



## **INFORMATION PACK** **FOR DISABILITY ASSISTANCE DOG APPLICANTS**

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### **GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR** **DISABILITY ASSISTANCE DOG APPLICANTS**

**Please read this information carefully.**

**These guidelines will help you to determine you and your pet's suitability as candidates for the training programme.**

1. You must have a physical disability.
2. A medical report will be obtained from your GP/hospital consultant.
3. NB: Support Dogs will **NOT** cover the cost if any charge is incurred for obtaining these reports.
4. You must be over the age of 16.
5. You must have the motivation and ability to provide regular exercise and grooming, suitable food and medical care for a dog.
6. You must genuinely enjoy the close companionship of a dog and want to form a working relationship with one.
7. All applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, creed, age or any other categories protected by law.
8. You must have your own pet dog aged between 10 months and 4 years old.
9. You must have had your own pet dog for at least six months.

10. Not all dogs are suitable for training. Please note certain types of breeds will not be considered for training.
11. You must **NOT** acquire a dog for the sole purpose of having it trained by Support Dogs. You must have your own **EXISTING PET DOG**.
12. All dogs and bitches must be neutered prior to graduating as a fully registered Support Dog.

## **FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS**

All applicants must consider the financial commitments of having a Disability Assistance Dog. The following outlines the commitments of each party:

### **Commitments of the applicant:**

- Dog food
- Dog treats
- Dog toys
- Travel expenses to Training Centre for the purpose of training sessions and aftercare visits.
- Vet bills
- Pet dog insurance

### **Commitments of Support Dogs**

- Accommodation during training visits
- Instructors training costs
- A full training pack which includes:
  - A suitable training lead
  - A training aid such as a halti or harness (if one is required)
  - A whistle
  - A Support Dog I/D tag
  - A support Dogs photo I/D card
  - A environmental health card
  - A Support Dog in training jacket/fully registered jacket

**Please note - Support Dogs jackets are only available to partnerships once they have successfully completed the relevant assessment with a Senior Instructor.**

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

1. The applicant requests an information pack from the office by letter or telephone.
2. Applicants that meet the required criteria can then request an application pack.
3. An application pack is sent to the applicant, this will include:
  - a. Information about the application procedure
  - b. Application form
  - c. Medical declaration consent form
  - d. Dog information sheet

4. The application form, dog information sheet and the medical declaration form must be returned to Support Dogs along with the required photographs before we can process your application.
5. A letter of confirmation of receipt will be sent out to the applicant.
6. The application form and dog information sheet are initially assessed as part of the application procedure by the Disability Assistance Dog team.
7. Please note - Incomplete documents will delay the application process.
8. Applicants will be informed of the results of this assessment within three months. Some applicants may be advised that their application has not been successful.
9. Successful applicants will be invited for an initial interview at our Sheffield training centre.
10. You will be required to make your own travel arrangements and cover your own costs. The Head of Training and other representatives will be assessing applicants for their suitability for the Disability Assistance Dog Training Programme. At this stage your dog will also be assessed. Some applicants will be advised that their application has not been successful.
11. Please note - all dogs must be fully vaccinated including the kennel cough vaccine before they can attend the training centre. A veterinary health form will be supplied and must be completed by your vet prior to the initial interview.
12. If an applicant relies on care for their daily living, it is essential to their application procedure that any person or persons providing this support be present for the initial interview. Please note- these individuals will also be required to attend the 2 day assessment and the residential training.
13. The reports of the interview will be assessed by a specially appointed panel. Applicants will be informed of the results of this panel within 7 days of the assessment taking place. Some applicants will be advised their application has not been successful.
14. Successful applicants will be offered a place on the next stage of the application process –The 2 day assessment.
15. At this time a medical report will be obtained from the applicants GP. A second report may then be obtained from the hospital consultant. Finally a further report may be obtained from another professional person with the knowledge of the applicant's condition.
16. Please note- During the application process a home assessment will also be carried out to assess the dog's home environment and daily routine, more information regarding this assessment will be given at the initial interview.
17. The 2 day assessment is a more detailed assessment that allows Support Dogs to assess the relationship between the applicant and their dog, whilst observing their dog handling skills and the dog's response to them both on and off the lead. Dogs will also be assessed away from their owners.
18. The assessment will include observations of obedience and control exercises, play sessions and lead control both at the training centre and in a local town area.

19. The charity will arrange 1 night's accommodation and cover the cost of the **ROOM ONLY**. You will be required to make your own travel arrangements and cover the costs.
20. Applicants should be aware that if specialist mobility equipment e.g. hoist's are required, that the hotel may not be able to accommodate such equipment due to health and safety issues. Manual and motorised wheelchairs are classed as acceptable.
21. Successful applicants will be accepted on to the training programme and provisional dates for the residential training will be given.
22. Please note - Some applicants will be provisionally accepted on to the training program pending a home assessment if one has not yet been carried out.
23. Some applicants may also be required to complete additional training with their dogs, in this situation the applicant will be given advice from their designated Disability Assistance Dog Instructor as well as an Action Plan detailing the work that needs to be completed. The applicant will then be invited back for a review at a later date before being given a final decision as to whether they will be accepted onto the training programme.

### **TRAINING GUIDELINES**

- The 6 week intensive training course is the first part of the Disability Assistance Dog Training Programme.
- The applicant's dog will come to the training centre and work one to one with a Disability Assistance Dog Instructor for the first 4 weeks.
- Support Dogs will arrange for dogs to be placed with one of our foster carers during the evenings and weekends, for the duration of their 4 weeks training.
- You will be required to make your own travel arrangements, cover your own costs, and supply all the required equipment for the dog during this time.
- Following these 4 weeks applicants will then be required to attend a 2 week residential training at the Support Dog Training Centre.
- If an applicant relies on care for their daily living, it is their responsibility to provide adequate care and support during the residential training. Any person or persons providing this support will also be required to attend initial assessments.
- You will be required to make your own travel arrangements and cover your own costs. At this stage you will be re-joined with your dog. You and your dog will stay at a local hotel. The charity will cover cost of room **ONLY**. The hotel accommodation is of a basic standard. Clients can upgrade to alternative accommodation, and any extra cost would be chargeable to them selves.
- Once the client and dog have returned home. Regular checks will be made by the designated Support Dog Instructor to monitor partnerships progress.
- Partnerships will be required to attend the training centre for extra training visits at the request of their instructor. Some training visits may be completed at the client's home.

- The frequency of these visits will be decided by your instructor and the Head of Training.
- Applicants who successfully complete the training programme to become a fully registered Assistance Dog Partnerships will be required to complete a public access test and agree to the terms laid out in the Support Dogs Licence Agreement. This is a requirement for all Assistance Dog Partnerships in the UK.
- Each dog must be at least 18 months of age or over before they can qualify. However most partnerships will not qualify before their dog is 2 years old. This allows enough time for the dog to mature and the partnership to reach the high standard of training required.
- Partnerships must complete a minimum of 170 hour public access work and achieve a high standard of training set out by their instructor before they can be put forward for qualification.
- In the advanced stages of training partnerships will be required to attend a three day qualification class at the training centre and on the third day they will be assessed by an external assessor.
- Newly qualified clients will be required to return a progress report to their instructor each month for the first six months.
- Qualified partnerships will also be required to attend the training centre for a 6 month review to assess that social and training standards are being maintained, and will be required to return for annual assessments their after.
- Please note the annual assessments (After Cares) are held at the beginning of each year.

**For more information please contact one of our Disability Assistance Dog Instructors at the Support Dogs training centre on: 0114-261-7800**

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1088281