

Apply for a canine partner

Canine partner assistance dog
information pack



The purpose of the Canine Partners assistance dog information pack is to provide more detailed information on the process of how to apply for one of our amazing dogs and how we create life-changing partnerships. We will provide details regarding our eligibility criteria and what to expect of our application process, the assessment process and when taking one of our dogs home. We will also provide you with details about canine partner ownership and other useful material to explore.

What we do

Canine Partners is a registered assistance dog charity that transforms the lives of people with physical disabilities by partnering them with our amazing dogs. Our dogs bring a greater independence and quality of life to their partners, offering security, companionship, and practical help with everyday household tasks. Our dogs also provide psychological and social benefits including increased independence, confidence, social interaction and self-esteem.

How we train our assistance dogs

At Canine Partners we train our dogs to carry out practical task work in order to make our applicants' lives easier and enhance their independence. We bring our dogs up to be well socialised in various environments and to have a high level of obedience. We mainly train Labradors, Golden Retrievers and crosses between the two breeds. We are currently expanding our own breeding programme and our aim is for at least 80% of our assistance dogs to come from our own breeding scheme in the future.

Puppies from our own litters, and those specially selected from external breeders, are then placed with Puppy Parent volunteers at eight weeks old to continue their two-year training programme.

Puppy Training

Once our puppies enter puppy training, our Puppy Parent volunteers focus on training basic obedience and socialisation in a variety of locations and environments. They also begin to train the basic core skills that are later developed into the practical task work.

Advanced Training

From 14-15 months old, our dogs enter the final stages of training and are overseen by a specialist Advanced Trainer. Throughout advanced training, our dogs live in homes with our Fosterer volunteers and are brought onsite regularly during the week to work with their Advanced Trainer.



During training, the core skills they have already learnt in puppyhood are then progressed onto more complex, practical task work. Our dogs continue with obedience training and visit local towns and shops to ensure they are confident and well-behaved in all situations. The dogs are exercised on a regular basis, and this is expected to be maintained throughout the partnership.

During advanced training, our dogs are carefully assessed and specifically matched with one of our applicants on the waiting list. We can then tailor the rest of the dog's advanced training to best suit their partner's needs.



How do canine partners transform lives?

Canine partners are trained to provide independence to individuals with physical disabilities. The level of independence one of our dogs may provide is dependent upon each individual's circumstances; one person's independence could be defined very differently to another's.

“ I can't remember my life before Oxford. He's changed my life for the better. It's like being the complete package; me and Oxford. I am much more confident with him by my side and I feel whole again. I can now go out and go to different places as being with Oxford gives me the confidence to. ”

Majid Sohrabi and canine partner Oxford

Our canine partners are trained to deal with and assist in all types of situations; from everyday chores, to responding in an emergency. If someone is living with a physical disability which can make things difficult or painful, our specially trained dogs are there to help with physical tasks. They are trained to be able to carry out three core skills: touch, tug and retrieve.

These three skills are then utilised to develop more complex task work such as:

- Retrieving dropped items
- Helping with undressing
- Opening and closing doors

- Pressing various switches when out in public e.g. door buttons or lift buttons
- Fetching help in an emergency e.g. pressing an alarm button, retrieving the phone or going and getting someone within the home

There are many more tasks which our dogs are capable of learning. These are often specifically trained to an individual's needs in advanced training and then training continues once home with their partner.

As well as practical support, our dogs can provide many psychological benefits such as:

- Increased independence, confidence, motivation and self-esteem
- Companionship, security and unconditional love
- A talking point, often leading to increased social interaction
- Helping to return to work, voluntary positions or further education
- Reducing reliance on human carers and, in some cases, medication

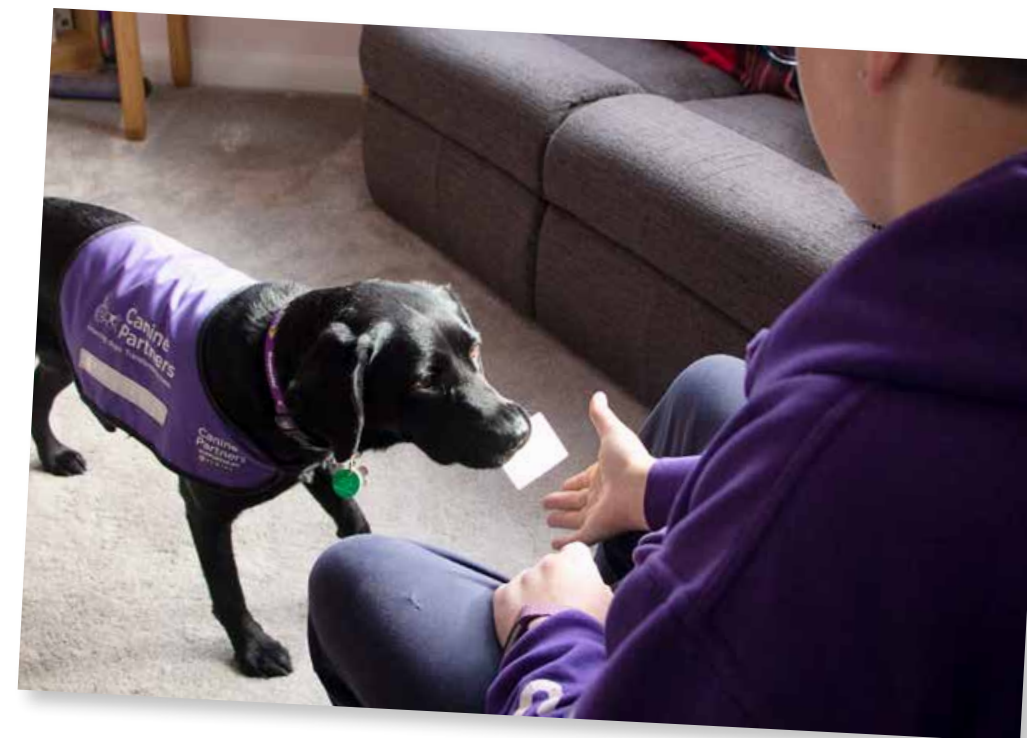
What to consider

In return for all of the above benefits, every partner has to work hard to maintain a strong bond with their dog. Our dogs are not 'finished products' when they return home; they require ongoing support and training from their partner, with our Aftercare Team there to provide support throughout the partnership.

In order to get the most out of their dogs, our partners are responsible for daily exercise, feeding, grooming, training and playing. We understand some partners may require support from family or a team with some areas of the dog's care. This will be explored in the assessment process. However, we aim for our partners to take as much responsibility for their dogs themselves as possible.

Part of the application and assessment process involves us requesting at least one medical report from an applicant's GP or a consultant who specifically supports them with their condition. This will allow us to learn more about an individual's needs and begin to assess whether one of our dogs can enhance their independence.

Our dogs are not trained to assist with any visual or hearing impairment as standard. We occasionally work with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People to provide dual purpose dogs in some circumstances. Individuals with a physical disability who also require support with hearing loss are encouraged to contact us directly for more information, if they wish to apply, on applicationsenquiries@caninepartners.org.uk



“ There are so many things that I did because I had to and they were hurting me, but now Liggy does those things for me so I am not bending to pick things up. As a result I have more energy, so I can do things that are enjoyable. There was a point where I was getting up in the morning, going to work, and then going to bed. But now with Liggy, I feel like I have a life again. ”
















Nicki Berry and canine partner Liggy

caninepartners.org.uk/canine-partner-assistance-dog














Eligibility criteria



To apply for a canine partner you will need to be able to fulfil the criteria listed below. An in-depth assessment will follow after the first stage application before an individual may be deemed suitable to be placed on the waiting list.

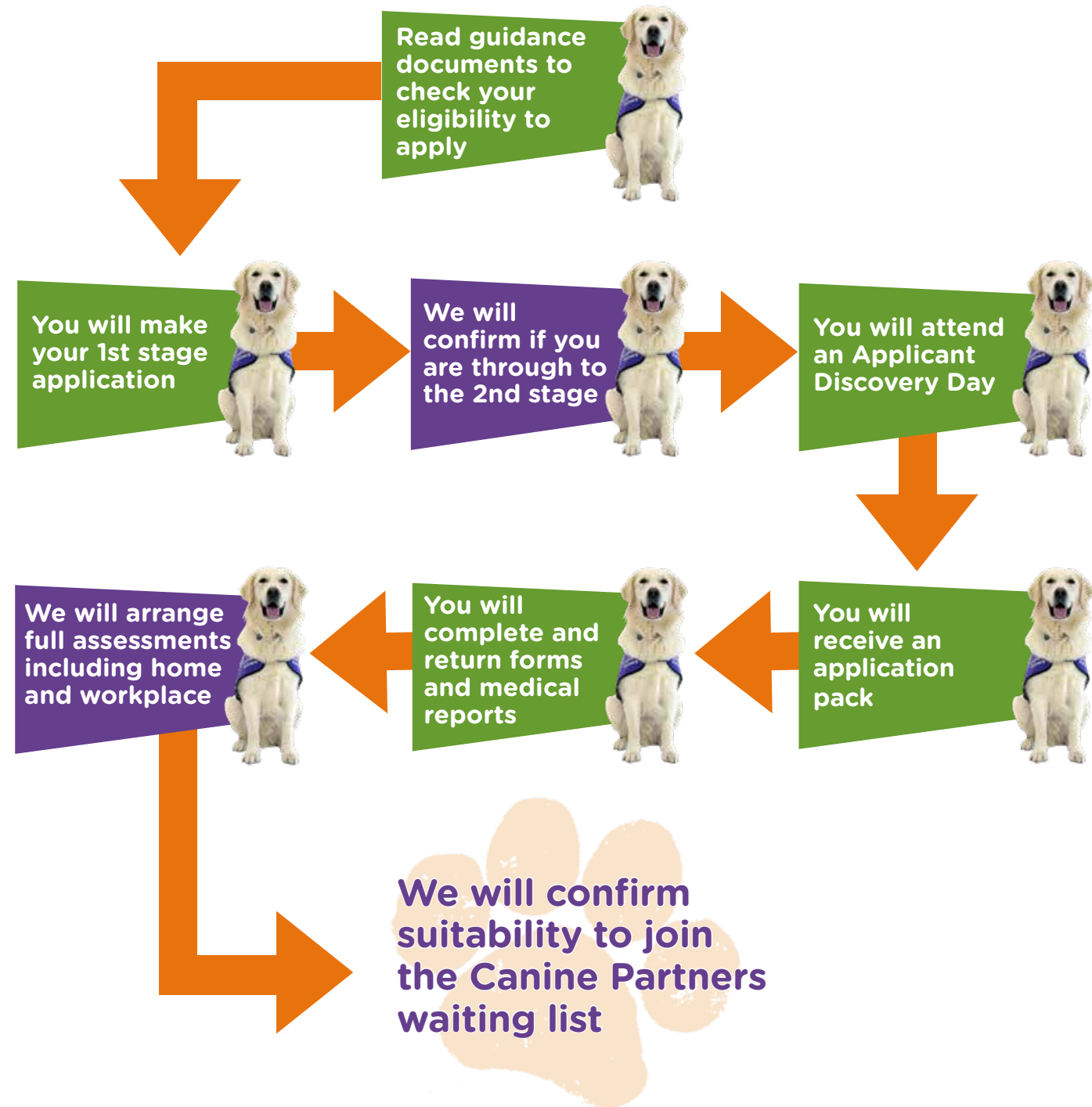
-  You must be 18 years of age or over.
-  You must be a permanent resident of the UK and live within the designated area open to applications caninepartners.org.uk/canine-partner-assistance-dog
-  You must have a diagnosed physical disability, where there is a need for an assistance dog to carry out practical tasks that will facilitate independence and mitigate aspects of your condition.
-  You must have no more than one pet dog already in your household.
-  You should be willing to travel to our National Training Centre (Leicestershire LE12 9SR) to attend:
 -  an Applicant Discovery Day
 -  at least one Applicant Assessment Day
 -  matching visit(s)
 -  a partnership training course
-  You must have an outdoor area a minimum six foot by six foot in size, accessible by yourself, that can be allocated and is suitable to use for the dogs toileting purposes. Please refer to our *Appendix 1* for further details of toilet areas.
-  If your outdoor space is within a communal garden, we will require written permission from your landlord for use of as space for a dogs toileting purposes.
-  You must be able to feed, give water, groom, and administer any necessary routine medical care to your dog; this can be achieved independently or with assistance.
-  You should be able to provide the dog with a minimum 45 minutes of exercise per day, with a minimum of four times a week off lead exercise; either by yourself or with someone accompanying you.
-  You must have access and transport to a veterinary surgery for routine and emergency appointments.
-  You should be prepared to take on the routine annual costs of a dog, including food, preventative parasite treatment and insurance (see our *General guidelines* for more details). Canine Partners aims to keep our dogs care costs at a minimum, whilst also maintaining the best level of welfare for all of our dogs.

Please note that:

-  You should be able to provide all of the above care to a dog independently or with others supporting you to do so. So as to maintain a strong working relationship with a jacketed canine partner, it is not suitable for other people to independently carry out all the care of the dog on your behalf.
-  If you live in accommodation not owned by yourself, or do not own the whole property (i.e. leasehold), upon application you will need to provide evidence from the owner of the property (or the Estate Management Company if your property is leasehold) that you are permitted to have an assistance dog in the property.
-  You will not be able to leave the dog alone for longer than four hours.
-  You will be required to read and sign a Dog Custodianship Agreement (please refer to the *General guidelines* section) and follow the guidelines given within it throughout your partnership, which includes receiving regular aftercare support in your home.
-  It is our policy for the dog to be kept on the same food and under the same insurance policy as throughout the whole partnership.
-  During the application process you will be asked to provide two emergency contacts, a kennels and vet details to use during your partnership.
-  The breeds that we train are Labradors, Golden Retrievers and Labrador cross Golden Retrievers. We cannot currently support any applicants who may require other breeds. If you require a different breed or wish to train your own pet dog, please visit the ADUK website to find out about other member organisations assistancedogs.org.uk
-  Canine Partners do not specifically train or place our dogs for the following;
 -  to provide any form of guidance, navigation or safety from environmental hazards.
 -  to carry out any form of seizure or diabetic alert, or to anticipate any medical conditions.
 -  for the primary benefit of emotional comfort or social support.
 -  for the sole purpose of supporting with autism.
 -  for the sole purpose of supporting someone's mental health

If you fit the above criteria and wish to apply when we open for applications, please read our information pack 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.

Application and assessment process



How to apply

In order to apply for one of our dogs, keep an eye on our website. This is where we publish our opening dates and the region we will be opening applications to. If you wish to apply and are within the region we open applications to, we would encourage you to check your eligibility before applying. To complete an online first stage application you will need to follow the link that will be made available on our website. If you are unable to access this link, or are unsure of your eligibility, you can contact the Applications Team in advance to discuss alternative options before completing the first stage application on the opening date.

Due to the high demand for our amazing dogs, we will be opening to new applications for short periods of time, and in different regions within the UK, so as to manage our applicants' waiting times as efficiently as possible.

As we receive a high number of first stage applications, all first stage applications will go through an independent selection process where a set number of applications will be impartially selected to progress to the next stage. This is to provide a fair chance to all of our potential applicants, and to reduce, as far as possible, our applicants' waiting time.

If your first stage application is successful, you will then be asked to attend an Applicant Discovery Day.

Applicant Discovery Days

These are days that are compulsory for applicants to attend so as to gain sufficient information about what the next stage of the application process will involve.

- The days will be carried out at our National Training Centre in Leicestershire.
- Up to 20 potential applicants could be in attendance at each day.
- The day will include presentations giving further information about the application process and what is involved when taking on a canine partner.
- Applicants will have to confirm within one week after this day if they still wish to move on to the next stage of their application.

Assessment

In order to add an applicant onto our waiting list we need to thoroughly assess their suitability and need for a canine partner. This is done through the various paperwork we request initially and will be followed up by an individual assessment, which would be carried out at our National Training Centre. This assessment will be of the individual's needs and suitability alongside practical assessment of their dog handling. We will then further assess each applicant's home and any pet dogs, work places or educational institutions that may be relevant.

Completion of the application process



The waiting list

If your application is successful and once you have been added onto the waiting list, you will continue making your way up the list until we can look at matching a dog to you. The wait time is variable and is often dependent upon each individual's needs. A more specific timeframe can be given to each applicant on the date they are added onto the list.

Matching visit

When an applicant nears the top of the list and a suitable dog becomes available, the dog's Advanced Trainer will call the applicant and arrange for them to meet their potential dog.

The matching visit is a chance for applicants to meet their potential dog and see if he/she is the right dog for them. It is also a chance for our trainers to see if they feel it is the right match for the applicant and for the dog.

A match will usually be confirmed two to three days after the matching visit. This gives the trainer and the applicant the chance to process the day and decide if it is definitely the right match. If a match is looking unsuccessful from the trainer's point of view, you will be informed on the matching visit.

After the matching visit, an applicant will usually have a maximum of eight weeks before attending their partnership training course.

Training course

In order to create the most successful partnerships, at the end of the dog's advanced training, the applicant is then expected to participate in a 2 - 3 week Partnership Training Course. This training course can either be onsite residential training at our National Training Centre or training in the applicants home, or a combination of the two. The structure of this training course is decided upon matching and is dependent on the applicants needs, the dog's needs and our organisational capacity.

Each applicant will train with their chosen canine partner under the guidance of one of our Advanced Trainers. The applicant learns how to work with their dog in varying environments, both onsite at the centre and offsite in public places. The applicant will learn how to continue and

maintain their dog's training and how to ensure their dog's welfare needs are being met, as well as what motivates their dog to work. One of the main purposes of the partnership training course is for the partnership to begin to form a bond, getting to know each other without usual day to day distractions at home.

We have specifically adapted accommodation to cater for most people's needs with varying equipment and adaptations. Any concerns about ensuring the accommodation meets the applicants needs, can be discussed further throughout the application process.

We do encourage applicants to bring someone with them, if possible, during their stay, to help support them with any personal care and for moral support. If an individual is unable to bring someone with them, we will discuss any care provision required to fulfill the applicants' care needs at matching.

Our residential accommodation is run by our highly capable Housekeeping Team, who endeavour to make applicants' stay as comfortable as possible. Onsite residential stays are fully catered and specific dietary requirements can be discussed with housekeeping directly on the matching visit.

Applicants will find out more about the partnership training course throughout the full application and assessment process.



Partnership and aftercare

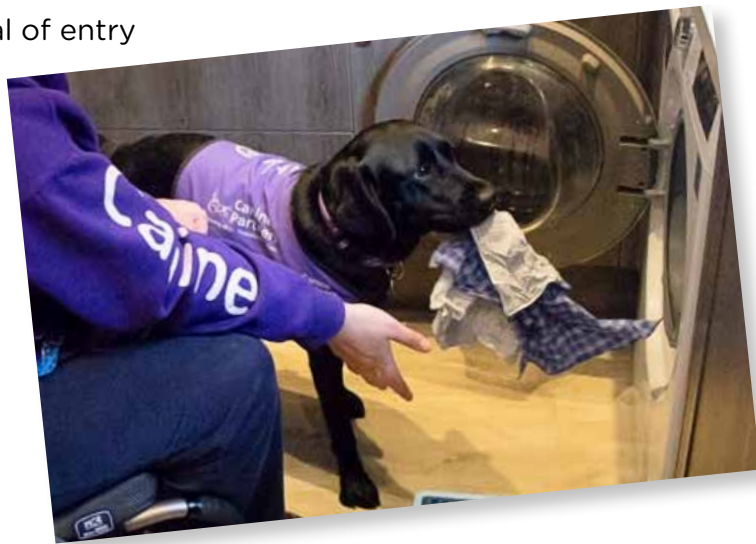


Returning home and aftercare support

Our partners (term for an applicant who is now placed with a canine partner) benefit from ongoing support from our Aftercare Team once they take on their canine partner. Our Aftercare Team will be on hand to offer training and behavioural input to help things go smoothly, from the moment a partner goes home from the training course, right up to the dog's retirement. We are proud to be able to provide such early support and, from experience, we have identified that this aids in the ongoing and long term success of our partnerships.

We have a network of Aftercare Instructors and Assistants across the UK, one of whom will be allocated to each new partnership. Our Aftercare Team are there to:

- monitor the dog's health and wellbeing to ensure their welfare
- help set consistent routines and training in the early days of partnership
- assist with any training or behaviour issues that may arise
- help a partner to train any new tasks or improve existing task work
- give advice and support where needed in regards to their canine partner
- help the partner manage the dog's health routine
- help support with any access issues or refusal of entry
- be an initial point of contact for the partner for any queries and advice - we do also have an emergency mobile number which all partnerships have access to for if/when they cannot get hold of their usual aftercare in an emergency e.g. overnight or outside of the Aftercare Team's working hours.



The visits from our Aftercare Team are arranged with the partners and carried out in their home environments within the Aftercare Representatives working hours (not weekends). Visits will include work in the home alongside accompanying partnerships on off-lead exercise and into public places that the partnership usually visits. We have a specific visit schedule for new partnerships, with visits taking place more often in the early months, and progressing to twice a year after the first year of placement.

We do not charge our partners for the training or purchase of our dogs as they remain under the ownership of Canine Partners at all times. However we have to request a £1 custodian fee when signing our Dog Custodianship agreement in order to legalise the contract. The ongoing costs of dog ownership are fully taken on by the partners, alongside the cost involved in the application, assessment and training process.

When taking on a canine partner, every applicant will be provided with a basic home starter pack for their dog. There will always be extra items that will be required to be purchased by the applicant which could be items that the dog needs or more specific items to an individual in order for them to handle their dog most effectively.

If an applicant is concerned about being able to cover all of the partnership costs, we would encourage them to contact our Applications Team to discuss this further.

Summary of Costs

Stage of Application	Costs	
Application and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport costs to Applicant Discovery Day. • Medical report completion costs (dependent on individual GP practices). • Transport costs to assessment(s) and matching visit(s). • Any adaptation costs required in the home or garden e.g. toilet area construction or fencing of garden. • Dog/partner specific equipment required before attending training course e.g. most suitable treat bag, most suitable car harness – this can all be established and discussed on a matching visit. • Any items an applicant may wish to buy for their dog before bringing them home e.g. bed/toys/treats. 	
Partnership Training Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport costs to travel to our National Training Centre for training. • A suggested donation will be requested to cover some of the costs of your Partnership Training Course. When staying onsite residentially, we would ask for £18 per person per night to cover our housekeeping and catering costs. • £1 legal fee when signing custodian agreement. • Any shopping during training e.g. dog equipment or tea/coffee when out. 	
Partnership (after returning home with your canine partner)	Vaccinations Free for working dogs but may have to pay for a vet consult fee	£0-£60
	Insurance Changes annually	£422.69 per year or £35.22 per month (Updated October 2020 subject to annual increases at renewal)
	Insurance excess Changes annually	£150 per condition
	Parasite preventative treatment	£10-£20 per month
	Veterinary and Preventative Treatment Costs All our dogs are required to have two health checks per year; one to the vets to include vaccinations, and one could be at the vets or a physiotherapy check.	Approximately £40-£60 per vet/physio visit, plus any insurance excess' this may trigger.
	Food All of our dogs to remain on Purina Pro Plan unless health/dietary requirements deem otherwise.	£37 - £50 per bag (lasts 4 - 6 weeks) when using 30% discount code. Other CP approved food brands may vary in cost.
Treats and poo bags etc. We can advise on some home-made treat recipes	Variable depending on supplier and types of treats.	

N.B Please bear in mind these prices may differ year on year and are dependent on where items are purchased from. We are happy to help every applicant and partnership find the most cost-effective way of providing all necessary treatment, health cover, food and items for their dogs. Some of our dogs may have pre-existing conditions or have unexpected vet visits that require ongoing management throughout the partnership. Any pre-existing conditions will be discussed at matching, but unexpected vet visit costs need to be considered. If any applicant is concerned about managing the costs of one of our dogs, please speak to the Applications Team who can discuss what support may be available. *Summary of costs updated October 2024*

Implications of dog ownership

Please find below a brief outline of some basic areas of dog care which could impact on someone's life when taking on a dog:

- Early morning and evening toileting requirements as well as regular opportunities throughout the day.
- Morning and evening feeding routines to be kept at roughly the same times each day where possible.
- Daily exercise needs: Canine Partners recommends on average 45 minutes a day with 4 times a week off lead exercise.
- Ongoing training and upkeep of obedience routines.
- Managing any potentially inappropriate or unwanted behaviours e.g. barking, scavenging etc.
- Routine vet visits as well as potential emergency visits.
- Toileting accidents due to illness and dealing with the implications of this.
- Preparation of boarding kennels or someone to look after your dog if booking holidays or going to places where a dog could not go (less so with assistance dogs but still advised for dogs to stay at home if travelling abroad for a holiday).
- Preparing your home for safe introduction of a dog e.g. no dangerous objects, medications stored safely, food items out of reach etc.
- Provision of a safe and comfortable resting space.
- Provision of fresh water at all times.

There is a lot of information available that further outlines the implications of dog ownership and we would encourage anyone interested in applying, to explore this area further. Some useful resources could be as follows:

- Various dog ownership books; if researching in books, bear in mind Canine Partners uses 'reward-based' dog training techniques.
- Online resources that outline dog ownership and what to expect
- Dogs Trust have a section on "help & advice"
[dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice](https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice)
- DEFRA outlines code of conduct for the welfare of dogs
[gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-dogs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-dogs)

Please note: Canine Partners is not responsible for what is on, or for updating, these external links and using the URL is at the user's discretion.

General guidelines

We have several policies and guidelines that are applicable throughout the application and partnership process. It is worth potential applicants being aware of these before applying.

Our vision

Our vision is that every disabled person lives their life to the full.

Our mission

Our mission is to change the lives of disabled people using expertly trained dogs to improve physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

Our values

We have six main values here at Canine Partners which we encourage all of our staff and volunteers to embrace throughout their work. Our values are:

- **Excellence**
We always aim for the very highest standards. We never accept anything less and work hard to make improvements where necessary.
- **Passion**
We are passionate about our work and the mission of our Charity. We throw ourselves into everything as much as possible and enjoy the rewards.
- **Teamwork**
We are a multidisciplinary team, spread across the UK. We support each other, through good times and the not so good.
- **The personal touch**
We foster a friendly family feel towards anyone with whom we come into contact. Whenever possible we are flexible and seek to tailor-make our service to every individual.
- **Innovation**
We aim to lead the way in everything we do becoming ever more expert. We try new things, in the full knowledge that some things work and some things do not but if you never try, you will never know. We welcome any new ideas.
- **Respect**
We always aim to deal with other people in the way we would ideally like to be dealt with. Canine Partners aim to create an atmosphere where people are treated with dignity and respect. We encourage trust and openness. These standards are reflected in the behaviour and conduct of our staff. We expect a similar approach from applicants and partners.

We welcome a professional working relationship between our staff and partners. Our staff are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and we have policies available to staff to outline acceptable conduct. These include areas such as: social media, exchange of personal details and gifts.

Our staff are required to visit you in the home to check on your progress and support you in your journey. When you agree to continue with your application and receive a canine partner from us, you are agreeing that staff will visit you as necessary at pre-arranged dates and times.

If the charity learns of any risks that affect our dogs' or staff's safety, we reserve the right to refuse to accept an application or continue a working relationship. Examples may include: relevant criminal convictions or environmental circumstances such as the living environment.

We ask that:

- The charity operates a zero tolerance policy to physical, verbal and electronic abuse to all
- You display behaviour that is tolerant and non-discriminatory in working with us
- You believe you are able to provide the level of commitment and co-operation that is required to maintain a successful working partnership with a canine partner and with the charity

Applicant agreement:

As part of the application process every applicant will sign an applicant agreement. This agreement will summarise and highlight all of the responsibilities and expectations of taking on a canine partner.

Custodianship agreement:

While Canine Partners maintains ownership of the dog, the applicant is the custodian of the dog. This means the applicant would be responsible for the dog's day to day care and training, including the costs of the dog. During the two week residential training course, all applicants will sign a custodian agreement to officially and legally take on this responsibility.

Insurance cover:

All Canine Partners' dogs are insured under a specific Assistance Dog Policy. This cannot be changed upon a dog going home with a partner, and the dog must remain on this policy for their full working life.

Vet fees can easily reach thousands of pounds; Canine Partners insist that partners keep the insurance policy paid and up to date to ensure that their canine partner would receive the necessary treatment if required. Within the dog Custodian Agreement, partners will sign to state that they will continue with Canine Partners' recommended insurance.

Feeding a canine partner:

All canine partners are fed on charity approved premium dog food (Purina Pro Plan as standard), unless health/dietary requirements require otherwise. The partner is responsible for paying for this. Any dietary changes must be pre-approved with the charity. Within the Dog Custodianship Agreement, partners will sign to state that they will continue with the Canine Partners approved food for their dog.

Dog health care - ADUK required health cover

“ADUK acknowledges that in order to prevent any risk to people’s health, all accredited assistance dogs must be regularly vaccinated, wormed and treated with flea control applications, in accordance with the very latest veterinary advice, using the very best products”

Source: assistancedogs.org.uk

All dogs must be kept in good health with regular health checking (6 monthly health checks at the vet), grooming and clipping as required for specific breed types.

All non-routine healthcare would need to be pre-approved by the charity’s Aftercare Manager. We may recommend specific referral veterinary practices for some treatment of our dogs. This does not include emergency care.

All health costs are to be covered by the partner and/or the insurance company (where applicable). If partners are struggling to cover costs, they must inform the Aftercare Team as soon as possible so that options can be explored.

All of our working dogs must be fully vaccinated. Canine Partners states it’s dogs need to be covered against the following parasites at all times during their working life:

- Fleas
- Ticks
- Lungworm
- Roundworm
- Tapeworm

All our dogs are required to have two health checks per year; one to the vets to include vaccinations, and one could be at the vets or a physiotherapy check.

Assistance dogs’ vaccination costs can be reimbursed from the manufacturer by the vet, but partners may still be charged a consultation fee.

Kennels, vets and emergency contacts:

Before adding an applicant onto our waiting list, we will request an emergency cover form to be completed and sent to us. Every partner must identify:

- Boarding kennels identified for emergencies or for longer periods of time when a partner may be abroad or somewhere unsuitable for a dog to accompany them.
- An accessible vet, and method to get the dog there.
- Two emergency contacts that can be responsible for overseeing the dog in the short-term in an emergency or to take the dog to an identified kennels to stay at the cost of the partner.

Please note: Some of our dogs may have pre-existing conditions, or have unexpected vet visits, that require ongoing management throughout partnership. Any pre-existing conditions will be discussed at matching, but unexpected vet visit costs need to be considered. If any applicant is concerned about managing the costs of one of our dogs, please speak to the Applications Team who can discuss what support may be available.

Pet dogs and taking on a canine partner:

- We will only accept applications from people who have a maximum of one pet dog in the home.
- In the case of successor applicants, if they wish their retired dog to stay in the home along side one pet dog (therefore exceeding the maximum number of dogs in the home), these circumstances and their ability to reapply will be assessed on an individual basis.
- During the application and assessment process, any pet dog will need to be assessed for their suitability to live alongside a canine partner and not disrupt their ability to work. All pet dogs must be over 12 months old and have been in the home for longer than six months in order for us to accept an application and be in a position to assess them. If someone obtains a pet dog whilst they are applying or being assessed this could mean we cannot proceed with their application.

Travelling abroad:

Permission must be requested in writing to take any canine partner out of the UK, to European destinations only. Partnerships must have been together six months before an application will be considered for panel review. If approval is agreed, the partner is responsible for any costs involved in taking a canine partner abroad.

Applications appeal process

The information we get from the application process helps us to make a decision as to whether an assistance dog is suitable. We have a duty of care for our dogs’ welfare, and also to our supporters who wish to see the most effective use of our funds. Therefore, we sometimes have to make decisions that result in an application being declined. All applicants have the opportunity to appeal our decisions and the appeal process can be found in *Appendix 2*.

How we handle applicants’ information

Canine Partners will only process or use your personal information if we have:

- Asked you and have a record of your first stage application and recent consent for us to do so, or
- A ‘legitimate interest’ to do so in order to support our charitable purposes. Our use will be fair and balanced and never unduly have an impact on your rights, or
- A contract with you that we can only fulfil by using your personal information, for example to send you an item that you have requested, or
- A legal obligation to use or disclose information about you, for example we are required by law to keep records of gifts that are given to us with Gift Aid for four years, or
- In extreme situations, such as an accident or medical emergency, we may share your personal details with the emergency services if it is essential for the preservation of life (yours or another person) for us to do so. This falls under the term ‘vital interest’ for using your personal information. After the emergency, we will always aim to inform you about your information was used in that situation.
- Applicants are not required to participate in fundraising or public relations activities without their expressed and voluntary permission.

We will not unduly prioritise our interests as a charity over your interests as an individual. We will always balance our interests with your rights. We will only use personal information in a way and for a purpose that you would reasonably expect in accordance with this policy.

Applicants' information will not be disclosed to other organisations without an applicant's permission. Canine Partners will not rent, swap or sell your personal information to other organisations for them to use in their own marketing activities.

Safeguarding

We have staff members trained in safeguarding and our applicants' and partners' wellbeing is our priority. We therefore withhold the right to disclose information to emergency services or medical professionals if we deem it necessary in a safeguarding emergency.

Full policy

We follow GDPR guidelines and have a staff member responsible for managing this. Please refer to our website for our full privacy policy: caninepartners.org.uk/privacy-policy

Canine Partners reserves the right to review its policies and make changes in the interest of creating and maintaining successful partnerships between partners. Updated policies and procedures will be shared with all applicants and recipients as required.



Useful information

Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK)

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

All ADUK members are non-profit organisations that work to the highest standards of guide dog and assistance dog training and welfare.”

Source; ADUK Website.

Canine Partners are a member of ADUK and are an ADI accredited Assistance Dog Organisation. If you wish to explore other members of ADUK and what services they provide, please visit the ADUK members page here: assistancedogs.org.uk/members

Purina

We work closely with Purina. As standard, all of our dogs are fed on their premium food from puppies all the way through to partnered assistance dogs.

To find out more about Purina, go to: purina.co.uk



Other charities we work with

In order to help members of the armed services community who have a physical disability, we occasionally work with Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion and other Forces charities.

We occasionally work with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People to train dual purpose dogs for people who have physical disabilities and hearing loss. These dogs will often spend time training with each charity before we work together for placement and training with their partner. These dogs are referred to as dual-trained assistance dogs and will have specific coloured jackets, with both charities logos on them, to reflect their dual-purpose.

Other charities that support physical disabilities

If you are not eligible to apply for a canine partner, or would like more information about other charities who provide assistance dogs, please visit the ADUK website for other assistance dog charities: [assistancedogs.org.uk/members](https://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/members)



Appendix

Appendix 1: Toilet area

To be able to take on a Canine Partners Assistance Dog, you need to be able to identify an area for them to toilet that is a short and reasonable distance from your home. When allocating a toilet area for a dog the following needs to be considered:

- Can you or your support network access the area to pick up after the dog?
- Can you see the dog at all times whilst they are toileting?
- Is it well-lit to be able to see the dog at night?
- Does the dog need to be on or off lead to toilet? If on lead, can you access the area to take them there?

Most of our dogs may prefer to toilet off lead in a secure garden, but if this is not possible then the following requirements need to be met:

- Roughly six foot by six foot in size, as a minimum.
- This can be of varying shapes to suit your garden, e.g. rectangular/ square/corner/u-shaped.
- Big enough for dog to move around and circle when toileting.
- It must have substantial drainage e.g. on soil or sloping towards a drain.
- Specific toilet areas will need to be cleaned regularly with dog friendly products, to prevent a build-up of smell.
- A weed membrane can be used between soil/base and toilet substrate to prevent weeds from growing; but this still needs to allow drainage.
- It must be accessible and close to the house to make on-lead toileting possible for you even if it is raining.

Appropriate substrates for toileting are as follows:

- Grass - larger areas only as small areas would become damaged and turn to mud
- Pebbles (rounded pebbles are gentler on a dog's pads)
- Bark chippings
- Astroturf - larger areas as smaller areas begin to smell quickly.

Further advice can be given during assessment on allocating or constructing a toilet area. The preferred substrate for each dog will be specified when at matching, so please await advice from our advanced trainer before laying down a substrate if constructing a specific area for a dog.

You will need to have an area in mind to allocate as a toilet area. However, we would suggest that you do not construct anything until gaining specific advice directly from the Applications Team or from the Advanced Trainer on your matching visit.

Appendix 2: Applications appeal policy

Due to exceptionally high demand not every applicant will be successful in applying for a canine partner. Unfortunately, not everyone will meet the eligibility criteria and regrettably, due to limited training places, we will not be able to help every person who applies.

If you are successful on our opening date(s) in the first stage of application, you will go forward to be able to submit an official application form. Every applicant will undergo a thorough assessment process before a decision is made about whether they can be added to our waiting list.

Taking on a Canine Partners assistance dog is a major undertaking, so every individual case is considered very carefully before any decisions are made. However, if you are unhappy with a decision made about your application, you do have a right to appeal by following this process:

1. Submit an appeal by letter, phone, or email, fully explaining your reasons for disputing our decision, alongside any supporting information, within 10 working days of receiving the decision about your application. This should be sent for the attention of The Applications Manager at our National Training Centre (Canine Partners Training Centre, Ashby Road, Osgathorpe, Leicestershire, LE12 9SR).
2. Your appeal will be considered by either the Applications Manager, Senior Leadership Team member or CEO, dependent on the level your appeal needs to be escalated to. Your appeal will be thoroughly considered, and our decision will be based on the information provided at the time of your application and appeal.
3. Canine Partners will contact you within 20 working days of receiving your appeal to advise of the outcome.

Please note:

- If your circumstances change significantly you may re-apply as long as you provide supporting evidence of the change.
- If you wish to submit a complaint, rather than an appeal, please refer to our Canine Partners complaints procedure on the website [caninepartners.org.uk/feedback](https://www.caninepartners.org.uk/feedback)

Contact us

Email applicationsenquiries@caninepartners.org.uk

National Training Centre

Ashby Road, Osgathorpe, Loughborough,
Leicestershire LE12 9SR



Assistance Dog Applicant Information Pack last updated October 2024.