Dementia Dog Project
A collaboration between Alzheimer Scotland and Dogs for Good

Job Description

Dementia Community Dog Handler

Purpose of the post

Alzheimer Scotland and Dogs for Good are collaborating on a project called Dementia Dog Project, to further explore the ways trained dogs can support people with dementia, their carers and family in the community.

The Dementia Dog Project has secured a National Lottery grant from the Big Lottery Fund, enabling the team to take their learnings beyond an individual assistance dog approach to trial different approaches to help support people with dementia in community settings.

This grant will be fully funding this post. This role is a unique and exciting opportunity to join the Dementia Dog Project team and help pioneer new ways to support people who are living with dementia in Scotland's communities.

It will allow the project to build on previous trials and pilot a small-scale series of 'Dog Day' community events and goal-oriented therapy intervention pilots in Scotland and trial areas in England, using trained dogs. Delivery will involve recruitment and training of small pools of volunteers and pet dogs in each trial area.

The Dementia Community Dog Handler will be the primary technical person involved in a range of Animal Assisted Intervention initiatives. This includes the advanced training of dementia community dogs at the project's operational base at HMP Castle Huntly.

Successful applicants will have a positive and proactive approach to making a difference for people living with dementia. A flexible can-do attitude, strong technical dog handling experience and people skills will be vital to this exciting role, as well as a willingness to regularly travel. The successful candidate may be required to accommodate a trained dementia community dog in their home on a frequent basis.

Accountability

The Dementia Community Dog Handler will report to the Project Manager. There will be 'dotted line' support for the technical elements of the project from Dogs for Good's Development team.

Posts managed

The Dementia Community Dog Handler will not manage any posts.

Main duties and responsibilities

1. Carry out advance training of up to two dementia community dogs, in line with agreed Dogs for Good procedures and established Animal Assisted Intervention standards. This will

involve additional dementia specific task work for the dogs, with support from the Dementia Dog Project team.

This training will involve working at the project base at HMP Castle Huntly open prison alongside the Dementia Dog Instructor to contribute towards the established prisoner rehabilitation program on site.

2. Work closely with the Project team and identified colleagues to help identify and understand the specific needs of clients to be supported in the community; decide their suitability, making appropriate recommendations to the Project Manager.

3. Facilitate the development of quality and safe working partnerships between individual/groups of clients and suitably trained dogs to support the specific needs of each individual or client group.

4. Maintain accurate robust records and provide verbal and written information within agreed timescales about specific interventions, clients, dogs as appropriate.

5. Contribute towards the establishment of new assessment standards for trained dogs and handlers in dementia settings

6. Recruit, train and support local teams of volunteer handlers with pet dogs

7. Undertake training assessments of dogs and handlers involved in the project interventions as required, using pre-agreed assessment procedures.

8. Ensure that in all interventions, the project is meeting the physical and emotional needs of the dogs.

9. To act as a professional ambassador at all times for the Dementia Dog Project and partner organisations when dealing with colleagues, members of the public, funders, the media and wider project stakeholders such as statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

10. Provide support to other staff members, as required by line manager.

11. Liaise with and provide support for volunteers who assist the charity.

12. Any other task agreed with your line manager.

Key Competencies

1. Ability to provide high quality personal judgement in relation to the following:
    - Dog training matters including the analysis of temperaments, appropriate training methods and requirements, public image, solution of training and behavioural problems and referral options.
    - Client training including adult learning styles, training approaches, specific and relevant programmes to be followed, welfare and safety and appropriate time for referral to others.
    - Appropriate support to colleagues.
    - Dealings with clients and members of the public.

2. Excellent interpersonal and teamwork skills.

3. Ability to plan work, be organised and ensure that time is utilised effectively for yourself, colleagues and clients.

4. Ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with a wide range of people internally and externally. This will include clients and their families, other professional service providers, members of the public, the media, managers and other colleagues.

5. Ability to positively embrace change by not only being flexible towards the ideas of others but also putting forward ideas to colleagues that will enable the project's work to develop. This will involve creativity in problem solving and making appropriate responses to new ideas and unexpected situations.

6. Knowledge in the following areas:
   - Activities of Dogs for Good and Alzheimer Scotland
   - Activities of the Dementia Dog Project to date
   - Basic theory of practical dog training
   - Understanding of Animal Assisted Intervention and its successful application
   - Law in relation to dogs
   - Some understanding of dementia
   - Client interview and selection procedures
   - Health and safety implications of dog and client handling

7. Data management and data entry skills.

Other Requirements

1. You will be required to hold a full UK Driving Licence.

2. As you will be working with vulnerable people, you will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check and adhere to all of the charity's Safeguarding policy and procedures.

3. As part of the role, you will be frequently required to work and stay away from home for short periods. Therefore a flexible approach to travel is essential.

4. Flexible working hours will be required in some instances to facilitate the effective delivery of the work

All responsibilities and duties are to be carried out according to Alzheimer Scotland's standards, policies and procedures as described in the organisation's manuals and Practice Standards and the Animal Assisted Intervention standards, National Care Standards and Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

Salary: The post is graded £23,500 - £24,931

The post holder will be subject to Enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks.

This job description is open to review by the organisation and was last agreed

Alzheimer Scotland

Dementia Community Dog Handler

Person Specification

This person specification should be read with the job description for the post of Dementia Community Dog Handler. Please note that the competencies are not ranked in priority order.

The following criteria will be used in short-listing candidates and in appointing the successful applicant.

	Essential	Desirable
Attributes and values		
Self-motivated, dynamic, and able to work without close supervision.	√	
Understanding of and empathy with the organisation's aims and values.	√	
Full and valid driving licence and access to a vehicle during working time.	√	
Willingness to travel within the defined geographical area	√	
Ability to problem solve and positively embrace change	√	
Shows a commitment to and understanding of equal opportunities, the elimination of discrimination and the empowerment of individuals and groups.	√	
Education		
Good general education.	√	
Knowledge of current and developing health and social care policy agenda		√
Experience and knowledge		
Understanding and experience of training and handling dogs	√	
Understanding of Animal Assisted Intervention standards and its different therapy applications	√	
Understanding of the needs of people living with dementia		√
Experience of working with volunteers	√	
Experience and understanding of training clients with dogs, using different training approaches to support differing learning needs	√	
Excellent team working skills and experience of influencing others from a cross section of the community.	√	

Communication		
Approachable, with excellent listening skills, tact and the ability to offer support and encouragement in a non-judgemental manner.	√	
Ability to communicate effectively with both internal and external teams	√	
Good interpersonal and communication skills both verbal and written.	√	
Experience of delivering presentations and meeting facilitation		√
IT skills		
Ability to input data accurately, use email and other computer packages.	√	
Personal qualities		
Good organisational skills and proven ability to manage own time and workload.	√	
Effective negotiation skills	√	
Team work		
Ability to work effectively as member of a small team.	√	