

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 is someone who cares for, socialises, and trains a Canine Partners puppy with help from a Canine Partners Puppy Training Coordinator. They will provide the early education that will enable the puppy to be comfortable in many environments, become a well-mannered puppy, enjoy learning, and succeed in their assistance dog training further on their journey to become an assistance dog.

What does the role involve? The most fundamental part of the role is giving a loving, safe and secure home for a puppy, where they learn as much as possible about how to behave around diverse types of people, in different situations, with different sights and smells. However, it also involves teaching basic cues and carefully introducing the puppy to new environments including different forms of public transport, as well as towns and cities. After 14-16 months, the Puppy Training Volunteer should have successfully socialised a puppy that behaves well and is both friendly and responsive to their handler.

Do I need to have experience in puppy training? Previous experience with dogs is a bonus, but not necessary. Our expert team are on hand to support you with advice and guidance every step of the way. You will be taught how to train the puppy using positive reinforcement methods in a variety of ways, including one-to-one sessions, classes, and group sessions out-and-about.

How long is the registration process to become a Puppy Training Volunteer?

Five to six weeks. There are two assessments (Telephone and Home check). We require general information from you to register you as a Canine Partners volunteer.

How long will I have the puppy for? The puppy will be placed with you at eight weeks of age and will be within your care for approximately 14 to 16 months. The exact length of time is dependent on many factors, not least how the puppy copes with training and their enjoyment of learning, but also health seasons and, the availability of the Assistance Dog Training Team to take the puppy onto their next stage of training.

Can I work part time and be a Puppy Training volunteer at the same time? We would ask you to demonstrate that you have the ability to actively supervise and enough time to be able to care, train and socialise the puppy, both on your own and in conjunction with your Puppy Training Coordinator (more details of which will be provided to you during registration). Please be aware that the puppy cannot be left

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for longer than three hours in one period, and that this period will need to be built up slowly over time.

Can I take the puppy to work with me? This will depend on your working environment and on the puppy as an individual. Our expert team will need to ensure that the puppy will be comfortable and safe, and that their training will not be affected. Your Puppy Training Coordinator will arrange to complete a workplace Assessment. It may be that this option is not immediately available but can be introduced as the puppy grows older.

When will I meet my Puppy Training Coordinator, my staff point of contact?

Your Puppy Training Coordinator will contact you to arrange a time to complete your home check.

How often will I see the Puppy Training Coordinator?

This changes as the puppy grows and copes with the training required. When you first get the puppy you may have twice-weekly visits to your home from the Puppy Training Coordinator. We provide weekly sessions thereafter, either on a one-to-one basis or as group sessions during working week. You will meet Canine Partners Volunteers during these training sessions and at social events. (There will be occasions you will not be able to bring Canine Partners pup/dog. Your Puppy Training Coordinator will arrange short term foster care

How far will I be required to travel? You will be required to do some travelling to attend classes, group sessions and to take the puppy to appropriate places. This will usually be within the boundaries of the Puppy Training Region you are assigned to and may be up to 45 minutes travel distance. If you require cover for your puppy for holidays it may be that in exceptional circumstances this distance is further if we do not have Puppy Support Volunteers in your immediate vicinity. You can claim for pre-approved expenses.

Will the puppy live with me? Yes, the puppy will live with you. If you are due to go away on holiday or there are any other reasons why you may not be able to care for the puppy for a fixed period, we are able to arrange a temporary stay with a Puppy Support Volunteer to care for them. We ask that unless exceptional unforeseen circumstances dictate, that you allow the puppy to spend time settling in with you before asking for cover.

How much will it cost me to have a Canine Partners puppy? You will receive a starter pack with everything you need to begin your journey with the puppy. You may supplement this with appropriate chews and toys if you wish, but we ask that you follow guidelines on the appropriate types. You will need to purchase items that enable you to comply with the law, such as poo bags and identity tags. We do ask that you cover the costs of local transport, to allow you to socialise the puppy in new environments, to attend puppy-training classes, and meet other Puppy Training and Puppy Support volunteers for support and fun!

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Can I be a Puppy Training volunteer if I have young children? Many of our volunteers have young children or grandchildren. We will assess each volunteer's circumstances individually.

Can the family help? Anyone aged 18 and over, within the family/household can apply to become a Puppy Training Volunteer or Puppy Support Volunteer. We actively encourage this. Children under the age of 18 can become involved with the care of the pup/young dog in the home. Only those aged 18 and over may walk the dog or be left with a dog unsupervised in the home.

Can I have a pet dog and be a Puppy Training volunteer?

You can become a Puppy Training volunteer as a dog owner with up to two pet dogs of suitable temperament in your home. The dogs must be over 18 months of age and have lived in your home for at least six months. One of our trainers will assess the temperament of your pet dog during the application process. The puppy is to be fed and walked separately to your pet dog daily to maintain their training successfully, this does not mean they cannot go out together when appropriate.

Can I introduce a dog into my home while caring for a Canine Partner dog?

We ask that you speak to your staff point of contact to confirm you are considering getting your own pet dog. We will then plan for the Canine Partner dog in training to be moved to a different home. If you wish to continue to be a Puppy Training or Puppy Support Volunteer, we will assess pet dogs over 18 months of age after they have lived six months with you.

How long before I meet Canine Partners puppy/dog? This will vary dependant when the next litter of pups are due. There are occasions when a slightly older puppy may become available at short notice. While waiting for your first full-time puppy it is encouraged that you take a dog on holiday cover as a Puppy Support Volunteer.

Is it ok to leave the puppy?

Puppies sleep a lot when young but are also not used to being alone. There will be occasions when we need to go to the shops. Your Puppy Training Coordinator will help with initial settling training. Once a pup is used to, being left alone the maximum time of being alone is no more than a few hours. This will be a gradual thing and dependant on each individual puppy.

What happens if I want a holiday?

We kindly ask our Puppy Training volunteers not to take any holidays for the first few months of welcoming a puppy into their home. We have Puppy Support Volunteers who will look after the pup while you go on holiday or if you require a break. These volunteers may be up to 45 minutes from you, and we would need you to arrange transport of the puppy and their equipment to them.

Are Canine Partners puppies allowed to be let off the lead to free run?

We encourage our puppies to be allowed time to free run and sniff off-lead from the time they are old enough to go out. You will be given guidance by your Puppy

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Training Coordinator how and where to do this, and you will receive ongoing training to ensure that the dogs have an effective recall.

How do volunteers cope when they hand the puppy on to Assistance Dog Training? All our Puppy Training Volunteers form a bond with the puppy they have been looking after, having invested so much, and wanting the puppy to be the best they can be. As such, it can be tough to see the puppy move on to assistance training, however those who view it as a success because this is what the puppy is meant to do, find it easiest. Some have compared it to seeing their children go off to university, leaving home but continuing to grow and learn, so they can go on to be partnered, leading a rewarding and happy life in the service of someone with a disability. Knowing that you have played a part in changing someone's life for the better can go a long way to helping you come to terms with your loss.

Will I see the puppy once they leave for formal training?

Once the puppy has entered formal assistance dog training, you will receive an update via your Puppy Training Coordinator. When they have passed their training, and they have been partnered you may request that your contact details are given to their partner. It is then important that we leave it up to the discretion of the partner to decide whether to maintain contact, since it will depend on their own circumstances, but they are advised not to contact you during the initial stages of their partnership so they can focus on bonding.

How much does a Canine Partners dog cost through its lifetime in training and service? From puppy selection, through to training, the partnership and aftercare, costs £30,000 to Canine Partners for each dog.

What happens to the puppy if they do not reach the required standards to go on to assistance dog training? Each dog is an individual and there may be reasons why they do not get considered for a role as a jacketed Assistance dog. There are alternative careers that we may put them forward for, depending upon individual circumstances:

- **Canine Home Assistance Partner** – These are dogs who may find working in a busy community too difficult but are tailor-trained to their partner's needs and can carry out important practical tasks inside the home. This could include retrieving dropped items, calling help in an emergency, helping with undressing, and much more.
- **Canine Companion** – A canine companion is placed in a home where there is an adult or a child with a physical disability or condition who would benefit from the companionship and emotional support a dog can provide, but where practical support from the dog is not required. These special dogs also give other social benefits of dog ownership, such as friendship and reduced loneliness
- **Ambassador Dog** - As a partnership, the Ambassador Dog and their volunteer will attend public or virtual displays, which will raise awareness of how we train and develop our dog's core skills, that can then be extended to tasks that would match with a person with a disability.
- **Brood bitch** - Our Brood Bitches (canine partner mums), live in a family home with volunteers on a full-time basis from approximately 14 months of age.

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After the age of two they will have no more than four litters (one litter per year), before being retired.

- Alternative organisations - we have some dogs who prefer other kinds of work and find a job with another organisation
- Rehoming

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