1 donated). Please notify Support Dogs if you wish to cancel this declaration.



YES - Please claim Gift Aid on all donations I have made in the last four calendar years, and until further notice.

Signature

Date

Please send completed forms to:

Support Dogs
Riverside Works
9-12 Jessops Riverside
Sheffield
S9 2RX





NATURAL NUTRITION *for* ANY MISSION



MAINTAINS IDEAL BRAIN FUNCTION & TEMPERAMENT

   burnspet.co.uk

Proud Sponsors of Support Dogs