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Dogs trained in house fire rescue

Three dogs have been trained to save their owners from house fires, in the first project of its kind in the UK.

Holly, Dudley and Little Ern react to the smell of smoke or sound of a fire alarm by pressing a panic button before shutting their owner in a safe room.

The former rescue dogs can even place a towel under the door to block smoke.

The trio were trained by the Sheffield charity Personal Assistance Dogs and will be placed with vulnerable or disabled people in Merseyside.

The dogs also paw and bark at their owner to alert them to the danger, and bark when fire crews arrive to aid the search and rescue mission, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service says.

Their training takes eight months and costs £5,000 per dog.

Val Strong, training director at PAD, said: "We have to choose dogs that are not too active, but are very reactive.

"In other words, they have to be quite calm and placid if they are living with elderly or mobility-impaired people, but they must be sharp enough to respond instantly when required.

"They are the first of their kind in the country, but we hope to train more if this pilot is successful."



Holly is trained to close the door and stop smoke getting underneath



The dogs press a panic button to raise the alarm



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Holly, a three-year-old Staffordshire Terrier-cross, was rescued after being used in dog-fighting, Little Ern, a Border Terrier-cross, and mongrel Dudley, both aged around 18 months, were found wandering the streets.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mike Hagen, of Merseyside Fire Service, said that the most likely people to die in a fire are elderly people with mobility or sensory difficulties.

"We are always looking to provide imaginative ways of improving their safety, while respecting their right to live an independent life in their own home.

"Not only will these dogs provide company but they will be walked daily by volunteers, who will therefore have contact with the owner every day."

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