

Puppy Training Volunteer Frequently Asked Questions

Become a Puppy Training Volunteer!

Help shape the future of our life-changing assistance dogs by becoming a Puppy Training Volunteer! You'll play a key role in raising and nurturing a young pup as they begin their journey to transform lives. 🐾

Your love and care can make a world of difference!

What is a Puppy Training Volunteer?

A [Puppy Training Volunteer](#) provides a loving home for a Canine Partners puppy and helps them learn the skills they need for their future role as an assistance dog.

With support from a dedicated Trainer you'll socialise the puppy, introduce them to new experiences and environments, and help them develop into a confident, well-mannered young dog ready for the next stage of their training journey.

What does the role involve?

The most important part of the role is providing a safe, loving and supportive home for a puppy.

You'll help them:

- Learn good manners
- Meet different people
- Experience new places, sights, and sounds
- Learn basic training cues through positive reward-based training
- Travel on public transport
- Build confidence in a variety of environments

Do I need to have experience in puppy training?

No. Previous experience with dogs is helpful, but it's not essential.

Our expert team will support you every step of the way. You'll learn how to train your puppy using positive, reward-based methods through:

- One-to-one sessions
- Group training classes
- Out-and-about socialisation
- Ongoing and regular guidance from your Trainer

How long does the application process take?

The application process typically takes around five to six weeks.

During this time, you may have:

- A telephone assessment
- A home assessment

These assessments will help us make sure the role is the right fit for right fit for you and that your home and lifestyle will be right for the puppy.

How long will the puppy live with me?

Puppies usually join their Puppy Training Volunteer at around eight weeks old and stay with them for approximately 12 to 14 months.

The exact length of time may vary depending on the puppy's progress, development, and individual needs.

Can I work part-time and be a Puppy Training Volunteer?

Yes, some of our volunteers work while caring for a puppy.

However, you'll need to demonstrate that you have enough time to care for, train and socialise the puppy and can actively supervise them throughout the day.

Please note that puppies should not be left alone for more than four hours in a day, and any time spent alone will need to be introduced gradually as they grow and develop.

Can I take the puppy to work with me?

Possibly.

Whether a puppy can attend your workplace will depend on both your working environment and the individual puppy.

Your Trainer will carry out a workplace assessment to ensure the environment is suitable and supports the puppy's development. It may not be appropriate until the puppy is older. [Please get in touch](#) to discuss your working circumstances.

When will I meet my Trainer?

Your Trainer will contact you to arrange your home assessment during the application process.

They'll be your main point of contact throughout your volunteering journey and will be there to support you every step of the way.

How often will I see my Trainer?

The level of support varies depending on the puppy's age and stage of training.

When your puppy first arrives, you may receive up to two visits each week. As your puppy progresses, you'll continue to receive regular support in your home and the community, through:

- One-to-one sessions in your home and in the community
- Group training classes
- Socialisation outings
- Ongoing guidance and advice

You'll also have opportunities to meet other Canine Partners volunteers and become part of a supportive volunteer community. We have a private Facebook group you can join to engage with other volunteers.

How far will I need to travel?

You'll be expected to travel locally to attend our training and group sessions, and general socialisation visits with your puppy.

Most travel will take place within 45 minutes of your home.

In rare scenarios you may be required to travel further but we will endeavour to let you know in advance of the puppy arriving.

Will the puppy live with me?

Yes. The puppy will live with you as part of your household throughout your time volunteering for us.

If you need time away for a holiday or other planned commitments, we can arrange for the puppy to stay with another volunteer.

We ask volunteers to allow their puppy time to settle into their new home before requesting cover.

How much will it cost me?

You'll receive a starter pack containing the essentials needed to begin your journey with the puppy. We also cover the cost of all food and vet bills. We will ask you to provide an ID tag with your details, but you can claim this back on expenses.

We cover travel costs to our arranged classes, training sessions and socialisation opportunities.

Can I volunteer if I have young children?

Yes.

Many of our Puppy Training Volunteers have children or grandchildren. Every application is assessed individually to ensure the home environment is suitable for both the puppy and the family.

Can my family help?

Absolutely.

We encourage everyone in the household to be involved where appropriate. Anyone aged 18 or over can apply to become a Puppy Training Volunteer. Children under 18 can enjoy interacting with and helping care for the puppy at home, but only adults aged 18 and over may walk the dog or be left responsible for them without supervision.

Can I volunteer if I already have a pet dog?

Yes.

You may apply if you have up to two pet dogs that:

- Are over 18 months old
- Have lived with you for at least six months
- Have a suitable temperament

Your dog's temperament will be assessed as part of the application process. The puppy will need separate feeding and dedicated walks each day to support their training and development.

Can I introduce a new pet dog to our home, while caring for a Canine Partners puppy?

No. Unfortunately, introducing a new pet dog can impact the puppy's training, routine and development. If you're considering bringing a new pet dog into your household, please speak with your Trainer first, as arrangements would need to be made for the puppy to move to another volunteer home.

How long before I receive a puppy?

This varies depending on puppy availability and training needs. Generally, it will be within 4-12 weeks.

While waiting for a puppy placement, many volunteers enjoy supporting the charity by providing short-term care for dogs and puppies. Please let us know if you would like to do this.

Is it ok to leave the puppy alone?

Yes, but only when appropriate for their age and stage of development. Your Trainer will help you teach your puppy to feel comfortable being left for short periods. Time alone is introduced gradually, with the puppy's wellbeing always remaining the priority. The maximum time is no more than four hours.

What happens if I want to go on holiday?

We ask Puppy Training Volunteers not to take holidays during the first few months after welcoming a puppy home, while they settle into their new environment.

After that, we can organise temporary care when you take a holiday or need a break. You will be responsible for transporting the puppy and their equipment to the volunteer providing care.

Can puppies be let off the lead?

Yes.

We encourage puppies to enjoy opportunities to explore, sniff and exercise off lead in safe and suitable environments.

Your Trainer will provide guidance on where and when this is appropriate, and help you build a reliable recall using positive, reward-based training.

How do volunteers cope when their puppy moves on?

Many volunteers develop a strong bond with their puppy, so it's completely natural to feel a mix of emotions when they move on to the next stage of their journey. Canine Partners has a dedicated Bereavement Support Programme, which includes support when a puppy or dog moves on to the next stage of their Canine Partners journey.

While saying goodbye can be difficult, many volunteers describe it as a moment of immense pride. Seeing a puppy, you've nurtured take the next step towards supporting a disabled person to live with greater confidence and independence is incredibly rewarding. Thanks to the foundations you've helped build, your puppy is one step closer to changing someone's life and beginning a rewarding future as an assistance dog.

Take a read of our Puppy Training Volunteer [Julia's story](#) as she talks about how it feels when a puppy moves on.

Will I see the puppy again after they leave?

Once your puppy moves into [assistance dog training](#), you'll receive updates through your Trainer.

When they are successfully partnered, you may request for your contact details to be shared with their partner. Any future contact is entirely at the partner's discretion.

During the early stages of a new partnership, partners are encouraged to focus on getting to know their assistance dog and building a strong bond. For this reason, they are usually advised not to make contact straight away while they settle into life together.

How much does it cost Canine Partners to train and support a dog?

From puppy selection through training, partnership and ongoing aftercare, a [Canine Partner](#) assistance dog costs approximately £50,000.

What happens if a puppy doesn't become an assistance dog?

Every dog is an individual, and their welfare always comes first.

Alongside our jacketed [Canine Partners](#), some dogs may be better suited to other roles, including:

- [Canine Home Assistant](#)
- [Canine Companion](#)
- [Dog Ambassador](#)
- [Canine Partner mum \(brood\)](#)
- Alternative specialist organisations

If none of these options are suitable, we carefully rehome them to loving pet homes. Every decision is made with the dog's wellbeing, needs, and long-term happiness in mind.

The puppy's needs and welfare will be paramount in deciding upon the best placement.

Thank you

Puppy Training Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. By opening your home to a puppy, you're helping create loving, life-changing partnerships between disabled people and expertly trained assistance dogs. If you have any further questions about what you've read above, please get in touch.