

Pets As Therapy



The PAT Dog hospital visiting scheme was devised by Lesley Scott-Ordish when she became aware of the unhappy situation facing many elderly people who have to give up their loved dogs to go into residential care.

PAT Dogs visit hospitals, hospices, residential homes, schools in fact anywhere they are welcome, dogs are owned by volunteers all of whom are members of the sister charity PRO Dogs.

Volunteers normally visit once a week for 1-2 hours, this of course is flexible and must fit into schedules for all concerned.

The scheme has been found to have all round benefits for people as well as the dog being the centre of attention!

Can any dog become a PAT Dog?

Yes, to apply you need to have owned the dog for at least 6 months, this is to ensure that a good bond has been established, there are no stipulations on breed, size or age of dog other than the dog must be at least 6 months of age, although it must be said,

an older dog would maybe find this work rather tiring, your dog will need to be tested to assess suitability for the work.

How do I apply?

Write to Pets As Therapy at 6 New Road, Ditton, Kent ME20 6AD enclosing a large stamped self-addressed envelope.

You will be sent an application form to be completed by you with various questions relating to your dogs personality and whether you attend any training classes, if you have passed any of the 3 levels of the Kennel Club 'Good Citizen' scheme then these can be stated on the form.

A form is also included for the person carrying out the required temperament test on your dog, this will give you an insight into what the assessor is looking for.

How do I get my dog tested and what does it involve?

The temperament test is carried out by a Veterinary Surgeon or a PAT Dog accredited tester. The person carrying out the test will check that your dog is sociable and friendly without being over-boisterous. Your dog should be calm and gentle when being groomed or stroked. The examiner will also want to see how your dog reacts to a sudden noise. Your dog will need to have a current vaccination certificate and be healthy and clean. Your dogs doesn't have to be 'dog friendly' it is human interaction that is important, although not being agreeable with other dogs will stop 'Fido' from being involved in any events such as sponsored walks, etc. Lastly two character references are required for the volunteer.

Staffords as PAT Dogs

There are many Staffords who have successfully registered as PAT dogs, at present there are 42 active Staffords that are working daily to help people by offering unconditional love, (second nature to a Stafford) which is often one of the most missed aspects of a persons life which should help life be more bearable and to help speed recovery.

Pets As Therapy (continued)

Then there are Staffords that show what the temperament is all about. Gus owned by Jean Bond, is a registered PAT dog and is a great ambassador for the breed. Gus was rescued by the RSPCA from a dog fighting ring, where he was used as a bait dog, he had his paws slashed and then strung up for the other dogs to attack, he spent 6 months undergoing treatment before being rehomed and now lives each day to the full, making his 4 weekly visits to different hospices, hospitals and residential homes in the East Anglian

region. Gus has recently been short-listed for the 'Golden Bone' award for his work, the good publicity this has generated in the area has been tremendous and can only be good for the breed in today's intolerant society.

Wendy Clewley

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