



Application Guide

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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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 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.

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’

How we train our dogs

At Dogs for Autism, our training program focuses on equipping our dogs with specific task abilities in order to enhance the lives of applicants and bolster their independence. We prioritize socialization in diverse environments and instil a high level of obedience in our dogs.

Our training primarily targets Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, Cavapoos, and their crossbreeds. We're currently expanding our in-house breeding initiative with the goal of sourcing our assistance dogs internally in the future.

Puppies from our breeding program and carefully chosen ones from external breeders are placed with volunteer Puppy Parents at 8 weeks old to commence their training regimen which is made up of 2 stages.

Stage 1 Training

Upon entering our stage 1 training program and under supervision by our training team, our dedicated volunteer Puppy Parents concentrate on instilling fundamental socialization skills in our puppies across diverse locations and settings and initiate the training of basic core skills, which serve as the foundation for the practical task work that follows. They attend puppy classes held at our training centre and have weekly one-to-one sessions with our trainers.

The puppy will continue to live with the Hampshire based volunteer puppy parents until they advance to their stage 2 training.



Stage 2 Training



As dogs reach adolescence and are deemed ready, they advance to stage 2 training under the guidance of specialist advanced trainers at our Hampshire-based training centre.

During this phase, our dogs will transition from the care of volunteer puppy parents to living in the homes of local volunteer B&B fosterers and will attend 'DfA school' daily in our training centre.

Stage 2 training involves progressing from the core skills learned during puppyhood to more intricate and practical task work. Concurrently, our dogs continue obedience training and undertake visits to local towns and shops to ensure they exhibit confidence and good behaviour in all settings. Regular exercise is an integral part of their routine, which is expected to be maintained throughout their partnership.

Towards the end of stage 2 training, our dogs undergo thorough assessments and are carefully matched with an applicant from our waiting list. Subsequently, the remaining portion of the dogs' advanced training is tailored to best suit the specific needs of their future partners.

How do Dogs for Autism transform lives?

Dogs for Autism profoundly impacts lives by offering assistance dogs to autistic people. These highly trained dogs serve as indispensable companions, significantly improving the quality of life and independence for those they partner with. By performing a range of tasks tailored to the specific needs of each individual, Dogs for Autism dogs address both physical challenges and emotional well-being across various situations. Our dogs undergo comprehensive training to address a wide range of situations, from everyday challenges to emergency responses. In cases where individuals also contend with physical conditions often associated with autism, our dogs can be trained to assist with tasks such as picking up a lead to mitigate difficulties or discomfort.

Core taskwork aimed at mitigating the effects of autism includes:

1. **Deep and/or Light Pressure Therapy:** Dogs are trained to provide calming pressure through leaning or laying on their partner, helping to alleviate anxiety or sensory overload.
2. **Interrupting Unwanted Behaviours:** Dogs learn to recognize and interrupt behaviours that may be detrimental or disruptive to their partner's well-being, promoting positive coping mechanisms.
3. **Anxiety Support:** Dogs offer emotional support by providing companionship and comfort during periods of anxiety or distress, helping to alleviate symptoms and provide reassurance.
4. **Emergency Assistance:** Dogs are trained to respond in emergencies by pressing alarm buttons, retrieving phones, or seeking help from others within the home, ensuring prompt assistance when needed.

In addition to the tasks already mentioned, our dogs are capable of learning a wide range of additional tasks tailored to an individual's specific needs.

Beyond practical support, our dogs provide numerous psychological benefits such as:

- **Enhanced Independence:** Assistance dogs help individuals with autism carry out daily tasks, promoting greater independence and autonomy, reducing reliance on human carers and, in some cases, medication.
- **Enhanced Socialization:** Dogs can serve as social facilitators, encouraging interactions with others and helping people navigate social situations more comfortably.
- **Emotional Support:** The companionship provided by these dogs can significantly improve the emotional well-being of autistic people, offering comfort and a sense of security.
- **Confidence Building:** Interacting with a trained assistance dog can boost confidence and self-esteem, empowering people to engage more confidently in social interactions and daily activities.

- **Stress Reduction:** Spending time with a dog has been shown to lower levels of stress hormones and promote relaxation, contributing to overall mental well-being.
- **Reduced Isolation:** The presence of a dog can alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation, fostering a sense of companionship and belonging.
- **Improved Mood:** The unconditional love and affection of a dog can uplift mood and provide a sense of happiness and joy.
- **Improved Self-Esteem:** Individuals often experience a boost in self-esteem, recognizing their own worth and capabilities more positively.
- **Heightened Motivation:** The presence of one of our dogs can serve as a motivating factor, inspiring individuals to engage in activities and pursue personal goals with enthusiasm.

Overall, the partnership with our assistance dogs provides a holistic approach to personal growth and well-being, promoting independence, confidence, motivation, and self-esteem in autistic people.

“ *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, who is partnered with Lola

What to consider before applying

Building a bond

To harness all the wonderful things mentioned earlier, each partner must actively engage in maintaining a strong connection with their canine companion.

We request that, where feasible, partners take on the responsibility of daily tasks such as exercising, feeding, grooming, training, and participating in playtime with their dogs, as this strengthens the bond between the partner and their canine companion. Although occasional help from family members or the supervising handler might be required, partners are urged to shoulder as much responsibility as they can.

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.
- **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.

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
- Donation towards the dog (contributing a donation towards the care and training of the dog is voluntary, but greatly appreciated. As an organization, we heavily rely on donations to support our work. We kindly ask all applicants to consider making a donation if they are able to do so. Your contribution helps us continue providing assistance dogs to those in need.)

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, who is partnered with Makka

”

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 (or the applicant) 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 to take full responsibility for the handling, ongoing training and welfare of the dog. They will be known as the supervising handler.
- You should be willing to travel to our training centre in Alton, Hampshire to attend:
 - Family training centre information day
 - Relationship and Educational visit
 - Matching Visit
- The applicant (if appropriate) and the supervising handler should be willing to attend an online assistance dog preparation course. This is usually 3 online sessions.
- 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.
- You will treat the dog as a working dog, recognizing its purpose beyond being a pet.

Eligibility Criteria



- 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 12 months old at the time of 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.

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 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.
- Please note that 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.

What is required from you?

In addition to completing various paperwork and providing additional information throughout the stages, there are specific compulsory requirements for both the applicant and the supervising handler to advance to the next stage.

While we acknowledge that meeting these requests may present challenges for applicants, failure to fulfil these requirements would impede the ability to collaborate effectively with the trainers and team at Dogs for Autism. Consequently, we would be unable to proceed with confidently matching a dog to the applicant.

Online Course

We must ensure the applicant and the family/supervising handler are aware of what to expect from having an assistance dog in order to create the most successful partnerships.

We will send each successful applicant on a 3 session online course that is run by Dogs for Good. We ask the applicant (if appropriate) and the supervising handler to attend. The attendance of this course is non-negotiable.

Additional to the Dogs for Good online course, we will also be running our own course on preparing for an assistance dog. The attendance of this course is also non-negotiable.

NOTE: This course will provide you with homework which is a prerequisite to having a DfA dog placed with you.

Family Training Centre Information Visit

Attending this visit is mandatory for applicants and their supervising handler to acquire adequate information about the forthcoming stages of the application process. Failure to attend will result in an instant rejection of the application.

When the link to the application forms are published, we will also publish the date for this visit. Please ensure you are available to attend on this date before applying.

- This will be carried out at our training centre in Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3HD.
- Up to 20 potential applicants could be in attendance.
- The day will include presentations giving further information about the application process, what is involved when taking on a Dogs for Autism dog and a fun quiz!
- Applicants will have a 2 week cooling off period, where they will be able to process the information and consider if they wish to continue with the application. The autism liaison team will contact each applicant to confirm if they wish to continue.

Relationship & Educational Visit

Attending this visit is mandatory for applicants and their supervising handler. Dates and times will be agreed between Dogs for Autism and the applicant and supervising handler.

- This will be carried out at our training centre in Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3HD
- There will be no other applicants or families present
- The visit will include meeting some of our dogs, handling the dogs, welfare education, and a 'getting to know you' opportunity for the team involved with matching a dog to the applicant.
- Prior to the visit, an itinerary for the visit will be sent so you will know who will be present and what the visit will look like once you arrive.

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 and completing any requested forms or tasks.



Peter and Coco

“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 Peters parents we cannot express our gratitude enough to DFA. Coco is an amazing and intelligent dog who has made a massive difference to Peter”



STEP BY STEP



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.

Medical and Professionals' forms

You will be sent forms for both the applicant and the supervising handler to complete. These will comprise of:

- Medical forms - These are to be printed and given to your GP, specialist nurse or consultant to complete.
- Professionals involved forms - These are to be completed with details of any professionals that are involved in supporting the partner and/or supervising handler. Examples of professionals are:
 - SENCO
 - Social Worker/Care manager
 - Family Services
 - Clinical Psychologist
 - Councillors/Psychotherapist
 - Child protection services
 - Occupational therapists
 - CAMHS
 - Outreach workers
 - Behaviour support team
 - Physiotherapists

Upon receiving the completed forms, we will reach out to the contacts listed to verify the information provided.

REVIEW

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

Online Course

If your application is accepted to move on to the next stage, the partner and supervising handler will be invited to attend our online courses.

We must ensure the applicant and the family/supervising handler are aware of what to expect from having an assistance dog in order to create the most successful partnerships.

We will send each successful applicant on a 3 session online course that is run by Dogs for Good. We ask the applicant (if appropriate) and the supervising handler to attend. The attendance of this course is non-negotiable.

Additional to the Dogs for Good online course, we will also be running our own course on preparing for an assistance dog. The attendance of this course is also non-negotiable.

NOTE: This course will provide you with homework which is a prerequisite to having a DfA dog placed with you.

Family Training Centre Information Visit

Applicants and supervising handlers will be invited to attend our family training centre information day, attending this visit is **mandatory** for applicants and their supervising handler to acquire adequate information about the forthcoming stages of the application process. Failure to attend will result in an instant rejection of the application.

When the link to the application forms are published, we will also publish the date for this visit. Please ensure you are available to attend on this date before applying.

- This will be carried out at our training centre in Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3HD.
- Up to 20 potential applicants could be in attendance.
- The day will include presentations giving further information about the application process, what is involved when taking on a Dogs for Autism dog and a fun quiz!
- Applicants will have a 2 week cooling off period, where they will be able to process the information and consider if they wish to continue with the application. The autism liaison team will contact each applicant to confirm if they wish to continue.

Home visit

Prospective applicants and their supervising handler will undergo a home visit to ensure the suitability and safety of the living environment for the dog. Typically, the individual conducting the home visit will also bring a dog to observe how the applicant and supervising handler interact and handle a dog. This observation also ensures that any resident pets are comfortable and content around another dog.

Should the assistance dog be anticipated to accompany either the applicant or the supervising handler into an educational institution or workplace, the home checker will additionally visit and assess these locations for suitability.

REVIEW

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

Second stages of the application process



Active waiting list

Advancing successfully through the initial stages of the application process will result in your placement onto our active waiting list. **However, it's important to note that this does not guarantee you will receive a dog from us.**

There are several stages and criteria that must be fulfilled before reaching a final decision. Dogs for Autism reserves the right to withdraw the application from the active waiting list at any point, based on our discretion and judgment.

Relationship & Educational Visit

Attending this visit is mandatory for applicants and their supervising handler. Dates and times will be agreed between Dogs for Autism and the applicant and supervising handler.

- This will be carried out at our training centre in Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3HD
- There will be no other applicants or families present
- The visit will include meeting some of our dogs, handling the dogs, welfare education, and a 'getting to know you' opportunity for the team involved with matching a dog to the applicant.
- Prior to the visit, an itinerary for the visit will be sent so you will know who will be present and what the visit will look like once you arrive.

REVIEW

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

Literature

After the relationship and educational visit, the team will gather to evaluate the visit's outcomes and assess the application. If the team decides to proceed with the application, we will send out a training journey pack containing essential forms and application refreshers to the applicant. As the literature is dispatched and paperwork is collected, we will diligently update the application with the returned paperwork. Although it may seem like things have slowed down and gone quiet during this period, rest assured, we are actively working behind the scenes!

REVIEW

The final application review

Once an application has successfully navigated through all preceding stages, and all necessary literature and paperwork have been gathered, the team will convene for a final review of the entire application. At this juncture, we will determine whether we can proceed with matching you with one of our dogs.

If we determine that we are unable to match you with one of our dogs, we will inform you accordingly.

Should we feel we are able to match you with a dog, we will inform you accordingly and the matching process will commence.

Matching Process



Matching Process

Once the matching process commences, we will actively work to pair the applicant with a dog.

A comprehensive overview of the matching process will be provided in our training journey pack, which is sent out in the earlier stages of the application process.

For a brief summary of the next stage, please refer to the following information.

Matching Visit

Once a suitable dog becomes available, the autism liaison team will contact the applicant and invite them to visit our training centre to meet the dog. These matching visits allow applicants to interact with potential dogs, assessing compatibility, while our trainers and autism liaison team evaluate the suitability of the match.

If we have observed the applicant interacting with the matched dog during a previous visit and are confident in the match, a matching visit may not be deemed necessary. However, such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Usually, it takes three to four weeks to confirm a match after the matching visit. During this time, both the DfA team and the applicant can reflect on the day and determine if it's a suitable match.

If a match is unsuccessful, we will be in contact with the applicant.

Approaching the final stage

Once a match has been agreed upon, there are a few additional steps we need to complete before commencing the handover process.

If deemed appropriate, we may request the applicant to collect scent samples. Although this isn't currently a standard practice, we are actively working behind the scenes to implement scent training for a percentage of our dogs.

The applicant will receive a client manual. This comprehensive manual provides detailed information on what to expect during the handover process and once the dog has become a part of your household.

Lastly, the applicant and supervising handler will sign a commitment agreement. The specific details of these expectations will be outlined in both the training journey pack and the client manual provided, however we will include a brief summary of the handover process in this guide.

Handover Process



A brief summary

As previously mentioned, detailed information regarding the handover process will be provided in the training journey pack and the client manual. However, below is a brief summary of the handover process.

What will be expected of you:

- 2 x pre placement support sessions with the autism liaison team
- To have scheduled a further 4 support sessions after the dog has come to live with you
- To have taken over the insurance payments for the dog
- To have registered and set up your own healthplan for the dog at your local vets
- If necessary, to have found local groomers who are professional and highly rated
- Both the applicant and supervising handler are required to schedule 2 weeks of 'quiet home life' while the dog settles in. This may involve taking annual leave or working from home, with no plans for visitors or trips out during this period.
- Signing of the final placement contract
- Pre-booked dog paddocks/fields for a minimum of 2 x a week for the first few weeks after the dog has come to live with you
- Ensure the house and garden are ready to receive the dog
- To be available throughout the week that the trainer stays locally to you with the dog during the transition phase



Zana and Luna

“They have a very special bond, Luna is Zana’s best friend. This is so important for us as Zana hasn’t been able to make friends or really make connections with other children so her bond with Luna is very special and transformational for Zana’s wellbeing. For others outside the family who are not as tuned into Zana’s communication cues their bond make look very subtle, but I think it is very powerful that Zana only really has 2 words and one of them is Luna.” ”

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.

What you agree to when applying for a DfA dog



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.

Financial costings



Stage of Application	Costs	
Application Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical report completion costs (dependent on the medical professional) • Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the family training centre information visit • Time off work (if applicable) to attend the family training centre information visit • Time off work (if applicable) to attend the online assistance dog preparation course • Time off work for the whole household (if applicable) to be available for a home visit • Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the relationship and educational visit • Time off work (if applicable) to attend the relationship and educational visit • Any adaptation costs required in the home or garden 	
Matching & Handover Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport (and hotel depending on your location) costs to the matching visit • Time off work (If applicable) to attend the matching visit • Dog or partner specific equipment (suitable treat bag, suitable car harness or car crate, if need any stairgates etc) • Any items the applicant may wish to buy for their dog before bringing them home (bed, toys, treats, brushes, etc) • Preparing for taking over the dog's insurance payments • 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 • Time off work (if applicable) for the transition week • Time off work (if applicable) for the first 2 weeks of the dog settling in once handed over 	
Partnership	<p>Agria Insurance (You are able to upgrade your insurance policy with Agria but you are not able to decrease the policy cover)</p> <p>Insurance Excess</p> <p>Yearly Vaccinations</p> <p>Parasite preventative treatment</p> <p>Food</p> <p>Treats, poo bags etc</p> <p>Grooming (if applicable)</p> <p>6 monthly vet check up</p>	<p>£25-£60 a month <i>Dependent on the breed of dog and if the policy is upgraded</i></p> <p>£170-£250 plus 20% of treatment cost</p> <p>£40-£70 <i>Price varies from vet to vet</i></p> <p>£20-£30 a month <i>Dependent on the size of the dog</i></p> <p>£20-£50 a month <i>Dependent on the size of the dog and the product</i></p> <p>Variable depending on supplier and items</p> <p>£25-£60 every 6 weeks - quarterly <i>Dependent on the breed of dog and grooming preferences</i></p> <p>Up to £65</p>

Please bear in mind that these pricings may differ year on year and dependent on where items are purchased from.

We do highly advise that our dogs be on a vet healthplan as it often works out cheaper, and most include 6 monthly vet check up and nail clipping

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."



"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 and Bailey

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 specific 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 same policy 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.

Existing Pets

We are unable to accept applications if you already have a dog that is under 12 months of age or has been in the home for less than 6 months at the time of applying. If someone obtains a pet dog whilst they are applying or being assessed this will mean we cannot proceed with the application.

During the application and assessment process, any pet dog will need to be assessed for its suitability to live alongside an assistance dog and not disrupt their ability to work. If we deem that the pet 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/

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.

ADUK & 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 ADI and ADUK

