

SUPPORT DOGS

Support Dogs is a unique UK charity dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with epilepsy, physical disabilities and children with autism and their families by training dogs to act as efficient and safe assistants.

Disability

Nearly one in five adults in Great Britain are disabled and only 17% of disabled people were actually born with their disability which sadly means that any one of us could one day face such problems.

Disability can lead to isolation, loss of confidence and feelings of low self-esteem and for many disabled people being unable to do simple, everyday tasks for their selves can leave them feeling depressed and worthless.

Our Support Dogs are taught task work tailored to their owner's needs enabling them to lead fuller and more independent lives. There are currently three types of Support Dog:

Seizure Alert Dogs are trained to respond and alert their owners to an imminent epileptic seizure thus preventing accidents and injury. The security and independence people have gained through having a Seizure Alert Dog is tremendous, not only because they have a warning prior to a seizure, but because they are able to take their dogs with them everywhere.



Disability Assistance Dogs are taught task work tailored to their owner's needs. They are taught to assist and support their disabled owners with their specific disability enabling them to lead a fuller and more independent life.

Autism Assistance Dogs are trained to meet the needs of both child and parents for a degree of predictability in social settings helping to bring independence not just for the children but for the whole family as well as increasing safety for the child.

A Support Dog can also be trained to do many other tasks which their owner may find difficult or impossible.

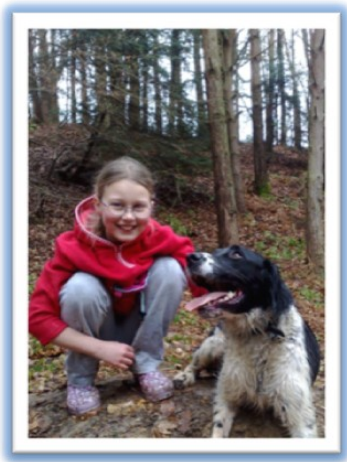
Some of our clients have lived for many months and even years without leaving their home and their Support Dog has literally transformed their lives.

Others are able to maintain their independence and active lifestyle but need additional help in order to be able to continue living life the way they want to. This is particularly important for those whose disability may be as a result of a debilitating illness that gradually becomes worse over time.



Support Dogs can also help to break down barriers to interacting with other people and help to improve confidence and reduce stress levels for their owners.

Support Dogs receives no government funding and relies solely on donations to continue our work. Each Disability Assistance Dog costs in the region of £12,000 to train and care for during its working life but the difference they make to the lives of each person is priceless as our clients can testify:



“Since training Grace has settled much better into school and is now able to walk in calmly. Family outings are now lovely for all involved; Grace has not bolted for many months, she often does not notice the little things that used to cause her great distress such as scaffolding or road works and also interacts with members of the public as they often talk to her about her dog.

Whilst Grace will always be faced by the challenges of Autism, the presence of Merlin has lessened the impact of it and transformed our life as a family. “

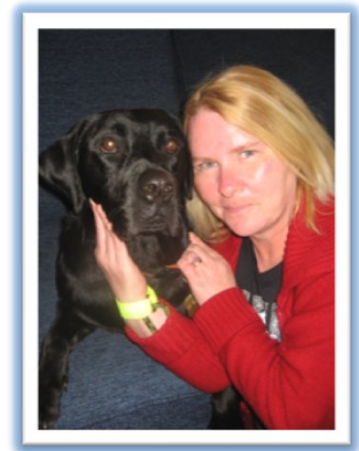
Tony Brown-Griffin

“It’s not just the alert itself; it’s the emotional confidence knowing that you are going to be alerted that makes the difference.

It’s hard to describe the feeling that having one of these dogs gives you. I can even go a couple of days without a seizure again now and I am getting out and about again. I don’t have to worry about being on the bus and having a seizure, or people staring at me.

Victor really has saved my life”

Ann Watson



One of the worst things about being disabled is having to rely on other people to do things and deal with the constant well-meaning offers to have everything done for you.

Before Billy was trained as an Assistance Dog, I dreaded going out shopping where I frequently had to deal with problems such as dropping something and hence having to climb down clumsily onto the floor to pick it up. People either looked the other way not knowing whether to help or not, or fussed around me making a scene of it. I would cringe with embarrassment and as time went on, I went out less and less because of it.

Billy has changed this completely. He has given me back my independence that I thought was lost forever and no words are strong enough to express exactly how much that means to me.

Carol Willacy



For more information about Support Dogs please visit www.support-dogs.org.uk