



**DOGS** FOR  
**GOOD**

# Creating possibility

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**Impact  
survey  
highlights**





## About us

**We're Dogs for Good. We help people build connections with dogs that make everyday life possible – in so many ways.**

We know the powerful changes that these connections can bring about, particularly for those with disabilities, dementia, autism and mental health challenges. Through carefully matched partnerships and tailored training and activities, we support individuals, families and groups to build the confidence to live happier, healthier and more independent lives.

# Welcome

**Welcome to *Creating possibility*, a report based on the findings of our most recent impact survey, carried out in partnership with Vet AI and funded by Ceva Animal Health.**

The survey aimed to help us gain a deeper understanding of our work and, in particular, the wider reach and benefits of our services. In all, **157 respondents took part over an eight-week period**. A mix of numerical, single- and multi-choice and open-ended questions focused on four main areas:

- Respondent demographics, type and duration of service
- The impact of our services on respondents' daily lives
- The impact of our services on secondary beneficiaries, e.g. family and friends, and the wider community including health and education professionals
- Overall satisfaction with our services.

Respondents could answer for themselves or with the support of a family member or carer. Carers/ family members could also respond on behalf of a client. Data was anonymised by Vet AI, and testimonials anonymised on request.

The results paint a compelling picture of the difference we are already making to the people we support and those around them, in terms of social connection, confidence and independence, resilience and overall happiness and wellbeing. This is valuable evidence we can draw on to grow and make our services even more effective in the future.

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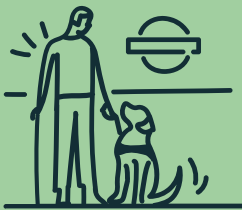
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# Understanding our reach

The support we offer each person or group of people we work with is unique. We take time to understand their needs, so we can work out the most effective way of supporting them. That support includes:



### Creating assistance dog partnerships

Our assistance dogs offer both emotional and practical support, enabling people to better access the world, build confidence in their abilities and live fuller, more independent lives.



### Family-focused workshops

Our specially designed workshops provide a supportive learning space for families with a pet dog. Through these, we show how to build a stronger bond that can translate into much-needed emotional and practical support.



### Working in the community

Our team of specially trained dogs, handlers and practitioners help people to feel supported in their own communities, often working in partnership with specialists in mental health, learning disabilities, dementia and physical therapy.

Across all these services, results show that **for every person we support, typically another five people also benefit**. This is encouraging, as we work towards our 2028 goal of impacting **6,000 people per year**, and our longer-term aims of reducing reliance on public services and creating more inclusive communities.

The survey highlighted the extent to which our services are valued by the people we support. Asked to rate how well Dogs for Good services had met their expectations, respondents gave **an average score of 4.7 out of a possible 5**. In response to the question “How likely are you to recommend Dogs for Good to someone else in need of their services?”, **the average score rose to 4.9**.

Underpinning this work is our belief in the power of the human-dog bond. We often talk about a “mutually joyful connection”, and this is reflected in the survey results. **For 92% of respondents the bond with the dog is strong, and for 80% it is very strong**, the highest possible rating. The impact of that bond is positive for 93% of those taking part.

Our ability to make a difference also depends on the expertise and understanding of our staff and volunteers. survey responses included praise for our staff: **kind, compassionate and empathetic**, they show a deep understanding of individual needs, helping the people we support to feel **valued and part of a supportive community**.



*We can't fault their understanding of autism and their amazing ability to provide support and friendship to the whole family. They are amazing at problem solving and giving us the confidence to move out into the world with our new dog. We truly believe they are a huge part of what has helped him be successful.*

By 2028, our work will be impacting

# 6,000

people per year



For every person we support, typically **another five people** also benefit



# 92%

of respondents report a strong bond with the dog



Asked how well Dogs for Good had met their expectations, respondents gave an average score of **4.7 out of 5**





# The bigger picture

Across the UK, millions of people are living with complex health and social needs. Evidence from a range of sources shows that these people – and their carers – are vulnerable to challenges including stress, anxiety and isolation. Our work goes to the heart of these problems, supporting people to live happier, healthier and more independent lives.

16.8 million

people in the UK had a disability in 2023/24, accounting for **25% of the population** (House of Commons, 2025)

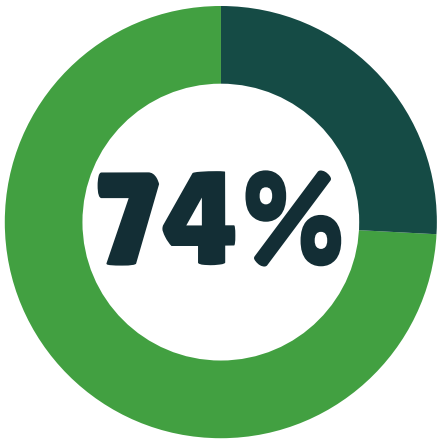


In 2021, disabled people in the UK rated their **wellbeing lower on average than non-disabled people** across four categories: life satisfaction, feeling that things are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety (Office for National Statistics)



80%

of autistic young people (aged 16-25) experience or have experienced **mental health problems** in their lifetime (Ambitious about Autism & Centre for Research in Autism and Education report, 2017)



of carers report experiencing periods of **stress and anxiety** (Carers UK State of Caring 2025 survey)

5.8 million

report being unpaid carers for a friend, family member or neighbour (2021 census)



Autistic individuals experience loneliness at up to **four times** the rate of their peers (University of Swansea, 2023)

1.4 million

people are expected to be diagnosed with dementia by 2040 (Alzheimer's Society)

26%

of socially isolated people are more likely to develop later-life dementia (University of Warwick study, 2022)



# Social connection

People feel a strong sense of belonging and feeling seen, supported by, and able to contribute to, the community

86%

of respondents felt our services had a positive impact on their social interactions and relationships

## Individual impact

When asked how Dogs for Good services have impacted on their social interactions and relationships, 86% of respondents said the impact was positive, with 45% describing it as “very positive”. For our assistance dog service, that proportion is 92%, while for children receiving community dog visits, all reported a positive impact on social relationships. When asked what that impact looked like in real life, respondents spoke of feeling a stronger connection to and building better relationships with those close to them.



*Our son left the house after being housebound for 18 months purely because of our dog.*

## Wider impact

We also asked respondents to tell us who in their lives had also benefited indirectly as a result of their receiving Dogs for Good services. Overall, 92% said that at least one person had seen a positive impact, in addition to themselves. On average, for each person we support, another five also benefit.



92%

of respondents reported that at least one other person had seen a positive impact as a result of them receiving Dogs for Good services

Among secondary beneficiaries, 74% of respondents cited immediate family members, 50% wider family and 47% close friends. Respondents also reported a positive impact on wider beneficiaries including teachers, doctors and nurses (36%) and carers (23%). A smaller percentage cited other beneficiaries including volunteers, youth services, care home residents, parishioners and hospitality venues. Note respondents could choose more than one group.

Immediate family

74%

Wider family

50%

Close friends

47%

Professionals

36%

Carers

23%

Digging deeper into how those stronger social connections impact on the wider community, we learned that the connection with a dog had enabled some clients to give back through volunteering with their dog, or by mentoring and supporting others. More informally, neighbours and friends had also joined in with dog walks, and individuals also talked about how the dog had helped them to meet and make connections with others.



*Our dog brings awareness without words; he has opened up our son's world and impacted lots of his friends positively.*

Nearly one in five respondents (18%) felt that being seen out and about with their dog was having a positive impact on wider attitudes. Dogs prompted questions and conversations about the role of dogs in support, helping to raise awareness of and reduce the stigma around disability.



**Kelsi and  
Sherlock's  
story**



**For Kelsi, who was diagnosed with a progressive illness at the age of 19, her assistance dog Sherlock has opened so many doors. As well as helping with everyday activities like getting dressed and loading the washing machine, he's helped her connect with the world around her.**

"Before Sherlock I'd get asked three or four times a day, 'what's wrong with you?'," she says. "But he totally changes those interactions. Now people ask me about him and how he helps me. It's a very different conversation." Living with Sherlock has had a major impact on Kelsi's mental health. "I still get pain but he brings me so much happiness, it doesn't take centre stage any more. He wakes me at 6am with a wet nose in the face and within seconds, he's making me laugh." Having completed her masters, Kelsi's ambition is to become a forensic psychologist. She also volunteers and is a keen basketball player. "Sherlock is gregarious and friendly and has helped me make friends and form relationships where people accept me for who I am," she says. "He's helped me accept myself and my disability. He helps me go out and tackle the world."

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*Sherlock is gregarious and friendly and has helped me make friends and form relationships where people accept me for who I am. I still get pain but he brings me so much happiness, it doesn't take centre stage any more. He's helped me accept myself and my disability. He helps me go out and tackle the world.*

## Building connections in Scotland

**A series of eight weekly sessions for people with a recent dementia diagnosis has helped build confidence and create connections.**

Community dog team members Natasha and Sandy worked with Alzheimer Scotland to deliver the sessions, which focused on gentle movement, mindfulness, connection and companionship, always centred on the wellbeing of participants and the dog. By the end, participants had learned about breathwork, increased their confidence and mobility, and made a connection with an Alzheimer Scotland group. "I can't wait to come here," said one. "It gets me out of the house. I didn't do anything or go anywhere before. Now I wake up and keep checking my watch for when I can leave home to get to this group."

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*I can't wait to come here. It gets me out of the house. I didn't do anything or go anywhere before. Now I wake up and keep checking my watch for when I can get to this group.*





# Confidence & independence

People have the self-belief to lead more fulfilling, independent lives



**94%**  
of respondents felt more confident managing day-to-day activities

## Individual impact

When asked about the impact of our services on their ability to go out and about independently, 89% of survey respondents reported an increase. For 66% the improvement was significant – while 40% chose the option to describe the impact as “huge”.

Comparing their situation now with before they had access to our services, 93% of respondents said they felt more confident about leaving the house. Respondents also reported feeling less reliant on family or outside services.

Interactions with a dog increased confidence in daily life. Again, comparing themselves now with how they felt before working with us, 94% of clients felt more confident managing day-to-day activities and 67% said they were now better able to complete daily tasks.



*My mum went travelling for nearly a month last year, leaving me with my assistance dog. Friends came to check in and help me with big tasks but for the most part, it was me and my amazing dog. That wouldn't have been possible in the past.*



**93%**

of respondents said they felt more confident about leaving the house

Around one in four (24%) respondents said they had been able to volunteer or go back to work – thus making a positive contribution to the economy – as a result of our services. The same proportion talked about being able to give back to their community. Others talked about spending more money locally since getting their dog (44%).

One particularly powerful set of results related to purpose. For 94% of clients, accessing our services has given them a clearer sense of purpose. More than three-quarters (77%) chose the option to describe this sense of purpose as “strong” or “huge”.

## Wider impact

For secondary beneficiaries including family, friends and carers, this boost to confidence and independence has a knock-on effect. When asked about the benefits to others, 32% of respondents said those close to them now had more time for themselves, with 20% citing time that could be

spent on work, education or hobbies. More broadly, feeling more confident in respondents' abilities also meant less worry and stress for those around them.

A number of respondents cited a reduction in reliance on public services as among the benefits to the wider community, linking to our long-term goal of reducing reliance on already over-stretched public services.



*I used to call my husband at his workplace, asking if he could get some shopping on the way home. Since having an assistance dog, I've been ringing him to ask what we need from the shops.*





**Jemima  
and Albert's  
story**

**When Jemima experienced the onset of chronic health conditions aged just 16, her life changed beyond recognition. Her dreams of going to university were shelved and she also had to withdraw from the social side of education, losing contact with friends.**

Assistance dog Albert has made a huge difference to every aspect of Jemima's life, including her relationships – and her ability to work. She's now a paralegal at a top law firm. "For me, independence is being able to make life choices, without limitations and barriers," she says. "Now, for the first time since my health deteriorated, I feel positive about the future. Albert is so enthusiastic about helping me that it makes me want to get up and do things too." That includes pursuing a career with an employer who is genuinely committed to creating an inclusive workplace. Naturally Albert is the star attraction in the office. "Albert and I have only just started out on our journey," says Jemima. "But I can hardly believe how different my life is now; he's changed everything and he brings me so much joy and independence."



*For me, independence is being able to make life choices, without limitations and barriers. Now, for the first time since my health deteriorated, I feel positive about the future. I can hardly believe how different my life is now. He brings me so much joy and independence.*

## Working with stroke patients at Inverclyde

**An eight-week pilot project has been supporting stroke patients at Inverclyde Royal Hospital with their physiotherapy and cognitive responses.**

Dogs for Good dogs Marcia and Billy have been going in to the stroke ward to take patients through a series of obstacle courses and games to help with balance, flexibility and strength. "It's nice to have a dog there," says patient Steven. "It means you're not just doing it on your own. Sometimes I'm a bit robotic when I'm moving but now I'm just thinking about the dog. When I first stood up, I had no balance at all, whereas now I'm almost walking normally." The results of the project are being evaluated, but the response from staff has also been very positive. "It's given us a new way of thinking about how we work with patients and how we get the dogs involved," says specialist stroke physiotherapist Alison Jardine.



*It's nice to have a dog there. It means you're not just doing it on your own. When I first stood up I had no balance at all, whereas now I'm almost walking normally.*





# Resilience

Greater capacity to overcome challenges and adapt to change



96%

of respondents felt our services had helped them to achieve their goals

## Individual impact

Survey respondents were also asked to reflect on the ways in which our services had supported them to develop greater resilience. A key part of this is having the energy, confidence and determination to pursue and achieve personal goals. For 96% of respondents, our services have supported them on this journey.

SS

*I feel incredibly empowered having [my dog] by my side. She gives me the confidence to do things by myself and that means I can take more on, achieve more, dream bigger and live more. She's so in tune with me, she lights up my life and I can't imagine being without her.*

We also asked respondents to reflect on how our services have impacted their health, both physical and mental. For physical health, the level of improvement was relatively small, in line with expectations for a cohort where a significant proportion have disabilities and long-term health conditions. For psychological wellbeing, the results are striking: overall, 84% of respondents said their mental health had improved since they started using Dogs for Good services.

SS

*Before having an assistance dog I hadn't been out of my home without another person for 17 years. Since having a dog my life has improved tremendously. Now my conditions aren't in control of my life. My dog gives me courage to rise above my health conditions.*

## Wider impact

As already highlighted, one notable theme to emerge from the survey is the fact that our services are clearly having a ripple effect. As well as the powerful impact on their own mental health and wellbeing, 68% of respondents pointed to an improvement in the mental health of those close to them – making this the most commonly reported benefit. Stronger relationships were cited by 19%, while 10% reported other benefits including improved emotional bonds, increased confidence and personal growth, along with reduced anxiety around dogs and people.



84%

of respondents said their mental health had improved since using Dogs for Good services



68%

of respondents pointed to an improvement in the mental health of those close to them





**Emma, Rhys and Max's story**

**Our family dog workshops have helped equip Max the dog to support 10-year-old Rhys, who is autistic – as well making life easier for the whole family.**

“We’d just come back from a really difficult holiday when I met a Dogs for Good volunteer,” says mum Emma. “They told me about the family dog workshop and how a pet dog could help a family like ours. It gave me so much confidence, because the learning is all about small steps and keeping things achievable. Now we’ve got Max I can say to Rhys, ‘We’re going out and you’re staying with a carer’ and he’s OK because Max is there. And Max is so good when Rhys is dysregulated, he’ll just go over and lick his ear. It really helps him to recover.” Having Max is also supporting Emma and the family to connect more effectively with Rhys. “As I started to teach Max, I began to feel that something I was doing was actually working,” she says. “I have ‘smug dog mum’ moments which give me this incredible feeling of achievement and joy. We’re definitely seeing how Max is becoming a bridge to Rhys and how we can build on that in a positive way.”



*As I started to teach Max, I began to feel that something I was doing was actually working. It's very powerful. I have 'smug dog mum' moments which give me this incredible feeling of achievement and joy. We're definitely seeing how Max is becoming a bridge to Rhys and how we can build on that in a positive way.*

## Innovative service delivery at Highfield

**Our innovative partnership with Oxfordshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services delivered community dog services within a hospital setting.**

Sessions are based in the education unit at Highfield, an in-patient unit supporting young people with complex, severe or persistent mental health problems. Community dog Walt and handler Sarah Tosh-Robb worked with patients in groups and one-to-one offering a range of activities, including dog skateboarding. While that might sound like just a bit of fun, it's actually a powerful way of encouraging teamwork, building skills and giving young people a sense of purpose – a great example of how our interventions work on multiple levels. “We would see changes in engagement, motivation and mood that lasted through the week,” says Tori Broom, Senior Occupational Therapist at Highfield. “Even when Walt wasn’t there, he was having an impact.”



*We would see changes in engagement, motivation and mood that would last throughout the week. Even when Walt wasn't there, he was having an impact.*





# Happiness, fun & wellbeing

The sense of wellbeing that comes from a mutually joyful connection supports people's ability to face challenges with positivity

92%

of respondents overall report a positive impact on their mental health

## Individual impact

The improvements in mental health already described are reflected in a similarly dramatic improvement in mood, with 92% of clients overall reporting a positive impact. For children receiving our community and assistance dog services, positive impact on mood was reported by 100% of respondents.



*...a sense of pride and fulfilment in training the dog and seeing great results, keeping me active and getting fresh air, having to take the dog out on walks and snuggling the dog at the end of the day brings so much joy to my life.*



100%

of respondents reported a positive impact on mood in children receiving our community and assistance dog services

## Wider impact

Once again, the benefits are not limited to the individual. Neither do they fit within neat compartments. Stronger relationships with family, friends and carers, for example, as reported by 19% of respondents, will impact on the whole range of benefits outlined in this report, including happiness, fun and wellbeing.

Respondents also reported a shift in the nature of those relationships, with loved ones able to move away from a caring role and resume their identity as parent, sibling, child or friend.



*I have more energy to play games or chat and they have more of their mum/wife than before the dog was in our lives.*

The impact is felt on health professionals too, with respondents reporting emotional benefits for this group. Respondents stated that our dogs created a positive atmosphere in public, at work, and in schools and community settings, improving mood across the board as well as reducing stigma and encouraging greater empathy among groups including peers, neighbours and staff.



*My dog puts a smile on the face of literally everyone we meet when we are out.*





## Community stories



### Martha and Greg's story

For Martha, who has cerebral palsy and has struggled with severe depression, assistance dog Greg is a powerful source of both practical and emotional support. "I was tired of fighting for my voice to be heard over my disability, and I was angry with the world for not seeing me," she says. "The emotional costs of the medical model of care I was receiving were devastating for me and my family." Now, with a personalised care package, including Greg, in place, life is, as Martha puts it, "richer, brighter and full of hope. I regularly walk at least a mile a day and have friends and a great support network." Martha is also helping to ensure others can benefit from her experience, both as an "Expert by Experience" helping to shape services and support the recruitment and training of health professionals, and as a volunteer with Dogs for Good. "I'm the happiest I've ever been," she says. "The impact Greg has had is immeasurable. He gave me a life, and changed my life. My philosophy now is to Be More Greg – curious, grounded and happy."

*"I regularly walk at least a mile a day and have friends and a great support network. The impact Greg has had is immeasurable. He gave me a life, and changed my life."*

### Bracknell walking group



Our work with community groups in Bracknell highlights the many ways dogs can make a positive difference. Those taking part in our walking and activity group for adults with learning disabilities report improved fitness, confidence and self-esteem. For many, this opportunity for positive interaction with a dog marks a step change in their ability to communicate and connect. According to the support team working with one participant, Jack, "He seems happy and relaxed after the sessions, and it's enabled him to make new friends."



# Thank you to our supporters





# For making everyday life possible

[dogsforgood.org](https://dogsforgood.org)

