



## GUIDELINES FOR SEIZURE ALERT DOG APPLICANTS

1. You should have a confirmed diagnosis of epilepsy.
2. You should have at least **10 major seizures** per month. Major seizures are defined as tonic clonic/atonic or complex partials-not including nocturnal seizures.
3. You should keep accurate seizure diaries.
4. You must be over the age of 16.
5. You should have a carer available.
6. You should have adequate daily support at home to ensure the dog's needs can be met at all times.
7. You should not have any changes to either your medication or vagal nerve stimulator, 6 months prior to attending the Information Day and throughout the assessment and training period.
8. It is not always possible to place a Seizure Alert Dog in a home where there is another household member who also has epilepsy.
9. It is not possible to place a Seizure Alert Dog in a home where there is already a pet dog.
10. All applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, creed, age or any other categories protected by law.
11. **YOU CANNOT HAVE YOUR OWN PET DOG TRAINED**
12. You should genuinely enjoy the close companionship of a dog and want to form a working relationship with one. You must have the ability to solely care for a dog without the help of another person.
13. It is not always possible to train a Seizure Alert Dog to alert if the applicant has a vagal nerve stimulator.
14. It is not possible to train a Seizure Alert Dog to alert if the applicant has non-epileptic/pseudo seizures.
15. A medical report will be obtained from your GP/hospital consultant.  
NB: Support Dogs will not cover the cost if any charge is incurred for obtaining these reports.

16. Any significant changes in personal circumstances\*, including any changes to drug therapy or medication, may affect applications.

17. Due to the workload and commitment that is required if accepted onto this programme we ask that if the applicant has any children the youngest must be at least 12 months of age prior to applying.

*\*please be aware this includes becoming pregnant whilst going through the application/training process. If this was to occur it may result in the application being put on hold or withdrawn, you may then be reconsidered once the child has reached at least 12 months of age.*

## **FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS**

All applicants must consider the financial commitments of having a Seizure Alert Dog. The following outlines the commitment of each party:

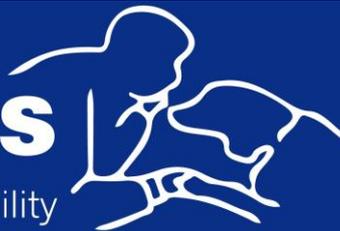
### **COMMITMENT OF APPLICANT:**

- Dog food
- Dog treats
- Dog toys
- Travel expenses to Training Centre for the purpose of training and aftercare visits
- Meal allowance whilst training at the Training Centre
- Vet bills up to excess
- Dog insurance

**Funding may be available in full or part for these costs through direct payments**

### **COMMITMENT OF SUPPORT DOGS:**

- Accommodation during extra training visits to our National training centre
- Instructor training costs
- Support Dog Jacket (unless lost, a charge may be made to cover the replacement).
- Specific worming and flea treatment products are available.
- Specific vaccines are available.



## PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING FOR A SEIZURE ALERT DOG

1. The applicant contacts the training centre to confirm a place on an Information Day. **NB** the applicant must be both stable on their medication for the past 6 months and have completed 6 months of seizure diaries prior to attending an Information Day. The information day will provide you with details that are relevant to the Seizure Alert Dog Training Programme; such as eligibility and criteria, the assessment procedure and what is involved in the training programme. Where possible an existing partnership of the relevant training programme will also share their experience with potential applicants. Applications will be available to applicants that are both eligible and wish to begin the process of applying for a Seizure Alert Dog.

The application pack will include:

- a. Application Form
  - b. Medical Declaration Consent Form.
2. The **application form, medical declaration consent form** and a **recent passport sized photo** of the applicant need to be returned to Support Dogs by the deadline that was given on the Information Day. **NB** Applications that have been received after the given date will not be processed until the following Information Day applications have been received (this would be approximately 4 months afterwards) From this point onwards the applicant should keep an accurate record regarding **ALL** of their seizures. If upon receipt of the application form, any of the above information is not returned to Support Dogs, Support Dogs will not begin to process it until the necessary information has been received.

**PLEASE BE AWARE; Applicants must not have any changes to either their medication or vagal nerve stimulator SIX months prior to the Information Day and throughout the assessment and training period of a dog.**

3. A letter of confirmation of receipt will be sent to the applicant.
4. The application form is initially assessed as the first part of the procedure. A medical report will be obtained from both the applicant's general practitioner and from the applicant's hospital consultant. Further reports may be obtained from any other professional person with the knowledge of the applicant's condition. **NB** Any request for payment for these reports will be the applicants' responsibility.
5. If successful following the receipt of medical reports, the applicants will attend a preliminary interview at the training centre. It is essential that all members of the immediate family and regular carers are present. At this stage applicants will be required to bring up to date seizure diaries.
6. If successful following the preliminary interview applicants will then attend the training centre for assessment and evaluation of their dog handling ability. This is to enable us to select a suitable dog and establish whether the applicant has a natural

rapport with dogs and have the potential to handle a dog at the standards required for public access.

7. If successful following the dog handling assessment a home visit will be carried out to assess the suitability of the home environment. It is essential that all members of the immediate family and regular carers are present to enable us to discuss fully the implications of a Seizure Alert Dog in the home.
8. Successful applicants will be offered a place on a training course and put on a waiting list for a suitable dog to become available. **NB** Any significant changes in personal circumstances, including any changes to drug therapy, medication or their vagal nerve stimulator, may affect their application.
9. Provided there has been no significant change of personal circumstances of the applicant, including changes in medication, when a potential dog has been identified applicants will be invited to attend the training centre for up to three days to establish their suitability for the dog. Applicants must be accompanied by a carer.
10. Successful applicants attend an initial three week residential training course arranged by Support Dogs. You **must** be accompanied by a carer during this period. During this time the client will learn individual handling techniques for their dog and the dog will be taught specific responses associated with the client's seizures.
11. The Support Dog instructor must feel the Seizure Alert Dog has seen sufficient number of seizures at the training centre prior to allowing the dog to return home with the applicant. This is to ensure the Seizure Alert Dog has created a positive association around the seizures.
12. Prior to returning home applicants must insure/take over the insurance cover for the dog.
13. The charity only has limited funds but recognises the need to meet the cost of hotel accommodation during periods of residential training.
14. On successful completion of residential training the client and dog will return home. A Support Dog instructor will then carry out a 3-5 day placement with the client and dog in their own home.
15. Depending upon seizure frequency the client may be required to attend a further period of residential training at a later stage. This will be decided by the Training Manager.
16. Partnerships will be required to complete 6 months as an in training partnership and the dog must be reliable in the task/s that they have been trained prior to being considered for graduation to become a fully registered assistance dog.
17. Applicants who complete their graduation complete a Licence Agreement and undertake to return a progress report each month for the first six months.
18. Regular visits will be made to graduated partnerships by training centre staff, including extra training carried out at the training centre.
19. Graduated partnerships will also be required to attend the training centre once per year to assess social and training standards are being maintained.

## JACKIE'S STORY

Fifteen years ago Jackie Evans from North Nottinghamshire was busy vacuuming her home. There was nothing particularly unusual about the day except that on this occasion Jackie found herself lying on the floor looking into her neighbour's face. Jackie's young son had called the neighbour for help but Jackie herself didn't have a clue what had happened.

At age 38 and without any warning it was her first epileptic seizure, although of course Jackie didn't realize it at the time. It was only several months later when the same thing had happened on a number of occasions that medical checks diagnosed the condition.



"I was devastated," comments Jackie. "The hospital said I wasn't allowed to cook, bathe, drive or do many of the everyday tasks looking after my house and family without being supervised! I couldn't imagine living my life that way forever and it was incredibly distressing. I had originally hoped to return to work once my son was older, but there was no chance of that either."

The situation was made even worse when Jackie was found to be allergic to many anti-convulsion medications. Of the 450,000 people with epilepsy in the UK, only 70% can be helped by medication, leaving the remaining 30% living with the fear of an attack that can strike at any time without warning.

Jackie's confidence plummeted and she became afraid to leave her home scared of making an exhibition of herself during a seizure or worse being robbed whilst she was not conscious. Even people who knew her appeared to cross the road and avoid her.

"It was like having a stigma attached to you," explains Jackie. "Then I read an article about Support Dogs in the British Epilepsy Society's magazine. There was never a question about whether to apply. I knew a Seizure Alert Dog was the only option left if I was to ever lead even the semblance of a normal life."

Now Jackie is on her second Support Dog and has found a new lease of life. Her first dog Sammy, a miniature Schnauzer, retired recently when her newest dog Ginny a cute crossbreed qualified.

Ginny who is aged three is a rescue dog that was found wandering the streets of Sheffield and after remaining unclaimed, was offered to the charity for training.

"Ginny will jump up and lick me madly to alert me that I am about to have a seizure," Jackie explains. "She does the same thing wherever I am; in the street, in the supermarket, or just in the house cooking dinner. It means I can get somewhere more private to avoid the embarrassment and to get to a safe place to avoid injury. I once collapsed in the middle of the road after a seizure before I had my Support Dogs. Luckily a motorist used his car to block the road and prevent me being severely injured."

Jackie credits her husband and son for their help during the training process as well as the constant support of the charity. When asked to sum up what her Support Dogs mean to her, Jackie says:  
"It's better than winning the Lottery."

## LYNN & DOUGAL'S STORY

I was diagnosed with epilepsy in 1998. I'd had a head injury at a funfair, that evening I had a seizure, although I didn't know it was a seizure at the time. We never thought any more about it after my 'funny turn', but then they started happening more frequently. When my GP suggested it might be epilepsy, I went immediately into denial. I found, as some people do, that a diagnosis of epilepsy is difficult to accept. It was particularly difficult for me, since I highly value my independence.



The impact of seizures on my everyday life was huge. It affected me quite dramatically. Immediately I lost my driving licence and I had to start epilepsy medication which had nasty side effects. Despite these medications, I've never had complete control. Ultimately I lost my job because of my epilepsy, which I found devastating.

As far as my independence goes, everyday tasks that I used to take for granted suddenly became hazardous to me. Things like having a bath, cooking, ironing and going out and about. I was wary of going out on my own; my confidence was knocked quite severely. Your relationships with people are affected; my mum became extremely protective of me.

I went along to the Epilepsy Action branch in Stockport; there was a young man who had a Support Dog. When I asked him about the dog, he told me that she was a Seizure Alert Dog and could give him an advanced warning of a seizure.

I got in contact with Support Dogs and began the process to apply for a Seizure Alert Dog. There is a lot involved in the process before you eventually come home with your dog. I met Dougal in February 2008. The trainer was pleased, so I went for my intensive training. Fortunately for me, Dougal was a quick learner. By the time he came home with me, he was already alerting me to imminent seizures.

Dougal gives me a 10-minute alert. If I'm at home watching TV he'll come and sit right in front of me blocking the telly. When I ask him 'what's the matter' if he is alerting to a seizure he will whine, if I am not sure I'll get one of his toys and try playing with him, if he is trying to alert me he just won't play he will just carry on looking at me and then I know I need to prepare for a seizure.

Having Dougal in my life has made it complete again. He has given me the independence that I have been seeking for the last ten years and has enabled me to have the relationship I should have with my family and friends.

Dougal means the world to me and I can't imagine life without him, he has transformed my life from being dependant to independent, he is so special, I love him to bits.

For more information about Support Dogs visit [www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk).