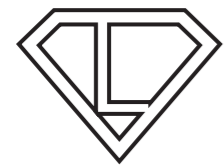
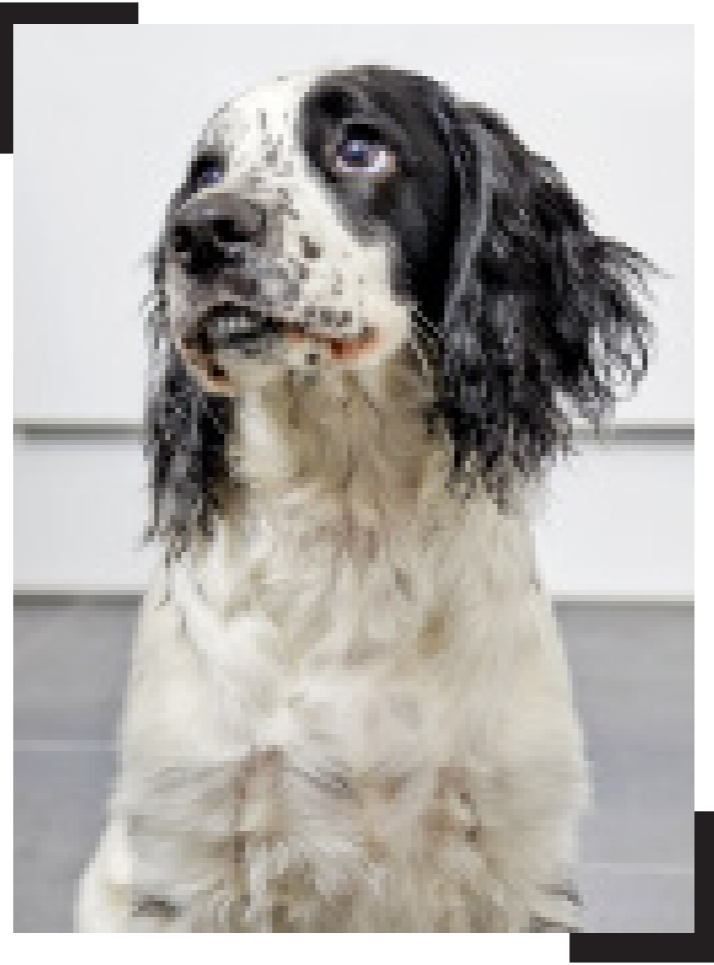
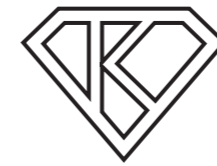


MEET THE WONDER PETS



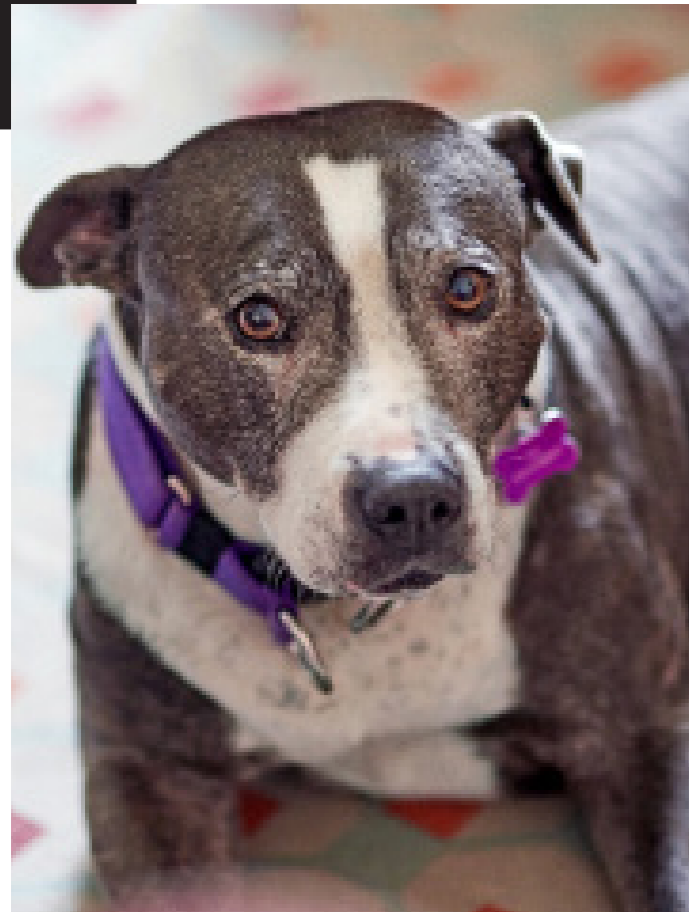
LARA

THERAPY DOG



KEN

MEDICAL-DETECTION DOG



ROSCOE

SUPPORT DOG



More of us own a dog than ever before, with a record 9.9 million pooches in the UK providing companionship, security and health benefits such as better mental health and improved fitness. Some dogs go even further. We meet three four-legged friends who have turned their owners' lives around

Words Sophie Goddard Photographs Jamie Lau





‘KEN SAVED ME FROM FALLING INTO A COMA. I’M SO RELIEVED TO HAVE HIM’

KEN

MEDICAL-DETECTION DOG

→ Type 1 diabetes meant life was unpredictable for Surrey-based Brenda Legge, 63, and her husband Beverley, until medical-detection dog Ken joined the family.

“I only found out about medical-detection dogs four years ago, although I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes back in 1978. I was chatting to a woman at an exhibition centre when she told me how a medical-detection dog had completely changed her life.

I was immediately interested because Type 1 diabetes means my body can’t produce

enough insulin, which controls blood glucose. Back then, I was getting very few reminders that my blood-glucose levels were out of sync; the lows would creep up on me, and I became increasingly worried I’d fall into a coma. Night-time was especially bad because when you’re asleep, you’re not aware of your blood-sugar levels. My husband

Beverley had to call the paramedics a few times when he wasn’t able to bring me round.

It took around a year for me to apply and be matched with a dog. After I’d been trained, I met Ken, a five-year-old labrador-retriever cross, at a ‘match day’ and we began training together. Luckily, Ken fell very quickly into what was required of

him. Because the training days weren’t close to home, our first night with him was in a B&B. In the middle of the night, Ken woke us up bashing his tail against the door. I checked my blood-sugar levels and was amazed to see they’d dropped. Ken knew they were out of sync and was alerting me.

It was impressive, because at that point he hadn’t undergone further training using my scent samples, and he’d detected it ahead of the sensor I wear on my arm. When we arrived home, Ken put a paw in my son Harry’s hand like a human and luckily, he got on well with our cat, too.

He has various ways of alerting me in public. He’s a quiet dog so he doesn’t tend to bark, but he’ll stop and refuse to budge until I’ve got my testing kit out. Once, we were in the back of the car and he pushed his front paws against me very hard, which was unusual. I tested myself and my levels were out. This was Ken’s way of alerting

me in a confined space. He also has a toy that he brings to warn me. If he’s right about my levels, he’ll get excited and I’ll give him treats.

Because my condition can change within minutes (things like food, the weather, adrenaline and exercise can all have a huge impact), having Ken around has brought a huge sense of relief to our family. He’s often the first to know something’s not right, and amazingly, we haven’t had to call the paramedics out at all since he’s joined us.”

THE SCIENCE

Most medical-alert assistance dogs work with those who have diabetes, but some assist with allergies and Addison’s disease. They are trained to scent small changes in their owner’s body odour, triggered by health issues. Find out more at medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk.

HEALTH HIGHS OF DOG OWNING

A LONGER LIFE

Dog ownership is linked to lower blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and heart attacks.

INCREASED ACTIVITY LEVELS

Dog-owners are four times more likely than others to meet physical activity guidelines, according to a study published in *Scientific Reports*.

A STRONGER IMMUNE SYSTEM

Research suggests that dogs bring a more diverse range of bacteria into our homes, which helps to strengthen our immune systems.

**BRIGHTEN
UP YOUR
NEXT
SHOP WITH
CLICK &
COLLECT**

**ORDER BEFORE 8PM
AND COLLECT
THE NEXT DAY FROM
YOUR LOCAL PARTNER***



ROSCOE

SUPPORT DOG

→ Cocker spaniel Rosco has become an important member of the Grainger family. Hester Grainger, 41, from Reading, explains why she finally gave in to her daughter's pleas for a dog.

"Last Christmas, my husband Kelly and I learned that our daughter India, nine, and son Hudson, seven, both have Asperger's syndrome. Caring for children with Asperger's can be difficult. They suffer from nerves and anxiety, which meant that leaving the house and going for walks was very stressful.

India, like many children with autism, has always been fascinated by animals and is dog-mad. One night, over dinner, she gave us a PowerPoint presentation detailing the pros and cons of owning a dog. After a family vote, we all agreed to getting one.

Rosco is an 18-week-old working cocker spaniel whom we brought home at 10 weeks. The first few days were difficult. Having a routine is key to children with autism, and Rosco's arrival was a huge change.

Hudson was anxious. When Rosco jumped, so did he, flapping his



'ROSCO HAS TRANSFORMED OUR HOUSEHOLD'

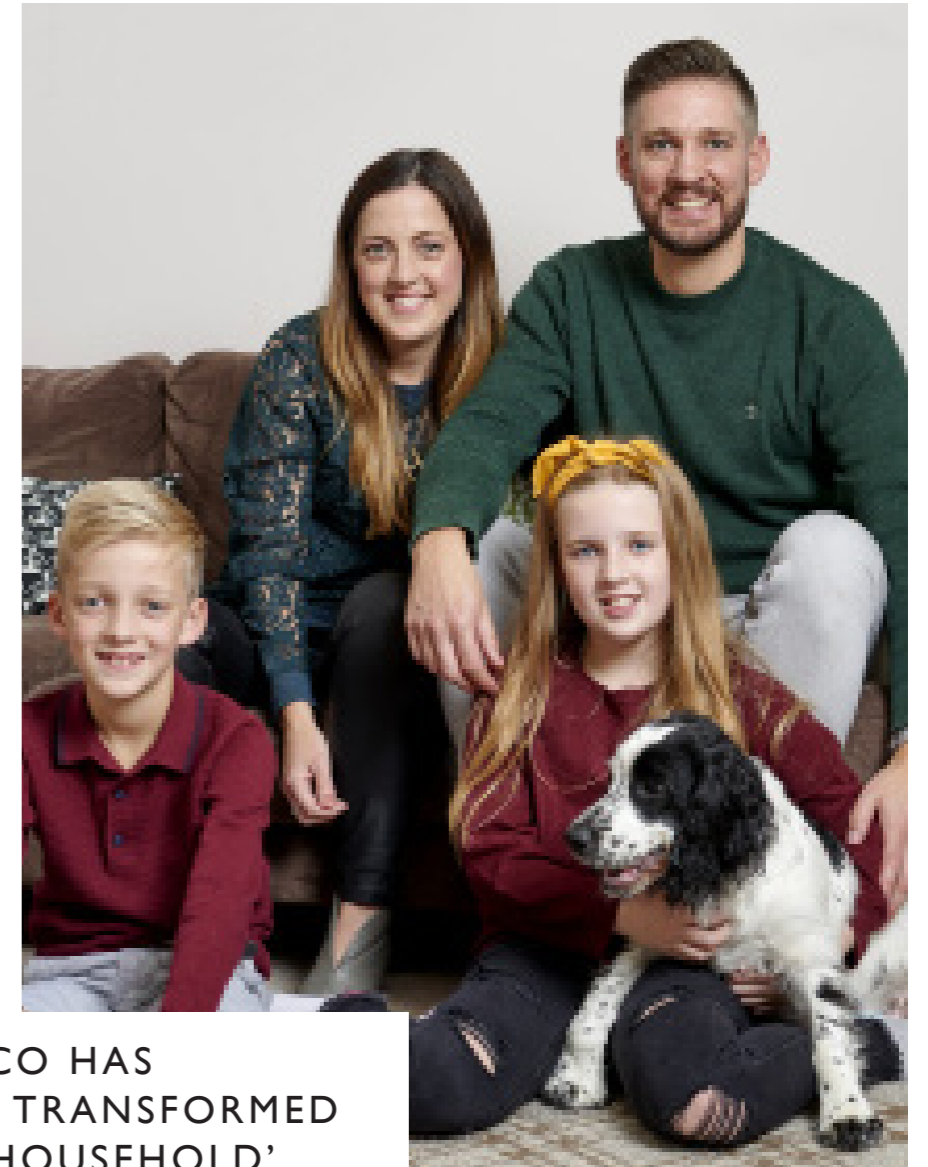
arms around. Initially, Hudson wouldn't cross the stair-gate to be in the same room, but because Rosco was very small and gentle, he slowly became more confident. And to my amazement, India was hands-on and attentive from the start.

The effect Rosco has had on our family is absolutely amazing. Everybody is so much calmer. Hudson calls Rosco his 'brother' and helps to feed him and

give him dog treats. Because of this, his own food phobias have improved (before Rosco, there were certain foods he wouldn't touch or even look at).

Hudson used to find leaving the house quite traumatic, but now that Rosco comes with us, he's more settled. When we go out for walks, both children are much less anxious around other dogs, too.

Having children with Asperger's means that they sometimes return home from school feeling very stressed or upset, but when that happens, they cuddle Rosco and calm down incredibly quickly. If they cry, he'll always walk over and sit with them to comfort them too. Owning a dog can often be a lot of hard work, but for us, the benefits completely outweigh the negatives."



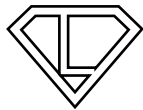
THE SCIENCE

Studies have shown that dogs can lower physical stress responses in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Those with assistance dogs had fewer behavioural difficulties and reduced anxiety, and in therapy sessions, showed fewer repetitive behaviours when a dog was present.

LARA

THERAPY DOG

→ For Bristol-based cognitive behavioural therapist and hypnotherapist Daniel Fryer, 51, fostering a rescue dog changed his life (and job) as he knew it.



‘RESCUE DOG LARA CONSOLES MY PATIENTS AND HELPS BUILD TRUST’

“I never planned to adopt a dog, but after a break-up, I volunteered as a dog walker at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home. Because they were oversubscribed, they suggested I foster a dog instead. I’d spotted a beautiful blue Staffordshire bull terrier while looking around. When I was accepted onto the programme months

later, I was given Lara, the very same Staffie.

I took her home and was amazed at how affectionate she was. When the foster team called, I said, ‘I love her, I’d adopt her if I could...’ And they said, ‘Why don’t you?’ So I did.

For two years, Lara sat in on sessions with me in my job as a cognitive behavioural therapist. It wasn’t

until 2016, when I started working at the Priory Hospital in Bristol, that she officially joined me in a professional capacity after the therapy services manager asked if she’d like to be a ‘therapy dog’. I’d just completed an Animal Assisted Therapy Diploma, so I contacted the charity Pets As Therapy and registered her.

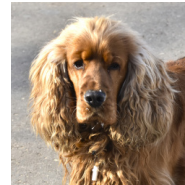
Lara’s picture is on the staff noticeboard, so patients can request her in their sessions. When they’re unhappy, she puts her head in their lap to provide comfort. Others find it relaxing to stroke her while talking. In group sessions, she’s an excellent ice-breaker, helping to build trust and rapport. Rehoming Lara was one of the best things I’ve ever done. She was a rescue animal and I was in need of rescuing, but now she can help others, too.” ^{WH}

THE SCIENCE

Being around dogs can decrease feelings of isolation and promote wellbeing. In fact, studies show that interactions with dogs can lead to the release of the feel-good hormone serotonin. If you own a dog, visit petsastherapy.org to find out how your pet can bring a smile to someone’s face.

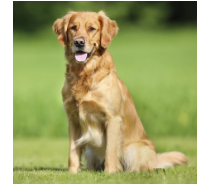
DOGS WITH JOBS

Our canine friends have mastered an impressive array of tasks to help humans. Here are just some of the specialist roles they fill day to day.



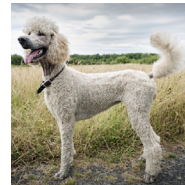
COMMUNITY

Self-care, road safety and anxiety reduction are some of the areas where dogs and their specialist handlers work to improve the lives of people in their community. Labradors, golden retrievers and working cocker spaniels are well suited to this role. Find out more at dogsforgood.org.



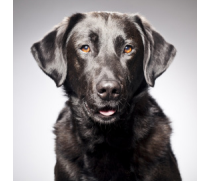
HEARING

Trained hearing dogs alert and lead their owners to sounds including doorbells, timers, smoke alarms and crying babies. Terrier breeds are common in this role, although poodles, golden retrievers, labradors and cocker spaniels are popular, too. Find out more at hearingdogs.org.uk.



GUIDE

Around 4,800 UK guide dogs help blind and partially sighted people to lead a more independent life. Retriever-labrador crosses are most popular, but other breeds offer different benefits – poodles shed less hair so are ideal for those with allergies, for example. Find out more at seeingdogs.org.uk.



SUPPORT

Loading a washing machine is just one of the owner-specific tasks that a disability-assistance dog can be trained to perform. Typically labradors, these dogs can also press pedestrian-crossing buttons and reach up to shop counters. Find out more at supportdogs.org.uk.