

Volunteer Role Description

Breeding Scheme - Brood Holder

Based from: The Grange, Saunderton

Coordinator: Claire Jones

What is a Brood holder?

The role of a brood holder is to foster one of our hearing dog mums and allow the dog to live long term in their home. The dog would live with your family, similar to a pet dog, with the addition of having up to 4 litters of puppies which mum would give birth to in your home. The puppies would stay under your care until they are 8 weeks of age and ready to move on to their individual puppy training volunteer.

Dogs accepted onto the scheme may vary in age but are usually between 10-18 months old. All dogs accepted onto the breeding scheme will be continually assessed and may at any time be withdrawn from the scheme. This can be for temperament or health reasons. Dependent upon the age of the dog when withdrawn the holder may be able to adopt the dog in the long term. If the dog is under 3 years of age, they may be assessed for their suitability as a Hearing Dog or an alternate career.

Main tasks?

- To allow the dog to live in your home long term.
- To bring the dog to the Grange centre for matings, this may include coming in on weekends and bank holidays.
- Visit the Grange regularly for health checks.
- To allow the brood to give birth (whelp) in your home and care for the puppies until they are eight weeks old. (This requires a degree of flexibility on the volunteer's part during these eight weeks).
- To exercise and feed the dog as instructed by the volunteer coordinator.
- Visit the Grange regularly for training classes.

What's in it for you?

Hearing Dogs is indebted to our nationwide network of volunteers who assist in attaining and furthering the charity's objectives. Whether it's a dog care role, fundraising, speaking, gardening, office work, driving or supporting our shop or restaurants, every single volunteer contribution is equally as valid in making Hearing Dogs such a worthwhile charity. By volunteering with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People you are helping a deaf person leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.

As well as helping others, volunteering has been shown to improve wellbeing too. It's human nature to feel good after helping someone out. Volunteering can also help you gain valuable new skills and experiences and boost your confidence.

We endeavour to champion and thank all our volunteers who give so generously of their time. We hold events and offer various opportunities to meet up with other volunteers, partnerships and dogs, either in person or online. From our most recent survey we know that 99% of responders enjoy being a member of the volunteer family and 99% would recommend it to others. When asked to give a TripAdvisor style rating to their volunteer experience, we received an impressive overall 4½ star review.

We hope all volunteers feel their time is well spent in supporting Hearing Dogs.

What are we looking for?

- A suitable home and a private, secure garden with direct access is essential.
- A quiet home life, preferably with no children of pre-school age or under.
- Volunteers must have access to a computer, email, and video calling facilities.
- A non-smoking household is needed, however outside-only smoking is fine. Vape smoking is also strongly recommended to be outside your property only.
- If there are other dogs in the household, they will need to be behaviourally assessed for suitability and must be neutered. Ideally no more than 2 other pet dogs in the house but more will be considered on an individual basis.
- May we politely ask that you think carefully about your availability before applying to be a volunteer and thereby engaging charity time and money. We require a long-term commitment for our Brood Holder role so if you have any major foreseen life changes on the horizon (e.g. moving house, getting a pet dog, new job, pregnancy) then it'd be preferable get back in touch when your circumstances are more settled please.

Support

- We supply all the food, bedding, toys & equipment needed to look after a dog & carry out this role. We also cover vet bills & any medical expenses.
- We can help with sundry expenses and mileage.
- We can arrange short term cover with another volunteer during holidays, with advanced notice or in the case of an emergency.

What happens next?

- Once we have received and processed your application, a member of our Puppy Supply Team will contact you to arrange a time to visit you and carry out a home visit.

- Once your application is complete, we will begin to match you with the right dog. There are various factors to consider at this stage, therefore there may be a wait before receiving a dog.

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check: Not required for this role.

Frequently Asked Questions

When is the brood able to have her first litter of puppies?

All broods must have had 1 season and be 14 months (smaller breeds) or 22 months (larger breeds) before breeding for the first time.

How often will a brood have a litter?

Each brood must have a rest season after each litter. Seasons can be between 6 and 12 months.

How do you choose which dogs join the Breeding Scheme?

All breeding scheme dogs must have a range of temperament assessments throughout training. If they are deemed suitable, they will have a thorough exam from a veterinarian before being accepted as a brood or stud, and annually thereafter until retirement. They must have any specialist checks done as dictated by breed type before acceptance as a brood or stud and at intervals advised by the specialist thereafter, these are often annually. Examples of these are hip scoring, elbow grading and PRA eye screening in appropriate breeds.

What breeds do you use, and can I choose what breed I get?

The breeds we use at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People are Miniature Poodles, Cocker Spaniels (Show & Working types and Show X Working) and Labradors. You can let us know what breed you would prefer. Please note there may be a longer wait for one breed than others.

How long will the brood be in the scheme for?

Broods retire in their 7th year or earlier and will have no more than 4 litters in their lifetime. After this time, you will be able to adopt the dog.

How are the puppies suitably socialised once they are born?

Litters are provided with comprehensive early socialisation programmes as appropriate to their age whilst with their mother from 3 - 8 weeks. This is then continued by the socialisation department when the pups are transferred to individual volunteer homes.

How much space is needed for the brood's whelping area?

Sufficient space is needed for the whelping area. Please do think carefully as to whether there is an appropriate, large, space with easy access to/from the garden for the brood and her puppies. Wipeable floors are a must – or the space can be covered in tarpaulin if needed. The area must be located where the pups can always be seen and where they can hear every day sounds around them. See below brood mum Fliss preparing for the arrival of her next litter. This space will be increased once the puppies' size and requirements start to grow.



Other information:

All breeding scheme dogs and their offspring must be micro-chipped.

Broods, studs and litters receive comprehensive vaccination, worming and de-fleaing programmes.

All broods and studs must be neutered by the charity prior to retirement.

Brood Holding & Coronavirus:

It has been necessary for Hearing Dogs to re-evaluate our working and volunteering practices since the outbreak of Coronavirus in March 2020.

Some of the reassessment and reorganisation that was necessary during the first lockdown has become embedded as standard into our training programmes to ensure we can raise and train our hearing dogs and puppies effectively whilst also ensuring the welfare and safety of our volunteers and staff in line with current Government instruction and law at any given time.

By introducing new working practices, advancing our technology, and following Government guidance Hearing Dogs is successfully continuing to maintain the vital services it provides to deaf people to the very best of our ability.

How does this affect you?

Here are some of the changes which have taken place since 2020 and that will continue for the foreseeable future:

- All puppy and dog training classes will be delivered as a mix of virtual and in-person group sessions. Volunteers must be able to attend both type of training classes.
- Home evaluations for new volunteers will be carried out in two parts; a questionnaire about your home and lifestyle, then your Volunteer Coordinator will be in touch to book an in-person visit to check your home and garden and go over any other questions.
- Our training centres in Buckinghamshire and East Yorkshire are open for essential pre-planned activity only, so please do not visit either site unless you have an arranged appointment.