



Information Guide

Autism Assistance Dogs for Children



LIFE CHANGING
DEVOTION

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In this guide we aim to provide you with all the information that you require prior to applying for an assistance dog from Dogs for Good. We have tried to answer as many commonly asked questions as possible, however if after reading this you are unsure then please get in contact with us.

Assistance Dogs for a Child with Autism

Each Autism assistance dog is trained to work in a special harness that connects it to both the Team Leader and child. The dog is trained to lead from the front, acting on instructions from the team leader while the child is encouraged to walk alongside the dog using a lead attached to the dog. This offers greater independence to the child and team leader, whilst ensuring the child is safe and unable to 'bolt' if they become stressed or anxious. 'Bolting' behaviour is also combated by training the assistance dog to automatically sit should the child attempt to run off. The dog also provides a consistent anchor for the child, so they feel more secure in unfamiliar environments.

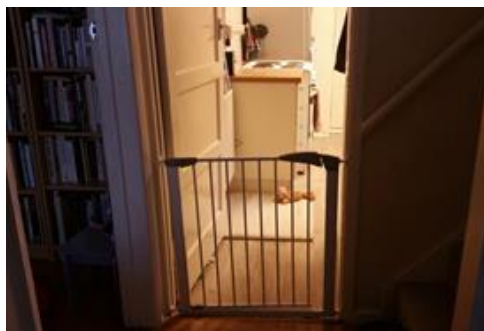
Having unlimited access to public places with the dog enables the whole family to do simple things such as shopping, which may have been impossible before.

A fully trained autism assistance dog can help change behaviour by:

- Introducing routines.
- Reducing bolting behaviour.
- Interrupting repetitive behaviour.
- Helping the child to cope with unfamiliar surroundings.

We work with a team model which includes a trained dog, a child and an adult family member (referred to as the Team Leader). The Team Leader is an individual who lives with the child and will be the main person to carry out the training and responsibilities for the dog. By training a Team Leader to assist with handling, the team is able to reach its full potential. The strength of each assistance dog team lies in the bond created between the Team Leader, child, and the dog. To help build this bond, we provide full training in assistance dog ownership, this includes everything from feeding, grooming and exercise, to the practical work the dogs provide.

The Team Leader is responsible for ensuring that the child and dog are supervised when together and the child should not be left responsible for the dog if alone.



All our teams need to have a 'safe space' for their dog. This is an area of the home where the dog can retreat to, having some alone time away to relax without the children, often separated off using a baby gate. The ideal safe space should be located in a quiet area of the home, that is used less frequently. Some people will use a utility room or kitchen. The Instructor can advise on suitable areas on the home visit. A suitable example of a safe space is on the left.

Our dogs

We train mainly Labradors and Golden Retrievers and first crosses of the two. Each dog spends its first year of life with one of the charity's volunteer puppy socialisers, and starts its formal training at around the age of 14 months at our Training Centre in Banbury, Oxfordshire. From time to time we will also train other breeds; however our autism assistance dogs must be large enough to act as an effective anchor for a child who may have 'bolting behaviours'.

We take the health and welfare of our dogs very seriously and encourage them to be kept at a healthy weight. We understand that it's sometimes hard to maintain a dogs' healthy weight, therefore we work with clients to aid with weight management plans. If no signs are shown that the dogs' weight is decreasing or starting to show signs of loss, we may look for alternatives to help, which could include the dog coming away for a period of time. This is often only as a last resort and if necessary if the welfare of one of our dogs is compromised.

Our clients

Our clients and families are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. Dogs for Good is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Dogs for Good is also committed to promoting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination. This policy applies both to service delivery and our own employment practices. We ask that clients provide the details and written consent of two people who live local to them, and can provide support to the partnership in the case of an emergency. This may include looking after the dog overnight at short notice, helping out with exercising the dog if the client is ill for example or providing childcare if the child/children are off school or in the school holidays when the team leader will still need to get out with the dog. It is ideal if at least one of these people does not live within the home of the client.

Training

Training course

Training with a dog generally takes place over a period of 6-10 weeks and is based in the home. Occasionally if we are teaching a number of people at the same time, we may offer the option of the Team Leader staying in a residential facility. During the course, all aspects of dog handling and care are covered, as well as the important part of building the relationship between the dog and its client. The partnership makes visits to supermarkets, shops and cafes supported by their Instructor, to develop the skills and experience necessary for assistance dog ownership.

Before making an application, you will need to consider the arrangements you may need to make to look after any family members or pets if you are required to stay away. Please note the child is not required to stay away, it will be the team leader.

After the first week of training, an Instructor will visit you 2-3 times a week for a period of up to 3 hours each time up until 10 weeks. On the days in between these visits, you will need to invest a similar amount of time in training with the dog, yourself, and your child. Having time off from work and someone to help with children or other animals is vital. We usually start to introduce your child onto the walks after about 3-4 weeks. Permission will need to be granted from the school, for the child to come out of school occasionally to train with the assistance dog.

Aftercare

As the partnership becomes established, visits are gradually reduced to yearly, to ensure the partnership is still developing well, to provide support with any issues that may arise, or to provide further training. Aftercare is an essential part of the Charity's work and an essential part of each partnership meeting its goals and aspirations. We request that children are available to accompany the Team Leader on these visits for the lifetime of the partnership with a dog.

Costs of assistance dog ownership

Whilst there is no cost to our clients to acquire an assistance dog from us, as with pet ownership in general, there are ongoing costs associated with keeping and looking after an assistance dog.

At Dogs for Good we help where we can by negotiating support from our suppliers and sponsors to ensure that costs like insurance, worming, flea treatment, and equipment are kept as low as possible. We provide the below figures as a guide to the costs and implications of having one of our dogs.

Please do speak with us if this could be a problem for you or if you need help meeting these costs:

Application costs	Annual Assistance dog Approximate costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical fee – up to £50 returnable on request if application is unsuccessful (GP fees vary) • Qualification fee - £25 • Travel costs to Training Centre in Banbury, or other appropriate venue of the charities choice for assessment/training • Any adaptations required to the home or garden to securely house a dog i.e. an average 6ft x6ft panel fenced toileting run is likely to cost around £80 – £100. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food - £360 (see footnote *) • Vaccinations - £50 • Anti worm treatment - £60 • Anti parasitic treatment (flea/tick) - £176 (on average £44 per tablet, depending on vets and source of tablets) • Toys and bedding - £50 (at owner’s discretion) • Suitable bones, treats, rewards - £35 (at owner’s discretion) • Insurance Premium – Approximately £350-£450 per year (though may change slightly year to year) • Insurance excess – Approximately £300 per condition, per policy year (may change slightly year to year)

* All of our assistance dogs are currently fed Royal Canin food, and we have a direct ordering system in place to ensure that our dogs are fed per our recommendations.

All the above figures equate to approximately £100-£150 per month.

Who can apply?

Any child aged between 3 and 10 that have been clinically diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum can apply for an assistance dog.

People who are either visually or hearing impaired can apply, but should note that our dogs are not trained for guiding or hearing tasks. Our dogs are also not trained for seizure alert.

Eligibility criteria

We have outlined below the minimum eligibility criteria required to be considered for an assistance dog. Achieving the below does not necessarily mean that an application will be accepted and approved:

1. Your child is aged between 3 and 10.
2. Your child must have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.
3. The dog will support only one child diagnosed on the autistic spectrum within the household.
4. Your child must be physically mobile.
5. You must be physically capable of handling a dog.
6. It is essential that you attend an information day at a venue of the Charity's choosing.
7. If you live in rented accommodation, you will need to provide written evidence from your landlord/housing association that you are permitted to keep an assistance dog on the premises.
8. You must have access to a secure outdoor area at ground level that can be allocated to use for a dog's toileting purposes.
 - a. A secure, fenced in garden is sufficient for this (fencing at least 5ft high all around), however some clients choose to build a pen in their garden for the purposes of toileting. We will advise you accordingly during your home assessment if we feel that you need to install a toileting pen.
 - b. If you live in a property with a communal garden and propose to use that for the dog's toileting purposes, you must have written permission to use the communal area for toileting, or to build a toileting pen 6ft x 6ft (minimum).
9. You must be able to provide a means of feeding, giving water and grooming the dog.
10. You must be able to independently provide regular exercise for the dog as advised by the Charity – on average this amounts to a minimum of two 30-minute lead walks and a minimum of a 30 minute to 1 hour free run (off-lead exercise) each day. This may be longer depending on the dog.
11. You will not leave the dog on its own for longer than 4 hours per day within a 24-hour period.

12. You will attend a training course on all aspects of handling a dog and its care. The length of the course, its format and its venue being at the discretion of the Charity.
13. You will be able to attend a handling session if required at one of the centres if your application is accepted, to gain some additional experience with a few of our dogs.
14. You must be able to provide access to a local veterinary surgeon for routine preventative treatments and emergency treatment.
15. You must be able to provide a 'safe space' in the house for the dog to have rest and respite when needed.
16. Whilst Dogs for Good constantly seeks to maintain the lowest possible costs for an assistance dog owner, you agree to undertake all identified costs relating to assistance dog ownership i.e. insurance excesses; feeding, worming, flea treatment and equipment etc.
17. You understand that assistance dog ownership costs will be approximately £100 per month. Please refer to earlier in this guide for a breakdown of these costs and let us know if this is a concern as there are ways we can help.
18. You understand that information provided on this form will be used by Dogs for Good to assess eligibility for our assistance dog services. Only information relevant to the enquiry will be held by us in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Dogs for Good will be the data controller for the purpose of this act.
19. We ask for and store the information you have provided us in order to best assess your needs and to meet the requirements for accreditation with Assistance Dogs International. We keep your information secure, private and do not share it with anyone outside of the organisation.
20. Throughout the process of application, training, and then during your working dog's life, Dogs for Good will contact you regularly for updates and information. This is so that we can ensure the welfare of the dogs and ensure that we are supporting you. We therefore expect our clients to remain in regular contact and have an open line of communication.
21. You understand that Dogs for Good is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. You agree to comply with the Charity's safeguarding processes and procedures.

Please note that as part of the application process, eligibility will also be dependent on permission from landlords/housing associations and employers (where applicable). Additionally, home checks are conducted prior to placing a dog. All application information received will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and respect. However, Dogs for Good retains the right to use this information for research purposes and in our work with sponsors and accreditation organisations.

How to apply

To provide fairer access to all potential applicants, we currently use a ballot style approach for accepting successfully completed eligibility assessments and inviting applications to our assistance dog services. This approach ensures that we can provide our services in a timely manner to our applicants within our limited resources. The ballot approach is delivered in accordance with the Dogs for Good Application Ballot - General Conditions of Entry.

1. Check our website to see if we are accepting enquiries from your region. Whilst we do cover the whole of England and Wales, our enquiry management system works on a postcode basis. This enables us to deal with the volume of enquiries we receive in an efficient and fair way, based on the demand for our services in any particular area/region and the resources we have available in that area. It is very possible that your enquiry may not be able to be processed when you first contact us.
2. We are happy to take your enquiry in a number of ways. The easiest and our preferred way of receiving an enquiry is through our website. If we are able to accept an enquiry from your area, you will be able to complete an online form that will record your details and confirm you meet our eligibility criteria. If you do not have access to the internet, we can take an enquiry in writing or over the phone, but please be aware that we may have to arrange a time and date to do this.
3. If we are not accepting applications in your area, you will need to monitor the webpage regularly to see if we have been able to open our lists in your area. Where possible we will give you an indication as to when the next opening will be for your area.
4. If we are accepting applications in your area you will need to complete an Eligibility Assessment. The Eligibility Assessment will remain open for 2 weeks. The webpage will explain when the Eligibility Assessment will close.
5. You must complete your Eligibility Assessment before the last day indicated on the Eligibility Assessment page.
6. Once you have successfully completed the online form indicating that you meet our eligibility criteria, your details will go into a pool with all other successful potential applicants. Within 3 working days of the Eligibility Assessment closing, we will randomly select from this pool a number of potential applicants to invite to an Information Session.

We will inform you by email, telephone or in writing as soon as practicable after the selection if we can offer you a place on an Information Session or if we are not able to offer you a place on an Information Session.

If you have not been offered a place on an Information Session, we will advise you as to how to access the next Eligibility Assessment. We will then destroy all information which we hold on you in accordance with our privacy policy.

When we advise you that we can offer you a place on an Information Session, we will send you a link to a booking website from which you can book your attendance at the available Information Sessions.

7. Information Sessions are held throughout the year. It is the responsibility of the applicant to book their own place on an Information Session through the booking website provided. It is important to note that some Information Sessions may book up quickly. You should endeavor to book your place on your preferred Information Session as quickly as possible. If you have difficulty using the internet or the booking system, a member of the TDST will be able to assist you.
8. Shortly after you attend an Information Session, a member of the TDST will contact you to confirm whether you wish to proceed with your application.
9. We will send you an application form and medical form or provide details of where you can download them. You will need to return the forms and any supporting evidence within four weeks. If the forms are not returned within this deadline, we will assume you no longer wish to proceed with your application and close your file.
10. You will be notified by email of the forms being received by the Training Department Support Team (TDST).
11. Within two weeks of your forms being received, the TDST will review the details you have provided and notify you if there is any further information or clarification that is required to proceed with your application.

If further information is required, then you will need to provide it within a further four weeks.

If no other information is needed, your completed application will be submitted to the Applications Panel.

12. The Applications Panel meets monthly.
13. You will be notified of the Applications Panel's decision within five working days of it meeting.

If your application is accepted, we will arrange for one of our Instructors to undertake a home visit.

If your application is declined, you may appeal the decision through the Charity's appeals process (detailed on page 12)

14. If your application is accepted, a home visit will be conducted within three months of the Panels' decision.
15. Following the home visit, we will notify you by letter within five working days of the Applications Panel's meeting to advise you of the Panel's decision to accept your application to train with a dog.

Should your application be declined, you will have four weeks to submit an appeal under the Charity's appeals process.

If your application is accepted, you will then be moved into the awaiting training stage. Awaiting training is the stage where we will begin to identify a suitable dog progressing through our training programme that matches your circumstances and needs.

16. Whilst in awaiting training, you will need to undertake the Dogs for Good preparation course. This may involve attending a workshop and undertaking online learning. Additionally, you could be asked to attend a handling session at one of our centers to gain more experience with our dogs. This is to prepare you for your life with your assistance dog and ensure that you and your Instructor can make the best use of your training time.

Data Protection

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation, we must outline to you and seek your consent where appropriate to collect and use your personal data. "Personal data" means any information which can be used to identify you as an individual. The ways in which we collect and use your personal data are set out in the Privacy Statement attached to the Application Form.

If you are making an application for an Assistance Dog, you are not under any legal obligation to provide us with personal data. However, should you decide that you prefer not to provide us with the personal data we request, we may not be able to provide Assistance Dog services to you.

Most of the information we will collect and use will be directly provided by you, and you will therefore be aware what it is.

We will not process externally or share with others (except in a medical or other such emergency) any sensitive personal data without your prior consent and you have the right to withdraw your consent for us to store and use your data at any time.

We will hold your information for the period of your application and then for a further three months if your application is unsuccessful or withdrawn (to allow you to appeal any decision made in relation to your application), after which it will be destroyed. If your application is successful, your and / or your child's personal data will be stored securely within the Dogs for Good Dogs Databases for the period of your and / or your child's Assistance Dog contract.

Appeals Process

Dogs for Good receives many applications from people wishing to benefit from having an assistance dog supplied by the Charity. As a relatively small charity with limited training places, we are regrettably unable to help everyone who applies.

Placing an assistance dog with a client is a major undertaking so each and every application is given very careful consideration prior to a final decision being reached.

If you are unhappy with our decision, you have a right of appeal, as described in the procedure below:

1. A letter should be addressed to the Client Services Manager within 28 days of receiving your decline letter, fully explaining your reasons for disputing our decision.
2. Your appeal will be considered by the Client Services Manager in consultation with the Operations Manager and the Director of Training & Development within 21 days of receiving your appeal.
3. We will contact you within 7 days of considering your appeal to advise you of the outcome.

It is important to note that the Charity's decision is final.

Our decision will be based on the information provided at the time of the application. Should your circumstances change significantly you may re-apply, providing supporting evidence of your changed circumstances.

Frequently asked questions:

If you have any questions, please see [Frequently Asked Questions](#), or contact us.

Our contact details

Dogs for Good
The Frances Hay Centre
Blacklocks Hill
Banbury
Oxon
OX17 2BS

Telephone: 01295 252600

Website: www.dogsforgood.org

Email: info@dogsforgood.org

Charity Registration No England & Wales 1092960

Charity Registration No Scotland SC039828

Company Registration No 4416149

Other options

Re-homing

We recognise that companionship is an important aspect of many applications, so in some cases we may suggest re-homing one of our older retired or withdrawn from training dogs. This can be particularly suitable to some applicant's needs as a re-homed dog would provide companionship, without the need to adhere to the routines and practices involved with maintaining a full assistance dog partnership.

Pet Dog

Alternatively, you may consider that a pet dog is suitable for your needs. A local dog trainer can help with general obedience and other training.

Please note pet dogs may not be permitted into shopping centres etc.

In certain situations a well-trained pet dog can be trained by an ADI accredited charity. There are currently two registered assistance dog organisations in the UK that can train a pet dog for adults with a physical disability, these being:

- Support Dogs - 0114 261 7800 www.supportdogs.org.uk
- Dog Aid - 01743 891314 www.dogaid.org.uk

Autism Dogs CIC

Millpool Farm
Wards Lane
Congleton
Cheshire
CW12 3LN

Tel: 01260 278416

Email: info@autismdogs.co.uk

Website: www.autismdogs.co.uk

Canine Partners

Mill Lane
Heyshott
Midhurst
West Sussex
GU29 0ED

Tel: 03456 580480

Email: info@caninepartners.org.uk

Website: www.caninepartners.org.uk

Dog A.I.D

Earlyworld House
7 Darwin Court
Oxon Business Park
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY3 5AL

Tel: 01743 588469

Email: admin@dogaid.org.uk

Website: www.dogaid.org.uk

Guide Dogs

Hillfields
Reading Road
Burghfield Common
Reading
Berkshire
RG7 3YG

Tel: 0870 600 2323

Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.ORG.UK

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

The Grange
Wycombe Road
Saunderton
Princes Risborough
Buckinghamshire
HP27 9NS

Tel: 01844 348100 (voice & minicom)

Email: info@hearingdogs.org.uk

Website: www.hearingdogs.org.uk

Medical Detection Dogs

3 Millfield
Greenway Business Park
Winslow Road
Great Horwood
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK17 0NP

Tel: 01296 655888

Website: www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

Service Dogs UK

Tel: 0330 1200755

Email: getintouch@servicedogs.uk.org

Website: www.servicedogsuk.org

Support Dogs

21 Jessops Riverside
Brightside Lane
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S9 2RX

Tel: 0114 2617800

Email: info@supportdogs.org.uk

Website: www.supportdogs.org.uk

The Seeing Eye Dogs Alliance

18 Court Lodge Road
Gillingham
Kent
ME7 2QU

Tel: 01634 572125

Email: info@seeingeyedogs.org.uk

Website: www.seeingdogs.org.uk

The Kennel Club

Clarges Street
Piccadilly
London
W1J 8AB

Tel: 01296 318540

Website: www.thekennelclub.org.uk