

## **Support Dogs' epilepsy seizure alert programme**

The benefits of an epilepsy seizure alert dog can be enormous. The overall aim of having a seizure alert dog is to provide a 100% reliable advance warning up to 1 hour before an epileptic seizure. We aim to ensure a greater level of independent living for our seizure alert clients, who will have a confirmed diagnosis of epilepsy.

This document details:

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

If you have any queries please do contact us at [info@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:info@supportdogs.org.uk) or phone 0114 261 7800



## Criteria and guidelines

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

1. You should have a confirmed diagnosis of epilepsy.
2. You should have at least **10 major seizures per month**. Major seizures are defined as tonic clonic/atonic or complex partials, but not including nocturnal seizures.
3. Applicants must **not** have any changes to their medication six months prior to the information day and throughout the assessment and training period of a dog.
4. We accept applications from those aged from 15 years. However you must be at least 16 years old before beginning full time training with Support Dogs.
5. You should have someone who is able to act as your carer available through the 6 month training process.  
  
This could be a friend or a family member and is to provide additional support to you and the dog during the training process. For example checking to ensure the dog is responding and acting in the way it will have been trained to immediately before and after your seizures.
6. You should be capable of providing or have adequate support at home to ensure the dog's needs can be met at all times.
7. It is not always possible to place a seizure alert dog in a home where there is another household member who also has epilepsy.
8. It is not possible to place a seizure alert dog in a home where there is already a pet dog.
9. All applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, creed, age or any other categories protected by law.
10. You cannot have you own pet dog trained.
11. You should genuinely enjoy the close companionship of a dog and want to form a working relationship with one. You must have the ability to solely care for a dog without the help of another person.
12. It is not possible to train a seizure alert dog to alert if the applicant has a vagal nerve stimulator.

13. It is not possible to train a seizure alert dog to alert if the applicant has non-epileptic/pseudo seizures.

14. 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.

15. Any significant changes in personal circumstances\*, including any changes to drug therapy or medication, may affect applications.

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 application/training process. If this was to occur, it may result in the application being put on hold or withdrawn, you may then be reconsidered once the child has reached at least 12 months of age.*

## **The application and training process**

1. Please read the information and guidelines and, if you are eligible, please register your interest on our website at:

[www.supportdogs.org.uk/forms/seizure-alert-programme-registration](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk/forms/seizure-alert-programme-registration)

2. Approximately 4 times a year we will email all applicable applicants and invite them to an online information day. This will be an opportunity to find out more about the programme and ask any questions to our training team. Sadly places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

3. After the information day you will be given a detailed application pack to complete. The application pack will include:

- a. Application form
- b. Medical declaration consent form
- c. You will also be required to keep a diary of all your seizures

4. Once we have received this, 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. We ask that you bring your up to date seizure diaries with you.
- b. Dog handling assessment – we will look at how comfortable you are with dogs and enable us to select a suitable dog for you.
- c. A home visit assessment will be arranged.

6. If successful following the home assessment/further assessments, you will be offered a place on the Seizure Alert Dog Training Programme.

7. Once a potential dog has been identified, a match will take place. You will be invited to our training centre for up to three days to establish if the dog is suitable for you. You must be accompanied by a friend or family member during this visit, who is able to support you if/when you have a seizure.

## 8. Training

a. You will attend an initial three-week training course at our training centre in Sheffield. You must be accompanied by a friend or family member during this visit, who is able to support you if/when you have a seizure. You will learn individual handling techniques for your dog and the dog will be taught specific responses associated with your seizures.

b. When your Support Dog instructor feels your seizure alert dog has seen sufficient number of seizures and has a positive response you and your dog can return home together.

c. Your Support Dog instructor will then carry out a 3-5 day placement with you and your dog at home.

d. You may need to visit our training centre again if the frequency of your seizures is not sufficient for the dog to become proficient at their alert.

9. Once home you and your support dog must complete at least 6 months as an 'in training' partnership. This is to establish your dog is reliable in their role as a seizure alert dog and that you understand and are able to fulfil your role as its handler, prior to being considered for the graduation.

## 10. 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 qualify as a fully registered assistance dog team!

Registered Charity Number: 1088281

11. Our charity will continue to support you and your dog 24/7 throughout the dog's working life, with regular health checks and extra training and ongoing care.

### **Financial commitment**

As a charity, Support Dogs is committed to ensuring that as many people as possible are able to access our services.

Our services are provided 100% free of charge. We will not charge you for providing you with a fully trained support dog.

#### **Our charity will cover the costs for:**

- All 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

However once the dog is at home with you, **you will need 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 your dog insurance excess
- Dog insurance