

Volunteer Dog Fosterer

Canine Partners is a registered charity that transforms the lives of people with physical disabilities by partnering them with assistance dogs. Our amazing dogs bring a greater independence and quality of life to their partners, offering support, security, companionship, and practical help with everyday household tasks.

By volunteering at Canine Partners you contribute to something very special - 'transforming the lives of people with physical disabilities by partnering them with assistance dogs'

About the opportunity

Canine Partners are looking for volunteers who can provide loving homes for our young dogs, aged 14 months upwards, whilst helping to train them to be canine partners.

By volunteering you will:

- Be a valued member of our Charity
- Know that you are integrally involved in the care and training of a dog that will change the life of a person waiting for their Canine Partner
- Benefit from the companionship and enjoyment of having a dog in your life without life long commitment or costs associated with dog ownership
- Have the opportunity to meet like minded people

'With out the continued hard work and support from our volunteers, we would not be able to provide our clients with our life changing dogs'

What is involved

- Commitment to providing a loving home, care, and training for a dog for the duration of their time in training
- We consider this a full time role as you, or another approved adult member of the household, will be required to care for the dog for much of the day and overnight
- Our trainers need access to the dogs during weekdays for training purposes. We ask that you commute to and from our training centre when required to drop off/collect the dog. Drop off and collection times are generally between 8.30 -9.30am and 4-5pm
- Availability to attend pre-arranged training sessions at your home, in your local area, and at our training centre.
- With our guidance, and using positive training methods, to continue the training of the dog in various areas. For example:

- Home behaviour
- Social behaviour
- Behaviour around other animals
- Walking on a lead
- Off lead exercise
- Maintaining the dog's health and welfare and, via support and training, to recognise behaviour/health concerns and report them immediately to the dog's trainer

What we require from you

- You live within a 30 minute drive of our training centre (post code LE12 9SR)
- That you, as the dogs main carer, are over 18 years of age
- You have a dog friendly secure garden
- Though desirable, prior dog ownership is not required.
- All members of the household are keen to foster one of our dogs
- There is no more than one pet dog living in your home. The pet dog must be over 12 months of age and would need to undergo our pet dog suitability assessment
- Have the time and ability to commit to the training and care of a young dog. This is a physical role
- Have access to a suitable vehicle to transport the dog
- That you or other approved adult member of the household are at home most of the day, and overnight, to care for the dog
- Have an area of your garden that can be used for toileting the dog – details about this are provided during our home check assessment.
- Understand that the dog in your care remains under the ownership of Canine Partners

Support and Training

- Induction process which includes the submission of an application form, initial phone call, and home visit
- On-going Instruction and support from our dog trainers. This will be in person, via video link, phone calls, handouts etc.
- Holiday cover arranged
- Reimbursement of expenses, such as mileage costs, if requested
- Invitation to join our Official Canine Partners Community Facebook Group

Rachel, a mum-of-two, is a volunteer fosterer for Canine Partners, who is currently fostering her 19th dog, David. This is her story:

I have been volunteering as an overnight (B&B) foster parent since 2016, David has been with us full time since March 2019, when we first went into lockdown due to the COVID 19 pandemic. During this last year he has been into the centre on a few occasions when needed but has completed his training and is ready to go to his partner when restrictions allow.



Despite not having that face-to-face contact on a regular basis, we have been fully supported by the trainers with any issues we may have, items we need for David and any training they have wanted us to work on. We tend to foster the same dog for a full 17 weeks during their advanced training, to ensure the dog has some continuity, familiarisation and are settled. Occasionally, we will also have a dog for a one-off weekend, have taken on a dog part-way through their training or taken a dog that has had their training extended past the 17 weeks.

I decided to volunteer as we lost our wonderful black Labrador, Murphy, back in 2014. He was 16 years old and left a huge hole in our family. We were devastated and said we could never put ourselves through that type of loss again. However, a couple of years on we desperately missed having a dog around but still didn't feel we were ready to commit to having another dog of our own. We have a busy work and family life, so we aren't in a position to have our own dog. We researched Canine Partners and the amazing work they did, which led to us learning that they needed volunteers to foster their incredible dogs in training. For us this was an easy decision, we got our dog fix without the full-time commitment and at the same time we could help a charity we believed in. As they say, the rest is history!

We always start off the day with a cuddle, then it's out for a 'better go now' before breakfast. 'Better go now' is the command for the dogs to go to the toilet. Most dogs just fit in with you as you go about your day; they follow you about to see what you are up to or just chill out on their bed. If it's a working day for the dog, then we drop them off at the Midlands Training Centre near Osgathorpe, Leicestershire, and pick them up at the end of the day. Being a foster parent is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. To watch the dog grow and develop over the 17 weeks they are with us is fantastic, and to think that you have played a part in that is very humbling.

Listen and follow the advice from the trainers, as they are amazing people who know what is expected from a canine partner for them to succeed. Also, do not expect that you will get a perfect dog to look after. Even though they are being trained to be an assistance dog, they are still dogs, they are still young and they are still learning. Be patient with them, praise them for good behaviour, and above all – enjoy them.

