

GOOD TIMES

DOGS FOR GOOD

Helping to shape the future



An update from Ed Bracher, our CEO

Ask anyone at Dogs for Good about what motivated them to get involved and they will share a story with you about connection, brighter futures and overcoming challenges.

Last year, in partnership with Vet AI and funded by Ceva Animal Health, we carried out our first impact survey to help us deepen our understanding of the benefits people feel from using our services and to explore the reach of our services.

The results blew us away, both in terms of the many ways that our support is helping people to live their lives and the wider benefits that our dogs bring to family, friends, carers and the wider community. Our report – *Creating Possibility* provides one of the clearest pictures yet of how our work is experienced, where it is most effective and how it shapes our future.

Turning experience into insight

We now know:

- **96%** say our services help them pursue and achieve personal goals
- **89%** feel more able to go out independently
- **86%** report improved social interactions

96%

of respondents say our services help them pursue and achieve personal goals



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

- **84%** experience better mental health
- For every person supported, typically **five others benefit**
- Asked how well Dogs for Good had met their expectations, respondents gave an average score of **4.7 out of 5**

These aren't just statistics; they are signposts, highlighting where our services are working best: enabling people to participate more fully in community life and to experience meaningful social connection and a strong sense of belonging.

Understanding the wider impact

One of the most valuable parts of the survey was to see beyond support for an individual and understand the benefit to families, carers and communities.

- **92%** reported a positive impact on at least one other person
- **68%** noted improved mental health for those close to them

92%

reported a positive impact on at least one other person



These are powerful insights when we consider that in a 2025 report by Carers UK, 74% of carers experienced periods of stress and anxiety. This reinforces that we are not just changing individual lives, we are strengthening support networks.

Supporting joyful bonds

As we scale up our support, our impact survey reflects powerfully that all our work begins through human-dog connection.

These connections are not only supportive but genuinely joyful, creating moments of trust, comfort and confidence that can be life-changing. This was clearly reflected in the survey, with 92% of respondents saying they had formed a strong bond with a dog.

Stories well-told

This issue of Good Times brings these insights to life, sharing stories of young people navigating the trauma of losing a loved one, to individuals gaining independence and managing long-term conditions. These stories demonstrate not just what we do, but why it matters and how we can continue building support for the future.



Download or email us on supportercare@dogsforgood.org to request a copy of our *Creating Possibility* report

Sterling work; engineering a brilliant life

Katy Deacon is a Chartered Electrical Engineer, Fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) and a lifelong problem-solver. After a successful career in engineering, her life took an unexpected turn when she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. True to her nature, Katy refused to be defined by the condition. “It’s given me a run for my money,” she says, “but I’m firmly of the mindset that this is not beating me.”



Drawing on her engineering mindset, Katy set about redesigning her life on her own terms. Today, she leads her own company Towards Belonging, serves as a visiting professor, is Vice President of the IET and is a sought-after keynote speaker championing accessibility and inclusion.

We’re proud to say that Katy’s advocacy work now also includes talking about how her assistance dog Sterling supports her as she navigates everyday life.

“He enhances my story and my presence. He gives me unique connections, and makes everything special.”

Sterling performs practical tasks such as opening doors and picking up items, but his impact goes far beyond that.

Last year, Katy shared her story at an Assistance Dogs UK event hosted at the House of Commons. She spoke powerfully about Sterling’s impact: “I was no longer the woman in the wheelchair, instead I was the woman with the dog.” But she also shared how devastating an access refusal for Sterling can be to her everyday life. With 43% of UK assistance dog partners experiencing access refusal, voices like Katy’s are important.

Katy has won awards for her work on diversity and inclusion and continues to shine a light on the challenges that prevent disabled people from accessing the world. This year Sterling was also awarded as Assistance Dog of the Year at the 2026 Empowerment Awards. Together, Katy and Sterling form a remarkable partnership; one that reflects resilience, ingenuity and determination.

The difference is not marginal - it's transformational

One year on from being partnered with assistance dog Chester, Alex has taken a powerful and refreshingly analytical look at the impact he's had on her life. What emerges is not just a personal story, but compelling evidence of the transformative difference that our dogs can make.

By reviewing medical records, activity data and day-to-day experiences, Alex has quantified what many already understand instinctively. Quite simply, assistance dogs are making life possible for people. In 12 months, here are some of the ways Chester has helped Alex.

66% reduction in Alex's pain medication: Alex has been able to reduce her morphine use from 150ml to 50ml daily. Not only a significant clinical outcome, but one that has improved Alex's concentration, stability and performance both in and out of work.

59% increase in physical activity: Giving Alex a renewed sense of purpose and routine. Where once getting out of the house every day felt unachievable, this is now part of everyday life bringing fresh air, exercise and improved wellbeing.

100% improvement in going out alone: In the six months before Chester, Alex was unable to go out alone. Since then, she has independently attended multiple medical appointments, completed over 20 shopping trips and managed urgent healthcare visits without support.

50% increase in working hours: Newfound independence has also translated into the workplace where Alex has increased her working hours by 50%. Her confidence has grown and she feels less reliant on her colleagues for support. This is of enormous significance when you consider that in the UK, disabled people are 30% less likely to be in employment.

It's clear to see that daily living for Alex has also been transformed. Tasks she once avoided due to pain, such as dressing or doing laundry, are now completed with consistency and dignity. At the same time, Chester has opened literal and metaphoric doors for her, increasing positive interactions and reducing isolation, something disabled people are statistically four times more likely to experience.

For Alex, the data tells a clear story: the difference is not marginal - it is transformational. Chester has not only improved measurable outcomes across health, independence and employment, but has restored confidence, connection and participation in everyday life.

We made a positive impact to the lives of
2,970
people in
2025



Can you help us reach more people?

We're increasing our activities in some of our key regions: across the North West, Banbury and Bristol over the next 18 months. Volunteers will play a critical role in helping us to support more people in these local communities - from helping raise our puppies to supporting activities and community engagement. Can you help us to find the right people?

There will be people out there who would make brilliant volunteer dog carers but just haven't heard about us yet!

- Are you on social media?
- Could you promote us at work?
- Do a local talk?
- Put posters up?

All creative ideas welcome!

Email: volunteer@dogsforgood.org

When play becomes a pathway to healing

At Merchants' Academy in Bristol, something remarkable is happening. In a space where young people are navigating grief, loss and emotional trauma, healing isn't always found through traditional routes. Instead, it often begins with something far simpler: play.

Through our community work, Community Dog Handler Julia and golden retriever, Georgie, are helping a select number of students process some of life's most difficult experiences.

Our work in the community is built around tailoring the support to each group or individual's needs and working with health and education professionals to create opportunities for connection, confidence and recovery. And this is where our expertise in the human-dog connection comes into its own.

Georgie is not just present, she is perceptive. During one particularly emotional session with a student facing his first Mother's Day without his mum, Georgie instinctively responded to a shift in the room. As the

student spoke vulnerably, she quietly approached and rested her head on his lap, offering comfort without prompting. That simple, intuitive act gave him the reassurance and comfort that he needed to continue talking.

Moments like these demonstrate something powerful: the ability of dogs to reach young people in ways that feel accessible, safe and deeply human.

For Merchant's Academy, this work has been a meaningful intervention that delivers real, tangible results. For the young people involved, the impact is clear - they are finding new ways to process their experiences and, importantly, to begin moving forward.



We have 12 community dogs and five activity dog teams supporting people in the community

Progress and positivity – enhancing stroke rehabilitation in Scotland

Ludo, a playful golden retriever with a gentle nature, might not look like a typical member of a hospital team, but at Inverclyde Royal Hospital's Larkfield Stroke Unit, he and his handler, Úna Race, are making a lasting impression.

Working alongside occupational therapists and physiotherapists on the ward, they are helping to reshape how stroke rehabilitation is experienced by patients and staff alike.



Over the past year, the team has explored how the human-dog connection can enhance recovery.

What began as an unfamiliar approach quickly demonstrated how a dog can become an integral part of daily practice, offering benefits that traditional therapies alone cannot always achieve.

Activities are tailored to each patient's needs, focusing on strength, coordination and independence. Ludo acts as both motivator and companion, with Úna's guidance and support.

Patients may practise reaching and grip by throwing a toy, improve coordination by handing it back, or rebuild strength and confidence while grooming him. Each interaction is purposeful, yet feels natural rather than clinical. Patients engage, often surprising themselves with what they can do.

Ludo's presence brings comfort, familiarity and motivation, helping people reconnect with movement and engage more consistently in therapy. His impact extends across the ward, where staff are just as keen to spend time with him. Together, they foster a positive environment that supports meaningful recovery daily.

Learn more about our work in the community



We are so thankful to everyone who helped shape Reco. They've all played a vital role in a journey that has changed our lives.

68
puppies were raised by our amazing puppy socialiser volunteers in 2025

It takes a village to raise a dog

Reco's journey from playful puppy to life-changing autism assistance dog for Jenson and his family shows just how many people it takes to help make this happen.

From the very beginning, our volunteer puppy socialisers, the Lucas family, opened their home to Reco. With patience, routine and plenty of adventures along the way, they helped him build the foundations of trust, confidence and connection. He wasn't raised as a family pet but was being prepared for a purpose.

As he grew, temporary boarders such as the Cooper family played a vital role, introducing him to new environments, routines and experiences. Trips to the shops and cafés, journeys on public transport and even holidays all helped Reco learn how to respond to different situations. Each stay built his resilience and adaptability, all of which are essential qualities for the role he was going to play in the future.

Alongside every volunteer who cared for him, Dogs for Good puppy coordinator Michelle, trainer Sarah and instructor Katie guided each step; shaping his skills, supporting transitions and ensuring both Reco and his carers felt supported along the way.

At the end of this journey, Reco was ready to go on to make life possible for a new family and that family were the Coles. Before Reco, Sarah and Tom were doing everything they could to support their autistic son in a world that often felt overwhelming. "Trains and Warwick Castle are his thing," Sarah explains. "Getting him outside that bubble was hard." The pandemic made life even more intense, leaving the family exhausted and isolated.

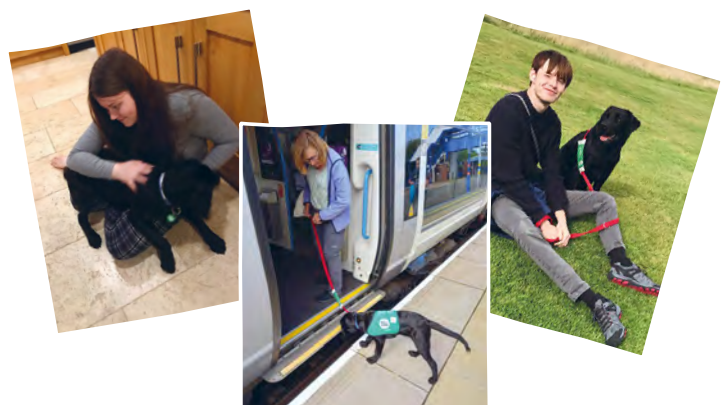
Reco joined the family and with the support from their instructor, began their training together. It wasn't all plain sailing as Jenson needed time to adjust to the new member of the family, but with patience and support, something gradually shifted.

"Reco has become the heartbeat of our family. We couldn't imagine a more perfect dog for us."

For everyone who helped raise him, seeing the difference Reco now makes brings everything full circle. "There were tears when he left us" says puppy socialiser Sue Lucas, "but they were happy tears, because this is exactly why you do it."

Reco's journey shows the huge number of people who were involved in helping him to go on to be such a great support to Jenson and his family, bringing into focus the wonderful connection between humans and dogs.

"We are so thankful to everyone who helped shape Reco," says Sarah. "They've all played a vital role in a journey that has changed our lives."



Finding a best life for Jessie

We know every dog makes a difference. Just as importantly, we're committed to ensuring our dogs live their best possible life. Recognising each dog as an individual and supporting them to thrive in an environment that truly suits their personality and needs is always our priority. For some, this means a different path, one without the additional expectations of being a working dog.

Jessie was one of those dogs. While she began training to become a Dogs for Good community or assistance dog, the team around her felt she'd thrive more in a different role. And thanks to the care, support and training she received, Jessie built the skills and

qualities to make a real difference. That's what made her the perfect match for Nichola and her family.

Nichola has five children, four of whom are neurodivergent. After taking part in the Family Dog programme, she knew a pet dog could transform family life - it was just a matter of finding the right dog.

With guidance from experienced instructors, Nichola was matched with a Dogs for Good change of service dog: Jessie. From the beginning, the family was carefully supported by our team, helping everyone understand Jessie's needs and build a strong, positive bond.

"We went to meet Jessie and in that moment, life changed massively," she says. The impact has been profound.

"We were quite isolated as a family and Jessie's given us our freedom. She's such a positive focus, her energy is infectious. Watching her run in and out of the sea with my children on our first holiday together was something very special."

97%
of volunteers said they were proud to volunteer for us, in our recent survey



Hats off to our knitters

Jude Ayres has supported Dogs for Good for 12 years, first getting involved when her husband Ray began volunteering as a driver after retiring. Jude became part of the Banbury fundraising group and soon began organising events in Brackley, where she saw the opportunity to make an even bigger impact in her local community. She recently won one of our 'fundraiser of the year awards'!

Around 18 months ago, Jude and her friends Vicky and Yvonne, all keen knitters, had a simple but creative idea. Using a tea cosy pattern, they created novelty hats for friends who enjoy cold water swimming. After sharing their creations online, interest quickly grew, with over 250 orders arriving from across the world, including Germany, France, Finland, Norway and beyond. The hats have become especially popular with cold water swimming groups.

Using donated wool, every penny raised goes directly to Dogs for Good. So far, they've raised more than £3,000, a fantastic achievement from what started as a small idea.

A true team effort, the trio continue to knit tirelessly, turning their spare rooms into mini wool stores and working hard to keep up with demand. They've also branched out into seasonal gifts, including covers for Terry's Chocolate Oranges.

Check out some of the novelty gifts available via their Facebook page



TEAM SHELDON'S TRAIL

DOGS FOR GOOD



This woman can...

Mary Lamb and her assistance dog, Sheldon, have accomplished an extraordinary feat, completing a 215-mile trek along the Trans Pennine Trail and raising money for Dogs for Good. Spanning nine days and some challenging terrain, the journey was a powerful demonstration of determination, friendship and resilience.

For Mary, this challenge was deeply personal. Having benefited from the support of four Dogs for Good assistance dogs over the years, she credits us with giving her greater independence and confidence. Sheldon, her current dog, was by her side throughout the trek, offering both practical support and unwavering companionship.

"Dogs for Good has changed my life in so many ways. This challenge was my way of saying thank you and giving something back so others can experience that same support."

Mary is no stranger to pushing her limits. A prolific fundraiser, she has raised over £30,000 in recent years through a variety of efforts, including community talks, the longest zip wire in the UK and becoming the first woman to complete the Three Peaks challenge in a wheelchair. But her latest endeavour proved to be one of her toughest.

Training for the trek during the winter months with her 'wing woman' Jill, was particularly demanding. Battling cold, wet conditions and building up endurance ahead of the event required immense commitment. "The training was incredibly tough," Mary explained.

"There were days when it felt relentless, but I knew what I was working towards and always had Sheldon and Jill by my side."

When the trek itself began, the scale of the challenge quickly became clear. Long days, uneven terrain, and physical exhaustion tested Mary to her limits. "It was both amazing and gruelling," she said. "Some moments were really hard, but others were just incredible; you're surrounded by beautiful scenery and this amazing sense of purpose."



Mary was supported every step of the way by a dedicated team of family and friends, as well as volunteers from the army who helped her navigate more difficult sections of the trail. Their encouragement and practical support proved invaluable. "It was a huge team effort," Mary said. "I couldn't have done it without the people around me. Everyone pulled together to get me to the finish line."

At the heart of it all was Sheldon, whose steady presence made a profound difference.

"Having Sheldon with me made everything feel possible. He kept me focused and motivated, even when I was exhausted."

Crossing the finish line after nine days was an emotional and exhilarating moment. For Mary, it represented not just the end of a physical journey, but the culmination of months of preparation, teamwork and determination. "The camaraderie was amazing," she said. "There was such a strong sense of togetherness, and finishing it together felt incredible."

Mary's achievement is a testament to resilience, partnership and the impact of assistance dogs. Through her efforts, she has not only raised vital funds but also inspired others with her story, proving that with the right support, extraordinary things are possible.

Help Mary reach her target by donating today



Know a family who could benefit from extra support?

For families living with autism, dementia or physical disability, a pet dog can be more than a companion.

Our Family Dog community helps them turn that bond into everyday support—with expert-led workshops, practical tools to use at home and a network of families who understand.

Introduce someone to Family Dog and help them access practical, everyday support at home. Encourage them to get in touch with our team to start the conversation.

20% OFF

Families referred to Family Dog via Good Times can access 20% off the full price £60.

Visit dogsforgood.org/family-dog and quote GOODTIMES20

Building the future: help us transform our Banbury site

As we look ahead, our ambition is to support 6,000 people every year by 2028. To achieve this ambitious goal and to continue providing the very best care for our dogs, clients, volunteers and colleagues, we now need to invest in the future of our Banbury site.

Why redevelopment matters

While our current facilities have served us well, they were not designed for the scale or complexity of our work today. A thoughtfully planned redevelopment will allow us to:

- Deliver outstanding environments for puppies and dogs in training
- Create modern, accessible spaces that support collaboration and wellbeing
- Work more efficiently across teams, increasing our impact and reach

This investment is essential to ensure we grow sustainably without compromising the quality of care we provide, or the experience of those who rely on our services.

Progress so far

Our redevelopment is being delivered in phases to ensure continuity of services.

Phase 1 - Puppy and people wellbeing centre

Thanks to generous support from donors and trusts, funding for this £546,635 project is already secured

and this phase has already begun. This new facility will provide a dedicated, purpose-built environment where puppies can thrive, and early-stage training and assessments can take place in one accessible, welcoming space.

Phase 2: Your support is needed

We are now seeking support for Phase 2: improvements to our health and welfare building for dogs in training.

This £401,921 project (starting August 2026) will:

- Refurbish and reconfigure existing space
- Provide vital roof repairs and improved temperature control
- Create enriched indoor and outdoor environments
- Ensure full accessibility for clients and volunteers

These upgrades are critical to maintaining high welfare standards, supporting veterinary care, and adapting to future challenges, including increasingly warm summers.

Be part of what comes next

Your support will help secure the future wellbeing of our dogs, strengthen the communities we serve, and expand our impact for years to come. Together, we can build a space that matches the ambition of our mission.

Find out how you can support Phase 2, by emailing supportercare@dogsforgood.org

Our ambition is to reach
6,000
people every year by 2028



Puppies, purpose and people

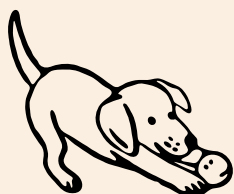
Choosing Dogs for Good as Roke's Charity of the Year has been a brilliant way to unite colleagues while making a positive impact. We spoke to Jess Hawkins, a Project Manager at Roke, about why the partnership works so well.

"At Roke, innovation and making a positive difference really matter to us, so Dogs for Good felt like a natural fit. We also wanted a charity that would bring people together, and Dogs for Good is both impactful and highly engaging."

Jess and her colleagues have embraced the partnership through a wide range of activities, from bake sales to a fire walk, with some also taking on a 100km walking challenge later this year.

"People love knowing their efforts directly support the training of our sponsored puppy, Nigel. The updates have sparked conversations, strengthened connections and raised awareness of accessibility and the vital independence assistance dogs provide."

If your employer has a Charity of the Year scheme, contact corporate@dogsforgood.org for support in nominating us.



WARNING: this gift may cause excessive joy!

Gift a puppy sponsorship and surprise someone with the cutest journey they'll ever be part of.

They'll get updates, milestones and a front-row seat to their puppy's journey to becoming a life-changing dog plus a welcome pack to get them started. All from £4 a month.

Give the joy of a puppy sponsorship today

dogsforgood.org/sponsor-a-puppy

