

Assistance Dog Trainer

Assistance dog trainers work for charitable organisations who train dogs to help people with disabilities and medical conditions gain more independence.

The Work

You could be training:

- **guide dogs for blind or visually impaired people**, to help their owners get about every day, for example crossing roads or avoiding obstacles in busy areas
- **hearing dogs**, to alert deaf people to sounds such as door bells, smoke alarms, telephones, alarm clocks or crying babies
- **medical or seizure alert dogs**, to alert their owners with serious health conditions, such as diabetes or severe allergic reactions, before a medical emergency, or to alert their owner with epilepsy if they are about to have a seizure
- **disability assistance dogs**, to help people with physical disabilities carry out daily tasks such as opening and closing doors, or pressing buttons on phones or emergency alarms. They may also support children with autism to help them cope better in social settings and provide companionship.

In all cases, you could be:

- settling the dog in at the training centre, taking it for walks and playing with it to find out what its abilities are
- working alongside volunteers who foster dogs to give the dog basic training such as obeying simple voice commands, fetching skills or avoiding obstacles and stopping for traffic
- teaching the dog advanced skills, such as carrying out emergency response procedures, or picking items off supermarket shelves, loading and unloading washing machines, depending on the type of support dog
- matching the dog to the right person, for example, placing a lively, energetic dog with a young, active person
- teaching the new owner to feed, groom and care for the dog
- training the owner and dog together, to work as a team
- helping establish a dog in its new owner's home, making follow up home visits, to deal with any problems
- carrying out other duties, such as training other instructors, assisting in puppy socialisation classes, or keeping training records.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Salaries vary depending on the organisation, but generally you would earn between £16,000 and £18,000 a year

as a trainee, rising up to around £28,000 once fully qualified. With more experience this can rise to around £34,000 a year.

Conditions

- Your basic working week would be 35 hours, Monday to Friday, but you may have to work some evenings and weekends.
- You sometimes might have to work at short notice.
- You might have to live at the training centre.
- You may have to spend nights away from home, including weekends, while you are training the owner and dog together.
- You will have to travel to visit owners at their homes and workplaces.
- Some of your work would be outdoors, sometimes in bad weather.

Getting In

- This is a small profession and entry is competitive.
- Entry requirements can vary depending on the organisation, ranging from subjects at National 5, including English and Maths, and Highers through to a degree. Qualifications in dog behaviour, or experience in training dogs is also useful. Check individual employers for details.
- Courses in animal care or animal management are relevant.
- Experience of working with dogs (paid or voluntary) is essential, such as volunteering at a rescue centre or working in a kennels.
- Experience of working with people with disabilities is beneficial.
- You must be at least 18 years old and have a full driving licence, or be able to show how you would do the job without one.
- You must be fit enough to do physical work.
- For some posts you may require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

Guide Dogs (The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association) employs most assistance dog instructors. Other employers include [Canine Partners](#), [Dogs for Good](#), [Hearing Dogs for Deaf People](#) and [Support Dogs](#).

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- able to handle dogs and enjoy working with them
- able to plan and organise your work
- flexible and able to use your initiative
- reliable and responsible
- optimistic, positive and encouraging
- observant
- able to work alone without supervision, but as part of a wider team.

You need to have:

- excellent communication skills
- an understanding of issues faced by people with disabilities
- patience, with dogs and people.

Training

- You would receive on the job training from your employer.
- Depending on the organisation you work for, training can take up to 3 years. This might involve spending time away from home for up to 6 months at a time.
- You would study towards relevant qualifications such as a City and Guilds certificate.
- If working for Guide Dogs, you would work towards a qualification recognised by the [International Federation of Guide Dogs](#).

Getting On

- With suitable experience and training you may be able to get promotion to a placement officer, or to a supervisor or manager position.
- Promotion may mean moving to a different part of the country.
- You could become self-employed and offer private dog training.

Contacts

Canine Partners

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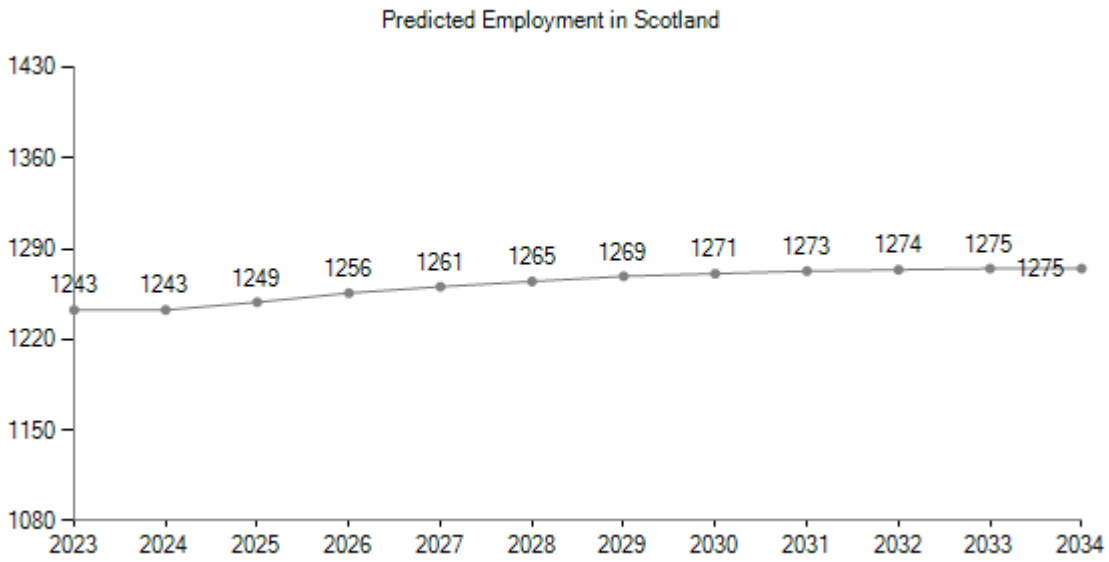
Facebook: www.facebook.com/lantrascotland

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)