



## Dog Matters

### What is Animal Assisted Intervention?



#### What do we mean by an “Animal Assisted Intervention”?

“Animal Assisted Intervention” is the term used to describe:

“A goal-directed intervention is designed to promote improvement in physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning of the person(s) involved and in which a specially trained animal-handler team is an integral part.” <https://aai-int.org/>

Animal Assisted Intervention may be carried out by qualified therapy or educational providers, or in conjunction with trained dog handlers, or volunteers.

Some examples of the main categories of AAI (see AAI website for more detail and further examples):

♥ AAT – Animal Assisted Therapy

Goal based activities incorporating a dog-human team, set by a qualified therapist such as an: occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist, psychologist etc.

♥ AAE – Animal Assisted Education

Goal based activities incorporating a dog-human team, set by a qualified teacher.

♥ AAA – Animal Assisted Activity

Activities and interactions that may be provided by volunteers or professional teams supporting overall wellbeing, social, motivational, or recreational goals.

The International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy provides training and registration for play therapists (and canine professionals in collaboration with play therapists) working with dogs in therapy: <https://risevanfleet.com/international/>.

The founders have created a book which is a great starting point for people looking to work in animal assisted intervention: <https://risevanfleet.com/international/about/animal-assisted-play-therapy-book/>



Another organisation working to improve standards in the field of animal assisted intervention is: <http://www.scas.org.uk/>.



## What to look for in a charity or organisation supplying AAI

- ♥ Waiting lists and application processes.
- ♥ Expertise in animal assisted intervention and insurance in place.
- ♥ Dogs matched depending on the service and at least 12 months of age.
- ♥ Health and behaviour records for all of their dogs/animals.
- ♥ Socialisation and training processes in place for the animals.
- ♥ Assessment process for all their animals and animal handlers to ensure high standards of wellbeing for the animals and clients.
- ♥ Possible membership of an umbrella organisation such as AAll, with external and internal assessment processes in place.
- ♥ Dogs showing relaxed body language photos on their website, social media, and information sheets.
- ♥ Activities provided do not include forcing or restraining an animal to interact with a client, painting on or dressing up an animal, or allowing groups of children/adults to crowd an animal.
- ♥ Training programmes and ongoing support for volunteers/staff.
- ♥ Is the organisation or individual keen to adhere to standards of wellbeing for the dogs in line with dog training organisations? For example, are they a member of a dog training organisation?
- ♥ What language does the organisation use to talk about AAI? For example, if the term “dogs are used” is seen regularly, are dog’s best interests at the heart of their services or are they just a “tool”?

## Getting involved / Training your own dog

- ♥ Do you have the energy and capacity to put in all the work required for training your dog and meeting his/her needs, along with the time needed to be able to take them to various facilities?



- ♥ Be prepared that your dog may not be suitable for visiting a variety of client groups. Assess your dog and only visit facilities where your dog shows a relaxed, happy demeanour.
- ♥ Do you have an in depth understanding of your dog’s behaviour and general wellbeing needs?
- ♥ Find help from experienced professionals who understand:
  - Dog behaviour.
  - Dog training.
  - Client groups and the variety of needs they may have.
  - Facility resources and what may be expected of you and your dog.
- ♥ Do you have the funds to pay for any charges related to volunteering with your dog?
- ♥ Continuously assess your dog’s wellbeing and desire to visit various client groups in different facilities.
- ♥ Think about insurance and source one that covers your dog.
- ♥ Risk Assess potential facilities that your dog will be visiting.
- ♥ Educate the staff and client groups about your dog and ensure that you are putting your dog’s needs ahead of yours, the clients or the staff’s when visiting with him/her.

