

GOOD TIMES

DOGS
FOR
GOOD

SUMMER
2025
ISSUE!



Laying strong foundations

AN UPDATE FROM ED BRACHER, OUR CEO

At Dogs for Good's heart is a belief that dogs are good for us. Over the last four decades it's enabled us to diversify and grow our services to support a wide range of people who can find the world doesn't feel made for them.

Last year we launched our new strategy - a road map to enable us to deliver our services to **4,000 people** by 2028. Already, we're seeing that strategy come to life and gather momentum. We're increasingly talking about the outcomes we help create - the lives improved, the independence supported, the relationships deepened, and the joy sparked in communities up and down the country.

At our core, we love seeing people and dogs thriving together, understanding the needs of both and creating deeper bonds that make life possible. And by helping individuals live more independently and confidently, we're contributing to something much bigger: easing pressure on public services, fostering social connection, and building a more inclusive society.

That's serious work, and we take it seriously. But it's also work filled with lightness, laughter, and the unique spirit that dogs bring to everything we do. One of my favourite moments was hearing about Walt, a community dog who works with handler Sarah to support young people at an inpatient mental health unit. The young people there taught Walt to ride a skateboard. It was a joyful, playful act that speaks volumes about connection, confidence, and care. For me, that image sums up what we're about: evidence-based impact, delivered with warmth and a wagging tail.

That joyful ethos has also shaped how we evolve our services. We've introduced a more personal, flexible approach to accessing support, taking time to understand each person's goals and aspirations so we can give the right support. Instead of long application forms, we start with a simple enquiry and follow up with a conversation, enabling a more integrated and holistic approach right from the start.

None of this would be possible without our dogs and the people who care for them. We've strengthened our health and welfare team to provide even greater support to our dogs and our volunteer team.

Our service teams are developing closer ties enabling us find the right match for our dogs, in an environment where they can really shine. Marley's story in this edition of Good Times is a perfect example.

Last year we welcomed nearly **100 new volunteers** – a wonderful milestone and a reflection of the passion and commitment that surrounds Dogs for Good. We're working on more ways to celebrate and thank everyone who plays a role in our community, whether they've been with us for years or are just beginning their journey.

With such a powerful combination of joy and strong foundations, I look forward to seeing where the rest of 2025 will take us.



Bringing joy, connection and confidence to Bracknell

Dogs for Good is playing a vital role in helping people in Bracknell feel more connected, confident and supported in a project that brings together communities who may feel more isolated.

Through our Community Dog services, we're working with individuals living with dementia, learning disabilities, mental health challenges, and those at risk of isolation. Whether it's in care homes, assisted living facilities or out in the community, our specially trained dogs like Ned and Lexi are creating genuine moments of joy and connection.

In care homes, we've seen remarkable results—residents light up when they interact with the dogs, often leaving their rooms to join in brushing, stroking or even playing games like "Doggy Bingo." One care worker shared, "She stroked the dog and you could see in her face there was an instant connection."

Dare to walk on fire?

Join us on 10th October 2025 for our Firewalk Challenge!

**Face your fears. Feel the heat.
Make a difference.**

Limited spaces available.

SIGN UP TODAY



We also provide befriender visits for people living at home with dementia, where the presence of a dog can spark memories and heartfelt conversations. For those with profound and multiple learning disabilities, our dog-led walking groups offer stimulation, companionship and fun. We all know the joy and laughter that comes from watching dogs play, stroking them, or simply feeling a dog's head resting in their lap and that can be transformative for the people supported through spending time with our dogs. One support worker said, "We had no idea how much he loved dogs. His connection with Ned opened up new possibilities for how we support him."

Our work in Bracknell is also evolving. Under the leadership of Community Dog Practitioner Lucy Purchase, we're building local capacity through a structured volunteer training programme, empowering others to deliver meaningful sessions with their own dogs.

Every step of our work in Bracknell starts from the basis of being community-led and it's exciting to see how this work is developing and finding new ways to extend and embed our support.

**NEW THIS
YEAR!**



Scotland service to help with stroke rehab

Kirsten Law joined Dogs for Good as Head of Scotland in October last year and has already done some great work to broaden our service offering and reach.

A generous donation from Pets Foundation enabled us to recruit a new practitioner to the team, Una, who joins us from Dogs Trust. She will be working alongside our community dogs on a brand new pilot with Inverclyde Royal Hospital which aims to help people recovering from a stroke. "The team at the hospital tell us that people's will and motivation to engage with rehab is typically quite low," explains Kirsten. "We're really excited to start work, because we know that a dog's involvement will make all the difference."

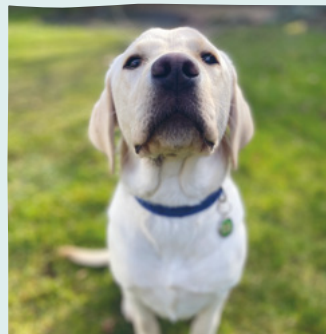
In addition to this work, Una will provide additional resource to supporting people with dementia as well as working with Kirsten to develop more opportunities elsewhere in the region.

As with all other aspects of our work, the support we receive from our extraordinary volunteer colleagues is incredibly important. In Scotland, we have a band of about 20 people who help us deliver Activity Dog and Dog Day activities in Perth, Helensburgh, Dundee and Glasgow. "They really are a fabulous, talented and generous bunch and we're so lucky to have them working as part of our team," says Kirsten. "Working alongside their wonderful dogs, they're a huge part of the work we do and the impact we have, helping to make life possible for people."



CRUFTS AND ŠKODA

Once again, we were lucky enough to share Škoda's fantastic stand at Crufts and over the four days of the show, we spoke to so many people about the work we do. We're so grateful to everyone who helped out and to Škoda for hosting us!



YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN WOODY

Young's Pubs and their alliance with Wooden Spoon recently fundraised to sponsor one of our puppies – a brilliant achievement and we're enormously grateful to them all. In addition, the Young's team came and shot a short film about the work we do which was shared on their and our socials. They also met their puppy, Woody, who stole the show... and everyone's hearts.



ONE STEP BEYOND!

Congratulations to our five intrepid fundraisers who ran the TCS London Marathon for us on a beautiful but very warm spring sunshine day in April. Kate, Karen, Tori, Gary and Alastair have done us proud in raising vital funds which will help even more people transform their lives with the support of a life-changing bond with a dog.



GUARDS POLO CLUB GIVES A WARM WELCOME

We're delighted to be invited back to the Guards Polo Club in May and help host their annual dog show during the Labrador Trophy Tournament. It's always a great day out with lots of fun and laughter as our dog mascot makes an appearance and shows his top skills at attempting to be a Dogs for Good dog.



My first year with Jodi

REFLECTIONS FROM ASH

It has almost been a year now since I got the call to say that I had a potential match to a beautiful Golden Retriever named Jodi. I vividly remember the barely containable excitement as my instructor Lily told me about a two-year-old dog that loved retrieving tasks, was super cuddly and had a habit for rolling on her head!

I spent the few days in preparation to make the trip to Banbury buzzing with anticipation. "What if the dog doesn't like me?... Am I going to be able to cope with all the training whilst balancing university?"

Realistically though, I was over prepared, and the staff at Dogs for Good had thoroughly ensured that we were well informed, prepared and ready to embark on this journey.

When I arrived at Banbury there were two potential dog matches for me to meet. After taking a walk around site with each of them, getting to know their working style a little and talking with Lily about each dog's personality, I had two options that I felt certain would both have made brilliant assistance dogs.

I sat down on the floor and Jodi plodded over to me, leaning her head into my chest and melting into my lap where she didn't move, enjoying belly rubs and falling asleep; I knew right then that she was the one.

Jodi moved in the day that I broke up from Uni for the summer, and initially I couldn't take my eyes of her, watching constantly for signs of anxiety and especially careful with her interactions with my other dogs. My retired assistance dog Sarge is a little arthritic, and isn't a fan of other dogs jumping all over him. Jodi seemed to get the memo immediately though, giving him space to let him come and greet her in his own

time, and much to my surprise, a few days later I would find them cuddled up together in Jodi's bed! She walked into the house that first day, and it was like she had always been there.

After just four weeks of training with Lily, Jodi passed her qualification assessment with flying colours, and we haven't looked back. In September she started Uni with me, accompanying me on my degree in Humanistic and Integrative psychotherapy, attending hospital appointments and events, and never failing to make friends with everyone she meets.

Every day has been a little easier since Jodi came home. Her practical tasks turn getting dressed and taking medication into a fun game, I no longer lose my wallet and keys thanks to her retrieval skills, and I go to bed each night with a smile after tucking her into bed with a kiss on the head.

Jodi radiates sunshine, every walk is filled with laughs as I watch her roll on her head, when we enter our classroom we are greeted with a chorus of "Morning Jodi!" and instead of feeling stared at and self-conscious when I'm out alone in public, I feel proud of the beautiful intelligent dog that I know people see before they see the wheelchair.

Gala Dinner 2025



Our second Gala Dinner saw many of us swap our dog walking gear for a touch of glamour, and what a night of celebration it turned out to be. Hosted once again by our lovely friend, Clare Balding, and supported by some dog-loving companies including our headline sponsor, Škoda, it was a wonderful evening of joy, connection and belonging, celebrating the people and dogs that make up what we do and who we're for.

Clare chatted on stage to some special guests whose insights into how dogs can help us belong in the world more easily were moving, thought provoking and also funny! We also debuted some brand new films we've been working on which were a big hit with everyone in the room. All in all, a truly memorable evening!





Marley and us

Marley is a handsome, loveable black labrador who has many wonderful things to offer. He wasn't suited to assistance dog life so our team set about exploring alternative opportunities for him. And very quickly, a bright future came knocking for Marley...

Emily and Mike were after the perfect dog for their busy household and lives. They have a daughter with special needs and were interested to know how a dog might be able to improve her confidence and provide distraction when locked into challenging states of mind. They signed up to the workshops to find out what that might look like.

Dogs for Good Family Dog Instructor, Hannah knew Emily personally and when she found out that two-year-old Marley was on the lookout for his forever home, she felt that this could be the perfect solution.

Hub pilots cleared for take off!

WATCH THIS SPACE...

As part of our ambitious plan to support more people through the power of connection with a dog, our hub development team is piloting new approaches to grow and evolve our services. Two new projects launched this year, the first is a service delivery project working to help respond to local needs and deliver our community work alongside our assistance dog services. The second is a dog supply project, helping to support our dogs to ensure they are able to adapt and enjoy their future working roles.

In March we announced that our Service Delivery pilot will be in the Bristol area, already an established community for Dogs for Good, with a passionate group of staff and volunteers in the region. Our Bristol pilot will bring together both our community initiatives and our assistance dog services, and builds on valuable

"When Hannah told us about Marley we just knew that he was going to be our dog," says Emily. "The deal was sealed when we were told that his only big quirk is that he's distracted by... leaves! A dog with a funny quirk like that was always going to fit right in with our own funny, quirky family!" she laughs.

Very quickly, Marley became the fifth member of the family.

"He's a real character and has made a massive difference to all of our lives, I expected to get the health benefits of longer walks but I didn't realise how much he would energise us all as well as providing so much love and fun."

explains Mike. Emily says that their daughter Anna has benefitted too. "Marley helps her moderate her mood and can be a great distraction when getting her ready in the morning."

Having the learnings from the Family Dog workshops has also helped Mike and Emily teach their girls about how to meet Marley's own needs and ensure he is as happy and content.

"We are forever grateful to Dogs for Good for bringing Marley into our lives and supporting us through the transition."

says Mike. "He is such a good, happy boy and it's wonderful that we have been able to provide him with a forever family."

insights on our work in Bracknell and Scotland where we're already working in partnership with local organisations to provide support to people who often find the world feels inaccessible or isn't made for them. We're also excited to tap into existing Dogs for Good projects across the South West to develop a sustainable, impactful model for the future. To help embed the Bristol pilot locally, we welcomed Emma Gwynne as our new Community Engagement Officer in April.

Our Dog Supply pilot is also underway near our Banbury HQ. Led by a team of Jess (Trainer), Michelle (Puppy Coordinator), and Gemma (Health & Welfare), this project supports our staff and volunteers in exploring how dogs can thrive and develop in preparedness for their future roles. We're actively evaluating the pilot to understand how our dogs—and the people around them—respond to this new way of working.

We'll be sharing more updates soon on how these pilots are shaping the future of our services.

Family-focused workshops

Our specially designed workshops provide a supportive learning space for better understanding a dog's needs. Through these, we show how to build a stronger bond that can translate into much-needed emotional and practical support for families.

WHO WE SUPPORT

- Families with an autistic child
- Individuals with a physical disability or people supporting a family member with a physical disability

→ Facilitated by our expert team



→ Supportive peer community



→ Support in finding the right dog for your family



→ Ongoing support for your family—human and dog included

OPTIONAL WORKSHOP

Finding a dog that meets your needs

For those that don't already have a dog

- What having a dog involves
- Finding and choosing a dog
- Understanding different dogs types

WORKSHOP ONE

Getting started

Creating the right environment for everyone

- Meeting your dog's needs
- Nurturing a safe and secure home
- Building a connection with your dog and other family members

WORKSHOP TWO

Understanding your dog's potential

Making the most of dog-human relationship

- Communicating with your dog
- Ways they can support you and a family member
- How dogs learn and develop

WORKSHOP THREE

Working with your dog

Equipping you for a journey of mutual learning

- How to teach your dog using positive reinforcement methods
- Training and learning tools
- Advanced training and skills

BOOK YOUR SPACE TODAY

 dogsforgood.org/family-dog

 familydog@dogsforgood.org

Workshops cost £60*

*Financial support available

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