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# Application Guide

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June 2026

The Dogs for Autism Applicant Guide serves to offer comprehensive insights into the application process for obtaining our remarkable dogs and the transformative partnerships we foster. This guide outlines our eligibility criteria, the application procedure, the assessment process, and the transition of welcoming one of our dogs into your home.





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“For the first time, bedtime felt different. As **Casper** curled up at the foot of his bed, a sense of calm filled the whole room. In a world that often feels overwhelming, it's the little things that can make the biggest difference. For us, it was a furry friend who turned our bedtime battles into cherished moments.

**JON'S MUM**





# Dogs for Autism

## What we do

Dogs for Autism is an ADI accredited charity dedicated to enhancing the lives of autistic people through the provision of assistance dogs.

Our goals encompass pairing our remarkable dogs with autistic people to significantly improve their independence and overall quality of life. Beyond offering security and companionship, our assistance dogs provide invaluable support in various daily tasks.



## Our Mission

To have a positive impact on the lives of autistic people and their families, to empower them to achieve their goals, improve access to their chosen communities and to enhance their emotional and physical wellbeing.

## Our Vision

To train and provide assistance dogs, at no charge, to autistic people of any age who will significantly benefit.

**Enriching lives, Expanding horizons**

## Our Commitment

Through the provision of our assistance dogs, trained to mitigate some of the disabling impacts of autism and the environment, we are committed to creating and maintaining successful client-dog partnerships that impact positively on the lives of autistic people and their families.



# How do we transform lives?

At Dogs for Autism, we see every day just how life changing an assistance dog can be for an autistic person and their family. Our dogs are so much more than companions, they become trusted teammates, offering practical support, emotional reassurance, and a constant source of comfort and understanding.

Each of our dogs is individually trained around the needs of the person they are partnered with, helping to improve independence, confidence, emotional well-being and day to day quality of life.

Our dogs are trained to support people across a wide range of situations, from everyday challenges through to moments of distress or crisis. For individuals who may also experience physical difficulties sometimes associated with autism, dogs can also be trained to assist with practical tasks, such as retrieving dropped items or picking up a lead to reduce discomfort or overwhelm.

## Autism specific taskwork

Some examples of the core autism specific taskwork our dogs may be trained in include:

- **Deep and/or Light Pressure Therapy**, where the dog provides calming pressure by leaning against or laying across their partner to help reduce anxiety, sensory overload or emotional distress.
- **Interrupting unwanted or harmful behaviours**, helping to redirect their partner towards safer and more positive coping strategies.
- **Anxiety support, through close companionship**, grounding and reassurance during periods of stress, overwhelm or uncertainty.

Alongside this, our dogs can learn many additional tasks depending on the individual needs of the person they are supporting. No two partnerships are ever exactly the same.



# How do we transform lives?

Beyond the practical support they provide, our dogs also have a huge emotional impact. Many of our partners describe their dog as giving them the confidence to do things they never previously felt able to do.

Some of the wider benefits people often experience include:

- Greater independence and autonomy in daily life
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Reduced anxiety and stress levels
- Emotional comfort and reassurance during difficult moments
- Improved motivation and engagement in activities
- Reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Increased opportunities for social interaction and connection
- A stronger sense of routine, purpose and companionship

For many autistic people, having an assistance dog is not simply about taskwork. It is about feeling safer, more understood, more confident, and more able to navigate the world in a way that works for them.

Overall, our partnerships aim to provide a holistic approach to support and well-being, helping autistic people build confidence, independence and emotional resilience, while always having a loyal companion by their side.

“ One of the key things **Lola** helps me with is emotional regulation; when I am upset or anxious, I go to Lola for comfort. She's a calming presence, and I get positive sensory feedback from stroking her. She also lays on my lap, providing deep pressure that is soothing to me.

**REBECCA**





# What to consider before applying

## Building a bond

One of the most important parts of any successful assistance dog partnership is the relationship and bond that develops between the dog and their partner. While our dogs arrive highly trained, building a strong, trusting, and meaningful connection takes ongoing time, consistency, and involvement from both the applicant and supervising handler.

To help strengthen this bond, we encourage partners, wherever possible and appropriate, to take an active role in their dog's day-to-day care and routine. This may include activities such as:

- Feeding
- Grooming
- Exercising and walking
- Play and enrichment activities
- Practising training and handling skills
- Participating in day-to-day routines and care

These everyday interactions are an important part of helping the dog build trust, confidence, communication, and a strong working relationship with their partner.

We fully recognise that every applicant will have different abilities, support needs, and levels of independence, and there may absolutely be times where support from family members, carers, or the supervising handler is needed. However, wherever it is safe and realistic to do so, we encourage partners to be as involved as possible in the dog's care and routine, as this often plays a significant role in developing a successful long-term partnership.

It is also important to remember that relationships with dogs take time to develop naturally. A strong bond is not usually instant, and both the dog and partner will need time, patience, consistency, and support as they learn to understand and trust one another.

## Lifestyle Adjustments

Owning any dog comes with routine and lifestyle changes, but being partnered with an assistance dog, there are key things you need to consider:

- Daily dog walks - Daily walks are imperative, irrespective of the weather conditions. Come rain or shine, our canine companions depend on these outings. During sweltering heat, you will need to schedule walks for the cooler times of the day, such as early mornings before sunrise or late evenings.



# What to consider before applying

- **Planning things in advance** - Spontaneous trips to the seaside or impromptu family days out if you can't take your dog will no longer be feasible as your dog becomes a central consideration in your plans. Leaving your assistance dog alone for more than four hours in a day is not permitted, necessitating careful planning for outings. In situations where it's unsuitable to bring your dog, like scorching weather or venues that prohibit pets and assistance dogs such as certain zoos, arranging alternative care for your dog becomes essential. Otherwise, opting out of such outings will be necessary.
- **Routine changes** - Adjusting to a new routine is inevitable when welcoming a dog into your life. Incorporating time for walks, feeding, grooming, and play sessions with the dog will undoubtedly affect the partner and family's daily schedule. While we acknowledge that adapting to these changes can be challenging for our partners, it's vital that they understand and embrace this shift that comes with being paired with one of our dogs. As part of the assistance dog preparation course, you'll receive homework assignments, including the task of adopting a routine as if your dog were already in your life. This exercise is designed to help you familiarize yourself with the responsibilities and rhythms associated with owning a dog, preparing the partner for the transition ahead.
- **Holidays** - Introducing a dog into your life inevitably impacts your holiday plans. Just like arranging days out, holidays now require careful advance planning. Spontaneous weekend getaways or extended trips without considering your dog's needs are no longer feasible. Thankfully there are plenty of places you can go for an idyllic break where your dog can come too, however if you don't plan on taking your dog, you will need to look for care for your dog, and this will be the responsibility of the partner or the supervising handlers.

## PLEASE NOTE:

**Our dogs are not permitted to be left at commercial kennels or day care at any time.**

- **Adapting your home** - Removing potentially harmful items such as small toys, sharp objects, or choking hazards from your dog's reach. Storing medications securely in cabinets or containers out of your dog's reach to prevent accidental ingestion. Storing food items in sealed containers or high shelves to prevent your dog from accessing them and potentially ingesting harmful substances. Designating a comfortable and secure area in your home where your dog can rest and feel safe and identifying and addressing any potential hazards in your home, such as exposed wires, toxic plants, or open windows, to ensure your dog's safety.
- **The less glamorous side of dog ownership** - Dogs can inadvertently pick up bugs or fall ill, which might result in toileting accidents indoors or outdoors. Regrettably, such incidents cannot always be prevented and may potentially cause stains on carpets or furniture. It's important to note that Dogs for Autism assumes no liability for any damages caused by the dog, with the partner and supervising handler being held accountable instead.



# What to consider before applying

## Sensory considerations

While owning a dog can be a rewarding experience, it can also pose challenges for individuals with sensory difficulties. Some of these difficulties may be:

- **Visual** - dog toys around the house, shedded fur on clothes, toys, sofas etc, drool, 'zoomies'
- **Auditory** - barking, licking, snoring, panting, nails on hard floor, collar tags clinking the food or water bowl, dog whistle, dog moaning/groaning/chatting
- **Smell** - 'wet dog smell', dog poo, dog breath, dog flatulence, dog food and treats,
- **Touch** - Texture of the fur, drool, touching dog treats, tail wagging into you, being licked, shedded fur, soggy dog toys

It's crucial to be realistic with applicants about sensory considerations. Despite our dogs being highly trained, they are sentient beings, and there may be occasions when they bark, jump or display natural dog behaviours that could be difficult for some partners.



## Financial considerations

Caring for a dog can entail significant financial responsibility. Later in this guide, we will delve deeper into the various financial aspects you need to consider. However, for a brief overview, please see below:

- Food and treats
- Toys
- Health and assistance dog insurance (including excesses)
- Grooming
- Flea and worm preventative care
- Vaccinations
- Vet checks (6 monthly)
- Equipment such as beds, food and water bowls, leads, collars, enrichment items, whistles etc



# Application Reviews

## Applications will be reviewed throughout the entire process until the matching stage

To advance through the application stages, it's essential to comprehensively evaluate an applicant's suitability and requirement for a dog throughout the entire application process.

This evaluation comprises several components:

- completing necessary paperwork as requested throughout the application process,
- undergoing an individual assessment once all relevant professionals and medical contacts have been consulted. This assessment will focus on the individual's needs and suitability, as well as the supervising handler's capacity to assume full responsibility for the dog.

Additionally, attending multiple mandatory visits to the training centre in Hampshire is required.

At each juncture, the application will be carefully reviewed, and successful candidates will progress to the subsequent stage.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**We reserve the right to reject an application at any stage for any reason.**



*When **Makka** arrived in my life in the summer of 2020 I needed a door-to-door taxi service (paid for by the local authority) to get to & from college, and could not go out anywhere without my Mum. 18 months into our partnership I began to independently travel home from college & over the next 12 months started to travel to college as well, most days using two buses to college and two buses home. There is no way I could've done this without the support of my dog – we have come so far in two and a half years!.*

**GRACE**





# Eligibility Criteria

To apply for a DfA dog you will need to be able to fulfil the criteria listed below. An in-depth assessment will follow after the application form is completed before an individual may be deemed suitable to be placed on the waiting list.

- You must be aged between 5 and 75 years
- You must be a permanent resident of the UK
- You must have a formal diagnosis of autism and a need for an assistance dog to carry out taskwork that will help to mitigate aspects of your autism
- You are willing for at least one adult, other than the applicant, to take full responsibility for the handling, ongoing training, welfare, and financial costs of the dog whenever required. This person will be known as the supervising handler.
  - Applicants living in university accommodation must have an additional supervising handler who is based locally to the university and able to provide practical support with the dog when required.
- You should be willing to travel to our training centre in Alton, Hampshire to attend:
  - Information day
  - Relationship and Educational visit
  - Matching Visit - At least 1 but we may request an additional visit if we deem it necessary.
- The applicant (if appropriate) and the supervising handler should be willing to attend an online assistance dog preparation course. This is currently 3 online sessions with Dogs or Good.
- You or your supervising handler are capable of independently completing the minimum of two 40 minute walks/runs per day with the dog
- You and your carer are able to commit to in person training sessions covering all aspects of handling the dog and its care (the length of course, its format and its venue being at the absolute discretion of the charity)
- You should be capable of providing access to and transportation to a veterinary surgeon for routine preventive treatments as well as emergency care.
- You must be able to independently or with assistance provide food, water, grooming, and any necessary routine medical care for your dog.
- You agree to adhere to the charity's guidelines regarding feeding and training.



# Eligibility Criteria

- You will treat the dog as a working dog, recognising its purpose beyond being a pet.
- The applicant must not currently be living in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), shared university accommodation, or other temporary/shared student living arrangements. However, applicants living in self contained student accommodation for their own exclusive use may still be eligible.
- You must have a secure outdoor area, at least six feet by six feet in size, accessible to you, and suitable for the dog's toileting needs. If your outdoor space is part of a communal garden, written permission from your landlord is required for the dog's use of the space for toileting.
- Any existing dogs in the household must be at least 18 months old and have been in the home for more than 12 months at the time of application. If someone obtains a dog whilst they are applying or being assessed this will mean we cannot proceed with the application.
- You should be prepared to cover the routine annual expenses associated with owning a dog, including food, preventative parasite treatment, insurance (including any excesses), grooming, and necessary equipment. Maintaining the welfare of our dogs is of utmost importance.
- You commit to participating in appropriate data collection, training and handling sessions, support visits, refresher training, and any other sessions deemed necessary by Dogs for Autism.
- You are willing to adjust your lifestyle and attitudes as necessary to meet the ongoing physical and psychological needs of the dog.

*Luna is Zana's best friend which is so important for us as Zana hasn't been able to make friends or make connections with other children so her bond with Luna is very special and transformational for Zana's wellbeing. Zana only really has two words and one of them is Luna.*

**ZANA'S MUM**





# Eligibility Criteria

## PLEASE NOTE THAT:

- If you reside in accommodation that you do not own, or if you do not own the entire property (such as in leasehold situations), you must provide evidence from the property owner (or the estate management company for leasehold properties) confirming permission to have an assistance dog on the premises.
- You must not leave the dog unattended for more than a total of four hours a day.
- Upon placement, you'll need to review and sign a dog final placement contract. Throughout your partnership, you must adhere to the guidelines outlined in the contract, which includes receiving regular aftercare support and providing proof of the dog's medical records.
- Our policy mandates that the dog remains on the same insurance policy for the entire partnership duration unless explicit permission is granted in writing by Dogs for Autism to change providers.
- The dog remains the property of Dogs for Autism at all times, and you are not authorized to alter the dog's name or microchip details.

If you fit the above criteria and wish to apply when we open for applications, please continue to read our applicant guide to find out more and see our website to find out when applications can be submitted. All eligible applications will be considered regardless of race, sex or religion.



# Eligibility Criteria

## What is a Supervising Handler and is it a requirement to have one?

Every applicant, regardless of their age, must have a supervising handler in place before they can be considered for an assistance dog. This ensures there is always a responsible adult that can take on the overall responsibility for the dog's care, welfare, handling, ongoing training, and financial costs of an assistance dog when the applicant cannot do so.

The supervising handler must always be a different person to the applicant. They do not need to live with the applicant, but must be willing and able to take on all the responsibilities outlined below, and to facilitate and carry them out at short notice whenever required.

The supervising handler must be prepared to take full responsibility for the dog at any time the applicant cannot, whether temporarily or permanently, ensuring the dog is never left without appropriate care, supervision, or funding for their needs.

The supervising handler's responsibilities include:

- Handling the dog safely and effectively in public and at home, including stepping in at short notice if needed.
- Maintaining ongoing training to ensure the dog's skills remain reliable and effective, and being prepared to take over training sessions with the aftercare trainer.
- Providing for the dog's welfare, including feeding, grooming, exercise, housing and ensuring the dog's health and wellbeing, even if required at short notice.
- Covering all financial costs related to the dog's care, such as food, routine and emergency veterinary treatment, grooming, insurance premiums, equipment, and any other associated expenses if the partner cannot.
- Meeting legal and contractual obligations as outlined by Dogs for Autism.
- Attending all mandatory stages of the application and matching process alongside the applicant, including the Information Day, the Relationship and Educational Visit, and all Matching Visits. If the applicant is successful, the supervising handler must also be available throughout the Dog Placement Week.
- Applicants living in university accommodation must also have additional supervising handler support in place local to the university. This means having an additional supervising handler based within the local area who is able to provide practical support with the dog when needed.

In addition to completing various paperwork and providing additional information throughout the application process, there are several compulsory requirements that both the applicant and supervising handler must complete in order to progress through the different stages.



## What is required from you?

We understand that some of these requirements may present practical, emotional, financial, or logistical challenges at times. However, these stages form an essential part of the assessment and matching process, allowing the Dogs for Autism team to build a full understanding of the applicant's needs, lifestyle, support network, and ability to work safely and successfully alongside an assistance dog.

Attendance in person is also a mandatory part of the application process for both the applicant and supervising handler. This is because an important aspect of our assessment involves observing interactions and communication between the applicant, supervising handler, our staff, and our dogs within a real-life environment. These visits provide valuable opportunities for our trainers to observe natural interactions, discuss routines and expectations, offer guidance and education, and assess how a potential partnership may work in practice. Unfortunately, this element of the process cannot be carried out remotely or virtually.

If these compulsory requirements are not completed, unfortunately we would be unable to progress the application.

### Dedication, time and commitment

As part of being partnered with one of our dogs, we require a certain level of commitment and collaboration from the partner and/or supervising handler. This may involve allocating time within your regular schedule to meet with your affiliate trainer, attend reviews or training sessions, and complete any requested forms, questionnaires, or tasks.

Throughout the partnership, we also ask partners and supervising handlers to complete feedback forms and provide ongoing data and progress information.

This is an important part of helping us monitor the wellbeing and success of both the dog and partnership, improve our services, and ensure appropriate support can continue to be provided throughout the dog's working life, right through until retirement.

*For a long time, family outings felt impossible. Noise, crowds, and unfamiliar places quickly became too much. That all changed when **Megan** joined the family. With Megan by his side, Thomas can settle and find calm even in busy places. A simple cuddle or the gentle pressure of her paws brings him back to a place where he can cope.*

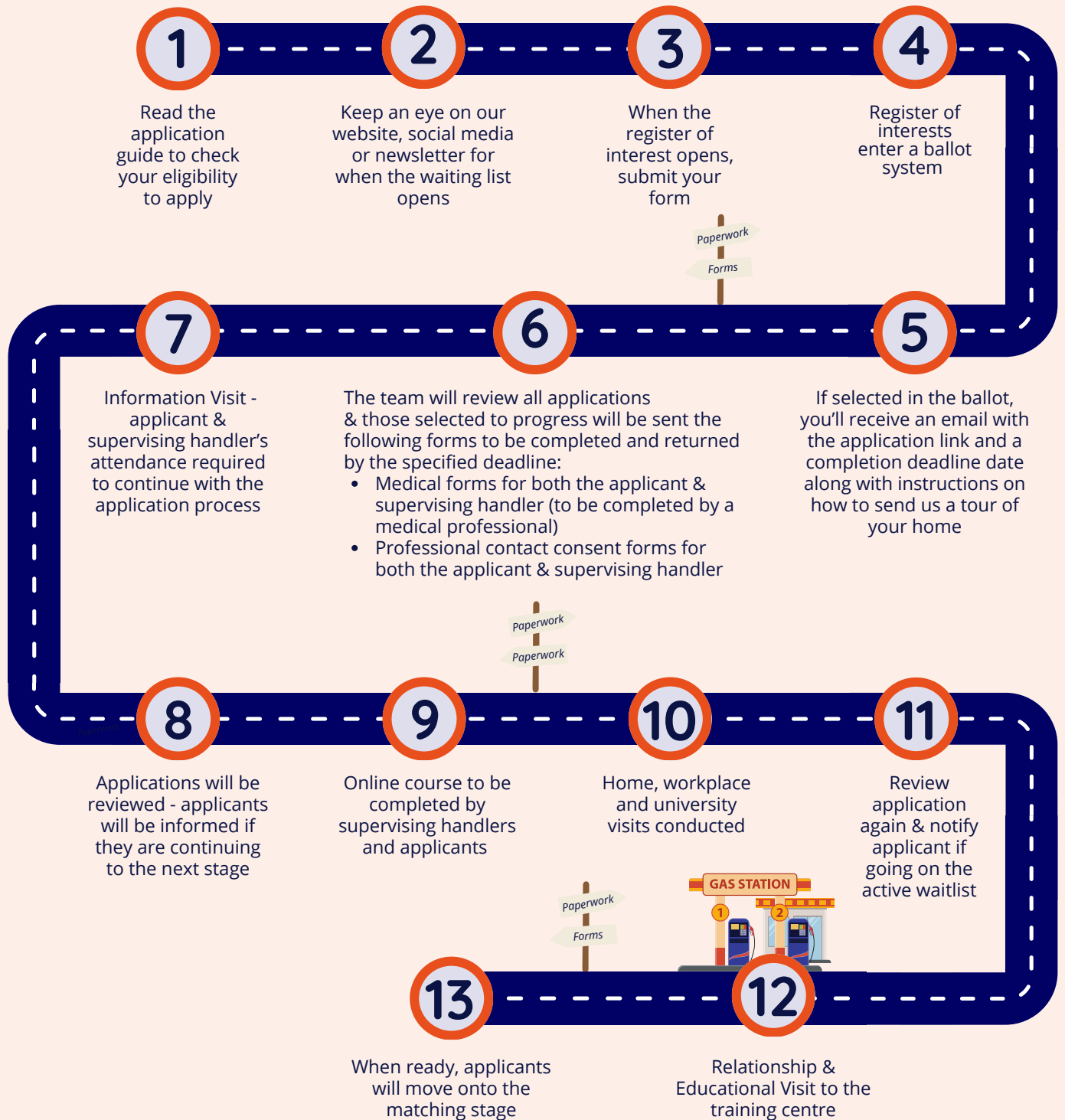
**THOMAS'S MUM**





# Application process

## APPLICATION PROCESS **STEP BY STEP**



Please be aware that we do our best to move through the application process as efficiently as possible. As a result, some elements may not follow the exact order outlined in the application guide. For example, you may have your home visit before completing the Dogs for Good course, or receive certain documents slightly out of sequence. This approach helps us keep things moving forward wherever possible and avoid unnecessary delays.



# First stages of the application process

## How to apply

To apply for one of our dogs, please stay updated by checking our website, social media pages, and newsletter. We will announce the opening and closing dates for registering your interest to apply for a dog on all of these platforms.

Before registering your interest, we strongly recommend verifying your eligibility to avoid any disappointment in case your application is rejected due to not meeting the eligibility criteria.

The link to the register your interest form will be active only during the specified opening dates on our website. Given the large volume of registering interest forms we receive, only a predetermined number of forms will be chosen to advance to the next stage in an impartial manner. This ensures fairness and helps reduce waiting times for all potential applicants as much as possible.

Once the register of interest forms have been impartially selected, application forms will be accessible through a link sent to the email provided on the registration form. Please ensure the email address is accurate and accessible. Any emails that bounce back will be excluded from the application process, and an alternative submission will be impartially selected.

**Complete the 'Register your interest form' on the website**



**Your completed register of interest form will be entered into a impartial ballot**



**If selected, you will receive an Email containing a link to an application form**

The application forms are extensive and are expected to require approximately 90-120 minutes to complete. When beginning the forms, please keep this timeframe in mind. Make sure you allocate dedicated time to fill them out, ensure your device is charged, and have all necessary information readily available as you are unable to save progress and any incomplete applications will not be considered.

If you encounter difficulties completing the online form or are unsure about your eligibility status, feel free to contact our applications team for assistance and alternative options. Forms that are not submitted within the opening window will not be considered.

### PLEASE NOTE:

Regrettably, owing to the high volume of applications we receive, we will not be able to individually notify all applicants if their register of interest is unsuccessful. If you have not received communication from us within 4 weeks of the window closing, please assume that your registration has not been successful. You are welcome to reapply when the waiting list reopens.

Thank you for your understanding.



# First stages of the application process

## If selected in the ballot

If your Register of Interest is selected through the ballot process, you will receive an email from the Applications Team containing the next stage of the application process.

This email will include:

- A link to complete the full application form online
- Guidance and instructions on how to submit photographs and/or a video tour of your home
- Information about the deadlines for completing and returning each part of the application process

The full application form is more detailed and gives you the opportunity to tell us more about the applicant, their support needs, lifestyle, routines, home environment, and how you feel an assistance dog may support them.

The photographs and/or video tour of your home help our team gain an initial understanding of the environment a potential assistance dog may be living in. This is not about having a “perfect” home, but instead helps us consider practical elements such as space, safety, routines, and suitability for a working assistance dog.

We understand that completing the application form and gathering the requested information can take time, so we encourage applicants and supervising handlers to begin this as early as possible after receiving the email. Clear deadlines will be provided, and unfortunately we are unable to accept incomplete applications or late submissions after the stated closing date.

## After submitting your application and house tour

Once your full application form and house tour have been submitted, the Applications Team will carefully review all information provided. Due to the high number of applications we receive, unfortunately not all applicants will progress to the next stage.

Applicants selected to continue through the process will then be emailed the following documents to be completed and returned by the specified deadline:

- Medical forms for both the applicant and supervising handler, to be completed by a relevant medical professional
- Professional contact consent forms for both the applicant and supervising handler
- Information and an invitation to attend the Information Day



# First stages of the application process

## Medical and professionals' forms

If you progress to this stage of the application process, forms will be sent for both the applicant and the supervising handler to complete. These forms help us build a fuller understanding of the applicant's needs, support network, day-to-day life, and suitability for working alongside an assistance dog. The forms will include:

### Medical Forms

These forms are to be printed and taken to a relevant medical professional involved in the care of the applicant and supervising handler, such as a GP, specialist nurse, consultant, or other appropriate healthcare professional.

The purpose of these forms is to help us better understand any medical, physical, mental health, or wellbeing considerations that may impact daily life, handling of an assistance dog, or the long-term suitability of a partnership.

Please be aware that some medical professionals may charge a fee for completing paperwork, and completion times can vary significantly between services. We therefore strongly encourage applicants to arrange these forms as early as possible to avoid missing deadlines.

### Professionals Involved Forms

These forms ask for details of any professionals currently involved in supporting either the applicant and/or supervising handler. Depending on individual circumstances, this may include professionals such as:

- SENCO
- Social Worker or Care Manager
- Family Support Services
- Clinical Psychologist
- Counsellor or Psychotherapist
- Child Protection Services
- Occupational Therapist
- CAMHS
- Outreach Worker
- Behaviour Support Team
- Physiotherapist
- Educational or Support Staff

We understand that every applicant's support network will look different, and not all applicants will have involvement from all of the above services.

Once the completed forms have been returned, the Applications Team may contact the professionals listed to discuss and verify the information provided, gather further relevant information, and better understand the support needs of the applicant and supervising handler. This helps ensure we are able to make safe, informed, and appropriate decisions throughout the assessment and matching process.

All information shared with Dogs for Autism is treated confidentially and handled in accordance with our privacy and data protection policies.



# First stages of the application process



## Information visit

**Attending the Information Visit is a required part of the application process for both the applicant and their supervising handler. Unfortunately, we are unable to progress applications where attendance is not possible.**

When the Register of Interest forms are published, the dates for the Information Visits will also be published. Please ensure you are available to attend one of the available dates before applying.

The visit will take place at a venue local to our Headquarters in Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3HD. Up to 20 potential applicants may be in attendance.

The day will include presentations providing further information about the application process, what is involved in taking on a Dogs for Autism assistance dog, opportunities to meet members of the team and dogs, and some light interactive activities.

As part of the day, our team will also begin observing how applicants naturally interact with the dogs and environment, which forms an important part of the overall assessment process. Because of this, the visit cannot be completed online or remotely.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments wherever possible to support applicants in attending and engaging with the visit. Ahead of the visit, attendees will be provided with a visual guide of the venue, along with an agenda and timetable for the day.

During the visit, there will also be access to a sensory/quiet area, opportunities to take breaks when needed, and support from staff throughout the day. Applicants are encouraged to discuss any additional support needs with us in advance where possible, and we will always try to meet these needs as best as we can.

Following the visit, applicants will have a two week cooling off period to process the information provided and consider whether they wish to continue with the application process. A member of the Applications Team will then contact each applicant to confirm whether they would like to proceed.

**REVIEW**

**The team will then meet to review all applications up to this stage**



# First stages of the application process

## Online course

An assistance dog partnership involves much more than simply welcoming a dog into the home. It requires ongoing teamwork, consistency, understanding, and realistic expectations from both the applicant and the supervising handler.

As part of the application process, we want to ensure that applicants and families feel as informed, prepared, and supported as possible before moving forward. The more understanding everyone has about the realities, responsibilities, and day-to-day aspects of life with an assistance dog, the more successful and sustainable a future partnership is likely to be.

Successful applicants will therefore be enrolled onto a three session online course delivered by Dogs for Good. We ask that the applicant (where appropriate) and the supervising handler attend these sessions together.

The course is designed to help families and applicants develop a realistic understanding of:

- What life with an assistance dog is really like
- The responsibilities involved in caring for and handling a working dog
- Public access and working in the community
- Dog welfare and wellbeing
- Training expectations and consistency
- The emotional and practical realities of assistance dog partnerships
- Common challenges that may arise within a partnership

### PLEASE NOTE:

**Attendance and engagement with this course forms a compulsory part of the application process.**

In addition to the Dogs for Good course, Dogs for Autism is also currently developing its own preparation course specifically tailored to our partnerships, training approaches, and autism focused support work. Depending on timescales, this course may or may not be available by the time an applicant reaches this stage of the process.

Once introduced, attendance and participation in this course would also become a required part of the application process. The aim of this additional training is to help applicants and supervising handlers feel even more prepared, confident, and informed before progressing towards a potential partnership.



# First stages of the application process

## Home visit

As part of the application process, applicants and their supervising handler will take part in a home visit carried out by members of the Dogs for Autism team. The purpose of this visit is to help us gain a better understanding of the home environment, daily routines, support network, and overall suitability for an assistance dog partnership. It is not about judging housekeeping standards or expecting a “perfect” home. Instead, it is an opportunity for us to get to know you better, answer any questions or concerns and explore how an assistance dog may fit into your day-to-day life.

We understand that for some applicants, having people visit your home can feel daunting or cause anxiety, so we always aim to approach these visits in a relaxed, supportive, and informal manner.

In most cases, the staff member carrying out the visit will also bring a dog with them. This allows us to observe how the applicant and supervising handler naturally interact with and respond to a dog within a home environment. It also gives applicants an opportunity to experience spending time around a working dog in a more realistic and practical setting.

If there are already pets living within the home, introducing a visiting dog also helps us observe how they respond around another dog. Initial introductions are usually carried out calmly and gradually, often outside the home first where possible.

During the visit, we may discuss topics such as:

- Daily routines and lifestyle
- Support systems and responsibilities within the household
- Sensory considerations and practical challenges
- Potential taskwork and realistic expectations
- Exercise, toileting, and dog welfare arrangements
- Space within the home and garden areas
- Any concerns or questions the applicant or supervising handler may have

Prior to the visit, applicants will usually be provided with information to help them prepare, such as a visual guide, staff introductions, and a pre-visit questionnaire. We encourage applicants to let us know about any reasonable adjustments or accommodations that may help make the visit more comfortable and accessible.

If the assistance dog may eventually attend an educational setting, workplace, college, university, or other regular environment alongside either the applicant or supervising handler, the Dogs for Autism team may also arrange to visit and assess these settings.

**REVIEW**

**The team will then meet to review all applications up to this stage**



# Second stages of the application process

## Active waiting list

If an applicant successfully progresses through the earlier stages of the assessment process, they may then be placed onto the Dogs for Autism active waiting list. Being placed on the active waiting list means that the team believes the applicant could potentially be suitable for an assistance dog partnership, and that we can begin considering possible future matches.

However, placement on the active waiting list does not guarantee that an applicant will ultimately receive a dog from Dogs for Autism. Matching an assistance dog is an extremely careful and individual process, and there are many factors that need to align in order for a safe, successful, and sustainable partnership to be possible.

Unlike many waiting lists, dogs are not partnered on a first come, first served basis. Instead, each match is based on the individual needs of the applicant, the dog's temperament, training, working style, welfare needs, environment, and overall suitability for one another.

It is not unusual for applicants to wait 2 years, or sometimes even longer, for the right match to arise.

During the time an applicant is on the active waiting list, Dogs for Autism may continue to request updated information, carry out further visits or discussions, and review whether circumstances remain appropriate for a partnership. We also ask applicants and supervising handlers to continue engaging with the process, maintaining communication, and informing us of any significant changes in health, living arrangements, education, employment, support needs, or household circumstances.

The welfare and suitability of both the applicant and the dog will always remain our highest priority.

Because of this, Dogs for Autism reserves the right to pause, defer, or withdraw an application from the active waiting list at any stage of the process if we feel a partnership may no longer be appropriate, safe, realistic, or in the best interests of either the applicant or the dog.

We appreciate that waiting can feel difficult and uncertain at times, but our aim is always to ensure that any partnership formed has the very best chance of being safe, positive, and successful for everyone involved.



# Second stages of the application process

## Relationship & Educational Visit

Attending the Relationship & Educational Visit is a mandatory part of the application process for both the applicant and supervising handler. Dates and times for the visit will be arranged directly between Dogs for Autism and the applicant/supervising handler at a mutually suitable time.

The visit will usually take place at our Training Centre in Alton. This is an individual visit, meaning there will be no other applicants or families attending at the same time. We aim for the environment to feel as calm, welcoming, and relaxed as possible.

The purpose of the visit is to allow the team to begin getting to know the applicant and supervising handler in more depth, while also giving applicants an opportunity to spend time around our dogs and learn more about life with an assistance dog partnership.

Prior to the visit, applicants will be sent an itinerary and visitor information pack outlining what the day will involve, who will be present, timings for the visit, directions, parking information, and any other helpful details to support preparation and reduce uncertainty before attending.

### What to expect at the visit

During the visit, activities may include:

- Meeting and interacting with some of our dogs
- Observing and practising basic handling skills
- Spending time with dogs in different environments
- Discussions around dog welfare, routines, and responsibilities
- Exploring realistic expectations of an assistance dog partnership
- Talking through support needs, routines, goals, and potential taskwork
- Opportunities for the matching and training team to get to know the applicant and supervising handler further

The visit is not designed to feel like a formal “test”, and we understand that applicants may feel nervous or unsure beforehand. Our team aim to make the experience supportive, flexible, and enjoyable, while also allowing us to observe natural interactions and gather important information to help guide future matching decisions.



## Second stages of the application process



### Literature

Following the Relationship & Educational Visit, the Dogs for Autism team will meet to discuss the visit, review the information gathered throughout the application process so far, and consider whether the application should progress further.

If the team decides to continue with the application, the applicant and supervising handler will be sent additional literature and a “training journey” pack. This pack may contain important information, guidance documents, refresher materials about the application process, and forms that need to be completed throughout the next stages of the journey.

At this stage, there can sometimes be periods where communication feels quieter or less frequent while paperwork is being returned, reviewed, and processed by the team. Although it may occasionally feel as though things have slowed down, please be reassured that work is still actively taking place behind the scenes.

During this time, the team may be:

- Reviewing returned paperwork and forms
- Updating applicant records and information
- Liaising with professionals involved in the application
- Discussing applicants within the wider training and applications team
- Monitoring dog availability and suitability
- Planning future stages of the process

As a small charity, there can sometimes be unavoidable delays due to staff capacity, travel, training schedules, or the time needed to carefully review applications and potential matches. However, we aim to keep applicants updated wherever possible and appreciate your patience throughout the process.



# Matching Process

## Matching Process

Once an applicant reaches the matching stage, the team will begin actively considering potential dogs that may be suitable for partnership. Matching an assistance dog is a very careful and individual process, with significant time and thought going into ensuring the best possible fit for both the applicant and the dog.

When considering a potential match, the team looks at a wide range of factors, including:

- The applicant's support needs and goals
- Lifestyle, routines, and environment
- Sensory considerations
- Handling abilities and support available from the supervising handler
- The dog's temperament, personality, confidence, and working style
- Welfare considerations for both the applicant and the dog
- Compatibility with any resident pets or regular environments

Every dog is an individual, and not every highly trained dog will be suitable for every applicant. Because of this, matching can sometimes take a considerable amount of time, and applicants may meet more than one dog before the right partnership is identified.



**Coco** came into our lives, full-time, in January 2022. The change in Peter since this point has been amazing. He will now engage in conversation with strangers to talk about Coco. He will now come into a shop with me as he has Coco to keep him grounded. Coco comforts Peter when he is anxious or upset, demonstrated at his brothers Confirmation, where she sat on Peters lap when he found the situation overwhelming. As Peter's parents we cannot express our gratitude enough to DfA. Coco is an amazing and intelligent dog who has made a massive difference to Peter

**PETER'S PARENTS**





# Matching Process

## Matching Visit

Once the team feels that a potentially suitable dog has become available, the Autism Liaison Team will contact the applicant and supervising handler to arrange a Matching Visit at our Training Centre in Alton.

The purpose of the Matching Visit is to give the applicant an opportunity to spend time with the potential dog in person, while also allowing the Dogs for Autism team to observe interactions and assess the suitability of the partnership.

During the visit, applicants may spend time:

- Meeting and interacting with the dog
- Walking and handling the dog
- Spending time in different environments such as Alton town centre and the local supermarket
- Observing the dog's personality, behaviour, and working style
- Discussing strengths, challenges, and expectations with the team

The visit is designed to feel supportive and exploratory rather than pressured or formal. We understand that applicants and families may feel excited, nervous, or emotionally invested at this stage, and we encourage everyone to approach the visit with an open mind and realistic expectations.

In some situations, the team may already have had sufficient opportunities to observe the applicant interacting with a particular dog during previous visits or training sessions. If the team feels confident in the suitability of the match based on these earlier interactions, a separate Matching Visit may not always be necessary. Any decisions regarding this would always be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Following the Matching Visit, there is usually a reflection and discussion period before any final decisions are made. In most cases, it can take approximately three to four weeks for a match to be formally confirmed. This time allows both the Dogs for Autism team and the applicant/supervising handler an opportunity to reflect carefully on how the visit felt and whether the partnership appears suitable for everyone involved, including the dog.

Unfortunately, not every potential match will be successful, and sometimes a dog may ultimately be considered unsuitable despite initial positive interactions. If this happens, the team will discuss this openly and sensitively with the applicant and continue considering other possible future matches where appropriate.



# Matching Process

## Approaching the final stage

Once a match has been agreed upon by both the Dogs for Autism team and the applicant/supervising handler, there are still several important steps to complete before the handover process can begin. These final stages are designed to help everyone feel fully prepared, informed, and supported before the dog officially joins the household.

Depending on the individual partnership and the needs of the assistance dog, we may ask the applicant to provide scent samples for training purposes. Although scent training is not currently standard for every dog, Dogs for Autism is actively developing this area of work, and some dogs may be specifically trained to recognise and respond to an individual's scent where appropriate. If scent samples are required, full guidance and support will be provided by the team.

At this stage, applicants and supervising handlers will also receive a detailed Client Manual. This manual contains important information about:

- The handover and transition process
- Daily routines and expectations
- Dog welfare and care requirements
- Public access guidance
- Training expectations and maintenance
- Equipment and handling
- Ongoing support and aftercare
- Policies, procedures, and partnership responsibilities

The aim of the manual is to help applicants and supervising handlers feel as prepared and confident as possible before the dog moves into the home.

Before handover can take place, the applicant and supervising handler will also be asked to sign a Commitment Agreement. This agreement outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and standards required to maintain a safe, healthy, and successful assistance dog partnership throughout the dog's working life.

More detailed information about these expectations will be provided throughout the process within both the Training Journey Pack and the Client Manual. However, a brief overview of the handover process and key expectations is included within this guide to help applicants understand what the final stages of the journey may involve.

***Polly** isn't just a dog; she's my lifeline, my anchor, and my key to a more independent future. Together, we reshape my daily challenges into opportunities for connection and support, turning former obstacles into possibilities.*

**LOLA**





# Handover Process

## A brief summary

As mentioned previously, much more detailed information about the handover and transition process will be provided within the Training Journey Pack and Client Manual. However, below is a brief overview of some of the expectations, preparations, and support involved before and during placement.

The handover process is carefully designed to support both the applicant and the dog as they adjust to living and working together as a partnership. Bringing an assistance dog into the home is a huge and exciting milestone, but it is also a significant transition for everybody involved, including the dog.

The first few weeks and months are incredibly important for building trust, routine, consistency, communication and a strong bond. During this period, the dog will still be settling into a completely new environment, learning new routines, and adjusting emotionally to their new home and people. At the same time, the applicant and supervising handler will also be learning how to work, communicate, and live alongside the dog successfully.

Because of this, we place a strong focus on ensuring everybody feels prepared, supported, and realistic about the transition process before placement takes place.

Prior to placement, applicants and supervising handlers will be expected to:

- Attend two pre-placement support sessions with the Autism Liaison Team to help prepare for the transition and discuss routines, expectations, support needs, and any concerns.
- Arrange a further four post-placement support sessions following the dog moving into the home, ensuring ongoing support is available during the settling in period.
- Take over the ongoing insurance payments for the dog and ensure appropriate cover remains in place at all times.
- Register the dog with your local veterinary practice and arrange an appropriate healthcare plan where required.
- If appropriate, identify professional and reputable local grooming services for the dog.
- Prepare the home and garden so they are safe, secure, and ready to receive the dog. This may include things such as securing boundaries, purchasing equipment, and planning suitable quiet rest areas for the dog.
- Sign the final placement and partnership agreements prior to placement taking place.

Throughout the process, the Dogs for Autism team will continue to provide guidance, support, and ongoing aftercare to help both the partnership and the dog succeed long term.



# Handover Process

## Settling In Period

Alongside the practical preparations, both the applicant and supervising handler will also be expected to prioritise a calm, structured settling in period once the dog moves into the home. This gives the dog time to adjust emotionally and physically to a completely new environment, while also allowing the new partnership to begin building trust, routine, and confidence together.

Both the applicant and supervising handler will therefore be expected to plan for a minimum two week “quiet settling in” period following placement. During this time, we encourage families to keep life as predictable and low pressure as possible. This may include limiting visitors, avoiding unnecessary trips or busy outings, and adjusting routines where possible to ensure the dog has the best opportunity to settle safely and successfully into their new home and partnership.

This may include:

- Taking annual leave or working from home where possible to help support the transition period
- Avoiding unnecessary visitors, social events, or major outings during the initial settling in stage
- Giving the dog time to gradually adjust to their new home environment, household members, and daily routines
- Focusing on relationship building, consistency, routine, and helping the dog feel safe and secure within the home environment

## Exercise and Welfare

For the first two weeks after placement, applicants and supervising handlers will also be asked to arrange access to secure dog paddocks or enclosed dog fields at least twice a week.

This gives the dog regular opportunities for safe off lead exercise, decompression, play, and relaxation away from busy public environments while they adjust to their new home, routines, and partnership.

## Transition Support

During the transition phase, the training team will provide intensive support to help both the dog and applicant settle successfully into partnership. This usually involves a trainer staying locally to the applicant for part of the handover period and both the applicant and supervising handler will need to be available throughout this time to fully engage in the transition and training process.

The handover process can feel exciting, emotional, and sometimes overwhelming, but the Dogs for Autism team will continue to provide guidance and support throughout the transition to help give the partnership the best possible start together.



# Aftercare

## Aftercare support

Our partners, a term for applicants now placed with a dog, receive continuous support from our aftercare team. This team is available to provide training and behavioural guidance to ensure a smooth transition from the moment a partner receives their dog until the dog's retirement.

We take pride in offering early support, and based on our own experience and research, we recognize that this contributes significantly to the ongoing and long-term success of our partnerships.

Our aftercare team are there to:

- diligently monitor the dog's health and wellbeing to ensure their welfare remains paramount
- They aid in establishing consistent routines and training during the early days of partnership
- provide assistance with any training or behavioural issues that may arise.
- help a partner to train any new tasks
- offer advice and support where needed
- help with any access or refusal of entry issues
- Our aftercare team also serves as the initial point of contact for partners, addressing any queries and providing advice as needed. They are readily available to offer guidance and support throughout the partnership.

Every 6 months, we conduct a "Post-Graduation Check-In" where your affiliate trainer visits you for an in-person check. During this check, the trainer evaluates:

- The dog's equipment is clean and in good condition
- The dog's level of training is still up to standard
- The dog's health records are up to date
- The dog remains happy and able to carry out taskwork
- The taskwork remains relevant to the partner's requirements
- If any additional training support is needed

Dogs for Autism reserves the right to potentially reduce the frequency of these in-person visits as the partnership becomes more established. However, such decisions will be made at the discretion of Dogs for Autism, taking into account the individual circumstances of each partnership.





# Applicant commitments and responsibilities

Applying for an assistance dog is a significant commitment. To ensure the best possible outcomes for both our dogs and the people they support, all applicants must be willing to meet the following responsibilities and requirements throughout the application process and, if successful, throughout the partnership.

## Support Sessions Policy

Dogs for Autism requires your agreement to our support sessions policy. This policy is a crucial aspect of our work, encompassing the preparation of your home before welcoming the dog and providing ongoing support in the weeks following the dog's arrival.

## Financial Costs

By applying for a dog from us, you agree to assume all financial responsibility for any costs incurred throughout the application process as well as for the dog once they have moved in with you.

## Lifestyle Changes

You must agree and be willing to make any necessary lifestyle changes in order to accommodate one of our dogs.

## Training upkeep

While the dog will arrive fully trained, it's crucial to maintain the standard of their training by ensuring consistent expectations are upheld.

## Questionnaires, Data Collection and Testimonials

We regularly request applicants and partners to complete questionnaires, forms, and testimonials. This provides us with valuable insights into our performance, identifies opportunities for improvement, and assists us in applying for grants to continue placing assistance dogs with those in need.

## The Dog's Welfare is Paramount

Dog welfare is our highest priority, and by applying for one of our dogs, you are agreeing to uphold the highest standards of care for the dog's welfare. Failure to maintain the dog's welfare will be considered a serious breach of our requirements.

## Communication

Communication is a key element of a successful partnership. We require communication to be open and responsive to ensure the best outcomes for both you and the dog. If communication becomes an issue, we may need to reassess your suitability to be partnered with one of our dogs, which could lead to us withdrawing your application or, in some cases, ending the partnership between the dog and partner.



# Financial costings

Stage	Costs
Application Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical report completion costs (dependent on the medical professional)</li> <li>• Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the family training centre information visit</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) to attend the family training centre information visit</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) to attend the online assistance dog preparation course</li> <li>• Time off work for the whole household (if applicable) to be available for a home visit</li> <li>• Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the relationship and educational visit</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) to attend the relationship and educational visit</li> <li>• Any adaptation costs required in the home or garden</li> </ul>
Matching & Handover Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the matching visit</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) to attend the matching visit</li> <li>• Dog or partner specific equipment (suitable treat bag, suitable car harness or car crate, if need any stairgates etc)</li> <li>• Any items the applicant may wish to buy for their dog before bringing them home (bed, toys, treats, brushes, etc)</li> <li>• Preparing for taking over the dog's insurance payments</li> <li>• Pre-booking a local enclosed dog field for a minimum of twice a week for the first few weeks after the dog is handed over</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) for the transition week</li> <li>• Time off work (if applicable) for the first 2 weeks of the dog settling in once handed over</li> </ul>

## Partnership Estimates

*Please bear in mind that these pricings may differ year on year and dependent on where items are purchased from and are used as a estimate guide only. We would advise you calculate your own estimates for a small, medium and large dog before applying to ensure you can cover these costs.*

### Agria Insurance

(You are able to upgrade your policy but you are not able to decrease the policy cover)

£25-£80 a month

Dependent on the breed of dog and if the policy is upgraded

### Insurance Excess

£170-£250 plus 20% of treatment cost

### Yearly Vaccinations

£40-£70

Price varies from vet to vet

### Parasite preventative treatment

£20-£30 a month

Dependent on the size of the dog

### Food

£30-£65 a month

Dependent on the size of the dog and the product

### Treats, poo bags etc

Variable depending on supplier and items

### Grooming (if applicable)

£25-£80 every 6 weeks - yearly

Dependent on the breed of dog

### 6 monthly vet check up

Up to £65

### Additional equipment

Varies upon circumstances



# Right to remove applications

## Reservation of Right to Terminate the Application:

"Dogs for Autism reserves the right to terminate the application at our discretion at any stage. If the application is terminated for any reason, including, without limitation, any termination prior to a Change of Control, the applicant shall not be entitled to any payments, damages, awards, or compensation."

Dogs for Autism is not obligated to disclose the reasons for terminating the application. It shall remain at Dogs for Autism's discretion whether these reasons are shared with the applicant.

## Your Right to Terminate:

"The applicant or supervising handler may also terminate the application at any time by providing us with written notice. Your application will be closed as soon as reasonably practicable after we have received notice, all open Contracts are closed and all of your obligations are discharged."



*Daisy brings calm to Marcus's inner chaos. She gives him tools to manage his emotions, especially in public — where those moments can be the hardest. She has his back. And because of that, she has ours too.*

**MARCUS'S MUM**





# General Standards

## Staff & Trainers

We value a professional working relationship between our staff, trainers and partners, and expect our staff and trainers to conduct themselves accordingly.

Our staff and trainers are mandated to visit your home to monitor your progress and provide support throughout your journey. By submitting your application and receiving a dog from us, you consent to staff visits as needed at agreed-upon dates and times, and if the charity has any welfare concerns this may be without notice.

In the event that the charity identifies any risks that may endanger the safety of our dogs or staff, we reserve the right to reject an application or discontinue a working relationship. Examples of such risks include relevant criminal convictions or environmental circumstances, such as living conditions.

Please be aware:

- The charity maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards physical, verbal, and electronic abuse.
- We expect behaviour that is tolerant and non-discriminatory when collaborating with us.
- You must demonstrate the level of commitment and cooperation necessary to sustain a successful working partnership with both the dog and the charity.

## Insurance Cover

All Dogs for Autism dogs are insured under a Assistance Dog Policy with Agria. Partners are expected to take over this policy during the handover process before they receive the dog. Our policy mandates that the dog remains on the insured with Agria for the entire partnership duration unless explicit permission is granted in writing by Dogs for Autism to change providers.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

You are at liberty to upgrade your policy with Agria, but it cannot be downgraded at anytime.

## Existing Dogs

We are unable to accept applications if you already have a dog that is under 18 months of age or has been in the home for less than 12 months at the time of applying. If someone obtains a dog whilst they are applying or being assessed this will mean we cannot proceed with the application.

During the application and assessment process, any dog will need to be assessed for its suitability to live alongside our assistance dog and not disrupt their ability to work. If we deem that the dog is unsuitable to live with an assistance dog we cannot proceed with the application.



# General Standards

## Travelling abroad

Permission must be requested in writing to take any DfA dog out of the UK. If the request is approved, the partner is responsible for any costs involved in taking a dog abroad.

## Dog's health

In accordance with ADUK and ADI standards, all assistance dogs must be kept in good health, including undergoing regular health checks every six months at the vet and grooming and clipping as required for specific breed types.

Furthermore, all assistance dogs must:

- Be fully vaccinated
- Receive flea treatment
- Be wormed for lungworm, roundworm, and tapeworm
- Maintain an acceptable weight as specified in the final placement contract

All healthcare expenses are the responsibility of the partner and/or supervising handler.

Failure to uphold the dog's vaccinations, worming, flea treatment, weight, or six-monthly vet checks will be considered a direct breach of the contract.

## GDPR and Privacy Policy

Please refer to our website for our full privacy policy: [www.dogsforautism.org.uk/privacy-policy/](http://www.dogsforautism.org.uk/privacy-policy/)

Dogs for Autism reserves the right to review its policies and implement changes to foster and sustain successful partnerships with partners. Any updates to policies and procedures will be communicated on our website as necessary.

“ Having **Bailey** on holiday made a big difference to Josh. He usually finds the change of routine and location stressful which can lead to meltdowns, but having Bailey helped him relax and gave him something to focus on. He has had a big phobia of wasps, so beaches can be a trigger point, but Bailey helped him, by giving him a distraction and focus.

**JOSH'S PARENTS**





# AUK & ADI

## ADUK

“Assistance Dogs UK is a voluntary coalition of assistance dog charities that have been accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and/or The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).

ADUK members work to the highest international standards of assistance dog and guide dog training and welfare. ADUK celebrates and promotes the benefits that taking a standards-based approach brings to both the assistance dog, their partner/owner and the wider general public.” - Source: ADUK website

Find out more at: <https://www.assistedogs.org.uk/>

## ADI

“Assistance Dogs International, Inc. (ADI) is a worldwide coalition of not-for-profit programs that train and place Assistance Dogs. Founded in 1986 from a group of seven small programs, ADI has become the leading authority in the Assistance Dog industry.

Members of ADI meet regularly to share ideas and conduct business regarding educating the public about assistance dogs, advocating for the legal rights of people with disabilities partnered with assistance dogs, and the setting of standards and establishing guidelines and ethics for the training of these dogs.” Source - ADI website

Find out more at: <https://assistedogsinternational.org/>

**Dogs for Autism is proud to announce that we are an accredited member of both ADI and ADUK**





**For further information please contact:**

T: 01420 629390

E: [applications@dogsforautism.org.uk](mailto:applications@dogsforautism.org.uk)

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**Enriching lives, Expanding horizons**