



# 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. Heather initially created Pawsitive Squad to help dog training and canine-assisted activities to young people with complex neuro disabilities, 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. It also became clear that most services stopped at 16 or 18 years old and that, at this age, many young people lose significant support. We, therefore, decided to increase our age range up to 25 years old at the point of application.

Until November 2019, the primary focus was on offering canine-assisted activities and assistance dog task training. However, where the clients were still solely owner training, our courses aimed to 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 dog's 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: Eligibility

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

### 2.1: 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 the mental capacity to know how to behave around the dog appropriately (e.g. not to pinch, grab, catch) the dog. Alternatively, the responsible owner MUST have systems in place to ensure the young person is never able 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. A task trained assistance dog must be likely to mitigate the impact their disability has on their lives. It is not enough for your child to feel calmer because your dog is there. If you're unsure if any tasks/what tasks could support your child, please ask).

- The young person must require their dog to perform three tasks outside of the home EXCEPT if they need a 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 five years old,
- the young person is over 16 years old
- if they are any age and refused from one other assistance dog organisations based on the complexity of the young person's difficulties. It does not count if the young person was rejected due to space, location, the dog being family-owned or age.

## **2.2 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 one month of being accepted on the program and before any assessments can be undertaken.

- They are fully vaccinated (we do not accept homoeopathic 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 six 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 a 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 only to use positive techniques and methods with their dog and do 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 six years old at the point of application.
- Their dog must be groomed regularly 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 and child whenever they're together if the child is under 12 years old.

- 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 crossbreed) 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 crossbreed with a short nose and flat face which meet the same confirmation as any of the above breeds.

### 2.3: 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 sole owner trained assistance dog, this 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.

## 2.4 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 must 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 nonverbal young people (if they are accepted onto a waiting list we cannot assist). We've regrettably made this decision due to 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, must 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 the level of need/severity is if the young person requires a dog to perform at least three 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 three 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 3: 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 help both members of the family. In this circumstance, the child must need three 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, and 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 ten years old unless the young person disability means they will remain living with their parents as an adult.

### Chapter 4: Location & areas

Most 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:

- Four 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.
- Four 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.
- Eight 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 four days which makes the assessment travel easier. The final assessment can be done on two 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 of professional dog training experience.
- They must be insured.
- They must only use positive reinforcement training/ no aversive training.
- They must be willing to assess 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 5: Pre-application course

To be eligible to apply to join our assistance dog program, you must first complete the eight-week application course. This course contains:

- 6, 45-minute group live zoom classes
- Six exercises to complete and record in public spaces
- Virtual learning zone (Moodle) module and assessment

All the above should be completed within eight weeks of the first zoom session.

The pre-application course teaches you the fundamental skills required for dog training and also allows us to assess you and your dog's suitability for the assistance dog program over multiple sessions instead of having a formal selection assessment. The course costs £90.

The pre-application course covers:

- Socialisation skills - the right way to introduce your dog to new settings, objects, people & animals.
- Building the dogs confidence around items they are fearful of.
- Basic obedience skills - to sit, lie down, wait for food, wait in place, leave things they are never allowed, recall around minimal distractions, target, walk on a loose lead, watch handler.
- Training techniques - targeting, shaping, prompt and fade, chaining, capturing and connection.
- Welfare

**The pre-application course comes with access to:**

- Private Facebook to support group - where you can socialise with other prospective customers, ask questions, share your journey and check-in with our volunteer mentors.
- Our weekly parents & professionals social group - meet other people who are registered on our programs, share any worries or wins and enjoy a fun (and often slightly silly!) activity such as virtual scavenger hunt, quizzes etc.
- Our weekly super Saturday canine centred activities - these are specifically designed for the young people and vary each week to ensure there is something suitable for everyone every few weeks. Super Saturday activities include imagination adventures, scavenger hunts, tricks training and more.

Once you have completed the pre-application course, you will be eligible to apply to join the assistance dog program or therapy dog program. We will then use the information on your



application form as well as the results from the VLE assessment and review of your participation and observations made of your dog's behaviour and personality throughout this course to decide whether we are able to offer you a place on our program.

Even if you are not offered a place, this course gives you a great foundation for your dog's training.

#### **Upcoming pre-application course dates:**

- **3rd December 2020 till 28th January** - with LIVE ZOOM sessions on Thursdays at 7.30 pm till 8.15 pm on the 3rd, 10th & 17th of December 2020 and the 7th, 14th and 21st of January 2021.
- **4th February 2021 till 25th March 2021** - with LIVE ZOOM sessions at 7.30 pm till 8.15 pm on Thursdays at 7.30 pm till 8.15 pm on the 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th of February and the 4th and 11th of March.

## Chapter 6: The application process

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

Step 1: complete the 8-week pre-application course.

Step 2: on the pre-application course, you have access to the application forms. If you complete the course and decide you would like to join us then download, complete and email these forms.

Step 3: Wait for our reply. We make sure we have enough space for all the partnerships on our pre-application course so if you apply and are eligible and we feel from the pre-application course that you will be suitable you will be offered space and able to join immediately.

## 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 ten 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 a 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.

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 a groomer, flea and worming.

3) Veterinary record - All Pawsitive Squad assistance dogs and assistance dogs in training must have six-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.

All records are uploaded directly to Microsoft teams into a private file which just you and the Pawsitive Squad team can see.

## 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, 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
- The trainer cannot give hands-on training support to your dog
- Reliably WIFI/ data connection & phone/tablet/laptop needed

#### Zoom class contents

There are five 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
- Practising 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

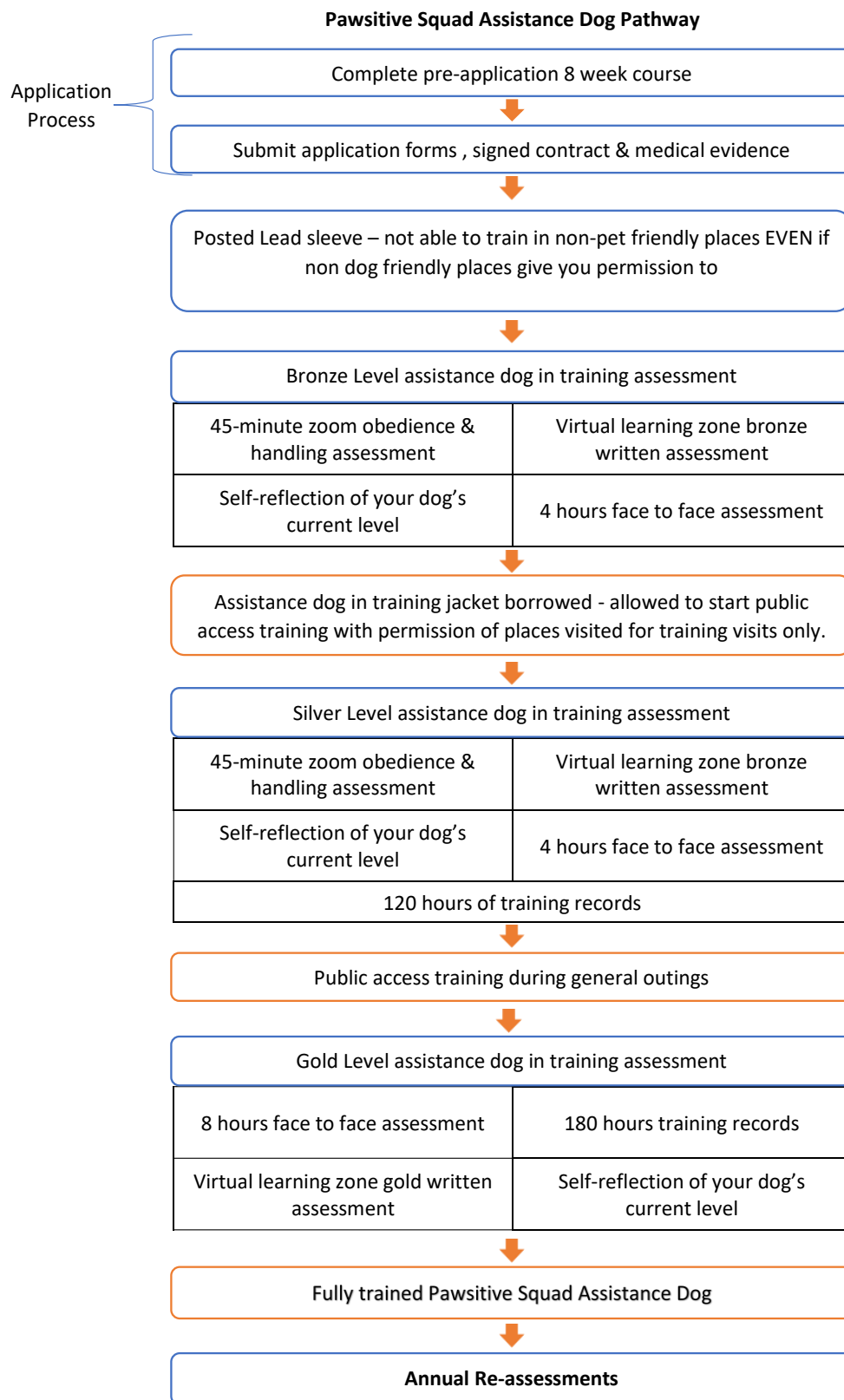
- Must travel to sessions
- Slightly more expensive (though only £1 more per class)
- May be difficult to access for clients with severe anxiety
- Child care etc. needed for siblings

## 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
- Four positions of deep pressure therapy
- headrest
- 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 the road if cars coming)
- Alert to emergency sounds (fire alarm etc.) if wearing ear defenders •
- Respond to emergency sounds (e.g. if a 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 the morning or during nightmares
- Remind handler to take medication

## Chapter: The assistance dog training and assessment pathway:





## Chapter 9: Assessments

At Pawsitive Squad, you have three 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 three 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 assessed 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 is 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 of our assessments, we have 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 is 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 two 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 significantly life-limiting (medical prediction of up to 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 apply 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 two 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 client of the special circumstances 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 monthly 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 organisation's 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 (e.g. shops, library etc.) until they've passed the bronze assessment.

#### Uniform

You can 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

### 11.1 general support

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 a 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.

## 11.2 Support from virtual support volunteers

We have a small team of exceptional volunteers whose role is to provide one to one and small group support to clients to ensure they're able to get the very best out of their assistance dog training program with us.

Virtual support volunteers can assist clients in several ways, including:

- Checking in via email on a weekly basis to provide motivation and support.
- Arrange study sessions with clients who are struggling to access/ understand the virtual learning zone materials.
- Support the client to develop/ improve study skills.
- Providing email support to clients who are facing any difficulties in accessing the assistance dog program.
- Training clients on how to use the various virtual resources and records used.
- Scheduling and supporting study time for the virtual learning programs and helping explain the virtual learning materials or reading the material aloud as required.
- Support clients through virtual assessments, this can include the client reading you the answer and you typing it for them or reading aloud questions and/or providing emotional support.

- Helping clients to book onto suitable classes and assessments for them. Raising any questions or concerns with the trainer which the client is struggling to raise directly.
- Ensuring clients have read/ heard and understood any changes to the assistance dog program, which may have an impact on them.
- Liaising with the Pawsitive Squad team with regards to any concerns for the young person or dog and any ways in which you or the client feel we could improve the service we provide.
- Typing out subtitles for clients as the trainer speaks in live zoom classes to support clients with hearing impairment or learning difficulties.
- Signpost clients to other services (e.g. Samaritans, shelter) as required.

Due to a limited number of volunteers, 14 to 25-year-olds on the program are given priority for support from an allocated virtual support volunteer. Other clients still have access to a wide range of support services as listed in 11.1.

## Chapter 12: Uniform

Pawsitive Squad CIC assistance dogs in training are not permitted to undertake any public access training until their dog has passed 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 single standard colour. Headcollars are not permitted except with written permission in exceptional circumstances when required due to the client's disability.

## Lead sleeves

Once your dog has been accepted onto the program, you need to hire a Pawsitive Squad lead sleeve.

We award lead sleeves at this point to encourage the 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 bronze award.



## Jackets

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

At this point in the 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. The prices listed here are correct on 1st December 2020 and will be reviewed at least annually on 1st April.

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. Clients must attend at least two classes per month.

2) Uniform - £15 to hire a lead sleeve, £60 to hire a jacket. This hire fee is non-refundable. Jackets and lead sleeves remain property of Pawsitive Squad and must be returned upon leaving the program.

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.

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

Other costs you will incur:

- 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 the insurer, dogs' size, breed etc. We can advise which insurers cover assistance dogs once clients join the program.
- 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.
- Cost of travel to and from face to face assessments, including potentially overnight accommodation if you live far away.
- Flea, worm, tick prevention – this must 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 two years of qualifying, you are 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 the 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).

Headcollars

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



### **Breaking our welfare standards**

Here at Pawsitive Squad, we have a strict, two 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 of 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 void, all uniform will need to be returned, and you will be charged the £150 withdrawal fee. We reserve the right to remove any client without welfare warnings if we deem their behaviour to have caused a significant risk to welfare.

The responsible handler (young person if 16-25 years old if they have the capacity, parent, carer, or guardian) is 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 the form and severity of the 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 two months (mandatory at least every six 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, we will 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](mailto:enquiries@pawsitivesquad.co.uk)