

Canine companion information pack



The purpose of the Canine Partners canine companion 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. The pack provides details regarding our eligibility criteria and what to expect from our application process, the assessment process, and when taking one of our canine companions home. We will provide further details about dog ownership and other useful material to explore.

What we do

Canine Partners is an assistance dog charity that transforms the lives of people with physical disabilities through partnership with our amazing dogs. This could be through partnership with an assistance dog providing practical support, or in the case of our canine companion scheme, through the placement of one of our amazing dogs as a companion to provide psychological and social benefits including increased confidence, social interaction and self-esteem.

How we train our canine companions

At Canine Partners we endeavour to train our dogs to be well-socialised and obedient dogs, and we hope as many of our dogs will go on to carry out practical task work as an assistance dog to enhance a person's independence. In some cases, the working life is not suited to a dog, maybe due to a health condition or certain behaviours. These dogs can still provide a hugely positive impact as a companion where there is a disability in the home. Our canine companions may still have gone through some of the below training stages but may be identified either during puppy training, advanced training or as an older dog as needing a companion lifestyle.

We mainly train Labradors, Golden Retrievers and crosses between the two. We are currently expanding our breeding programme and our aim is for 80% of our assistance dogs to come from our own breeding programme in future.

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

Puppy Training

Once they enter puppy training, our Puppy Parent volunteers focus on training our puppy's basic obedience and socialisation in a variety of locations and environments. They also begin to train the basic core skills to identify if a dog can develop these into practical task work or if companionship is more suited to them.



Advanced Training

Between 14-16 months old, our dogs enter the final stages of training and are overseen by one of our specialist Advanced Trainers. Throughout advanced training, our dogs live in homes with Fosterer volunteers and are worked by our Advanced Trainers during the week, where they may spend some time in our state-of-the-art kennel facilities at our National Training Centre.

If a dog's most suited career is identified as a canine companion during Advanced Training, their trainer will ensure that the dog is socialised and prepared for their new home, providing any specific habituation to mobility aids that may be required. Alongside this, our dogs will continue with obedience training and learning to be a good companion in the home. The dogs are also exercised regularly, and this is expected to be maintained once home with their new family.

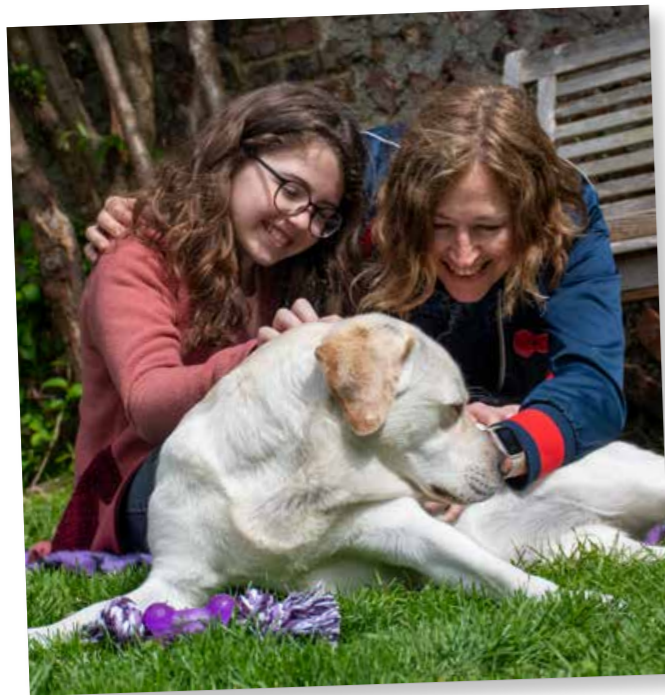


How do canine companions transform lives?

Canine Partners' canine companions are dogs who have been through our training and socialisation process and have been identified as being more suited to a companion dog lifestyle. They are placed in a home with a family or individual where a household member has a physical disability. The canine companion provides companionship and may encourage the psychological and social benefits of having a dog.

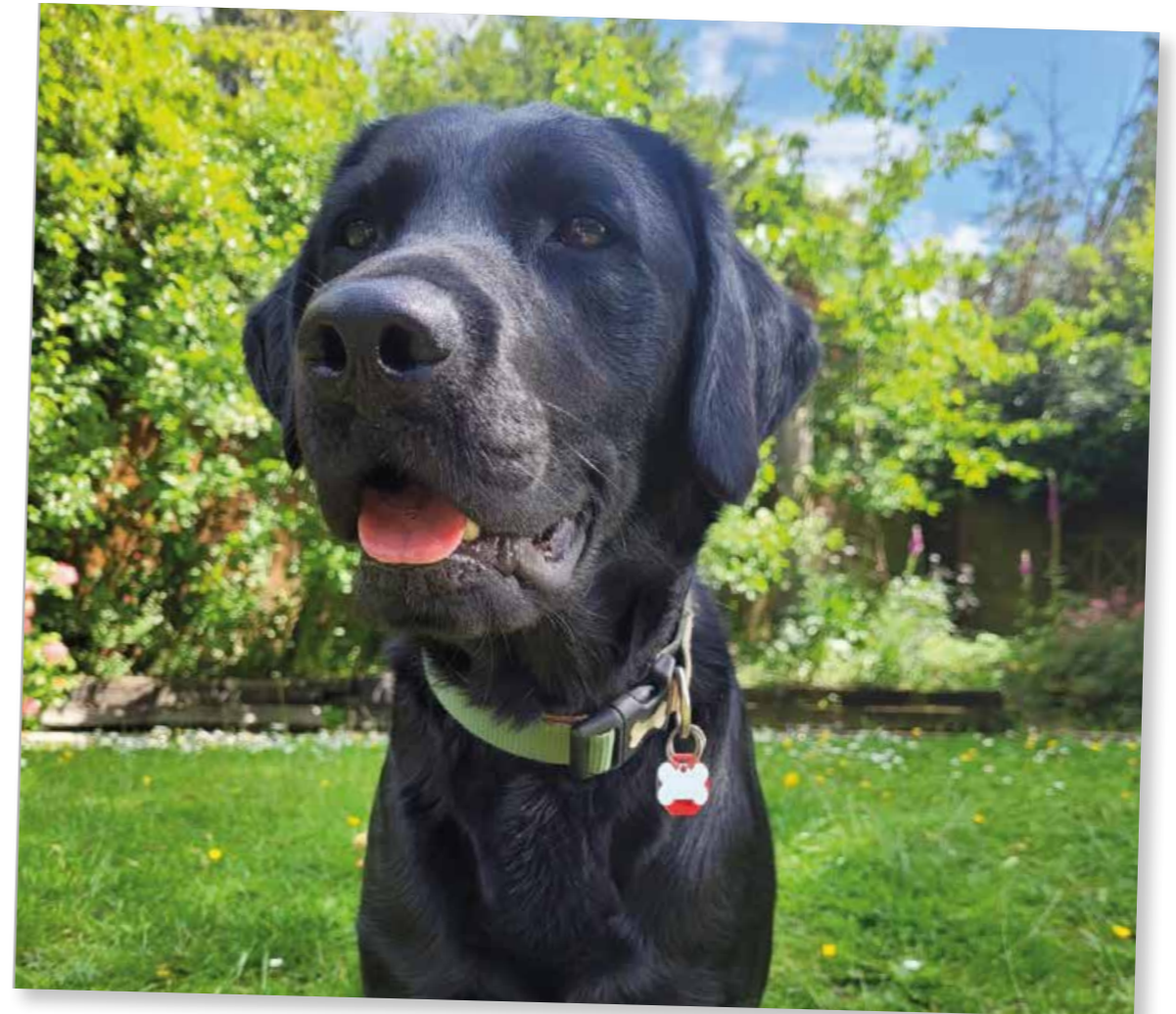
It has been shown that dog ownership can provide many psychological benefits such as:

- Increased confidence, motivation, and self-esteem
- Companionship, security, and unconditional love
- A talking point, often leading to increasing social interaction



What to consider

In return for all of the above benefits, every canine companion household 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 new family. Therefore, to get the most out of their dogs, we ask that their new guardians ensure they continue to be responsible for daily exercise, feeding, grooming, training, and playing.












“In so many ways, our wellness and happiness have been improved - a lot more exercise for all of us, meeting people in different neighbourhoods when we take Copper to various parks/lakes, feeling of community as we recognise people that we see every week, and more laughter and joy thanks to our lovely dog!”






Home of canine companion, Copper

Eligibility criteria









To apply for a canine companion you will need to be able to fulfil the criteria listed below. An in-depth assessment will follow for anyone who proceeds through 1st stage of application, before a family, individual or household may be deemed suitable to be placed on our waiting list.

-  There must be a household member who has a diagnosed physical disability/condition, where there will be a benefit provided through the companionship of a dog.
-  There must be a person in the household 18 years old or over who would be responsible for walking the dog and supervising the dog in any community environment.
-  You must be permanent residents of the UK and live within the designated area open to application (see webpage).
-  You must be willing and able to travel to our National Training Centre (Leicestershire LE12 9SR) or a location in the South East for the following parts of the application and placement process if required:
 - An assessment visit to work with a dog
 - Any matching visits to meet any potential dogs
-  That you, and all relevant household members, are willing to attend any educational sessions that we run during the application process – either virtually or in person (in Leicestershire or the South East).
-  You must enjoy interacting with dogs and feel you/your household would benefit from the companionship of a canine companion.
-  You confirm that you are aware that canine companions are best suited to a companionship lifestyle and you do not expect any practical task work from the dog.
-  You must have access to an outdoor area within a reasonable distance of your home, to be able to toilet a dog regularly and be able to pick up after them.
 - If your outdoor space is within a communal garden, we will require written permission from your landlord for use of as space for a dog's toileting purposes.
-  You must be able to feed, give water, groom, and administer any necessary routine medical care to your dog.

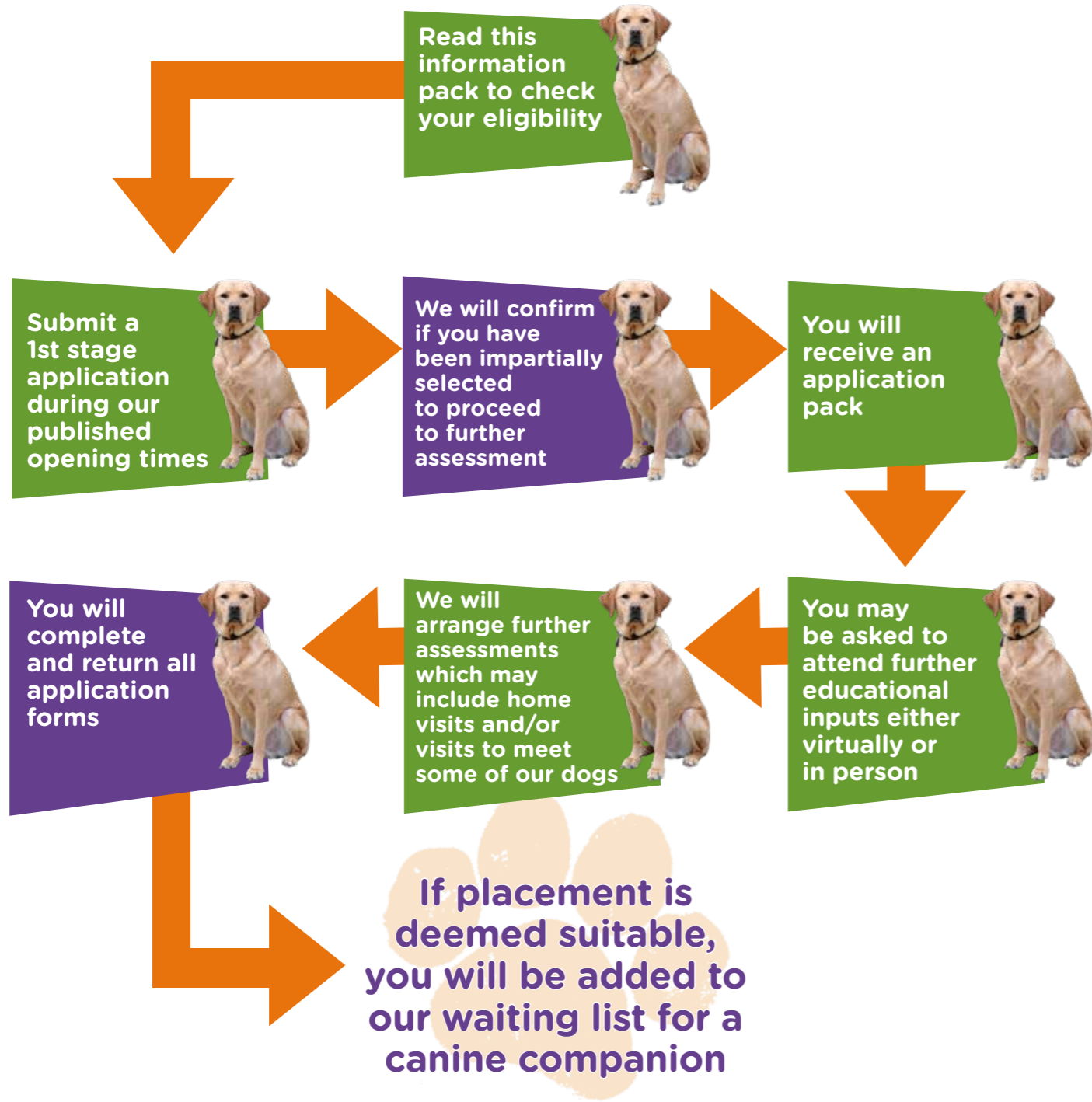
-  You are willing to support a dog through any health/training needs that they may have, which would be discussed with you at the point of matching.
-  You must be able to provide the dog with a minimum of 45 minutes of exercise per day, with a minimum of four times a week off lead exercise.
-  You must have access and transport to a veterinary surgery for routine and emergency appointments and have a care plan for a dog in an emergency.
-  The number and suitability of any pet dogs in the home will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
-  You should be prepared to take on the routine annual costs of a dog, including food, preventative parasite treatment and insurance.
 - Canine Partners aims to keep our dogs' care costs at a minimum, whilst also maintaining the best level of welfare for all our dogs.

Please note that:

-  If you live in an accommodation that you do not own or do not own the whole property (i.e. leasehold), upon application you will need to provide evidence of confirmation from the owner of the property (or the Estate Management Company if your property is leasehold) that you have permission for a pet dog in the property.
-  Feeding our dogs - We advise for our dogs to remain on the food they are on in training for at least three months upon initial placement, to reduce the amount of change the dog goes through in one go. Our dogs are fed on Purina Pro Plan as standard unless health/dietary requirements require otherwise.
-  You will not be able to leave the dog alone for longer than four hours at a time.
-  Canine Partners will retain ownership of the dog for at least the first six months of placement. You will be required to read and sign a canine companion Custodianship Agreement that outlines terms you must follow during this period before you fully adopt the dog and take ownership after six months. You will be expected to follow the guidelines given within this agreement for this period before full adoption.
-  The breeds that we train are Labradors, Golden Retrievers and Labrador cross Golden Retrievers. They can be of varying ages, and we cannot currently guarantee placement of any other breeds of dog at this time.
-  Canine companions are not trained to specifically support any of the following:
 - to provide any physical assistive tasks in or out of the home.
 - 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.
 - To carry out any specific tasks in relation to mental health (e.g. pressure therapy) or neurological conditions (e.g. autism)

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

To apply for one of our amazing canine companions, 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, and in different regions within the UK, to manage waiting times as efficiently as possible.

As we anticipate receiving 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 our potential applicants and to reduce, as far as possible, our waiting time.



caninepartners.org.uk/canine-companion

Assessment

Before we can commit to placing a canine companion with an individual, household, or family, we need to thoroughly assess each application on an individual basis. This is done through the various paperwork we request initially and will be followed up by an individual assessment, which may include a home check and/or a day at a specified location working with some of our dogs. This stage will obtain information for us to be able to assess each household's circumstances and ability to meet a dog's care needs, alongside establishing any specific training or socialisation that will be needed.

The waiting list

Once an individual, household or family has been added to the waiting list, they will continue making their way up the list until we identify a dog that may be suitable for them. The wait time is variable and is often dependent upon each individual, family or household's needs. A more approximate timeframe can be given once added to the list.

There may be the opportunity to attend educational sessions during the application process or whilst on the waiting list and we would expect canine companion applicants to attend these, either virtually or in person.

Meeting a potential dog

When an individual, family or household near the top of the list and a suitable dog becomes available, the dog's trainer will call and invite the applicants to meet the dog, either at our National Training Centre or at a location close to where the dog is currently being trained.

The matching visit is a chance for an individual, family or household to meet a potential dog and see if they are 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 dog and the people.

If the match is looking promising this will be discussed in the days following a matching visit and placement dates will then be confirmed.

Placement with a canine companion

Placement with one of our canine companions is usually carried out directly in the home, though there may be some training onsite at our National Training Centre required dependent on individual circumstances. The placement plan for each dog will be bespoke and discussed at the matching visit.

Each canine companion will be placed under the guidance of one of our trainers, who will ensure each home has the skills and things in place to facilitate successful placement with a dog and help that dog to settle into their new home.

Upon placement with a canine companion, the individual, family or household would take on all costs of the dog (see page 14) and would be expected to continue to provide for all of the dog's care, health and exercise needs.



Returning home and support

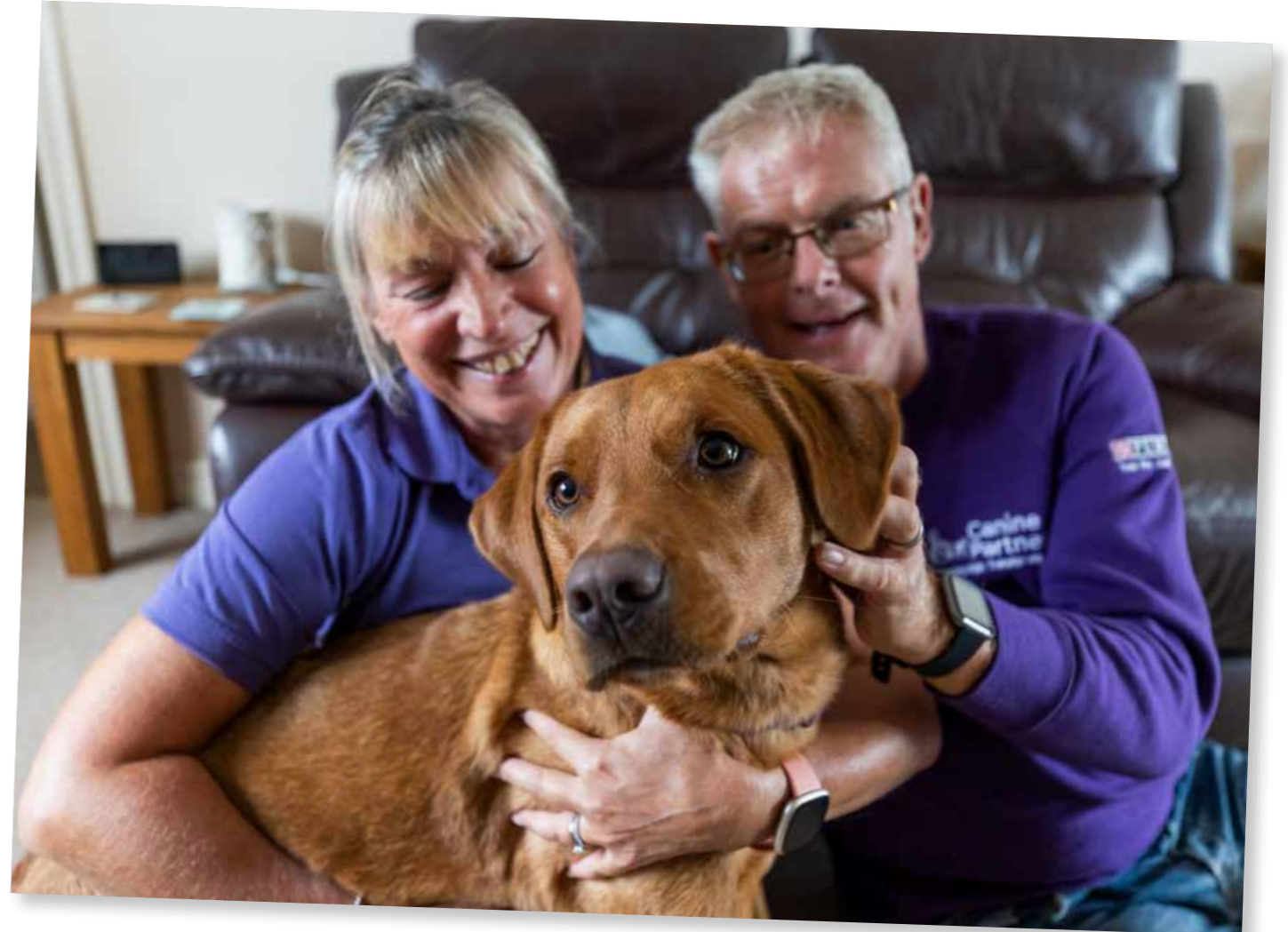


Upon placement, each canine companion household will be given the contact details of their Canine Partners representative, usually one of our specialist trainers, who will help to settle the dog into their new home and check in during the first six months to help set the placement up for success.

The canine companion household will be expected to sign a custodianship agreement, where Canine Partners retain ownership of the dog and the canine companion household would be the custodian of the dog for the first six to 12 months, before full adoption after this period. The allocated Canine Partners representative will check in with each canine companion household at three months and six months post placement to ensure things are going well before the canine companion household fully adopts the dog and takes full ownership of them thereafter. These check-ins may be virtual or in person in the home and will depend on what we deem required in individual circumstances. Canine companion households will also be expected to complete surveys for us to obtain measurable information on the difference our canine companion dogs are making during the first 12 months of placement.

The Canine Partners representative allocated to each canine companion partnership will be there to assist and monitor the following:

- To help settle a dog in and set consistent routines and expectations in the early days of placement
- To monitor the dog's health and well-being to ensure their welfare is being met before full adoption
- To give advice and support as and where needed in regard to their canine companion
- To help the canine companion household manage the dog's health routine



We do not charge our canine companion households for the training or purchase of our dogs, but donations are welcome at individual discretion. However, we have to request a £1 custodian fee when signing our Dog Custodianship and Dog Adoption agreements to legalise the contract. The ongoing costs of dog ownership are fully taken on by the canine companion household, alongside the cost involved in the application, assessment and training process.

Summary of Costs

Stage of Application	Costs	
Application and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport costs to assessment(s) and matching visit(s). • Any adaptation costs required in the home or garden e.g. securing the garden, baby gates to separate animals in the home. • £1 legal fee when signing custodian agreement. • Any items an applicant may wish to buy for their dog before bringing them home e.g. bed/toys/treats. 	
Partnership (after returning home with your canine partner) Please bear in mind any costings will depend on what you choose to cover for your dog upon adoption.	Vaccinations	Approx £60-£100 per year
	Insurance Changes annually	Agria (current insurer) £30-£60 per month* with excess amounts of £105-£170 per condition. <small>*dependent on level of cover chosen, excess amounts chosen and postcode. Based on estimates from dogs aged 1-8 years old.</small>
		Pet dog insurance - Prices, excess amount, and level of cover will vary.
	Parasite preventative treatment	£10-£20 per month dependent on choice of treatment
	Food We advise for our dogs to remain on the food they are on in training at initial placement to reduce the amount of change the dog goes through in one go. Our dogs are fed on Purina Pro Plan as standard unless health/dietary requirements require otherwise..	Purina dry food - £55-£65 per 12kg-14kg bag (lasts 4-6 weeks) Other food types will vary in price.
Day-to-Day dog items e.g. Treats, toys 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 partnership. Any pre-existing conditions will be discussed at matching, and these health/vet costs will need to be considered.. *Summary of costs updated June 2024*

Implications of dog ownership

Whether someone may be a first-time or an experienced dog owner, we feel it is important to thoroughly explore the implications of general dog ownership before applying for a canine companion.

Please find below a brief outline of just 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; are to be kept at roughly the same times each day where possible.
- Daily exercise needs: Canine Partners recommends ideally at least 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.
- Getting your dog used to being left home alone (maximum 4 hours at a time).
- Preparation of someone/where to look after your dog in an emergency or if you are booking holidays or going to places where a dog could not go (for more than 4 hours).
- Preparing your home for the 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 are vast amounts 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 and 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 various policies and guidelines we implement at Canine Partners, some of which are applicable throughout the application and partnership process that it is worth potential applicants being aware of before applying. When applying for a canine companion, all applications that fit our eligibility criteria will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, age or any other categories protected by law.

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 our 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**
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.

Expectations when working with us

We welcome a professional working relationship between our staff and partners. Our staff are expected to conduct themselves professionally 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 companion 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 can provide the level of commitment and cooperation that is required to maintain a successful working partnership with a canine companion and with the charity

Custodianship and adoption contracts

Canine Partners maintains ownership of the dog for the first 6-12 months, whilst the canine companion household would be the custodian of the dog during this time. This means the applicant would be responsible for the dog's day-to-day care and training, including the costs of the dog.

During placement all canine companion households will sign a custodian agreement to take on this responsibility officially and legally. We are bound to request a £1 custodian fee when applicants sign our custodian agreement to legalise the contract. At the end of the 6-12 month custodianship period the canine companion household would sign an adoption agreement and then take on full ownership of the dog.

Health cover

Canine Partners insists that our dogs are kept in good health; with regular health checking (six monthly health checks at the vet) grooming and clipping as required for specific breed types. We will also set a recommended weight range that we would ask the dog to be kept within to prevent any avoidable health issues related to obesity, which Labradors are more susceptible to if overfed. We therefore ask that everyone who applies identifies a Veterinary practice and provides us with their details. We advise that confirmation is also sought about the out of hours cover and how a dog would be transported to a vet in an emergency.

We also recommend that canine companions continue to have their annual booster vaccinations and receive preventative treatment for fleas and worms to reduce any risk to people's health. The choice regarding vaccination and parasite treatment will sit with the canine companion household after full adoption.

Insurance cover

All canine companions will be required to have continued insurance for at least the custodianship period with their dog.

All Canine Partners' dogs are insured with a Canine Partners approved insurance company. You will be provided with a quote for taking on a policy with the dog's existing insurance company, if you were to wish to remain with the same company. If not, canine companion households are asked to provide evidence of another sufficient insurance policy for at least the custodianship period.

Vets fees can easily reach thousands of pounds so after the custodianship period, Canine Partners would expect for canine companion households to show evidence of continued insurance or confirm how health and veterinary costs will be met moving forwards.

Kennels, vets and emergency contacts

Before adding an applicant to our waiting list, we will ask that there is a plan for emergency cover for a dog in cases of unexpected need for the dog's handlers to be away e.g. hospital admission or attendance somewhere the dog cannot go.

We recommend that all canine companion households identify the following in case of emergency:

- **A boarding kennel and/or dog boarder;** for emergencies or for longer periods when the individual/family may be abroad or somewhere unsuitable for a dog to accompany them.
- **Two emergency contacts identified** that can be responsible for overseeing the dog in the short-term in an emergency or are the drivers to take the dog to an identified kennel to stay at the cost of the canine companion household.

Please note: Some of our dogs may have pre-existing conditions, or have unexpected vet visits, that require ongoing management after full adoption. Any pre-existing conditions will be discussed at matching, but unexpected vet visit costs need to be considered.

Feeding a canine companion

All dogs in training and canine companions are fed on charity-approved premium dog food (**Purina Pro Plan** as standard), unless health/dietary requirements require otherwise.

We would recommend a dog stay on their usual food for at least three months after initial placement whilst they transition into a new home. If the canine companion household then wishes to transition the dog onto another food, this should be done gradually and should consider any health requirements of the dog. We encourage canine companion households to seek our advice if considering changing the dog's food.

Travelling abroad

Canine companion households cannot take their new dog out of the UK during the Custodianship period, as the dog will need time to settle into their new home. If wishing to travel abroad with their canine companion in future, any costs would be the canine companion household's responsibility and all legal procedures must be followed. We encourage canine companion households to consult with Canine Partners before taking a canine companion abroad, even after full adoption, as we may be able to advise on the dog's history and suitability to travel.

Applications appeal process

The information we get from the application process helps us to decide as to whether a canine companion is suitable. We have a duty of care for our dogs' welfare, and 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 can appeal our decisions and the appeal process can be found in Appendix 1

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 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 what 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.

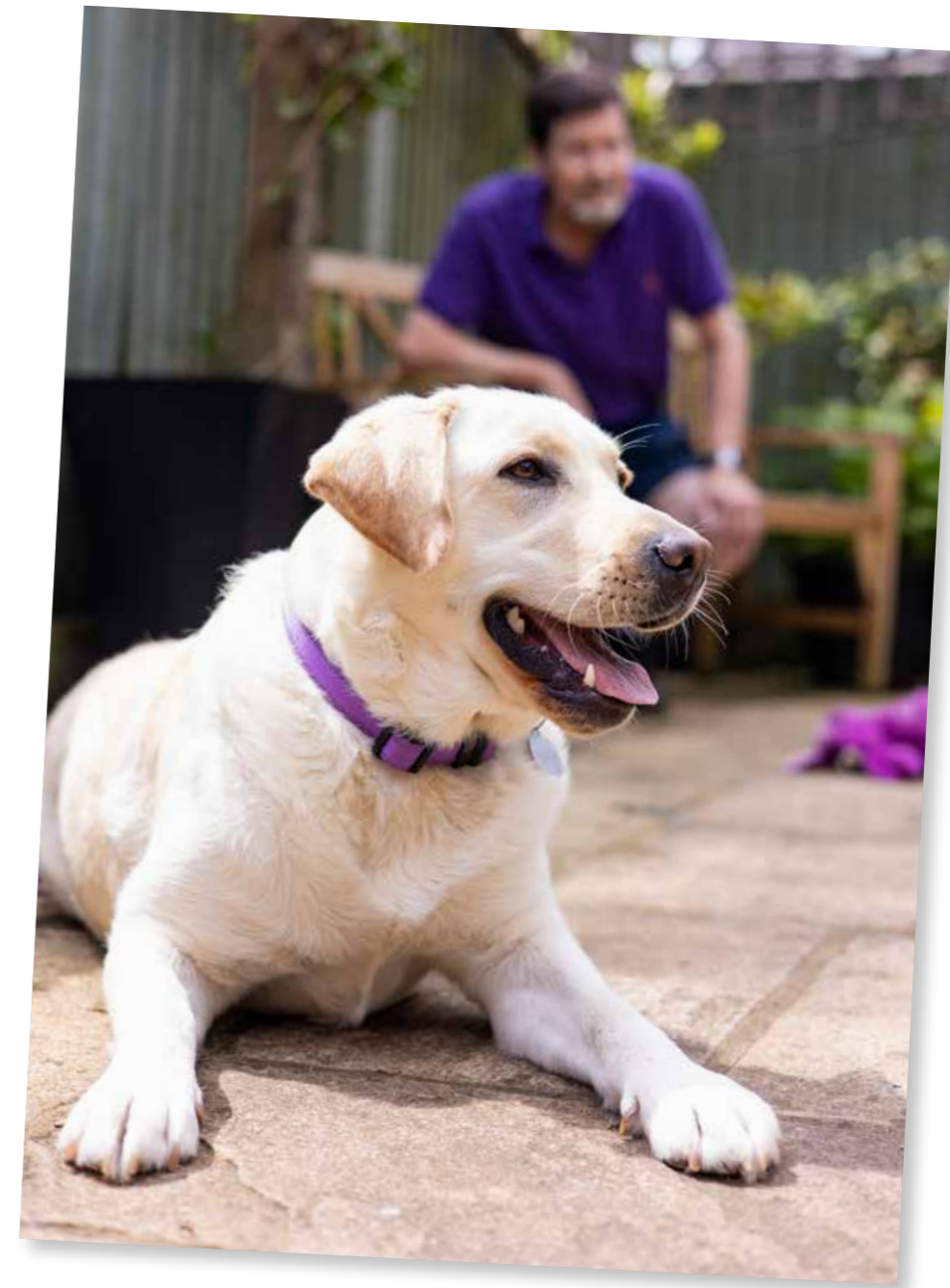
Safeguarding

We have staff members trained in safeguarding and our applicants' and partners' well-being 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



Please note: Canine Partners reserves the right to review their 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.

Appendix

Applications Appeal Policy

Due to exceptionally high demand not every applicant will be successful in applying for a canine companion. 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.

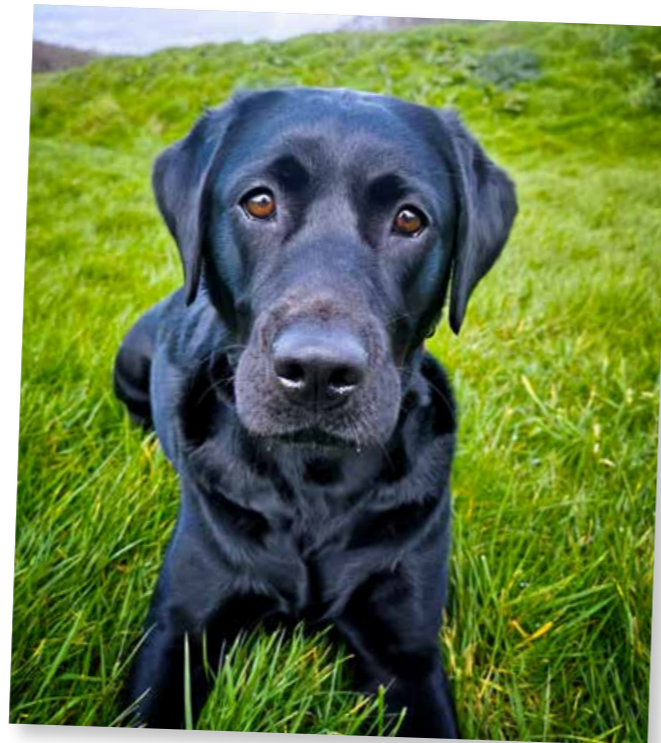
If you are successful on our opening date(s) in the first stage of application, you will go forward to be able to submit an official application form. Every applicant then undergoes a thorough assessment process before a decision is made about whether they can be added to our waiting list.

Taking on a canine companion 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, depending 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 if you provide supporting evidence of the change.
- If you wish to submit an official complaint, rather than an appeal, please refer to our Canine Partners complaints procedure on the website: caninepartners.org.uk/feedback





Contact us

Email applicationsenquiries@caninepartners.org.uk

National Training Centre

Ashby Road, Osgathorpe, Loughborough,
Leicestershire LE12 9SR

Canine companions information pack last updated June 2024.