

Proposal for the Pawsitive Squad Assistance Dog Program for Short Breaks Funding

Introduction

Pawsitive Squad CIC is a non-profit organisation which provides canine centred services to children and young people with additional and alternative needs across Mainland UK. This proposal is for 12 months access to our assistance dog program, which is ran by me, Heather Pyne and delivered with the support of a small team of fantastic volunteers.

My relevant qualifications include:

- Post graduate Microcredential (15 credits) in Online teaching: inclusive and accessible education
- BSc Hons 2.1 Open Degree (with relevant modules including approaches to mental health, issues in research with children and young people, counselling: exploring fear and sadness.
- Level 5 Dog practitioner diploma
- DipHE Equine Psychology & sport science.

Pawsitive Squad is an ASDAN registered centre number 3988.

Opportunities, aims & Outcomes

Our assistance dog program promotes social inclusion through our zoom classes and in person workshops where the young person can engage with other disabled children and young people in a low demand environment. In these sessions the young person also develops personal skills through learning how to train their own dog to become an assistance dog including to perform assistive tasks which promote independence, emotional regulation and safety and community access skills. Our program facilitates young people of diverse needs and ages to develop social skills through social opportunities focusing on a shared interest in animals.

Our assistance program also gives young people the opportunity to have a little space from their primary care givers where the young person cannot access services completely without the caregiver there due to severe anxiety or complex health needs. While we do require primary care givers to be present, the caregiver doesn't need to remain in close proximity meaning the young people can socialise and engage in dog centred activities while the primary caregivers supervise at a distance.

Explanation of activities available through the assistance dog program

Zoom group classes

We offer a monthly timetable with 15-minute group zoom classes which support the young person to learn in parallel with others in a low demand environment. This is a vital step in enable learning in group environments. In these sessions, the young person will also develop dog training and handling skills. Once they've passed the bronze award, and the dog is therefore ready to begin assistive task training, they will also teach their dog emotional regulation, independence and safety tasks such as:

- Deep pressure therapy & tactile stimulation which can be calming and grounding.
- Indicating to signs of increasing anxiety (*which helps promote emotional awareness & enables the young person to either use other assistive tasks or other coping strategies to regulate before becoming overwhelmed*).
- Fetching regulation equipment such as ear defenders, drink, fidget toy.
- Find and lead to parent/care giver (*which often enables the young person increased independence knowing if they become overwhelmed the dog will take them straight to their care giver*).

- Alert to emergency sounds e.g. fire alarm
- Crowd buffering - stand behind or circle around handler to create space for the handler.
- Find and lead to exit if the handler is feeling overwhelmed and needs to leave quickly.
- Interrupt episodes of self-harm, destructive behaviours or dissociation
- Road safety tasks including dual handling, refusing to cross in front of vehicles, indicating to curbs, stopping automatically at curbs to prompt checking for traffic.
- Find young person if lost, eloped or hiding

The young person will choose themselves which tasks will be beneficial to them but must teach a minimum of 3 assistive tasks which support their needs for their dog to become a fully trained assistance dog. A minimum attendance of 1 group zoom per month is required.

In person group workshops in Nottingham

Most months we offer in person group workshops which focus on the young person learning how to teach their dog specific skills or how to manage and problem solve through specific behaviour or emotional difficulties their dog is experiencing. These sessions provide an opportunity to engage with the local community, develop their practical handling skills and meet other young people. Attendance at in person workshops are optional. We also offer social training workshops at places such as museums, theme parks and cinemas.

Virtual practical training zone

The practical training zone guides young people to do canine assisted activities and dog training games through video & written instructional videos in a self directed format. This promotes the development of personal skills and enables the young person to engage with activities they find enjoyable with limited support, if any, from their primary caregiver.

Quotation

Our monthly fee is £70 for the assistance dog training program. Payments can be either made monthly or £840 annually.

Summery

The Pawsitive Squad assistance dog program offers a service which meets the aims of short break provisions by providing an opportunity for the child or young person to spend time away from their primary carers and engaging in activities that are enjoyable, where a young person cannot be completely away from the primary caregiver. We promote social inclusion as well as the development of personal and social skills through our multi-modal assistance dog program.

Our assistance dog program has been funded via short breaks for other young people in England and I hope you will consider granting permission for this family to use their short breaks funding for our program.

If you have any questions or require any support, please do not hesitate to contact me at:
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