



Information Guide

Assistance Dogs for Children



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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 Children

Dogs for Good train assistance dogs for children with physical disabilities. We believe that by training a dog to have special skills it will help give a child confidence by enabling them to be more independent. A children's assistance dog can be trained in tasks such as:

- Opening and closing doors
- Helping a child remove a jacket or pair of socks
- Retrieving dropped items such as mobile telephones
- Retrieving named articles such as gloves or a remote control
- Help with physiotherapy exercises

We work with a 'team model' which includes a trained dog, a child (16 or under) 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 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.

Dogs for Good accept applications from children with many different types of physical disability. We assess each application on how a dog can help a child, not on their type of disability. 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 task-work the dogs provide.

Our dogs

We train mainly Labradors and Golden Retrievers and first crosses of the two. From time to time, we will also train other breeds. Each dog spends their first year of life with one of the Charity's volunteer puppy socialisers and starts their formal training before the age of 18 months at our Training Centre in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

We take the health and welfare of our dogs very seriously and encourage them to be kept at a healthy weight, through a good diet and suitable exercise. We understand that it's sometimes hard to maintain a dog's healthy weight, so if needed, we work with our clients to implement weight management plans to get the dog's weight back to a healthy level. If after a period of time we find that weight has not been sufficiently lost, we may need to remove the dog from you so that we can work on this ourselves and look to return the dog to you at a suitable weight.

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, or helping out with exercising the dog if the client is ill for example. It is ideal if at least one of these people does not live within the home of the client.

Training

Family Dog

Prior to being matched with a dog, we require all Team Leaders to attend a series of our Family Dog Workshops. This is a series of 3 online sessions which are offered as part of our [Physical Disability Family Dog Service](#), covering topics such as relationship building, canine behaviour and communication, and training techniques.

Whilst some people choose to attend this course in order to train their own companion dog to assist them, we also ask Assistance Dog applicants to attend, as the workshops provide an excellent introduction regarding what to expect when your assistance dog is placed with you.

(Please note, the Family Dog registration fee is waived for assistance dog applicants.)

Training course

Once accepted and matched with a dog, we usually carry out training with you and the assistance dog from the your home, but on occasion to maximise our limited resources we may work with two to three clients at a time at a hotel located near to one of our centres.

Training courses last for a minimum of five days and are designed to set you and your dog up with the initial skills and tools to succeed together. During this training course we ask that we work with primarily the Team Leader so that the dog can begin to build a strong bond to one person on day one. Before making an application, you will need to consider the arrangements you may need to make to look after any family members or pets during your training course.

After the initial training course, an Instructor will visit you 2-3 times a week for a period of up to 3 hours each time, over a period of 6-8 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 also ask that your routine is as quiet and flexible as possible in the early days, to allow the dog to settle in. This may mean you need someone to help do school pick-ups for you for example, until such a time that you can take the dog with you.

We encourage bonding at home with the child from the beginning but usually start to introduce the child to walks outside with their dog after a couple of weeks. The child will need to have permission to be out of school for these visits.

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 free 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
• Medical fee – up to £50 returnable on request if application is unsuccessful (GP fees vary) • Qualification fee - £25 • Travel costs to one of our training centres as mentioned above (or any other 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 x 6ft panel fenced toileting run is likely to cost around £80 – £100.	• 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 chew toys, treats, rewards - £35 (at owner's discretion) • Insurance Premium – Approximately £350-£450 per year (though may change slightly year to year) • Insurance excess – Approximately £400 per condition, per policy year (may change slightly year to year)

* The majority of our assistance dogs are currently fed Royal Canin or Arden Grange 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?

Because there are so many types of disability, any person who is diagnosed with any kind of physical impairment which severely restricts their ability to be independent may apply for an assistance dog from Dogs for Good.

We welcome applications for children aged 7 to 16. In some cases, we may consider younger applicants, depending on individual circumstances. These are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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 medical / 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. It is essential that you attend an Information Session at a venue of the Charity's choosing.
2. You can undertake an assessment of your physical capabilities and learning skills in accordance with the standards required for owning an assistance dog.
3. You agree to attend a series of Dogs for Good's online "Family Dog" workshops in preparation for being matched with an assistance dog. More information about the Family Dog workshops can be found [here](#).
4. If you live in rented accommodation, you will need to provide written evidence from your landlord/housing association that you are permitted to have an assistance dog on the premises.
 - a) This should include permission to have a dog in your home, as well as confirmation that the dog can use the garden for toileting off lead. It may be necessary for the garden to be made secure and accessible for you and a dog (e.g adding a gate), so permission should be obtained for this if appropriate. This is particularly important if your garden is communal.
 - b) If you move house in the future, it will be your responsibility to check the permissions and requirements of your new landlord, ensuring they are still suitable for you and an assistance dog.
5. 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 (minimum fence height 5ft) is sufficient for this, 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).
6. You must be able to provide a means of feeding, giving water and grooming the dog.

7. 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 breed and size of dog.

- a) Please note, if you have a pet dog, there must be one handler per dog for lead walks, i.e. you will not be able to walk your pet dog(s) and assistance dog on lead together by yourself. This may mean walking your assistance dog separately, or having someone else with you who can handle your pet dog(s).

8. We generally require that there be no more than 2 pet dogs in the home, to ensure the success of an assistance dog. At times we may be able to make exceptions (for example if there is ample support from other adults in the home), but this will be discussed on a case by case basis and acceptance of your application is not guaranteed.

9. You will not leave the dog for more than 4 hours within a 24-hour period

10. Dogs for Good does not allow any dogs of any age to be within an enclosed space when someone is using cigarettes and e-cigarettes (including with a window open), to avoid the well documented impacts of second-hand nicotine consumption. When smoking or vaping outside, the dog should be off lead in a safe environment so that they can move away if they choose to do so.

11. You must have a need for a dog to carry out at least three distinct tasks that helps to mitigate aspects of your child's disability. Examples may include:

- Retrieve –different textured items.
- Pull – internal and external doors, clothes etc.
- Push – internal and external switches, doors and footplates on a wheelchair etc.
- Environmental walks / outings – suburban /urban / rural.

12. The Team Leader will attend a training course on all aspects of handling a dog and its care. The length of the course, format and 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. If you wish to take your dog with you to work, you will need written permission from your employer to take a dog on site with you.

15. You must be able to provide access to a local veterinary surgeon for routine preventative treatments and emergency treatment.

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 the information provided by you in your application will be used by Dogs for Good to assess eligibility for our assistance dog services. Only information relevant to the application will be held by us in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 1998. 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 will not share it with anyone outside of the organisation without your permission.
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.

Dogs for Good retains the right to use this information for research purposes and in our work with sponsors and accreditation organisations.

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 personal data will be stored securely within the Dogs for Good Dogs Databases for the period of your 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.

Companion Dog

Alternatively, you may consider that a companion dog is suitable for your needs. A local dog trainer can help with general obedience and other training, or you may wish to explore our Family Dog service (see below).

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

There are a number of registered assistance dog organisations in the UK that can train a companion dog for people with a disability, including:

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

Family Dog

The Physical Disability Family Dog Service, provides education through online workshops to give advice and support to train your own dog to help you. This would not be a registered assistance dog but a dog you obtain yourself.

Our workshops help you to consider how to bring your own dog into your life, taking you through considerations of breed / age of dog, right through to training advanced interventions. You will then receive ongoing, lifetime aftercare support from our Family Dog Instructors.

The workshops are aimed at people at every stage of dog ownership, from never owned a dog before and using it as an information gathering exercise to decide if it is right for them, to owning multiple dogs for many years and wanting to get more out of the relationship and advanced training.

More information on the workshops and how to book on can be found [here](#).

Other ADUK Members and Candidates

There are various other organisations that are members or candidates of Assistance Dogs UK, who specialise in different aspects of assistance dog training. The expertise of these other organisations may better suit your needs and goals.

Further information about ADUK members and candidates (including contact details) can be found on the [ADUK website](#).