

Support Dogs Disability Assistance Dog Programme

The benefits of a Disability Assistance Dog can be outstanding. The overall aim of having a Disability Assistance Dog is that you become more independent and have the opportunity to live a safer and more active life.

Disability Assistance Dogs can be trained to do a variety of tasks, both in and out of the home environment and are individually trained to their owner's requirements. Tasks can include: retrieving dropped articles, fetch help, raise an alarm, aid with dressing/undressing and open/close doors to name a few.

We will work with you to find exactly what tasks your dog can be trained to do that will make a difference to you and your family.

This document details:

- The application and training process
- Criteria and guidelines
- Financial commitments

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us at info@supportdogs.org.uk or phone 0114 261 7800



Criteria and guidelines

Please read this information carefully. These guidelines will help you to determine you and your pet's suitability as candidates for the training programme.

1. You must have a confirmed physical disability.
2. A medical report will be obtained from your GP/hospital consultant.
NB: Support Dogs will **not** cover the cost if any charge is incurred for obtaining these reports.
3. You must be over the age of 16.
4. You must have the motivation and ability to provide regular exercise, grooming, a suitable diet and medical care for a dog. Following the residential training you must be willing and able to provide regular training sessions with your dog in restricted environments. Support Dogs recommend at least one hour per day unless otherwise advised.
5. You must genuinely enjoy the close companionship of a dog and want to form a working relationship with one.
6. All applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, creed, age or any other categories protected by law.
7. You must have your own pet dog aged between 1 and 3 years old. PLEASE NOTE no dog will commence training until they are at least 18 months of age.
8. You must **NOT** acquire a dog for the sole purpose of having it trained by Support Dogs.
9. You must have had your own pet dog for at least six months.
10. Not all dogs are suitable for training. Certain types of breed traits may also be deemed as unsuitable for assistance dog work. This is assessed on an individual basis. (For further details contact the training centre)
11. All dogs must be neutered and micro chipped prior to commencing their training with Support Dogs.
12. All dogs are to be up to date with their routine health requirements prior to any assessments being carried out; this is inclusive of the kennel cough vaccine.
13. All dogs are to have a good response and understanding to general obedience commands prior to being accepted onto the training programme. NB. This will be assessed during the assessment period.
14. It is not always possible to consider an applicant if they, or someone living within their household, has uncontrolled epilepsy. This will be considered on an individual basis.

15. Any significant changes in personal circumstances* and/or the dog's behaviour throughout the assessment period may affect the application status.
16. Due to the workload and commitment that is required, if accepted onto this programme we ask that, if the applicant has any children, the youngest must be at least 12 months of age prior to applying.

**please be aware this includes becoming pregnant whilst going through the assessment/training process. If this was to occur, it may result in the application being put on hold or withdrawn, you may then be re-considered once the child has reached at least 12 months of age.*

The application and training process.

1. Please read the criteria guidelines. If you are eligible, please register your interest on our website at <https://supportdogs.org.uk/forms/disability-assistance-registration>
2. Approximately 4 times a year we will email all applicable applicants and invite them to an information day at our training centre in Sheffield. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis. This will be an opportunity to find out more about the programme and ask any questions to our training team.
3. After the information day, if you are suitable for the programme, you will be given an application with a full detailed form to complete. You will be asked to return this to Support Dogs by a given deadline.

The application pack will include:

- a. Application form
 - b. Medical declaration consent form
 - c. Dog information form
4. Support Dogs will:
 - a. Send a letter of confirmation of receipt of your application form.
 - b. Initially assess the application.
 - c. Obtain a medical report from your general practitioner and hospital consultant. NB Any request for payment for these reports will be the applicants responsibility.
 5. Interviews and assessments– you will only proceed if successful at each previous stage

- a. Initial interview. Your dog will be assessed on their confidence and coping mechanisms, without the applicant being present.

PLEASE NOTE – all dogs must be up to date with all routine veterinary requirements inclusive of the kennel cough vaccine before they attend the training centre for any assessment.
 - b. Two day assessment at our training centre in Sheffield. Support Dogs will arrange and cover the accommodation cost for one night.
 - c. A home assessment will be arranged, for us to visit your home.
6. If successful following the home assessment/further assessments, you will be offered a place on the Disability Assistance Dog Training Programme.
7. Training
- a)** Your dog will be required to complete an advanced training course with a Support Dogs Instructor at our training centre in Sheffield. This will be over a four week period. Just your dog will be in training and will sleep overnight in the loving home of one of Support Dogs experienced foster carers throughout this time. Support Dogs does not use kennels.
 - b)** You will attend a two week advanced training course following the dog's four week training. Support Dogs will cover the cost of accommodation throughout this time. You will learn all of the commands to tasks your dog has learnt.
 - c)** The Thursday and Friday of the second week will involve a home placement, transferring skills to the home environment.
 - d)** At the end of your two week training, we will ensure that you are happy, confident, and competent 'working' your dog.
8. All partnerships (dog and you) will complete at least 6 months as an 'in training' partnership and your dog must be reliable in their specific role prior to being considered for the graduation. You will be asked to complete at least 1 hour per day for restricted environment training with your dog and practise task training each day during this time.
9. Graduation

- a. You will be assessed in a restricted environment (places where dogs are not usually allowed to go such as shops, cinemas, hospitals), to assess the dog's behaviour and your handling skills.
 - b. If successful, you will be considered as a fully registered support dog team!
10. Continued support and extra training will be given throughout the dog's working life, including regular health checks and annual assessments.

Financial commitment

As a charity, Support Dogs is committed to ensuring that as many people as possible to access our support. We provide our services entirely free of charge.

We will not charge you for providing you with a fully trained support dog. We will cover the costs for:

- Your accommodation during visits to our training centre
- Training your support dog
- Support Dog jacket for your dog (unless lost, a charge may be made to cover the replacement).
- Specific worming and flea treatment products
- Specific vaccines

Once the dog is at home with you, you will need however to ensure you are able to cover the costs of:

- Dog food
- Dog treats
- Dog toys
- Travel expenses to training centre for the purpose of training and aftercare visits
- Meal allowance whilst training at the training centre
- Vet bills up to excess on your dog insurance
- Dog insurance