

One in ten guide dog owners prefer...their dogs!

✘ Almost a quarter (23%) of dog owners think their dog is more reliable than anyone else, according to research published today.

The survey, commissioned by charity Guide Dogs, revealed that one in 10 dog owners would rather spend their free time with their dog than anyone else and a similar number, 11%, believe the greatest relationship they have in life is with their pet.

The poll of more than 4,000 adults also revealed that a quarter of female dog owners spend more than 12 hours a day with their dog.

The survey has been published to mark the start of the charity's annual Guide Dog Week (October 2 to 10), which aims to highlight the extraordinary partnerships developed between guide dog owners and their dogs.

Richard Leaman, Guide Dogs chief executive, said: "These results show that there are some extraordinary partnerships that develop between man and his dog.

"When you consider what this might mean to someone who is visually impaired, the strength of relationship is magnified.

"It's a lifelong relationship based on trust, giving guide dog owners the confidence to achieve their aims in life and live more independently."

The charity said three guide dog partnerships were created every working day and it aimed to double this over the next few years, to enable more visually impaired people to benefit from a guide dog.

Each guide dog partnership involves around 20 months of

training and seven years of support, costing almost £50,000.

Hundreds of events are therefore taking place across the country this week to raise much needed funds to support the work of Guide Dogs.

Guide dog owner Dawn Sergeant, 27, from Liverpool, said: "Guide dogs really do have the power to give visually impaired people a life of independence.

"My dog Moss has completely given me a new lease of life, showing me that nothing is beyond my grasp.

"At 27 I'm now living the life of independence that I was previously prevented from living, I've started getting out into the community and meeting people – I've gone from never going out to never being in the house!"

The online poll of 4,240 adults was carried out by YouGov Plc in September.

Guide Dogs is a charity that provides guide dogs for visually impaired people. For more information visit www.guidedogs.org.uk

✘ The Scottish branch of Guide Dogs has its administrative home in Forfar where they work to provide a quality service to blind and partially-sighted people in the East of Scotland. You can help by volunteering to raise funds, or by applying to become a puppy walker. There are fairly stringent application standards, but look how cute this one is... Everybody say "aaaaahhhh"!