

Disability assistance programme Information Pack



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Personal Legal Services
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Support Dogs disability

Assistance programme

The benefits of a Disability Assistance Dog can be outstanding. The overall aim of having a Disability Assistance Dog is that you become less reliant on others for day to day living. 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.

How to express your interest?

Please read the information and guidelines enclosed in this document. This provides information to enable you to assess whether you are within the criteria for this training programme.

Support Dogs Information Day take place within close proximity to our national training centre in Sheffield. This is an opportunity for you to learn more about our Disability Assistance Dog Programme prior to applying and, where possible, meet one of our existing clients. Our training staff will also be on hand to answer any questions that you may have.

If you feel that you are eligible and would like to apply to attend the information day, please complete the application form found at: www.supportdogs.org.uk/forms/disability-assistance-registration

Sadly, due to our resources, places at this information day are very limited and we expect an extremely high demand. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

PLEASE NOTE a maximum of two people are able to attend the Information Day with you. Due to the content of information given on this day we ask that children under the age of 16 years and your pet dog do not attend. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us at info@supportdogs.org.uk.

Guidelines and criteria

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. It is not possible to consider an applicant who experiences non-epileptic seizures.

16. Any significant changes in personal circumstances* and/or the dog's behaviour throughout the assessment period may affect the application status.

17. 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.

Financial commitments

All applicants must consider the financial commitments of having a Disability Assistance Dog. The following outlines the commitment of each party:

Commitments of the applicant:

Dog food

- Dog treats
- Dog toys
- Travel expenses and meal allowance during training visits
- Vet bills
- Dog insurance

Commitments of Support Dogs:

- All dog and client training costs up to the successful qualification of the partnership.
- All further training costs throughout the working life of the assistance dog.
- A 24 hour a day, 365 days a year support/care line for all disability assistance programme clients. Available throughout the dogs working life.
- Accommodation during training visits
- Support Dog jacket (if lost, a charge may be made to cover the replacement)
- Specific worming and flea treatment products
- Specific vaccines

Support Dog relies entirely on voluntary donations and the fundraising efforts of our supporters. Any assistance you provide with fundraising is hugely appreciated. Please get in touch if you would like more details.

Procedure of application

1. The applicant is to contact the training centre to confirm they would like to attend an information day.

NB Information days take place at specific times of the year in order to regulate the amount of applications accepted, alongside the vacancies for team training. The information Day will provide you with details that are relevant to the Disability Assistance Dog Training Programme such as; eligibility, the assessment procedure and what is involved in the training programme. Where possible, an existing partnership of the relevant training programme will share their experience with potential applicants. Due to the content of information given during this time, we request no children under the age of 16 years are to be present for the information day. Your pet dog is also not to attend.

Applications will be available to applicants that are both eligible and wish to begin the process of applying to have their pet dog trained as a Disability Assistance Dog.

The application pack will include:

- a. Application form
- b. Dog information form
- c. Medical declaration consent form

2. The application form, dog information form, medical declaration consent form and a recent passport sized photo of both you and the dog need to be returned to Support Dogs by the deadline given on the information day.

NB Applications that are received after the given date will not be processed until the next intake of applications are due for assessment. If upon receipt of the application form, any of the information is not returned, the application will not be processed until all of the necessary information has been received. Please note this will delay the application procedure and if received after the deadline, it will not be processed until the next intake of applications.

3. A letter of confirmation of receipt will be sent to the applicant.

4. The application is initially assessed as the first part of the procedure. A medical report will be obtained from the applicant's general practitioner and consultant. Further reports may be obtained from any other professional person with the knowledge of the applicant's condition, if deemed necessary.

NB Any request for payment for these reports will be the applicant's responsibility.

5. Successful applicants will be invited for an initial interview. It is essential at this stage that all relevant family members/carers attend also. The applicant and dog will initially be assessed as to their suitability for the Disability Assistance Dog Training Programme. The 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 Registered Charity Number: 1088281 training centre for any assessment. A veterinary form will be supplied and this must be completed by your veterinary surgeon prior to the interview date.

6. If successful following the initial interview, applicants will be invited to the training centre for a two day assessment. Support Dogs will arrange and cover the accommodation cost for one night.

7. If successful following the two day assessment, applicants will receive a home assessment.

8. Further assessments may be required; this will be discussed on an individual basis.

9. Successful applicants will be accepted onto the training programme.

NB If deemed necessary, provisos may be given at the point of being accepted, to ensure the criteria requirements are met at the point the training commences. Please note, the application will be withdrawn if the provisos are not maintained.

Any changes to personal circumstances and/or the dog's behaviour prior to commencing training may affect the status of the application

10. Provisional training dates will be given. If provisos have been set, an interim assessment will be arranged prior to the dates being confirmed.

11. The dog will be required to complete an advanced training course with a Support Dogs Instructor; this will be over a four week period. The dog will be housed with one of Support Dogs experienced foster carers throughout this time. You must ensure the dog has all of the relevant equipment including enough food during their stay.

12. The client is required to 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. A jacket assessment will take place during the second week to ensure the client has the ability to lone work the dog. The Thursday and Friday of the second week will involve a home placement, transferring skills to the home environment.

13. Following the client's training, the client must be willing and able to provide at least 1 hour per day for restricted environment training with the dog. They must also be willing to practise task training each day. Progress of partnerships will be closely monitored.

14. Further training may be required; this will be discussed on an individual basis.

15. Teams are to successfully complete 6 months as an 'in training' partnership and the dog must be reliable in task work prior to being considered to graduate.

16. Teams who successfully complete their graduation are required to complete a Licence Agreement, agreeing to abide by the terms and conditions. They must also complete and return a progress report per month for the first six months.

17. All teams will be required to attend the training centre for a six month review.

18. Extra training may be required once graduated and teams must be willing to either attend the training centre or ensure time is made available for home visits to be carried out.

19. Graduated partnerships are required to attend the training centre once per year in order for a member of the training department to ensure the teams social and training skills are being maintained to the standard expected of an assistance dog partnership.