Volunteer with your dog FAQs

Are you interested in volunteering with your dog, but still have a few questions? Browse our frequently asked questions below. Hopefully you find the answer that you're looking for, but if not then you can still get in touch on 01295 759830 or volunteer@dogsforgood.org.

How can me and my dog support people?

You and your dog can work together as a Volunteer Dog Team to support people in your local community. By delivering activities together, you and your dog will bring comfort, motivation and moments of joy to people – helping them to feel more confident, connected and supported.

What activities could me and my dog be involved in?

Depending on what's the right fit for you, your dog and your local community – you could be involved in any of the following activities:

- Wellbeing walks - walking with small groups in the community, providing companionship and gentle motivation
- Community visits - visits to care homes, schools and other places alongside your dog
- Home visits – also known as one-to-one befriending, for people who would benefit from the regular, consistent companionship of your dog
- Dog Days events - fun group sessions involving several people and their dogs, creating joyful shared experiences for the people who attend

These are known as animal-assisted activities and are a type of Animal Assisted Service. You find out more about Animal Assisted Services on our website.

Where will I volunteer with my dog?

You and your dog will volunteer in your local community. This could be at a local park or forest with a walking group, at a care home or school, or visiting somebody in their home. Any activities and visits that you're involved in will be organised by Dogs for Good, and we'll work with you to find a placement that's a great fit for both you and your dog's strengths.

You may also be asked to volunteer with your dog at Dogs for Good events from time to time, and the details of these will be shared with you beforehand before you agree to take part.

What sort of dogs are you looking for?

There's no such thing as the 'right' dog, but we are looking for your dog to be:

- Calm and sociable, and to enjoy meeting new people
- Responsive to basic handling and willing to learn new skills
- Confident in different environments, or showing the potential to be confident with our support
- A dog whose signals and body language you know and understand well
- Happy to be groomed and have a basic health check

What sort of people are you looking for?

We're looking for people who have a genuine desire to connect with people and a commitment to their dog's wellbeing. We're interested in people who are:

- Kind, patient and compassionate, with a natural ability to put people at ease
- Comfortable engaging with a wide range of people, including those with additional needs
- A good communicator who can listen well and build a rapport with people

- Reliable and consistent, including being able to commit to agreed activities and keep simple records
- Respectful of boundaries and confidentiality, and confident to seek help when needed
- Happy to follow our standards, including dog hygiene and welfare guidelines

There are also some practical requirements that you may need to consider before reaching out about volunteering with your dog, these include:

- Ability to transport your dog safely to activities, or to arrange suitable alternative transport
- Availability to attend Dogs for Good training and education sessions, taking place both online and in-person
- Willingness to keep simple records of activities and your dog's welfare
- Commitment to following guidance on risk assessment, safeguarding and professional boundaries
- Readiness to take part in annual assessments and continuous learning, for both you and your dog
- A completed Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. We will support you through this process

I don't have much, or any, experience volunteering with my dog – is that ok?

You don’t need any formal experience to become a Volunteer Dog Team. We’ll be on-hand to provide full training and ongoing support.

When can I start taking part in activities with my dog?

Initially, you’ll take part in an induction process and a training programme that will last between 6-8 weeks. You’ll then take part in a ‘review’, which checks if you and your dog are ready to begin volunteering in your community.

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After your pass your review, we'll work with you to find a placement that's a great fit for both you and your dog's strengths, so you can start supporting people in your local area.

And once you're volunteering, you're not doing it alone – we'll continue to check in with you and provide support wherever you need it.

What will the training programme cover?

The training programme, which takes place both in-person and online through SharePoint, will cover:

- Reading your dog's body language and recognising signs of stress or discomfort
- Teaching your dog the skills they will need for activity sessions
- Facilitating positive and safe interactions between people and dogs
- Understanding the needs of the people you will support
- Preparing for sessions, including risk assessment and dog hygiene
- Safeguarding, professional boundaries and communication

After you've finished the training, we'll continue supporting you through regular check-ins and refresher training throughout your time volunteering with us.

How will Dogs for Good support me and my dog?

Here's what you can expect from Dogs for Good when you and your dog volunteer with us:

- We get to know you and your dog — your personality, strengths and what you both enjoy
- You take part in our training programme before taking part in any activities
- We take a look at your dog's temperament and behaviour to understand where they will thrive

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- Together, we'll find the activity that's best for you, your dog and the people you will support
- You won't be asked to take part in any activities until you and your dog are fully prepared and we've found the right activity for you both
- You begin activities with ongoing support and regular check-ins from Dogs for Good staff
- Whether you have volunteered with your dog before, or you are completely new to it, we'll support you throughout the entire process