



Pawsitive Squad CIC

Assistance Dog Program Handbook

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Chapter 1: History

Pawsitive Squad was founded in July 2018 by Heather Pyne, a Nottingham based dog trainer. Pawsitive Squad was initially created to provide assistance dog training and canine assisted activities to young people with complex neurodisabilities, learning disabilities or those recovering from trauma. Within the first few months it became apparent that there was a need for supportive canine services across all disabilities and which covered early adulthood as well so they extended the client criteria to any young person under 25 with any additional need or disability, who identify as LGBTQ+ or who are recovering from trauma.

Until November 2019 the primary focus was on offering canine assisted activities and assistance dog task training but where the clients were still solely owner training, our courses aimed to just boost the skills of owner trained partnerships. Around Christmas 2019, thanks to feedback from our clients we began to develop our full assistance dog program for clients to register onto for their dogs full training and working lives. Initially this program was solely face to face until March 2020 when, due to the COVID 19 outbreak the program flourished into a comprehensive virtual and face to face assistance dog program.

Our program is built on strong welfare principles, exceptionally high standards and with the engagement and based on the feedback of our amazing clients.

Chapter 2: How the assistance dog program works

Our assistance dog program is a full training and qualification/ working assistance dog program. Clients sign up at the start of their dogs' journey and remain with Pawsitive Squad until their dog retires (usually around 10 years old).

We are NOT:

- a short course
- booster training for owner trained partnerships
- training for pet dogs who are not intending to be trained as assistance dog
- extra training for dogs training under other organisations
- training for professionals who want to train assistance dogs

How it works:

1. You apply to join the assistance dog program with your dog if they're aged between 8 weeks and 6 years old and you meet all the eligibility criteria.
2. If you're eligible you'll be invited to undertake a foundation assessment to ensure both your dog is suitable for assistance dog work and that our teaching resources are suitable for you. The foundation assessment contains a live zoom 1-hour assessment which is looking at your dog's temperament and a short virtual assessment in our VLE.
3. If you pass these assessments you will be accepted onto the program and need to pay £50, £35 of which is for your initial assessment, £15 of which is the hire fee for your Pawsitive Squad lead sleeve which will be posted to you within 2 weeks of being accepted onto the program. If you do not pass the assessment then we do not charge you the fee as we will not be able to offer you a space on our assistance dog program.

4. If you're accepted onto the program you are given the details for the client Facebook group, the booking link and zoom link/class locations.
5. You select which classes are best suited for your dog and child based on the class descriptions and list of things taught. Most dogs will start with the new dog & puppy classes.
6. When you feel your dog meets the criteria for each assessment you can book onto each assessment.
7. Book into free 1-2-1 catch up sessions every other month and use the live weekly Q&As to answer any questions and keep your training on track.
8. Pass all 3 assessment levels – bronze, silver and gold and your dog becomes a fully trained assistance dog!

Chapter 3: Eligibility

Our assistance dog program is only open to 1 to 25-year olds with a long term, prescribed disability which has a big, negative impact on their lives AND which an assistance dog, trained in specific tasks would be able to help relieve some of that negative impact. We accept clients from across England, Wales and Scotland.

3.1: Client eligibility

To be eligible to join the Pawsitive Squad assistance dog program, the young person must meet all the following criteria:

- The young person must be under 25 years old.
- The child/ young person cannot pose a welfare risk to their dog.
- The child/ young person must have never deliberately harmed or injured any animal.
- The child/ young person must have mental capacity to know how to appropriately behave around the dog (e.g. not to pinch, grab, catch) the dog OR the responsible owner MUST have systems in place to ensure the young person is never in a position to behave inappropriately towards the dog.
- The child/young person needs to have a 'prescribed disability' of any kind which has a significant impact in some area of their life which can be mitigated through assistance dog TASK training (it is not enough for your child to simply feel calmer because your dog is there, specific tasks must be trained - if you're unsure if any tasks/what tasks could support your child please ask).
- The young person must require their dog to perform 3 tasks outside of the home EXCEPT if they require medical alert.
- The young person must want their dog trained as an assistance dog and be willing to engage in training.

Additional criteria for certain conditions

Due to the abundance of assistance dog programs for young people with ADHD & autism we are only able to accept applications from individuals whose sole diagnosis is ADHD, autism, anxiety or sensory processing disorder or any combination of those conditions if either:

- the applicant is under 5 years old,

- the young person is over 16 years old
- if they are any age but have been refused from two other assistance dog organisations based on the complexity of the young persons difficulties (it does not count if they were refused due to space, location, the dog being family owned or age).

3.2 Dog criteria

To be eligible to join the Pawsitive Squad assistance dog program the dog must meet all the following criteria. For flea, worming, insurance and not raw fed - these do NOT need to be in place before applying to join the program but must be in place within 1 month of being accepted on the program and before any assessments can be undertaken.

- They are fully vaccinated (we do not accept homeopathic equivalent) before training around other dogs or people.
- They are flea treated and wormed using a product and at a schedule recommended by their veterinarian
- They are not training or working under any other organisation & agree not to do so within 6 months if they choose to leave Pawsitive Squad
- They are not fed raw meat or unpasteurised milk products
- The owner commits to 6 monthly vet checks
- The owner commits to doing weekly head to toe health checks on their dogs
- The owner commits to obtaining assistance dog insurance covering veterinary fees and public liability insurance for their dog.
- The owner and any other handlers agree to only use positive techniques and methods with their dog and does not use any aversive training equipment.
- Their dog has never injured or shown aggression another person or dog
- Their dog cannot be overly anxious
- Their dog cannot be over 6 years old at point of application.
- Their dog must be groomed on a regular basis including teeth brushing
- The dog must never be 'tethered' to the child.
- The dog must be fit and healthy and remain a healthy weight.
- The owner must commit to fully supervise the dog with their child if under 12 whenever the dog and child are together.
- The dog cannot be a guarding breed if the young person has behavioural outbursts or has seizures, drop attacks or any similar medical issue in which their handling ability may temporarily be impaired AND the dog may feel their handler is in a vulnerable state.

Additional criteria for brachycephalic (short nose, flat faced) breeds

Any dogs which are of a brachycephalic breed (or cross breed) must have a vet examination and report submitted with their application. A letter to print and give to the vets for them to ensure the report covers all information we require can be found at the end of this handbook.

Breeds which are classified as brachycephalic are:

- Pug
- French bulldog
- Bulldog

- Boston Terrier
- Shih Tzu
- Pekingese
- Affenpinscher
- Cavalier king Charles spaniel
- Lhasa Apso
- Griffon Bruxellois

Or any other breed or cross breed with a short nose and flat face which meet the same confirmation as any of the above breeds.

3.3: Exclusions to eligibility

Unfortunately, if any of the below apply to you, you are not eligible to join our assistance dog program:

- If you fail to declare a potential conflict of interest OR declare a potential conflict which we deem makes the program unsuitable.
- If your dog has been placed with you by a dog selection organisation
- If your dog has received any boarding training with another trainer or organisation
- If you currently have another assistance dog actively working under a different organisation. If you have another solely owner trained assistance dog this dog would need to stop public working at the point your new assistance dog in training begins public access training.
- If you have used aversive training techniques or equipment on your current dog.
- If you have trained this dog with more than 1 other assistance dog organisation.
- If you have trained with 1 other assistance dog trainer or organisation for more than 9 months.

3.4 Frequently asked questions about client eligibility

Question 1: I/ my child is self/ parent-diagnosed with a disability or they're on the diagnostic/ assessment pathway for a disability diagnosis can we join the program?

Answer 1: We do not accept any self-diagnosis unfortunately as these are not covered under the Equality Act, 2010. Depending on the diagnostic route depends on whether we would be able to accept. For example, we cannot accept people on the diagnostic pathway for neurodiverse conditions (ADHD, autism etc) however if a diagnosis has not yet been reached for example for a rare disease but where the symptoms have been acknowledged and recorded and are under investigation by a specialist doctor (or the specialist is unable to give a named diagnosis due to the complexity of condition which is not uncommon with genetic and autoimmune conditions) then we may be able to accept the application. This would be considered on a case by case basis. If you're unsure if you're eligible we recommend applying and we can decide together.

Question 2: I'm 22/ 23/ 24, can I still join the program and what happens when I reach 25?

Answer 2: Absolutely! We accept applications from young people under 25. You have to be under 25 at the point you are offered a place (not placed on a waiting list). If you turn 25 while registered on the program, nothing changes. We will support you through your dog's working life, even if your dog hasn't passed all their assessments before turning 25 years old. However, once that dog retires, if you are over 25, we will not be able to support successor dog training for your next dog.

Question 3: My child isn't interested in training our dog as an assistance dog but I think it would benefit them, can we still join?

Answer 3: If your child is interested in and well bonded to your dog but don't want an assistance dog OR they want an assistance dog in theory but have no bond or don't play or positively engage with their dog regularly then we recommend finding alternative auxiliary aids for them. Having an assistance dog is not right for everyone and shouldn't be pushed. We do not pass dogs, even if the dog's behaviour is perfect, if their young handler and dog are not clearly bonded and the child isn't utilising the trained tasks.

Question 4: What disabilities can you assist with?

Answer 4: We accept any prescribed disability where the disability causes a significant negative impact and where training an assistance dog to do physical assistance tasks, autism/psychiatric tasks, hearing alert work, medical alert, medical response or environmental allergen alert will help reduce the negative impact the young person's disability has on their life.

The only exception we have currently is for neurodiverse (autism, ADHD etc) aged 7 to 16 years old where their neurodiversity is the only reason for requiring assistance, unless the young person has been refused assistance from 2 assistance dog organisations because of an issue relating to their disability such as the child doesn't bolt or they do not accept non-verbal young people (if they are accepted onto a waiting list we cannot assist). We've regrettably made this decision due the abundance of assistance dog programs available for autistic children of this age. We only have limited spaces and some of the clients we take cannot receive the necessary training elsewhere and we therefore have to prioritise those applications.

Question 5: How do I know if my/ my child's disability is severe enough to be accepted onto the assistance dog program?

Answer 5: The criteria we have set in terms of level of need/severity is if the young person requires a dog to perform at least 3 assistive tasks in public spaces. If you don't know if this is the case, on the application form you can select 'unsure' and we will contact you to discuss what tasks may potentially assist the young person, if there are 3 tasks which will mitigate the impact of their disability and they meet the other criteria they'll be able to access the program (subject to spaces and meeting all other criteria.)

Chapter 4: Team assistance dogs

Team assistance dogs are dogs which work for two disabled people. If any of the following apply, we are potentially able to train your dog to assist multiple disabled people within your household:

- Up to 2 siblings have a disability where your dog can be trained to help mitigate the disability of both children. Up to 1 child can require medical alert or response unless it is for the same condition.
- Both a parent and child have a disability where the dog can be trained to provide assistance to both members of the family. In this circumstance the child must need 3 tasks to be performed in public for themselves.
- 1 Parent and up to 2 children who each require assistance at different times or in different circumstances.

In any team assistance dog partnership, any training to assist a parent is secondary to the assistance provided to the young person. The dog will only be able to pass their final assessment if they are reliably tasking and appropriately behaved for the young person. For team assistance dogs we only accept applications where the children are below 10 years old unless the young persons disability means they will remain living with their parents as an adult.

Chapter 5: Location & areas

The majority of our assistance dog program can be accessed online; however, we do require that all assistance dogs are assessed for at least 20 hours face to face. This is to ensure your dog is reliably able to meet the required standard. The 16 hours are broken down into:

- 4 hours for the bronze assessment. this is the assessment to allow you to start training your dog in non-pet friendly public spaces with the permission of the places visited.
- 4 hours for the silver assessment to ensure your dog is progressing well and ensure that any problems are picked up and worked on before final assessments.
- 8 hours for the gold assessment as your qualifying assessment with us. This moves you from 'in training' to 'fully qualified' status with Pawsitive Squad.

We usually break these assessments down into 4 days which makes the assessment travel easier. The final assessment can be done on 2 consecutive days if required and if our availability allows.

All other training and assessment can be accessed online but the practical training classes can also be accessed face to face in Nottingham & Southwell.

I live really far away from Nottingham, do I have to travel there for all the assessments?

For you the face to face aspect of your bronze assessment, if you live over 80 miles away, you are permitted to ask another dog trainer to assess them, using our assessment criteria IF they meet the trainer requirements:

- They must have an OFQUAL regulated canine/ animal course qualification or COAPE qualification level 3 or above OR relevant dog/animal higher/ further education diploma/ degree from a U.K. academic college or university level 3 or above OR be a qualified vet behaviourist.
- They must have at least 18 months professional dog training experience.
- They must be insured.
- They must only use positive reinforcement training/ no aversive training.
- They must be willing to assess to our assessment criteria.
- They must conduct 4 hours of assessments.
- They cannot have a potential conflict of interest (e.g. not be a friend or family member)

They must meet ALL the criteria above to assess your dog and can only be used for assessment not training. You're responsible for paying their fees however if they do the assessment and send their report to us, we will not charge anything for verifying the assessment & making the final pass/ not ready decision.

*to clarify - things like Centre of excellence, course mix etc are not OFQUAL regulated and do not train the person to the standard we expect. We do not accept being registered with the association of pet dog trainers & kennel club accredited instructor scheme unless they also have one of the listed qualifications in point 1.

If you think you've found a trainer who meets the criteria please send us their contact details before booking in for the assessment as we will need to verify their qualifications etc before assessment.

The silver and gold face to face assessments must be carried out in Nottingham or Derby although in exceptional circumstance (due to significant distance) we would consider doing the face to face assessments for silver and gold all within one visit to Nottingham all at the point you feel your dog is ready to qualify.

Chapter 6: Application process

Our application & enrolment process is made of 3 main steps.

Step 1: Read this full manual.

Step 2: Download and complete the application forms.

Step 3: Email us your completed application forms.

Step 4: If you're potentially eligible to join the program you will be invited to complete a selection assessment. This contains a group temperament assessment on zoom and completing a written assessment in the virtual learning zone.

Step 5: If you pass the selection assessment then you will be invited to join the program.

At any stage of the application you can decide to withdraw your application.

Chapter 7: Commitment & paperwork

Training your dog to be an assistance dog is not a decision to be taken lightly. Joining an organisation to train your assistance dog is a long-term commitment - the duration of your dog's working life which easily be 10 years! For this reason, it's important you go into an assistance dog program fully prepared for the work and commitment involved.

Training an assistance dog can take between 12 months and 2 1/2 years depending on the role the dog is being trained for, their personality, the consistency and frequency of training etc.

To train your dog to be an assistance dog you need to be training with your dog for at least an hour almost every day (spread into 5-minute chunks is completely fine) and need to make room in your schedule for weekly or fortnightly classes.

7.1: code of conduct

All Pawsitive Squad customers you must adhere to our code of conduct. That is:

- Pawsitive Squad CIC, our groups, Facebook and website is not a space to conduct or advertise business, sales or similar enterprises. We do allow sharing of personal fundraising campaigns IF you seek permission first.
- Customers are not permitted to share on social media they are training their dog with Pawsitive Squad until they have passed the foundation, bronze and initial public access assessments.
- Customers must protect the intellectual property of Pawsitive Squad. This means not sharing our activities, worksheets, details of exercises and training with other people.
- Customers must make sure their dogs are clean and well-presented when in public and dressed in line with the company uniform policy.
- Customers not to use derogatory/belittling/demeaning language towards other customers, volunteers & staff
- Customers must NOT use the Pawsitive Squad logo or name on any products you purchase or make for use in public or for sale/ donation. This is to help us protect the Pawsitive Squad brand.
- Not to befriend under 16's you know through Pawsitive Squad as 'friends' on social media.
- To treat Pawsitive Squad employees & volunteers, other customers and the general public with respect and courtesy (Respect is the default, disrespect has to be earned).
- To refrain from speaking negatively about Pawsitive Squad publicly. Any issues should be raised directly with the leadership team in line with the company complaints procedure.

- Not to provide dog training or medical/veterinary advice to other customers. Customers must aim to avoid conflicts of interest and declare any, including the potential or any conflicts, which arise.

7.2: Paperwork

As part of our commitment to ensuring all assistance dogs at Pawsitive Squad are highly trained and are healthy and happy in the work they do, we have several records that our customers are required to keep:

1) Training records - Clients are given a template form to record all training hours including classes, training at home and training in public. Clients must keep full and accurate records of training between their foundation assessment and passing their final public access assessment. To pass the silver assessment clients need to have sent us 120 hours of training records, 12 hours of which must have been training within Pawsitive Squad classes, to pass the gold assessment, clients need to have sent us 180 hours of training records, 20 hours of which must be training within Pawsitive Squad classes or workshops.

The training record has to be sent monthly unless the client is accessing the special circumstances pathway, in which case records can be sent 3 monthly.

2) Groom and care records - All clients must keep a groom and care record of all relevant activity including brushing, nail clips, head to toe examination, taken to groomer, flea and worming. This record is sent every time one page is filled.

3) Veterinary record - All Pawsitive Squad assistance dogs and assistance dogs in training must have 6 monthly vet checks, one of these checks can be at the same time as their vaccination visit. Each time the dog visits the vet the vet record needs to be completed by the vet, if this is not possible then a printout record must be obtained. The vet record needs to state the dog's weight and recommended flea & wormed as well as any findings from the examination. The vet record needs to be sent to us each time your dog visits the vets.

4) Evidence of flea and wormer purchase/use such as receipt or prescription to ensure the dog is receiving appropriate preventative flea, tick and worm medication.

Chapter 8: Training

At Pawsitive Squad there are several ways you can access training. One is mandatory (the virtual learning zone theoretical training) then you can choose to either access training through face to face classes and workshops or through live zoom online classes or you can use a mixture of face to face and online training classes. The choice is yours!

8.1 Virtual learning zone theory training

All clients are required to work through 3 online courses (level bronze to gold) which are laid out on Moodle. Each virtual course contains dog theory training modules which cover vital aspects of assistance dog ownership and training including first aid, training techniques and welfare. Each virtual learning course involves 1-2 hours of reading / listening.

8.2 Live zoom classes

The live zoom online classes are 45-minute-long group classes which are held using the conference video call app/website zoom.

Positives

- Slightly cheaper - £7.50 per class
- No worry about travel
- Train anywhere you have WIFI/ data connection - even on holiday!
- Opportunity to watch and listen if feeling poorly/ unable to practically participate in training
- Opportunity to participate with the camera / mic off if the young person is not comfortable in front of others
- Dog not distracted by other dogs or other clients meaning they can focus just on training.
- Train in their usual working environment, correct equipment available for tasks such as emptying dishwasher which are difficult to replicate in our face to face working environments.
- Great for young people who are not confident out of the house or face to face training yet.
- Not impacted by COVID-19

Limitations

- Potentially more clients per class
- Need to create a tidy space at home to train in
- Client responsible for applying the training in the real-world environments
- Trainer cannot give hands on training support to your dog
- Reliably WIFI/ data connection & phone/tablet/laptop needed

Zoom class contents

There are 5 types of zoom group classes available, which cover all practical training an assistance dog needs. These can be seen in the image on the following page.

Puppy & New Dog Classes

In these classes we will teach you to teach your dog to:

- sit
- lie down
- follow a target (vital!)
- not jump up
- not excessively pull on the lead
- basic recall
- wait for food
- take treats gently
- Socialisation & desensitisation/ habituation

Your dog needs to have mastered these before moving up to working skills classes

Working skills classes

In these classes we will teach your dog working skills including (but not limited to):

- Walk in positions - heel, away, behind, close
- Settle under a seat, behind your legs, in middle
- Leave items on the floor & shelves both automatically and with a back up command.
- To wipe their feet & shake off on command.
- To walk dual handled or next to mobility equipment if required
- Emergency stop
- Reliable recall
- Remain in heel if lead dropped
- Ignore other dogs & people trying to get their attention
- Waiting reliably at tills, in queues etc
- Counter conditioning as required.

Before joining these classes your dog must have mastered the behaviours in the puppy & new dog classes.

Neurodiversity & psychiatric support

In these classes we will teach you to teach your dog assistive tasks including (but not limited to):

- 4 positions of deep pressure therapy
- head rest
- find lost/ hiding young person
- find parent/carer
- interrupt disruptive behaviour or dissociative episodes
- find & guide to exit
- learned disobedience (eg refuse to cross into road if cars coming)
- Alert to emergency sounds (fire alarm etc) if wearing ear defenders
- Respond to emergency sounds (eg if fire alarm goes off, guiding to exit)
- Alert handler to early signs of distress.
- Fetching supportive items such as water bottle or ear defenders.
- Wake handler in morning or during nightmares
- Remind handler to take medication

Before joining these classes your dog must have mastered targeting and basic recall.

Physical assistance classes

In these classes we will teach you to teach your dog assistive tasks including (but not limited to):

- pick up dropped items
- fetch named items (keys, lead etc) from other rooms
- fetch items off shelves or out of cupboards
- take an item from you to another person (eg passing wallet to cashier)
- take item from you to another place (eg rubbish to bin)
- pull emergency cord/ activate alarms
- Fetch phone when it rings
- turn on and off lights
- press buttons on lifts, accessible entrance buttons etc
- open doors
- help with dressing and undressing
- carry shopping in from car (light bags obviously!)

Before joining these classes your dog must have mastered targeting and basic recall.

Medical Alert & response classes

In these classes we will teach you how to teach your dog assistive tasks including (but not limited to):

- alerting to acute medical events by scent change
- alerting to acute medical events by behaviour change
- guide to safe space
- fetch caregiver if has a medical event
- fetch medication bag
- provide tactile stimulation (licking, nudging) during or after event to aid recovery
- lie quietly beside handler during medical event (including if fall)
- bark for attention if handler unconscious
- fetching phone
- activating emergency alarm/ pull cord
- lie across young person if they're confused post medical event discouraging from getting up too quickly.
- Fetch medical card/ info booklet & give to paramedics.

Before joining these classes your dog must have mastered targeting and have a good bond to the young person.



8.3: Face to face training

Our face to face classes & workshops are held in Nottinghamshire & Derby City.

Classes are usually held fortnightly in Southwell and Lenton however due to the COVID19 outbreak these are currently on hold. Classes are split into physical assistance, medical alert & response training classes and neurodiversity & psychiatric assistance classes. Face to face classes cover working public access skills, obedience and task training.

Workshops are held on a semi-regular basis, usually on a Sunday and are between 3 and 5 hours long. Each workshop focuses on a specific area of training for example:

- Impulse control
- working skills in real world environments
- behaving around other dogs
- assistance tasks in real world environments

and much more. Workshops are held at various locations across Nottinghamshire and Derby City.

Our classes are £8.50 per hour, the price of workshops differs depending on client space, area and type of training.

Positives

- Dogs tend to learn quicker in face to face classes
- Smaller groups than in virtual classes
- Trainer able to work hands on with your dog
- Practicing in real world environments meaning your dog gets used to working around distractions
- Clearer picture about how to help your dog improve (it's much harder to see subtle body language on a computer screen!)
- Bigger space to train in, all ready for you

Limitations

- Have to travel to sessions
- Slightly more expensive (though only £1 more per class)
- Maybe difficult to access for clients with severe anxiety
- Child care etc needed for siblings

Face to face class contents

Unlike the zoom classes, in the face to face classes we combined the task training with working skills and obedience. Due to COVID19 until 2021 we will only be offering the neurodiversity & psychiatric assistance face to face classes. In these classes we cover how to train your dog to:

- sit
- lie down
- follow a target (vital!)
- not jump up
- not excessively pull on the lead
- basic recall
- wait for food
- take treats gently
- Socialisation & desensitisation/ habituation
- Walk in positions - heel, away, behind, close
- Settle under a seat, behind your legs, in middle
- Leave items on the floor & shelves both automatically and with a backup command.
- To wipe their feet & shake off on command.
- To walk dual handled or next to mobility equipment if required
- Emergency stop
- Reliable recall
- Remain in heel if lead dropped
- Ignore other dogs & people trying to get their attention
- Waiting reliably at tills, in queues etc
- Counter conditioning as required
- 4 positions of deep pressure therapy
- head rest
- find lost/ hiding young person
- find parent/carer
- interrupt disruptive behaviour or dissociative episodes
- find & guide to exit
- learned disobedience (e.g. refuse to cross into road if cars coming)
- Alert to emergency sounds (fire alarm etc) if wearing ear defenders
- Respond to emergency sounds (e.g. if fire alarm goes off, guiding to exit)
- Alert handler to early signs of distress.
- Fetching supportive items such as water bottle or ear defenders.
- Wake handler in morning or during nightmares
- Remind handler to take medication

Chapter 9: Assessments

At Pawsitive Squad you have 3 assessments to work through. The bronze and silver assessments each have four components – a virtual (online) live assessment, a written assessment, a self-reflection and a 4-hour face to face assessment. The gold assessment has

3 components – a written assessment, a self-reflection and 8 hours of face to face assessments. For each assessment we complete a canine anxiety and welfare score.

Virtual (online) live assessment

The virtual live assessments are only included in levels bronze and silver. These assessments focus on assessing temperament, obedience and handler skills. Each virtual live assessment takes between 30 minutes and 1 hour and are assessment in groups via zoom. The virtual live assessments cost £25 each.

Written assessment & self-reflection

The written assessment & self-reflection are both found within the virtual learning zone. For each level; bronze, silver and gold, education resources are provided within the virtual learning zone in written and audio format. The written assessment is to check your understanding of the topics covered within the virtual learning zone. A score of over 90% is required to pass the written assessment. The written assessment fee for each level is £20.

The self-reflection is also found in the virtual learning zone. This is where you share with us your view of your dog's level including behaviours and tasks you feel they can reliably do and any difficulties you are having. This is not a marked aspect of the assessment process and has no cost – the self-reflection is to enable your trainer to tailor the support you receive to your dog's abilities.

Face to face assessment

The face to face assessments are designed to assess your dog's skills and behaviour and your handling within real world environments including during public access. During each face to face assessment we will visit a variety of environments including a park, shop and high street and you will be asked to complete a selection of exercises and demonstrate a variety of behaviours in each environment. The face to face component currently costs £8.50 per hour for group assessments and £25 per hour for one to one assessment.

Canine anxiety and welfare (CAW) scoring

As part our assessments we have a canine anxiety & welfare objective assessment which assesses, as the name suggests, the dog's welfare and anxiety. This is a points-based assessment in which you want to score as low as possible, points are given for anxiety behaviours and any welfare implications such as owner giving a lead yank or forgetting to bring water.

To pass the bronze assessment, the dog must have a CAW score below 15.

To pass the silver assessment, the CAW score must be below 10

To pass the gold assessment, the CAW score must be below 5.

Face to face assessments are currently £8.50 per hour for group assessments and £25 per hour for one to one assessment.

Chapter 10: Special circumstances pathway (SCP)

10.1 SCP eligibility

Our special circumstances pathway has been created to ensure those who have the greatest need to train their dog as soon as possible are able to access training as quickly as possible with the minimum administrative requirements for the client. To apply under special circumstances, the young person must meet at least one of the below criteria:

- 1) The child or young adult has a degenerative condition which means their physical or cognitive abilities are expected to significantly deteriorate in the next 2 years which could prevent the person being able to train their own dog if they have to wait.
- 2) The child or young person is receiving palliative care.
- 3) The child or young person has a condition which causes life threatening medical events on a regular or semi-regular basis requiring medical intervention to sustain life (e.g. for seizures rescue medication does not meet special circumstances however significant oxygen requirement during seizures or PICU/HDU admissions with seizures would) and they require the dog for medical alert work.
- 4) The child/ young person has a health condition which is considered to be significantly life limiting (medical prediction of up 10 more years).
- 5) The child/ young person has a condition which requires now or will require shortly at least weekly hospital medical treatment/monitoring (e.g. dialysis excludes physio, OT, SALT etc) on a long-term basis.

10.2 Differences between standard pathway and special circumstances pathway

Our special circumstances pathway (SCP) has been specially designed to fit around the lives and other responsibilities clients accessing the SCP have.

Application

The client needs to complete the application forms, found under 'apply now' on the Pawsitive Squad website. On the last page of the application you can select to apply under special circumstances.

If the client does meet the special circumstances criteria, they will be invited to a selection assessment which will be arranged within 2 weeks of application, where possible. If they pass the selection assessment the client will be offered a space immediately even if our books are closed. In the unlikely situation that we really cannot accommodate space, the special

circumstances client will be added to the top of the waiting list however when we close our program to applications, we always leave spaces for special circumstances applications.

Training Records

Clients on the CSP are still required to keep training records, however they are only required to send the records to us on a 3-monthly basis. The client needs to record 120 hours to pass their gold award.

Training

Clients on the CSP are offered priority spaces for face to face classes and workshops. Clients on the CSP are also offered a 1-2-1 catch up and training session free on a monthly basis to ensure any tailored training needs are being met.

Assessments

Clients on the SCP are able to access their bronze and silver public access assessments via live video or recorded video instead of face to face if they require, due to the young person's health. We assess the dogs to the exact same criteria as the standard assistance dog training pathway, the aim is to enable SCP families who struggle to travel to access the assessments when their dogs are ready in a format which is suitable for the young person and dog.

Clients on the SCP are permitted to take their dog into medical & care environments, with that organisations permission once they've been accepted onto the program, having passed the selection ,assessment however they are still NOT permitted to take their dog into other non-dog friendly places, even with their permission (eg shops, library etc) until they've passed the bronze assessment.

Uniform

You are able to hire your assistance dog in training jacket and lead sleeve as soon as you have been accepted onto the program, following passing the selection assessment.

Everything else stays the same. You have access to all the same services other clients do. For a flowchart showing the special circumstances pathway, please click [here](#):

Chapter 11: Support Available

We really pride ourselves on the quantity of support available for our young people and their parents/carers. On top of the paid classes (both online & face to face), workshops and assessments we also offer as part of the assistance dog program:

- 1) FREE weekly zoom question and answer sessions where you can ask pretty much any question about training & assessments, managing problem behaviours and anything EXCEPT 'how do I teach my dog to do...' questions - those questions need to be asked in classes and will be covered in the group training there.

2) Occasionally we have training available on a 1-2-1 basis both online and face to face. This is a paid service.

3) FREE regular canine assisted activity sessions for young people. These sessions are focused on having fun with your dog, developing a strong bond and getting your dog really focused on the young person.

4) FREE regular social canine themed sessions for young people. These sessions are social session which your dog doesn't actively participate in but which are dog themed. In these sessions we do fun activities like charades, guess the dog games, quizzes.

5) FREE regular parent & carer chat & activity sessions which are a chance for parents to talk to other families on a similar journey to them, share struggles and successes and have fun in our completely random virtual games such as quizzes, countdown and scavenger hunt!

6) FREE Facebook customer group to ask advice & share your journey with other clients.

7) FREE bi-monthly one to one catch up sessions with your trainer to offer any training advice & support required and share any concerns or difficulties.

Chapter 12: Uniform

Pawsitive Squad CIC assistance dogs in training are not permitted to undertake any public access training until their dog has past their public access in training assessment and foundation & bronze virtual assessment. Before customers have passed this level, they are therefore not permitted to dress their dog in any jackets (except a jacket required to protect their dog from cold/hot weather. This cannot state 'assistance dog', 'service dog' or 'in training'

Your dog's collar and lead must be either black and yellow or a single colour without additional prints & patterns. If the dog is in a harness this should be black, black and yellow or a single standard colour. Head collars are not permitted except with written permission in exceptional circumstances when required due to the client's disability.

Lead sleeves

Once your dog has passed the selection assessment and have been accepted onto the program you need to hire a Pawsitive Squad lead sleeve.

We award lead sleeves at this point to encourage the general public not to distract the dog when training, which could lead to bad habits. You are not permitted to take your dog into non pet dog friendly places until they've passed their foundation award.



Jackets

Once your dog has passed their bronze assessment you will need to hire a Pawsitive Squad Jacket.

At this point in training you're allowed to begin training in non-pet dog friendly environments, with the places you wish to visits' permission.



Once your dog is registered on the Pawsitive Squad assistance dog program they are only permitted to be dressed in Pawsitive Squad uniform, uniforms cannot be customised with any additional patches or bandanas. Uniforms are hired only, Pawsitive Squad remains owners of all uniform and you will need to return this when your dog stops working/ training under us.

Once a dog qualifies with us their jacket and lead sleeve are automatically changed into the qualified version (which no longer says 'I'm training or in training) at no additional cost.

Chapter 13: Costs

As a non-profit organisation we keep our prices as low as possible. We do not charge any subscription or joining fees.

The costs, paid to us for the assistance dog program are:

1) Classes - classes currently cost £7.50 per virtual class and £8.50 per face to face class. Classes are paid for in advanced each month - clients usually pay between £15 and £49 per

month. It is up to the client how many classes they attend per month although clients must attend a minimum of 8 classes every 3 months to remain on the program. Training takes between 10 months and 2 1/2 years.

2) Uniform - £15 to hire a lead sleeve, £60 to hire a jacket.

3) Assessments: the costs below are for all parts of the assessments – the first cost is if you do the face to face assessments as a group with other clients at the same time, the second cost, which says (1-2-1 face to face) after it is if you do the face to face assessments on your own without other clients being assessed at the same time.

- Total cost of bronze assessment: £79 (group face to face) or £145 (1-2-1 face to face)
- Total cost of silver assessment: £79 (group face to face) or £145 (1-2-1 face to face)
- Total cost of gold assessment: £88 (group face to face) or £220 (1-2-1 face to face)

Other costs you will incur:

1) insurance for your dog which must specifically cover assistance dogs and public liability. Clients are solely responsible for their dog's insurance - this is usually between £12 and £45 per month depending on insurer, dogs' size, breed etc. We can advise which insurers cover assistance dogs once clients join the program.

2) spaying / castrating your dog, this needs to be done before qualifying unless a vet advises otherwise (e.g. sometimes larger breeds we allow spay/ castrate once qualified if spay/neuter is delayed for growth & development reasons). Price of spaying/ castrating widely varies between individual dogs but usually costs between £110 and £360.

3) cost of travel to and from face to face assessments including potentially overnight accommodation if you live far away.

4) flea, worm, tick prevention – this has to be the brand recommended by your vet which usually cost anywhere between £10 and £45 per month.

Please also remember if you withdraw your dog from any stage of training or in the first 2 years of qualifying, you're liable for a £150 withdrawal fee.

Chapter 14: Welfare

Welfare is at the heart of all we do at Pawsitive Squad. Above all else we want our assistance dogs to be happy and healthy and want to work as assistance dogs. As part of our commitment to welfare we have strict rules about what equipment and techniques can and can't be used with Pawsitive Squad assistance dogs (and those in training).

Head collars

One item we occasionally allow, but only with written permission, which can potentially impact on the welfare of a dog is a head collar. The only circumstance in which we allow head collars is if the dog shows no sign of anxiety about wearing it or having it put on/taken off, they reliably walk on a loose lead with and without the head collar and the head collar is needed to facilitate control of the disabled handler. For example, if a client has a significant arm weakness, we may allow a head collar to ensure that, in the unlikely circumstance the dog did

pull, that they would not be pulled over as head collars do effectively take some strength out of a dogs' pull.

For a head collar to be used the client must formally request the use using an equipment request form, outlining why they wish to use it and providing medical evidence for why it is necessary. If a dog shows anxiety with any equipment used a counter conditioning plan is creative and, if this is not effective, the client is not permitted to use that equipment, even if doing so means the partnership is unsuccessful.

Equipment and techniques

Below is a simplified list of the type of techniques and equipment we allow at Pawsitive Squad.

Allowed	Not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard fabric or leather collar and lead (black & yellow or other single colour with no additional decorations) • Training leads • Target training • Positive reinforcement (rewarding the good) • Negative punishment (postponing the reward until they offer the right behaviour) • Food rewards/ treats • Toys as rewards • Play as rewards • Touch/ tactile rewards • Light weight harnesses • Kumfi front fitting harness (this brand only) • Martingale (only when required – must be corrected fitted so not tightening beyond a 2-finger space) • Muzzles & muzzle training (vital in case dogs ever injured) • Dogs on beds & sofas as long as consistent) • Socialisation & habituation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prong collars • Shock collars • Spray collars or bottles • Choke chain • Cord collars • Extendable leads • Training disks • Stones in a bottle to shake • Leash corrections (lead tugs) • Hitting • Shouting • Tethering to a child • Negative reinforcement • Positive punishment • 'no pull' harnesses • Ultra-sonic equipment • Liquid or air spray cans • Dominance or intimidation techniques • Children being unsupervised with a dog at any time • Lying across dogs • Cuddling the dogs in a way they might be or might feel unable to get away • Verbally or physically punishing any warning signs such as growling, baring teeth, barking etc. • Counter balance training**

**except under exceptional circumstances

Breaking our welfare standards

Here at Pawsitive Squad we have a strict, 2 strikes and you are out policy. If we see you doing anything which compromises your dog's welfare (as listed above), we will, on the first occasion give you a verbal warning, explain why the behaviour/ equipment is not appropriate and remind you of our welfare standards. This warning will be noted in your file.

On the second occasion that we witness you handling your dog in a way which compromises their welfare, we will give you a written warning. Again, this will explain why the behaviour was inappropriate, remind you off the welfare standards at Pawsitive Squad and remind you that if we witness any more behaviour which compromises your dogs' welfare that you will be removed from the program,

On the third occasion that we witness you handling your dog in a way which compromises their welfare your dog will be formally withdrawn from the program, whether they are in training or qualified. This will be confirmed to you in writing. All certificates will become null and void, all uniform will need to be returned and you will be charged the £150 withdrawal fee.

The responsible handler (young person if 16-25 years old if they have capacity, parent, carer or guardian) are responsible for ensuring the child or young person withhold the welfare standards. For example, this can mean the dog is removed from the room if the child is trying to hit out at the dog. Age and disability are not acceptable excuses for allowing a young person to cause fear or harm to the dog. The same rules apply whether the child or responsible handler are posing a welfare risk. If we deem the dog to be at significant risk of poor welfare, we will report the client to the RSPCA, police or dog warden depending on form and severity of concern. Luckily. We have never had to do this, so far.

Chapter 15: Support once qualified

Once your dog has qualified as a Pawsitive Squad assistance dog you still have a huge support package available. Firstly, you're still able to access classes, though priority space for these is given to assistance dogs in training.

Qualified partnerships also have access to:

- Free weekly live zoom Q&A sessions
- Free one to one 15-minute catch ups up to every 2 months (mandatory at least every 6 months).
- Requalification assessment once a year (mandatory to ensure standards haven't slipped)
- Free parent chat & virtual canine assisted activities
- Free access to the Pawsitive squad Facebook support group.
- Support with any access refusals.
- Liaising with employees or education (if over 16) to try and create a suitable plan to enable the assistance dog to accompany the young person **this is not always possible, the law gives a reasonable adjustment right and therefore in some education and employment environments such as animal colleges or work environments with open kitchens this is not possible.*

- Where appropriate liaise with schools about the assistance dog, while handled by a parent, guardian or carer coming onto the school site to assist with drop off or pick up of the young person.

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. If you have any questions, please contact us at enquiries@pawsitivesquad.co.uk