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Welcome from Ed Bracher

Welcome and thank you so much for deciding to volunteer with Dogs for Good. You are joining an amazing and talented team that is committed to the power of the partnerships between dogs and people and the value that this brings to individuals and society. We couldn't achieve much of what we do without the support our amazing volunteers, so I am delighted that you have chosen to get involved.

As you know for more than 30 years we have been bringing dogs and people together to enable people to overcome specific challenges and to enrich the lives of both. There is incredible (and growing) potential for us to do more to help more people in more ways. This doesn't necessarily mean just training more dogs (although that is important), but as we develop we know that we can both support people with different challenges and also support them in different ways. As we continue on our journey it is clearer than ever that the input of our volunteers will not just remain at the core of what we do, but will increase in importance. As I write this we are embarking on the development of a new strategy, so we will keep you updated and involved in that process. The future for Dogs for Good is exciting and full of opportunity, I very much hope you can play a full part in shaping and delivering that.

This handbook provides you with much of the information you need to know about volunteering with Dogs for Good – including how to get the most from volunteering with us; what to expect; and how to get help. It also contains the relevant policies and procedures; apologies if this is sometimes a bit dry and formal, but I hope you will understand that it is important to make sure you have all the necessary information. If you have any questions, please be sure to ask and we will be happy to help.

As I am sure you are aware, we rely entirely on the generosity of individuals and organisations to deliver our life changing work. Volunteers are both part of that community and are vital in enabling it, so once again, thank you for your commitment to this cause.

I hope you have a great time being part of our team and if you are ever in Banbury please come and say hello! With best wishes

Ed Bracher Chief Executive

Introduction



Assistance Dogs

We train assistance dogs to support people in their homes and in the community.

Our Assistance Dog services support children and adults with physical disabilities and families with a child affected by autism.



We provide specialist advice and support to help people get the most of out of their relationship with their pet dog.

Our Family Dog service provides workshops and on-going support for families with a child affected by autism who wish to explore the helping potential of a pet dog.







Community Dog

We train activity and therapy dogs to work with specialist handlers in communities and schools.

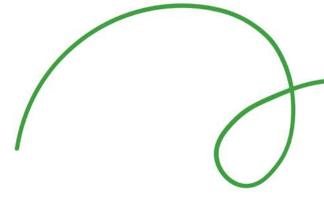
Our Community Dog service helps adults and children to overcome specific challenges and develop life skills.



Volunteering with Dogs for Good

Choosing to volunteer is a big and exciting step, and we want you to feel confident, informed and supported from the start. That is why we take time to share our policies, guidance and expectations with every volunteer colleague, and why we ask everyone to sign a volunteer agreement. It helps us build positive, respectful connections from day one.

People join us for all sorts of reasons. You might want to use your experience to support others, learn something new or try a different kind of challenge. Many volunteers tell us they were looking to give something back to their community, meet new people or simply enjoy being part of something meaningful. And often, it is a mix of all these things. Whatever brings you to us, we hope your volunteering journey feels rewarding, enjoyable and full of possibility.







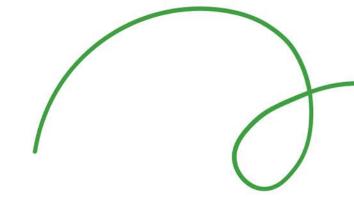
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We hesitated for some time about becoming Volunteer Puppy Socialisers. We were worried that it would be too hard to give the puppy back.

Our only regret is that we didn't do it sooner!



Volunteering with Dogs for Good



We are committed to offering every volunteer colleague a worthwhile and engaging experience. As part of that, you can expect:

- · A clear role outline with guidance to help you get started
- · Training that is relevant, practical and shaped around what you need
- · Advice and ongoing support from your volunteer coordinator
- Regular opportunities to share feedback and help shape how we do things
- Reimbursement of agreed out-of-pocket expenses, as outlined in our volunteer expenses policy







"I offered to volunteer with Dogs for Good due to the fact that the organisation provides dogs for children as well as adults. It's incredibly moving to see how much benefit the dogs can bring to a whole family. The dogs are loved every step of the way, from breeder to puppy socialiser to trainer to client – they are constantly fussed over and rewarded for their good behaviour. I work in the fundraising office helping organise visits to clubs and societies and liaise with other volunteers and clients. It's great to hear about what people are doing and know that you're a part of that too"



Volunteering with Dogs for Good

In return, we ask that you bring your time, skills and positive energy to our shared purpose. That includes:

- · Offering a regular and reliable commitment
- Following our policies and procedures, which help keep people and dogs safe and supported
- Approaching your role with a positive, open attitude
- Using your skills in ways that support the charity and the people and dogs we work with
- · Avoiding anything that could place the charity at risk or affect our reputation
- · Keeping us updated if your contact details change

Volunteers are a vital part of the Dogs for Good family. By working together, we can create the positive connections that help make everyday life possible for so many people and dogs.

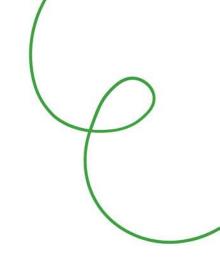


"Being part of one of the Volunteer Supporter Groups for Dogs for Good has been great. We meet regularly and we've done lots of different things because we're involved in the charity, everything from parachute jumps to supermarket collections, and it's great to know that we're raising money for a really good cause.



Our Volunteer Charter

Dogs for Good receives no government funding, so everything we do is made possible by the generosity of the public and the commitment of people like you. Your support helps us partner adults and children with skilled assistance dogs, guide families in understanding how a pet dog can support them, and place our activity and therapy dogs in schools and communities. Volunteers really do help us open up the world for more people every year.



Our promise

Our Promise sets out the values that shape how we work. You will receive a Promise Card which explains what these values look like in everyday situations and how we hope everyone in our Dogs for Good family, staff and volunteers alike, will bring them to life during their time with us.

Our principles

Our volunteer charter is built on principles that guide how we welcome, support and work with volunteers.

- We know volunteers offer something truly valuable to our mission and play a vital part in helping people make the most of a connection with a dog.
- We do not use volunteers in place of paid colleagues. Instead, we recognise the difference you make and aim to support you fairly and consistently.
- We want every volunteer to feel involved and able to contribute, so we work to integrate you into our activities in meaningful and positive ways.
- We expect colleagues across the charity to work well with volunteers and, where it makes sense, actively involve you in their work.
- We understand that volunteers value purposeful roles and opportunities to learn, and we will do what we can to help you develop while you are with us.
- We recognise that life can be busy and that volunteers often need flexibility. Where possible, we will work with you to find arrangements that suit your time and level of commitment.

Volunteers are an important part of the Dogs for Good community. By working together, we can help build the positive connections between people and dogs that make everyday life possible.



Expenses

We want volunteering to be open to everyone. To support this, we can reimburse agreed out of pocket expenses for certain roles. Please speak to your volunteer coordinator before spending anything that you hope to claim back, so they can confirm what is covered. Once approved, you will be asked to complete an expenses form and return it to your coordinator. More detail is available in the Appendix.

Support

Your volunteer coordinator is there to support you throughout your time with us. They will keep in touch regularly and are available to talk through any questions, concerns or practical issues that might arise.

Volunteers' voice

We value the insight and experience volunteers bring. If you have ideas, feedback or concerns about any part of our work, your coordinator is your first point of contact and will make sure your views are heard.

Insurance

Volunteers must be aged 18 or over. Dogs for Good has a valid insurance policy in place and a copy can be provided if you would like to see it.

Confidentiality

We take confidentiality seriously. Everyone who volunteers or works with Dogs for Good must follow our confidentiality policy, which helps protect the people and dogs we support, as well as our colleagues and volunteers.



Resolving challenges

Volunteers play a vital part in our work and we want your experience with Dogs for Good to feel positive and supported. While volunteering does not imply any kind of contract, it is important that we maintain the standards that keep people and dogs safe and that you enjoy being part of the service we offer.

If something is not working for you, or you feel unhappy about any part of your volunteering experience, we want to hear about it. The steps below outline how concerns can be raised and resolved.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your experience

Step 1 - Talk to your volunteer coordinator and explain what is concerning you. If your concern relates to your coordinator, you can move straight to Step 2. Your coordinator will look into the issue, try to resolve it and respond to you within 14 working days.

Step 2 - If the concern is not resolved at Step 1, we will arrange a meeting with your coordinator's manager. They will investigate, work with you to find a way forward and respond within 14 working days.

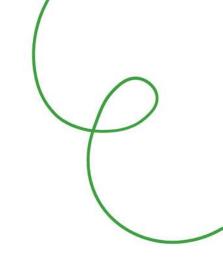
Step 3 - If the concern is still not resolved, a meeting will be arranged with the Head of Department who will also investigate and respond within 14 working days.

If, after this process, we are still unable to resolve your grievance, it may not be appropriate for the volunteering arrangement to continue.

You have the right to appeal if you are not satisfied with the decision. Appeals should be made in writing to the Chief Executive. Throughout the process you are welcome to bring a friend to any meeting you attend and you will always have the opportunity to explain your concerns in full.

All information relating to a complaint or dispute is treated as confidential. Anyone investigating a concern will only discuss the matter with people who need to be involved or who can provide relevant background or advice.





Resolving challenges

If the charity is dissatisfied with your work as a volunteer

Volunteers give their time freely and we approach any concerns about behaviour or performance with sensitivity. Our aim is always to address issues quickly, fairly and with the right support, and in most cases concerns can be sorted out informally.

However, if your work as a volunteer raises concerns that affect the people or dogs we support, other volunteers, colleagues or the wider charity, we may need to take further action. The steps below explain how this will be handled.



Step 1 - Your volunteer coordinator will meet with you to explain the concerns and talk through what needs to change.



Step 2 - If the concern is not resolved, a meeting will be arranged with your coordinator's manager.



Step 3 - If the concern remains unresolved, a meeting will be arranged with the Head of Department.

Throughout this process, our aim is to work with you constructively and respectfully. We want every volunteer to feel part of the Dogs for Good community and supported to give their best.



If a concern continues after the steps above, we may need to bring the volunteering arrangement to an end. Only a Head of Department can make this decision. If this happens, you will receive a letter within five days of the final meeting explaining the reasons for ending the volunteering activity.

You will always have the opportunity to share your views and you are welcome to bring a friend to any meeting you attend. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can request an appeal in writing to the Chief Executive. If the decision is upheld after the appeal process, you will receive a letter asking for the return of any charity property. If you hold more than one volunteer role, the management team will decide whether the decision applies to all roles or only specific activities.

We welcome everyone to our volunteering family

We are proud to be a charity that celebrates diversity and inclusion. A diverse and inclusive volunteer team helps us connect with a wider range of people and better understand the communities we support. We actively welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and value the unique experiences and perspectives each person brings.





This handbook is here to guide and support you throughout your time with Dogs for Good. From time to time, policies may need to be updated to reflect changes in the law or the needs of the charity. Where a change is required by legislation, it will take effect from the date the legislation comes into force.

We ask that you take time to familiarise yourself with the policies set out in this handbook. These apply to you as a volunteer and help us all work safely, respectfully and consistently.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important part of volunteering with Dogs for Good. It protects your own personal information and also safeguards the people we work with, our supporters, other volunteers, colleagues and the charity itself. This applies to any information you come across directly or indirectly, whether written or spoken, and whether shared intentionally or by accident.

All volunteers are asked to sign a privacy statement which is stored securely on our database. If you wish to change or withdraw your consent at any point, please let your volunteer coordinator or the Communications Team know so that we can update your records.







Out of pocket expenses

We aim to ensure volunteering is accessible to everyone. Any expenses covered by the charity must be agreed in advance with your volunteer coordinator and should be genuine out of pocket costs with no profit element included. The Appendix provides full details of what can be claimed. Expense forms are available from your coordinator and need to be returned within four weeks of the cost being incurred.



Photos and videos help us tell our story and show the difference our work makes. We will ask you for your consent preferences regarding the use of your image and store this information securely on our database. If you wish to change or withdraw your consent at any time, please contact your volunteer coordinator or the Communications Team and we will update your details.







Charity equipment

If you are given equipment to support your volunteering role, it remains the property of Dogs for Good. We ask that you take good care of anything provided, as some items can be costly to replace. When the equipment is no longer needed, or if we ask for it to be returned, please make sure it is handed back promptly and in good condition.

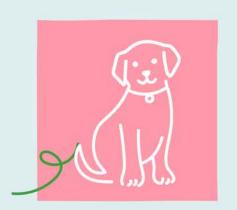
Pet dogs on charity premises

We know many volunteers have dogs of their own, but we ask that you do not bring your pet dog onto our sites unless this has been specifically agreed in advance. We do not have the facilities to look after pet dogs safely during visits.

In exceptional circumstances, and only if it is safe to do so, your dog may stay in your car while you are on charity property. Please be mindful of how quickly a car can become too hot or too cold and only leave your dog if you are completely confident that they will be safe and comfortable.

If you need to take your dog out of the car for any reason, you must request permission in advance from your volunteer coordinator. They will need to confirm that your dog has an up to date vaccination certificate before approving this.

For everyone's safety, pet dogs must remain on a lead at all times while on charity premises and should never be allowed off the lead.









Representing the charity

When you volunteer with us, we ask that you only act on behalf of Dogs for Good as part of your agreed role or when you have been given specific permission to do so. This includes how you speak about the charity online, such as through email or social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram.

If your volunteering with us comes to an end for any reason, we ask that you no longer describe yourself as a Dogs for Good volunteer or representative in any setting.



Dogs for Good has a no smoking policy in all buildings and vehicles. If you smoke, you may do so outside and away from entrances, and we ask that you dispose of any cigarette waste responsibly.

Data protection

Dogs for Good is committed to protecting personal information and handling it responsibly. The Data Protection Act gives individuals the right to know what information is held about them and, with some exceptions, to request a copy of this information.

Staff and volunteer records are always treated as confidential. You can request reasonable access to your own records and you have the right to challenge anything you believe is incorrect or misleading. We do not share references, whether received or provided, unless we have written permission from the person who supplied the reference.

To help us support you safely and effectively, volunteers must provide up to date contact details, including a phone number, email address and home address. We also ask for the contact details of the person you would want us to notify in an emergency while you are volunteering.

It is important that information about individuals, whether clients, supporters, donors, volunteers or staff, is only shared with people who have a clear need to know it. Personal information must never be shared outside the charity.

If you have any questions about how your data is used or stored, your volunteer coordinator can guide you or put you in touch with the relevant team.







Personal property

We want everyone to feel comfortable bringing the things they need for their volunteering role, but please be aware that Dogs for Good cannot accept liability for any loss or damage to personal belongings on our premises. If something is reported to us, we will look into it, but we cannot take responsibility for any loss.

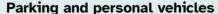


Reporting issues with essential items

If you lose or damage something essential to your volunteering role while on charity premises, please let your volunteer coordinator know as soon as possible so the matter can be looked into.

Using personal tools or equipment

If you bring your own tools or equipment to use on behalf of the charity, they must meet the relevant health and safety requirements, particularly those relating to electricity and Portable Appliance Testing. We can only approve their use if we are satisfied they are safe. It is your responsibility to ensure any personal items you bring are in suitable working condition.



If you bring a car or bicycle onto charity premises, please park only in authorised areas. Vehicles and bicycles are left entirely at your own risk and the charity cannot accept liability for any loss or damage.



Driving to charity events

If you are driving to a charity event, please make sure you follow all legal requirements. You must hold a valid driving licence, be medically fit to drive and have the correct insurance and a current MOT. If you choose to car share, this is a private arrangement and the charity cannot take responsibility for any aspect of that agreement.



ID badges and uniform

You will be asked to request an ID badge for your volunteering role. We will also provide a polo shirt or T-shirt free of charge. If you would like additional items, you can order them at your own cost via dogsforgood.deco-apparel.com/



Health and safety policy

At Dogs for Good, we want everyone who works with us or visits our sites to feel safe, supported and confident. The Trustees and Executive Team see the wellbeing of colleagues, volunteers, visitors and members of the public as a shared responsibility. Health and safety is an important part of how we work and is valued alongside all our other responsibilities.

Our policy is to do everything reasonably practical to reduce the risk of injury, ill health or damage and to maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone. We are committed to meeting all relevant health and safety legislation as a minimum and to improving our standards wherever possible.



To support this commitment, Dogs for Good will:

- Provide and maintain safe working conditions and safe ways of working
- Offer the right training, information, instruction and supervision for all activities
- Consult, inform and involve colleagues and volunteers in matters relating to health and safety wherever possible

In return, we ask volunteers to help us keep everyone safe by:

- Working safely and following the procedures and systems in place
- · Reporting any accidents or near misses
- Cooperating fully with staff in all matters relating to health and safety

Our Health and Safety Policy, Procedures and this statement are reviewed regularly and updated when legislation or working practices change. A copy of the full Health and Safety Policy and Procedures Manual is available on request.

If you have any concerns about health and safety, you are encouraged to speak to your volunteer coordinator at any time.

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Personal safety guidelines

Personal safety is something we want everyone to feel confident thinking about. If your volunteering role involves working alone or travelling independently, the following guidance can help you stay safe and feel supported.

- Make sure someone knows where you are going, who you are meeting and when you expect to be finished.
- A simple buddy system can help. Let someone you trust know your plans each day and check in with them once your activity is complete.
- Consider making a quick phone call before you begin a visit. Let the person know you will call back afterwards. This provides reassurance for you and acts as a safeguard.
- Avoid telling anyone you do not know that you will be travelling or visiting alone.
- When you arrive at a venue, take a moment to assess your surroundings. If anything feels unsafe or uncomfortable, trust your instincts.
- If you would prefer not to walk into a venue alone, you can call ahead and ask the organiser to meet you outside and walk in with you.
- If you feel unsure about your safety at any point and cannot resolve the situation, you should leave the area and call your coordinator as soon as possible.

Your safety matters. We never want you to feel pressured into doing anything that feels unsafe or uncomfortable. You are always encouraged to prioritise your wellbeing and to talk to your coordinator about any concerns you may have.



Meeting the highest possible standards

Dogs for Good works to very high standards to deliver the unique support we offer. We ask all volunteers to follow the advice and instruction provided by staff and to work within the charity's policies, procedures and legal responsibilities. This helps us protect the welfare of people and dogs and ensures our work runs smoothly. If these guidelines are not followed, it can cause disruption and additional costs for the charity.





Expenses policy

Some volunteer roles can claim back out of pocket expenses. If you are unsure whether this applies to your role, please speak to your volunteer coordinator before spending anything. Volunteers are not paid for their time and can only be reimbursed for approved costs to avoid any issues around tax or income related benefits.

What can be claimed

Travel

- Car travel can be claimed at 45p per mile, up to 100 miles per round trip unless otherwise agreed
- Standard class public transport fares can be reimbursed with receipts
- · Taxi costs can be reimbursed with prior approval and a receipt
- Pool vehicles may be available for certain activities and are coordinated by your volunteer coordinator

Meals and refreshments

- A meal allowance may be reimbursed for full day volunteering with prior agreement and receipts
- · Tea and coffee are available for volunteers at the training centre
- · Stationery and communication
- Stationery or small equipment you purchase for charity use can be reimbursed
- Postage, phone calls or similar costs can be reimbursed with receipts or relevant bills

How to claim

- All expenses must be agreed in advance with your volunteer coordinator
- · Receipts are needed for every claim except mileage
- An expenses form must be completed and submitted to your departmental coordinator
- Claims are paid by cheque or BACS
- Expenses must be claimed within two months or they cannot be reimbursed

This version keeps everything volunteers need, but in a tidier and more efficient format.



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Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a vital part of how we work at Dogs for Good. We believe that the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults must always come first. Keeping people safe is the responsibility of everyone who works or volunteers with us, whatever their role.

We are committed to bringing people and dogs together in a way that is safe, professional and respectful. To help us achieve this, we want all volunteers and colleagues to understand what safeguarding is and what to do if concerns arise. You will receive basic safeguarding training when you join and you will also be given a Safeguarding Awareness Card. Please keep this card safe and take time to read it, as it outlines your responsibilities and the steps to take if you need support.



Our safeguarding work is supported by three key documents:

- Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers this provides clear guidance on acceptable behaviour when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Procedures for protecting vulnerable adults and children these explain what abuse is, how to recognise it and what to do if you are worried about someone.
- Safeguarding Record of Concern Form this form should be used to record any safeguarding concerns so they can be followed up appropriately.

If you have a safeguarding concern, no matter how small it may seem, please speak to your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible. You can also contact the charity's Designated Safeguarding Officer, Duncan Edwards, on 01295 262600 or at duncan.edwards@dogsforgood.org.

Further detail about our safeguarding policy is available on the volunteering hub.

Whatever your volunteering role, we ask that you support this commitment and help ensure responsible safeguarding is part of everyday practice. This protects the people we work with, the dogs we support and the reputation of the charity.

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Equal opportunities policy

Dogs for Good is committed to creating an inclusive and fair environment where everyone feels valued and able to contribute. This applies to both the services we deliver and the way we support colleagues and volunteers within the charity. We want everyone who joins us, in any capacity, to have equal opportunity to succeed.

Core principles

We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind. This includes both direct and indirect discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, gender reassignment, gender identity, biological sex, marital status, age, religious beliefs, pregnancy and maternity or paternity status, sexual orientation or any other personal circumstance.

We recognise that some groups experience greater barriers due to discrimination, and we are committed to addressing inequality wherever it may appear in our services or our working practices.

Our policy aligns with the Equal Opportunities Act 2010, and we will always aim to meet both the legal requirements and the highest standards of good practice. We expect all colleagues, volunteers and committee members to support this commitment and to play an active part in promoting equality and fair treatment. Dogs for Good will take positive action and make reasonable adjustments where needed to ensure we are accessible and inclusive.

We also have clear procedures in place to help apply this policy in day to day practice, including guidance for recruitment and selection. To remain effective and relevant, this policy is reviewed regularly and updated as needed. It is non contractual and generally reviewed every two years, or sooner if legislation changes.

Accountability

The Director of People is responsible for creating and maintaining this policy, and the People and Governance Committee approves it for use. The Board, Executive Team and Managers share responsibility for ensuring equal opportunity runs through all areas of service delivery, employment and volunteering.

Anyone involved in recruitment or selection must follow our recruitment guidelines, and all colleagues and volunteers are expected to uphold the principles of this policy in their work.

Equal opportunities policy

This policy in practice

Decisions relating to the following must always be based on objective criteria and personal merit:

- · Selection and recruitment of employees or volunteers
- · Access to learning and development opportunities
- · Promotion or progression within the charity

Over the next 12 months, Dogs for Good commits to:

- · Offering appropriate equality related training for employees and volunteers
- · Publishing our recruitment approach to support fairness, consistency and accountability
- Monitoring key people related data such as recruitment, progression and learning access to help identify areas for improvement

Definitions

For clarity, the following terms are used in this policy:

Direct discrimination - Treating a person or group less favourably because of a protected characteristic. For example, refusing to employ or promote someone because of their ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination - A requirement or condition that unintentionally disadvantages certain groups. For example, insisting that a degree is essential for a role when the skills could be gained through experience.

Victimisation - Treating someone less favourably because they have raised a complaint of unlawful discrimination or harassment.

Harassment - Unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Positive action - Taking lawful, reasonable steps to increase access or representation for groups who are under represented, without discriminating against others.

Equal opportunities policy



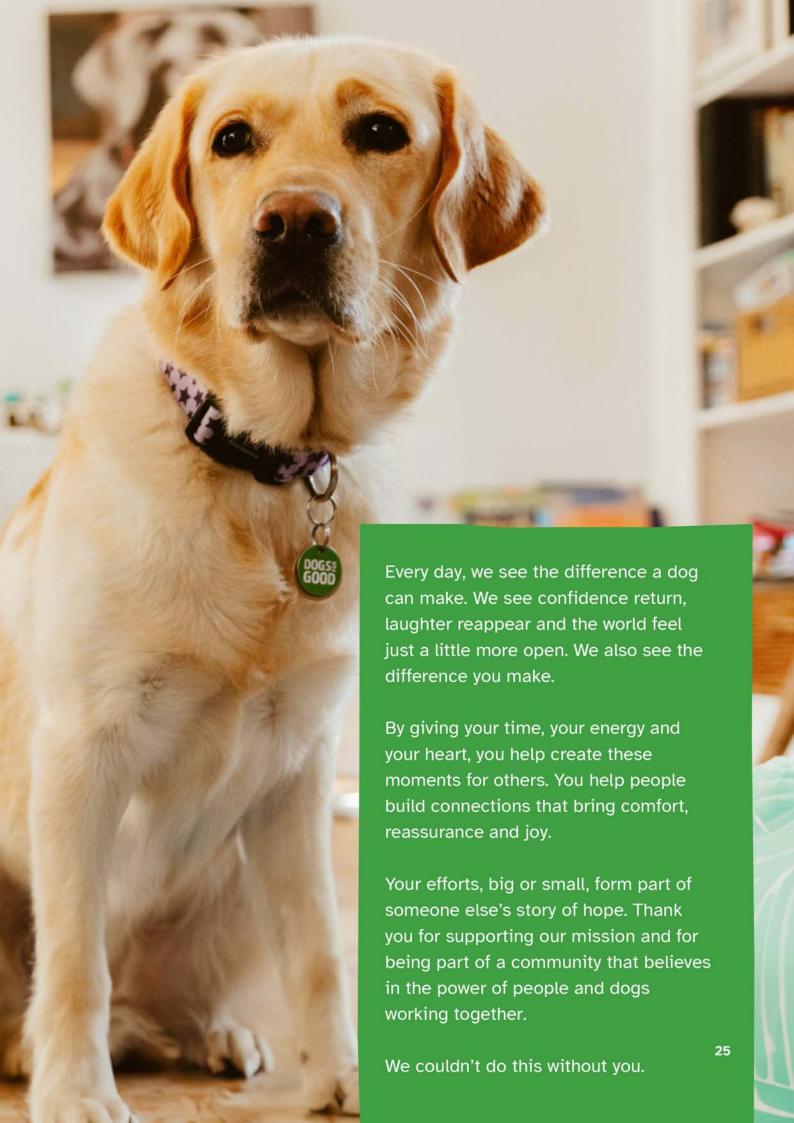
Reasonable adjustment

Practical steps taken to remove or reduce barriers linked to a protected characteristic, including disability. Dogs for Good will make reasonable adjustments wherever needed as both a service provider and employer.

Making a complaint

If you believe this policy has not been followed, we encourage you to speak to your line manager or your volunteer coordinator first. If this is not possible, you can speak directly to the Director of People in confidence.

If you wish to raise a formal grievance, you will find the process outlined in the section of this handbook titled "Resolving challenges".



For making everyday life possible

dogsforgood.org



