



Amazing dogs. Transforming lives.

## PARTNERSHIP STUDY

### **SANDRA BELL & BUMBLE**

**DoB:** 13/01/1965  
**Location:** Glasgow  
**Disability:** Multiple Sclerosis

**Sandra was partnered with canine partner Bumble in July 2015. This is her story:**

It doesn't seem long ago that I was getting on with my life as normal. I worked as a Psychiatric nurse for thirty years and latterly a Psychiatric Liaison Nurse Manager, working with a team looking after people in crisis. It could be quite a stressful job, but I loved it and thrived on the buzz.



I started to become unwell in 2009 and was quickly diagnosed with MS. At the time I was adamant that I wouldn't use a stick, then I wouldn't use crutches. However, as time has gone on I will use whatever it takes to help me get from A to B!

I took early retirement three years ago, but until then I continued to work through some very difficult times. I was devastated to have to leave my job, but now I look upon it as a blessing. If I hadn't left, I probably would never have applied to Canine Partners.

When I heard about Canine Partners, I requested an application form but did nothing with it for a year - I felt there were other people who needed more help than me. It was only when I met Carter, a beautiful golden doodle, with his owner Heather that things changed. I hijacked them for about an hour to talk about Canine Partners, then her parting words to me were to apply, as I had nothing to lose – they could only say no.

Thankfully they didn't say no and at every stage of the application process I found it hard not to get too excited. In May 2015 I finally got the call to say that they had found a possible match for me, I didn't even ask what her breed was – just her name. Two days later we were on a flight to meet Bumble at the Southern Centre! I remember first meeting Bumble like it was yesterday. She sashayed through the door and it was love at first sight, she is such a pretty wee dog and I couldn't believe how lucky I was.

After the match was confirmed, I headed back to Heyshott in June for the most fantastic 2-week residential training course. It was one of the hardest things I remember doing for a long time and was totally exhausted from it. However I met lifelong friends and a few months after returning home I realised what all that hard work was about – creating a partnership.

Bumble has been home for a year now and I cannot tell you how much I love her and what a difference she has made to my life. When I go out, people stop and talk about what Bumble does for me rather than avoiding the lady in the wheelchair. Before Bumble I had lost all my confidence and hadn't been out on my own for over a year, now I am never on my own with her at my side.

In the past I found it very frustrating when I dropped things, which I do frequently, as I had to ask someone else to pick them up for me. Now, Bumble does this for me with her tail wagging and is delighted to help. I also really struggled to get my clothes off which she does with ease, even putting them on the chair for me. She gets me the phone, which is a huge reassurance to my family, as they know she can help if anything happens. She also lifts the footplates on my wheelchair, something I cannot do on my own.

We had all got a bit wrapped up in what wasn't going well with my MS, but Bumble has changed the focus. She gives me so much love and makes me smile everyday when before I couldn't always find things to smile about. However, I always tell people that she isn't a robot; she's still a dog. When she is working she wears her purple jacket with pride, but when it's playtime she gets to run around the park with her friends.

I genuinely mean it when I say how life changing it is to have a canine partner. She gives me unconditional love and although she melts everyone's hearts, I love her the most. I wouldn't be as happy as I am today if it wasn't for Bumble and I cannot thank everyone who helped to raise her enough. In my opinion all dogs are amazing, but some are truly amazing - like Bumble and all the other canine partners.