



**DOGS  
FOR  
GOOD**

# Looking back on **2025**

**Our annual report**



*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*



## 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 live happier, healthier and more independent lives.

In everything we do, we are guided by the commitments set out in our promise:

- ➔ **Seek to understand:** We see, hear and understand each other, every person and dog we work with, as individuals.
- ➔ **Respect all needs:** We take into account that everyone's needs are different and, person or dog, equally as valuable.
- ➔ **Make positive connections:** We all play a part in building the connections that make life feel possible, and which make for a more supportive community.

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# From our Co-Chairs of Trustees



**In our first year as co-chairs of the Dogs for Good Board of Trustees, we are proud to reflect on a period during which the charity continued to provide life-changing support, at the same time as making meaningful progress against our strategic aims and strengthening the foundations needed to deliver long-term impact.**

We welcomed several new trustees during the year, and a central focus has been on intentionally bringing together a cohesive and forward-looking board that can offer the broad expertise needed for the next steps in our strategy. Their skills and experience are already strengthening our strategic oversight and enriching the perspectives guiding our decisions. We thank them for their commitment, and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

The year saw us make some important investments in our future. We advanced our strategic priorities, developing our model for delivering responsive client services in communities, enhancing volunteer support, and piloting our first dog supply hub. We continued to modernise our operations and build

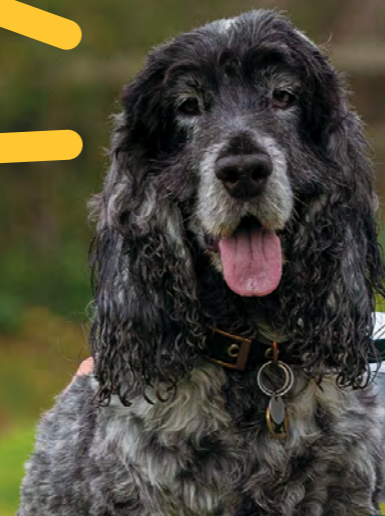
financial resilience, ensuring we can meet the growing need for our services sustainably and responsibly.

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary commitment of our staff, volunteers, donors and partners. Their dedication, compassion and expertise underpin our success. On behalf of the board, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed their time and energy to Dogs for Good.

We are grateful to the individuals and families we work alongside, whose experiences continue to shape and strengthen what we do. Their insights and feedback help us to better understand how the human-dog bond can support greater independence, confidence and connection in everyday life. With a strong strategy, a committed community and a shared belief in the power of dogs to transform lives, we enter 2026 together, with optimism and excitement.

*Ruth Goddard and Dr Helen Timbrell,  
Co-Chairs, Dogs for Good Board of Trustees*

# From our CEO



**When sitting down to draft this welcome note, I always start by looking back at how we've summed up previous years. If 2023 was the year of "how", and 2024 the year of "what", 2025 has to be the year of "do" – the year when we really started building on the foundations we've laid, and putting our new strategy into practice.**

Our first dog supply hub is enabling us to explore innovative ways of working that put the needs of individual dogs front and centre, and that empower our volunteers to play a bigger part in service delivery. We're also looking at how we can use feedback in a dynamic and agile way, iterating and adapting at the same time as we deliver. With our work in the community, we're looking at how we can create an effective structure for partnership-building that enables us to extend our reach and build on the amazing work we're already doing.

In both cases, the aim is to create models that can be replicated and rolled out as we ramp up delivery. At the same time, we are developing robust mechanisms for measuring our impact, both

in terms of numbers reached and resources saved, and the "softer" – but no less important – impact on quality of life.

Our impact survey, carried out this year in partnership with Ceva, provided valuable evidence we can draw on to grow and make all our services – including the assistance dog partnerships that are the foundation of everything we do – even more effective in the future. This in turn will help us to enable more people to experience the value of the human-dog bond and support us in reaching our goal to have a positive impact on 6,000 people per year by 2028.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to see these new ways of working mature and bed in. As our Head of Hub Development Jude Palmer puts it, they are the platform that will enable us to expand and reach our goals. Looking around me, I see a team – of staff, of trustees, of volunteers – that's energised and motivated to embrace the challenge.

*Ed Bracher OBE, Chief Executive Officer,  
Dogs for Good*

# Highlights of the year



We renewed our Assistance Dogs International accreditation, winning praise for our person- and dog-centred approach



## 265

guests joined us to celebrate the positive connections dogs bring to our lives at our second Gala Dinner in April 2025. The event was hosted by presenter, broadcaster and writer Clare Balding

Our new website launched in autumn 2025, improving accessibility and helping visitors find the right information quickly



Katy Deacon shared her experiences of access refusal with her assistance dog, Sterling, with the All Party Parliamentary Dog Advisory Welfare Group



## £10K

raised by supporters at our first Firewalk challenge event

## 106

new people joined the Dogs for Good family, helping us expand our reach, including 16 staff and 90 volunteers

We shared early findings from our impact survey, *Creating possibility*, showing how our support benefits individuals and their families



In total, we made a positive impact on more than

# 2,970

people in 2025, including:



## 668

people benefited from our animal-assisted services, helping them reach their goals or build connection and confidence through activity sessions



## 28

assistance dogs placed, bringing the total number of working partnerships to 221



## 221

people attended our family dog workshops

# Our strategy

## Our ambition

By 2028 we will be positively impacting 6,000 people each year through our work.

## Our impact goals

- We are improving the quality of life for people and dogs.
- We are increasing understanding of the value of connection with a dog.
- We are creating a more inclusive society.

## Our strategic aims

- We will build a community-based model of both delivering our services and providing well prepared and trained dogs that is flexible to local needs.
- We will develop a training, education and advocacy approach that supports our people to deliver our objectives and supports people outside the organisation to engage with dogs effectively and with respect for their welfare.

### Our 7 strategic pillars

#### 1 Hubs and communities

We are developing welcoming, connected communities where people and dogs come together, supporting one another and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.

#### 2 Education, learning and development

We will use our expertise to support people to build knowledge, confidence and skills, so that we support more people to create life-changing connections with dogs.

#### 3 National Centre of Excellence

Our centre in Banbury will be a place of inspiration, learning and innovation, where best practice is developed, shared and celebrated.

#### 4 People and dogs

We are building a thriving, inclusive community where people and dogs flourish, enabled by clear pathways that ensure we can grow and support our people and dogs now and into the future.

#### 5 Impact and insight

We listen, learn and reflect, using insight and experience to deepen our understanding, keep improving and have the greatest possible impact.

#### 6 Expertise and advocacy

We champion the life-changing connection between people and dogs, sharing our knowledge to inspire others and influence positive change.

#### 7 Infrastructure and resources

We have a strong, sustainable foundation that enables us to be confident about our future and grow our impact.

# Delivering our services



In 2025, we worked with **52 community partners** across England and Scotland. **105 people** benefited from goal-focused animal-assisted work, and **563 people** took part in animal-assisted support programmes.

We use our knowledge and understanding of the human-dog bond to create connections and bring positive benefits to people and their communities.

 Strategic pillars 1, 5 and 6

## Matching services to needs

Enabling people to reach their goals through connection with a dog is at the heart of what we do. Many of the people we support live with complex health and social care needs – and every individual, family or group is different. Our staff and volunteers take a holistic approach, using their knowledge, experience and creativity to empower people through solutions that match their specific needs.

This year, we continued to support people through our three core services:

- assistance dogs
- family dog advice and guidance, and
- working in the community to provide animal-assisted services.

Effective service delivery is key to achieving our ambition to positively impact 6,000 people each year by 2028. We recognise that our support is best when it responds to local needs, and is integrated into a community.

The launch of our first service delivery hub in Bristol builds on our existing work. By bringing together learning from our community-based activities in Scotland, Bracknell and Oxfordshire we can build a hub approach tailored to local needs.

The work is led by Emma Gwynne, our new Community Engagement Officer, who also leads our partnership with Merchants' Academy (see page 8). We further strengthened the team in Bristol this year, recruiting a second community dog practitioner, Bec Konteh. One of our existing instructors, Jane, also qualified to deliver community dog work.

The goal now is to identify what works, and which activities should be managed centrally and which locally in order to maximise reach and impact – and develop a scalable model. “This is a vital part of the work that our first hub helps us to understand and define,” says Emma. “The service delivery hubs provide a platform that enable us to expand our reach and achieve our goals.”

For the volunteers in the area, Emma provides a vital focal point. “We want our volunteer colleagues to feel valued and engaged,” she says. “The aim is to ensure we’re providing the support they need and making the most of their skills to enable us to reach more people.”



## Merchants' Academy: making a difference through play

A collaboration between Dogs for Good and Merchants' Academy School in Bristol is supporting children dealing with grief and loss. Community Dog Handler Julia Lange and golden retriever Georgie are running play-based sessions, where children can express their feelings in a safe environment. "It's amazing to see these children, who have been navigating really hard stuff," says Merchants assistant head teacher Hannah Greene. "And it's a gift and a joy to work with a charity that's passionate about everything we're passionate about."



## Working with stroke patients at Inverclyde

An eight-week pilot project has been supporting stroke patients at Inverclyde Royal Hospital. Dogs Marcia and Billy have been taking patients through obstacle courses and games designed to help with balance, flexibility and strength. Now the impact of the pilot is being evaluated. "When patients know the dog is coming in, they are so much more motivated and excited to get going," says Jane, an occupational therapist

By the end of 2025, we had **12 community dogs** and **five activity dog teams**

## Streamlining applications

In 2025, we rolled out a new application process, enabled by the launch of our revamped website. Anyone seeking support from Dogs for Good now completes a simple enquiry form. This is triaged by our Training Support Team, then discussed at weekly meetings with service team staff. Following this, a member of the team contacts the individual to gather further information and identify next steps.

This more person-centred approach is helping us to give people the information and guidance they need more quickly, steering them towards the right source of support, whether that comes from Dogs for Good or elsewhere.

"Feedback suggests that signposting and the conversations around it are hugely valuable," says Kelly Jennings, Services Manager. "For our own teams, the enquiry meetings are a great way of sharing knowledge and encouraging collaboration. It's enabling us to support people in a more flexible way."

## 2025 enquiries in numbers:

- **430** enquiries handled
- **32%** related to physical disability, **27%** to autism
- Average time to reach an outcome: **10-12 days**
- **48%** signposted to other services
- **27%** invited to family dog workshop

At the end of 2025, we launched our family dog physical disability service. We also continue to encourage all clients "awaiting training" to join the family dog programme while waiting for a match. While it's too early to see the impact on the long-term success of placements, anecdotal feedback suggests that clients who engaged in the workshop series felt better prepared and more receptive to information when they were matched.



*I would really recommend anyone who is waiting for an assistance dog with Dogs for Good to do the family dog workshop. It was so helpful and made me feel more prepared and confident*

Assistance dog client

- **64** individuals took part in our dementia family dog workshops
- **2,297** individuals have attended our autism family dog workshops since they began in 2008
- **93** individuals took part in our physical disability family dog workshops.

## Working to raise standards across the sector

We are committed to helping raise standards in assistance dog work through our active involvement with industry organisations. This year, we worked closely with fellow members of Assistance Dogs UK to put together the Shared Outcomes Framework. This will set out clear guidance for all members on how to gather data and build a framework for effectively measuring the impact of their work, with learnings shared across all assistance dog organisations.

In November, we passed our Assistance Dogs International accreditation. The assessors' report highlighted Dogs for Good as an exemplar of best practice. There was also praise for our team's professionalism, compassion and commitment.

## Understanding our impact

This year we undertook our first major impact survey, in partnership with VET AI and with support from Ceva Animal Health. Our report, *Creating possibility*, brings together feedback from clients across our services (see below). "It was inspiring to see how deeply our services resonate, and to learn that the positive effects often extend beyond the individual," says Selina Gibsone, Research and Development Manager. Looking ahead, we are working to develop effective models for calculating our reach and impact.



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

**94%**

said they felt more confident managing day-to-day relationships and **93%** said they felt more confident about leaving the house



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



Download our *Creating Possibility* report to see our impact and how we're shaping the future

# Building an organisation for the future



## We are supporting our people by:

- Making sure all recruitment communications, including our job adverts, reflect the Dogs for Good culture and ethos.
- Creating a person-centred interview and induction process, embedding our promise at every stage.
- Recognising employee and volunteer contributions through our annual People & Dog Awards and Marsh Trust Awards for Volunteers.
- Continuing to provide opportunities for knowledge sharing through our development and education days.
- Introducing quarterly town hall meetings and weekly “all hands” meetings to strengthen cross-team working.
- Launching a leadership development programme for managers, focused on building coaching skills and supporting teams to feel confident and empowered.
- Making sure our people feel safe and well-supported through access to mental health first aiders, menopause champions, stronger lone-working practices, a Wellbeing Committee and a range of assistance programmes.

These activities, along with the forthcoming strategy, reflect the importance of embedding our culture, creating strong communication channels and encouraging cross-team working as we grow and develop the organisation.

**Our goal is to ensure that all our people – staff and volunteers alike – have the support they need to deliver services effectively and to realise their potential. By backing that support with robust infrastructure we can ensure our organisation is fit to meet the challenges – and embrace the opportunities – that lie ahead.**

## Strategic pillars 2, 3, 4 and 7

### Creating a connected team

Work is under way on our new People Strategy, scheduled for launch in 2026. The strategy aims to create a connected and engaged team of employees and volunteers, who are motivated and equipped to help us achieve our goal of positively impacting 6,000 individuals each year by 2028.

Changes already under way include building capacity in our people team. Our newly appointed People Operations Manager Sarah Knight is focused on how we can better support our employee community and deliver a person-centred service to our own people.



## Investing in volunteers

This year we appointed a new Head of Volunteering and Supporter Engagement, Patrick Makosch. Patrick’s focus to date has been on building capacity, creating a new team focused around functions including diversity of volunteering roles, community fundraising and mass participation.

“The goal is to speed up our volunteer recruitment pipeline by matching volunteer skills and experience directly to our organisational needs,” he says. The move also aligns with the work going on in our dog supply hub to empower volunteers to play a more active role in service delivery (see below). These changes are directly informed by the feedback from our Volunteer Engagement Survey.

**97%** of respondents to our Volunteer Engagement Survey said they felt proud to be a Dogs for Good volunteer, **81%** felt valued and **77%** felt supported.

As we scale up our provision and create a stronger community of staff and volunteers working together, it is essential that all colleagues feel connected and informed. Planned actions include creating clearer contact routes, setting standards for responding to enquiries, refreshing volunteer resources, providing more consistent briefings and support and providing more opportunities for volunteers to share feedback.



# 68

puppies were socialised by our volunteers in 2025



## Emma and Chewie: growing capacity through our volunteers

Emma, who was named Dog Volunteer of the Year at our 2025 Marsh Trust Awards (see page 12), qualified as a volunteer dog team in early 2025 along with pet labradoodle Chewie. Together, they are now supporting the Bracknell Walking and Wellbeing Group for adults with mental health challenges. “Having volunteers like Emma supporting a visit or session has a wider impact on our work,” says Services Manager Kelly Jennings. “It increases the number of people we can reach and means our community dogs can focus on more goal-based intervention work.”

## Scaling up delivery

Having spent 2024 laying the groundwork, we launched our dog supply hub in 2025. The goal is to trial and refine a new approach to dog development that exposes dogs to a wider range of experiences and situations, at their own pace.

“Of course, the goal is for our puppies to reach the standards we’re looking for in our working dogs,” says Jude Palmer, Head of Hub Development. “But the focus is more on supporting our volunteers to observe and understand, putting the emphasis on what the individual dog needs to reach each milestone.” Currently, the programme is in its pilot phase. “Design and delivery are running in tandem,” says Jude. “It takes a lot of flexibility but it should mean that in 2026 we can embed and share learnings from the pilot, and scale the model elsewhere.”



## Focus on health and welfare

We continued our work to develop a more joined up approach to dog welfare. Our Health and Welfare team now have their own caseload of dogs to support, ensuring more continuity of care from the puppy’s earliest days right through to partnership. In total the team actively supported **178 dogs** this year.

## Recognising people and dogs

Our People & Dog Awards and Marsh Trust Awards for Volunteers celebrated the brilliance of all our colleagues, both two-legged and four-legged. The winners and nominees all went above and beyond to support both people and dogs. We also celebrated our first Bridget Jeffery North Star award winner, Dogs for Good Research and Development Manager Selina Gibsone. Selina was recognised for truly embodying our promise and inspiring others through her actions and impact. The award was named in honour of occupational therapist Bridget Jeffery, who sadly passed away in 2025. A long-time Dogs for Good volunteer, Bridget provided many valuable insights into the delivery of person-centred support.

## A space fit for the future

The Frances Hay Centre, our national training centre in Banbury, Oxfordshire was established in 2001. For the past 25 years the centre has given us a home for developing our services, supporting our dogs, volunteers and staff to help us reach our goals.

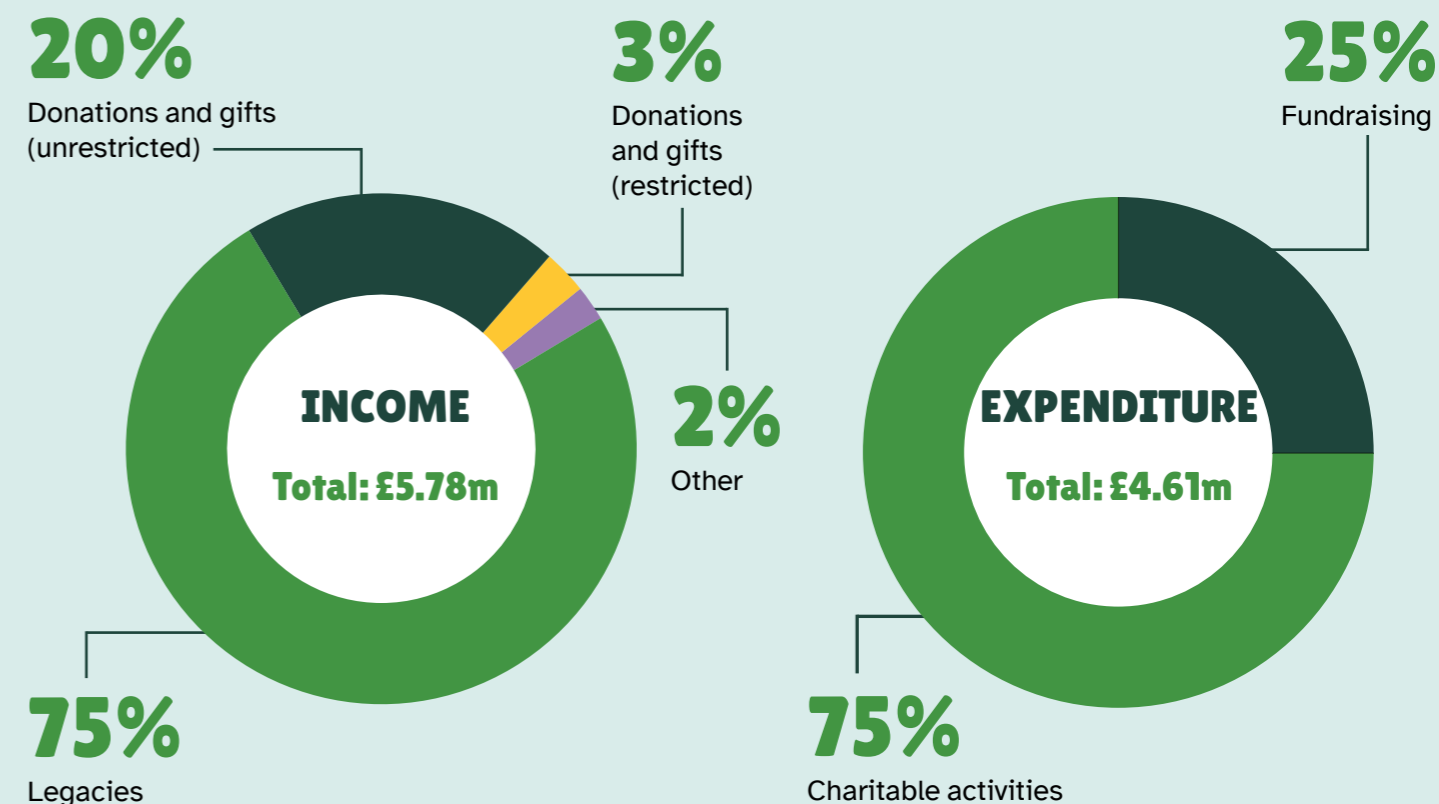
With the ambition to grow our services and work in a more person- and dog-centred environment, we have been working with our architects on plans to redevelop the buildings, including:

- shared working spaces to help teams work collaboratively together
- space to run animal assisted services directly from our centre
- improved accessibility
- dog areas designed to maximise rest and wellbeing, and
- dedicated areas for puppies, dogs and volunteers to work together.

Building work will start in 2026 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2027.



# Summary of accounts



## Thank you to our partners and supporters

We are grateful for all the support we receive through donations, fundraising and legacies. Special thanks go to the following companies and charitable trusts who supported us in 2025...

- Škoda UK
- Pets Foundation
- Ceva
- Wooden Spoon Charity
- Conference Care
- No Fear Bridge
- Wheelwrights’ Charity
- Hodge Foundation
- Hospital Saturday Fund

**SKODA**

**Pets Foundation**



**Wooden Spoon**  
The children’s charity of rugby

# We bring people and dogs together to make life possible

Watch our short video to see how



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

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