

Spring 2025

# PAWS FOR THOUGHT

The Dog A.I.D. Newsletter



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DOG A.I.D. TEAM

Greetings from the Dog A.I.D. Team! Our Spring newsletter has a real celebratory feel to it as we bring you news of our latest partnership successes, an update on the launch of our volunteer trainer mentoring programme and our Trainers of the Month for 2025 so far. We're delighted to share with you our new **"Pets as Partners"** series which tells the stories of our clients and the incredible impact that their Assistance Dog has. If you're inspired by these stories and want to find out how to support our life-changing work, check out our [Lend A Paw campaign page](#). Happy reading!

## Follow us on social media!



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# Celebrating Success!

**Congratulations to all of our partnerships  
celebrating assessment passes**

## **Level 3 Passes**

Sandy and Sky – trained by Zoe Axford

Hilary and Loki – trained by Vicky Welsh

Nat and Wisp – trained by Daniel Warren-Cummings

Jodie and Harmony – trained by Maurice Millington

## **Level 2 Passes**

Christine and Bear

Mark and Jackson

Teresa and Spring

Christina and Nala

Laura and Molly

AnnMarie and Cree

Amy and Arc

## **Annual Assessments**

Emma and Luna

Ann and Snoopy

Asha and Stanley

Richard and Odin

Danielle and Buddy

Ruth and Willow

## **Annual Assessments**

Gillian and Rhoda

Kate and Skye

Hannah and River

Alison and Poppy

Denise and Dexter

Michele and Cocoa

# Dog A.I.D.'s partnership with Reech

In early March, Dog A.I.D. hosted a filming event at **Holiday Inn, Telford** supported by our friends from the Shropshire-based marketing agency **Reech**. Dog A.I.D. was fortunate enough to be chosen as Reech's 2024 charity partner and recipient of a year's marketing support from them. We were excited to welcome members of the Reech team (all huge dog lovers!) who had a great day filming and taking photographs of some of our partnerships and volunteers. The beautiful footage that they captured will be vital in raising awareness of the life-changing work of our charity.



It's been a fabulous experience working alongside Reech as part of their **Reech and Reward initiative** which provides expert marketing support to charities to help achieve their goals and amplify their impact. As our project with Reech comes to an end, we will have **very exciting news to share with you** which we will be announcing in our Summer newsletter. Look out for the news at the beginning of July.

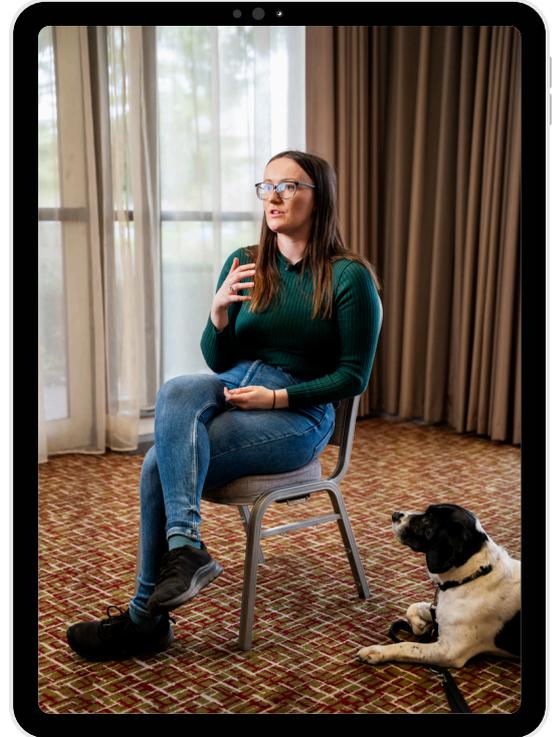


# Dog A.I.D. volunteer mentoring programme

## Training Advisor Beth talks about our new initiative supporting volunteer dog trainers

Dog A.I.D. has been piloting a brand new initiative - our **Training Mentoring Programme**. This programme has been created for dog trainers who have training skills and experience but want to build specific skills in **Assistance Dog training** and develop their confidence in this area.

**The mentoring programme is delivered online over a minimum of 6 weeks.** Delegates are asked to submit training videos and workbooks for feedback, as well as completing a quiz at the end. Throughout the course, delegates have bi-weekly check-ins with a member of the Dog A.I.D team as well as access to support from our training advisor via email.



When trainers have successfully completed the programme, they are ready to be matched with a client. **Our first volunteer to complete the programme said, “I really liked how the task-specific questions were built up...I thought the case studies were interesting and stimulating,** a good prep for issues I might encounter once I start working with a client. I also liked the training videos and the step-by-step summaries on how to teach certain behaviours. **The feedback received, whether written or given during a 1-2-1, was always helpful and supportive as well as thorough”.**

The programme was developed by **Dog A.I.D. training advisor Beth** (pictured above) who said, “I love working with new trainers passionate about Assistance Dogs and look forward to helping them build their skills and confidence about the industry”.

We’re hugely grateful to the Pets Foundation whose generous funding has supported the development of this programme. To find out more about the programme, email [trainers@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:trainers@dogaid.org.uk)



**Pets**  
Foundation

# TRAINERS OF THE MONTH 2025

**WE'RE CELEBRATING OUR HERO VOLUNTEER TRAINERS WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINER OF THE MONTH SO FAR IN 2025**

**Trainer of the Month for January...Jemma Russell!**

We were told: "Jemma is helpful, supportive and kind. She always tries to meet my individual needs during training. As a result of her dedication, my husband and I have both increased our knowledge of how to train Gabi, and Gabi has greatly benefitted from the sessions...We want to thank her for everything".

Jemma personifies the qualities of our amazing Dog A.I.D. volunteer trainers delivering person-centred support. Thank you Gemma!



**Trainer of the Month for February...Jessica Jones!**

We've received amazing feedback from Jessica's client, who is really happy with her coaching and feels their bond with their pet dog is even stronger since beginning training with Jessica.

Thank you so much for your hard work Jessica, and congratulations! We're so grateful to you for volunteering your skills and expertise with Dog A.I.D.



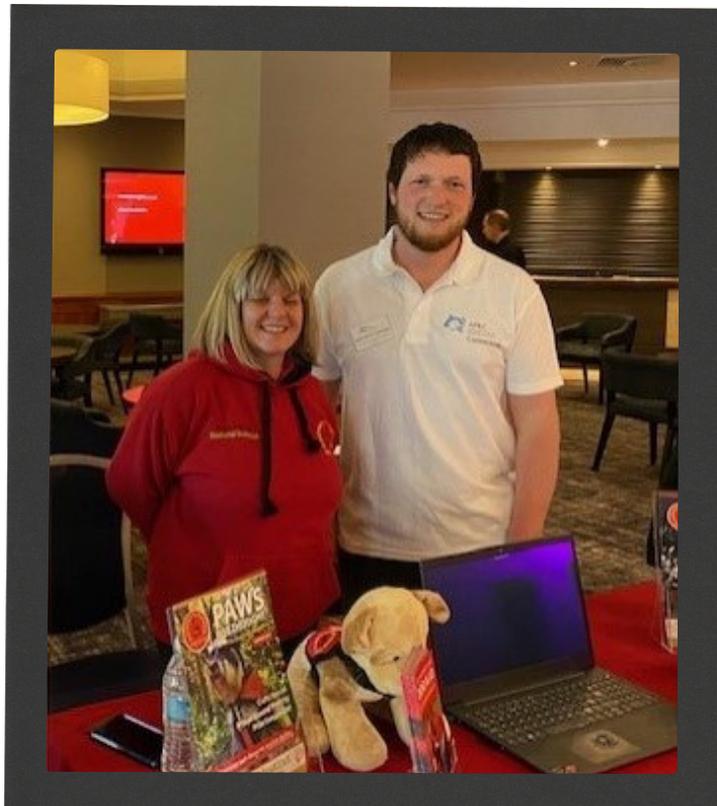
# TRAINERS OF THE MONTH 2025

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## **Trainer of the Month for March...Daniel Warren-Cummings!**

Daniel has recently helped his client-Assistance Dog partnership achieve a pass in their Level 3 assessment, which is fantastic news. He also regularly helps out with annual assessments, increasing our capacity to ensure that our qualified partnerships retain their vital accreditation.

Thank you so much Daniel, we really appreciate everything you do for us!



## **Trainer of the Month for April...Lyn Alton!**

Lyn is working with her first partnership with Dog A.I.D. and we have had the most phenomenal feedback from her client. Lyn has formed a fantastic working relationship with the partnership and their family, with them praising her communication, knowledge, and professionalism.

Lyn is pictured (second from left) with her team from Wagtail Walks and training. Lyn has also been fundraising for Dog A.I.D. since becoming a volunteer. We're so grateful for her support!



# Could you be a Dog A.I.D. Trustee?

## Do you have the skills to help us grow and develop our charity?

Dog A.I.D. is a small charity that has a **huge** impact. We change lives by coaching physically Disabled people to train their own pet dog to become an Assistance Dog, enabling independence and increased confidence in our clients.

We are currently recruiting for two talented volunteers to join our Board of Trustees, including a Secretary to the Board, who will play a vital role in growing and developing our charity. Dog A.I.D. currently has over **400 people waiting to access our services** so growth to meet demand is at the heart of our three year strategy. We are particularly keen to hear from **people with lived experience of physical disability and/or people with expertise in law, fundraising, safeguarding or charity governance.**



The Trustees collectively oversee, and have legal responsibility for Dog A.I.D.'s governance, management, values and strategic development. Being a charity Trustee is a responsible role but also an incredibly interesting and rewarding one where you have the opportunity to see your experience and skills make a real difference.



Dog A.I.D.'s Trustees meet at least four times per year, usually online via Teams but we have plans to have some face-to-face meetings and Away Days in the future. Trustees are asked to make a commitment to attend each meeting and to represent the Board on committees where they have specific interests and/or expertise. Trustees are also asked to take part in training and strategic development meetings and contribute to decision making and discussion via email where necessary.

In return for your time and commitment, you will receive full training and support to undertake the role. For an informal conversation please email our Deputy Chair - [isobel.michael@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:isobel.michael@dogaid.org.uk)

# Pets as Partners

In the first of our “Pets as Partners” series, we would like to introduce you to **Lillie and Ignatius, the Assistance Dog who’s challenging assumptions!**

**Lillie Abbott** is both a client and volunteer trainer with Dog A.I.D. We’re grateful to Lillie for sharing her story with us!

Lillie said, **“Before Ignatius, I had a wonderful Dog A.I.D. Assistance Dog named Ezekiel, a German Shepherd who completely transformed my life.** My health challenges had made everyday tasks difficult, and I found myself struggling with things that many people take for granted, picking up dropped items, opening doors, or even feeling confident enough to go out alone. **Ezekiel was my lifeline, giving me back my independence** and allowing me to navigate the world in a way that felt safe and manageable. Ezekiel eventually needed to retire...that’s where Ignatius came in. He had been planned for about three years before he was even born, and from the moment he arrived, he was full of personality, sassy, clever, and completely in tune with me. **I realised that Ignatius had the perfect temperament and drive to step into the role”.**



FILM NEGATIVE



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

“At first glance, Ignatius **might not be the breed people expect to see working as an Assistance Dog.** He’s a miniature long-haired Dachshund, and I know people are sometimes surprised when they see him in action. **But having worked with the breed before, I knew their capabilities, and Ignatius has proven time and time again just how incredible small dogs can be in this role.** He has an amazing work ethic, and despite his size, he’s able to help me with so many vital tasks. One of the most impressive things he does is remove my bank card from card machines, something that’s become even more important as my grip strength has changed over time.

Ignatius took to training brilliantly...**our training journey lasted around 12 to 18 months,** and while there were challenges along the way, **seeing him develop into a fully qualified Assistance Dog was incredible”.**

# Pets as Partners

“Since qualifying, Ignatius has given me so much more than just practical support—he’s completely changed my confidence and independence. He comes to work with me every day, allowing me to go about my daily life without needing to rely on others. I feel more secure knowing he’s there, and I’ve been able to do things I might have hesitated to do before.

We’ve also had some amazing opportunities together. This year, we took part in the Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme silver and gold displays at Crufts, where Ignatius proudly wore his Assistance Dog jacket in the ring. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase how effective small dogs can be in assistance roles and to challenge the assumptions people often have about what an Assistance Dog “should” look like. Ignatius has also recently been involved in some filming for Dog A.I.D., which is really exciting. I love being able to give back and raise awareness about the incredible work Dog A.I.D. does”.

“I’ve also been involved with Dog A.I.D. as a trainer and assessor since around 2019. This role is one of the most rewarding things I do because I know firsthand how life-changing an Assistance Dog can be. I’ve been in that position of training my own dog, feeling the pressure of assessments, and working towards that ultimate goal of qualification. That perspective allows me to put clients at ease during assessments, supporting them through what can sometimes feel like a daunting process. My aim is always to make sure they feel empowered and confident in their partnership because I know just how much of a difference an Assistance Dog can make.

Ignatius is not just my assistance dog, he’s my partner, my constant companion, and my greatest source of independence. I’m so proud of everything we’ve achieved together, and I’m beyond grateful to Dog A.I.D. for making it all possible”.

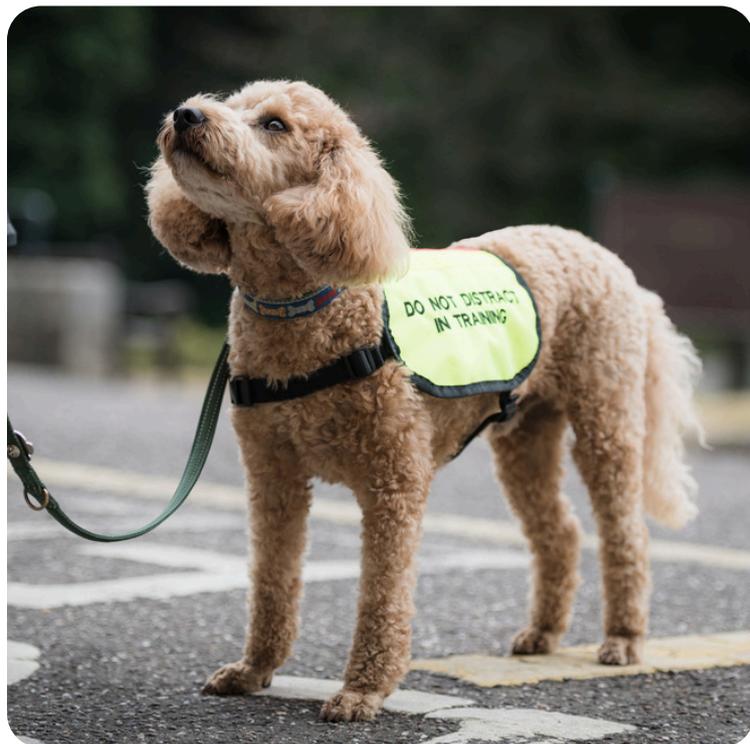


# Pets as Partners

**Ann started training with “life-changing” Assistance Dog Snoopy in 2021 and is now a passionate fundraiser and advocate for Dog A.I.D.**

**Ann Blake** has undertaken some incredible work raising funds and awareness for our charity. Thank you Ann for sharing your story with us!

Ann was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy (MD) in 2018. Ann said “MD was very fast. I went from going to the gym four times a week to having little energy. I couldn’t walk far and was falling over a lot”. Ann started thinking about training an Assistance Dog to support her and welcomed Snoopy to her home in April 2020. Ann said, **“I applied to train with Dog A.I.D. in 2021 and was so happy when I was accepted. I started to train with volunteer trainer Carol”**.



Carol coached Ann in dog training techniques so that she could train Snoopy to be her Assistance Dog. Ann recalls **“I’d never trained to that level but Carol broke it all down, teaching me to watch Snoopy’s body language and always finish on a high.** It me something to focus on and distraction from the pain. We taught Snoopy to nose touch with a margarine tub and then press, and then applied this to a button to open a door. It was phenomenal as **you really understand how a dog interacts with you and get to read them due to the training process”**.

**Snoopy has been trained to undertake a variety of tasks to support Ann, including fetching items like slippers, helping her undress, emptying the washing machine and picking up dropped items.** Snoopy not only undertakes practical tasks but also gets Ann out and about. She said, **“When you have a dog to look after, you have to get up in the morning. It gives a lot of motivation.** Snoopy travels on my Trampler to go to the forest for a walk”.

# Pets as Partners



Ann wanted to give back to both Dog A.I.D. and Muscular Dystrophy UK. Inspired by the book “The Boy The Mole The Fox and The Horse”, Ann has worked with friends in art and publishing to create **A Legacy of Love, a book full of beautiful art work and quotes by artists from across the world.** The book even contains art by celebrity artists including Gilson Lavis, a former bandmate and drummer for Jools Holland and actress Karen Attenborough.

So far, **Ann has donated an incredible £3,000 from the sale of the book to Dog A.I.D.** She has been interviewed about her fundraising by the BBC and Daily Express, and continues to **tirelessly raise awareness about Dog A.I.D. in schools and community groups** as well as fundraise through events.

Snoopy attends all of Ann’s talks and shows off his Assistance Dog skills!

Ann said, **“Snoopy comes everywhere with me. I have more confidence to go out as people interact with you.** It’s easier to have conversations. He’s a real icebreaker as people will stop and talk to me about him whereas often if you’re in a wheelchair, people don’t know what to say. **Snoopy has a face that melts hearts”.**



# Our Lend a Paw Campaign!

**Dog A.I.D. works with physically Disabled people to coach them to train their own pet dog, utilising the bond that already exists between the owner and their pet, to become an accredited Assistance Dog.**

Our services are delivered by a U.K. wide network of incredible volunteer dog trainers. **We receive no government funding and rely on the generosity of individuals, businesses and communities to fund our work.**

**We would love for you to “lend a paw” to support our work and ensure that we can continue to deliver our life-changing services.** Any action you take, large or small, all adds up to create a huge impact, giving physically Disabled people more independence and choices in life.

**You can “lend a paw” by:**

**Donating** - We know that times are hard for everyone but even the smallest donation makes a massive difference! You can make a one-off donation or give a regular gift.

**Volunteering** - We couldn't deliver our work without the support of incredible volunteer dog trainers. By giving an hour a week, you could change the world for a physically Disabled person. In return for your knowledge and expertise, we provide full support and ongoing development opportunities for trainers.

**Supporting** - There are so many ways in which you could support Dog A.I.D.! You could host a collection tin or fundraising event at your school or place of work, like and share our posts on social media or deliver an awareness raising talk about Dog A.I.D. in your community.

To find out more, go to <https://dogaid.org.uk/lend-a-paw-campaign>

