

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct establishes a unified welfare standard for all pet care professionals. It prioritises the physiological, psychological and emotional needs of animals across diverse service models, ensuring that profit never supersedes the Five Welfare Needs defined by the Animal Welfare Act.

Fundamental Welfare Standards

Respect: Treating animals with the upmost respect and kindness, ensuring the highest standards of animal care are met.

The Welfare Priority: Members must advocate for the animal's best interests. This includes declining or terminating a service if the environment or activity (e.g., a group walk or kennel stay) causes the animal significant or prolonged distress.

Force-Free Handling: Only positive, reward-based methods are permitted. The use of aversive tools (prong collars, electronic devices, "scruffing" cats, water sprays) or physical punishment is strictly prohibited and is grounds for immediate expulsion from the Pet Care Partnership.

Meet & Greets: Before accepting a new customer, members agree to conduct a Meet & Greet to determine whether it is a good fit for all parties (including the animals).

Suitability Assessment: Before joining a shared service (group walk, day care, home boarding) dogs must undergo a period of assessment to ensure they are socially suited for the dynamic. Accepting that customers not wishing to pay for such an assessment are not a good fit for a welfare-focussed business.

Health & Hydration: Fresh water must always be accessible for pets in a member's care. Members must perform regular well-being checks (as appropriate) relating to condition, appetite, waste, and behaviour and provide feedback to Pet Owners should there be concerns.

Environment Control: Members must manage noise levels, temperature, and sanitation protocols in both premises and vehicles, to prevent the spread of disease and environmental stress.

Supporting Legislation: Follow all legislation relevant to the services, such as Animal Welfare Act, Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations, The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025, Welfare of Animals during Transport Order, Commercial Waste Legislation etc.

Professionalism & Legal Compliance

Insurance: Members must have valid pet business insurance before they take on customers and must always work within any limits or restrictions detailed within the policy.

Licences: All boarders (home or kennel), day cares, breeders and catteries must hold a valid Local Authority Licence.

Continuing Education: Members commit to ongoing learning in animal first aid, species-specific behaviour, and relevant preventative healthcare protocols.

Emergency Readiness: Members must have a documented emergency plan and immediate access to the owner's preferred veterinary contact.

Security: Protect customer's homes and personal data, ensuring that security codes and keys are handled with the highest care.

Compliance: Be respectful of customer's homes and property. Follow any instructions pertaining to bedrooms and bathrooms, eating, drinking, and guests (including other pets).

Service-Specific Obligations

Dog Walkers must:

- Limit groups to manageable numbers, observing local byelaws and permits (as applicable), and ensure safe, ventilated transport.
- Routes must be planned so that dogs are in the vehicle for the shortest time possible.
- Be considerate of dogs owned by others when sharing an open space.

Pet Sitters must:

- Respect the sanctity of the customer's home and follow the animal's routine to minimise distress or separation anxiety.
- Ensure the animal's environment is temperate, clean, and free of hazards (toxic plants and choking risks).
- Prevent animals from escaping during access. This includes knowledge of other keyholders, and any increased risks due to there being shared access to the property.

Home Boarders must:

- Adhere to the conditions of the Local Authority Licence that they operate under.
- Never exceed the maximum number of dogs specified on their licence, ensuring that each animal receives individualised attention.
- Provide multiple sets of resources (water bowls, beds, toys) that equal or exceed the number of dogs present, to prevent competition and conflict.
- Never leave dogs unattended for more than 3 hours in any 24-hour period.
- Have an open-door policy and be willing to show owners the exact area where their dog will be cared for (during designated viewing hours).

Day Cares must:

- Adhere to the conditions of the Local Authority Licence that they operate under.
- Never exceed the maximum number of dogs specified on their licence, ensuring that each animal receives individualised attention.
- Provide dedicated rest zones to prevent over-stimulation and "day care burn-out".
- Have an open-door policy and be willing to show owners the exact area where their dog will be cared for (during designated viewing hours).
- Maintain a strict staff-to-dog ratio (typically 1:10 or lower) to ensure every dog is actively supervised and supported.
- Segregated by size, age, and temperament. Members shall never force a fearful dog into a playgroup.

Kennels must:

- Adhere to the conditions of the Local Authority Licence that they operate under.
- Have an open-door policy and be willing to show owners the exact area where their dog will be cared for (during designated viewing hours).
- Offer at least two periods of exercise or "time out" away from the kennel unit per day in a secure, outdoor area.
- Ensure staff provide daily positive social contact (petting, play, or grooming) beyond just feeding and cleaning.
- Maintain a strict staff-to-dog ratio (typically 1:10 or lower) to ensure every dog is actively supervised and supported.

Catteries must:

- Adhere to the conditions of the Local Authority Licence that they operate under.
- Have an open-door policy and be willing to show owners the exact area where their cat will be housed (during designated viewing hours).
- Provide vertical space and hiding spots as essential feline requirements, not as optional luxuries.

Breeders must:

- Adhere to the conditions of the Local Authority Licence that they operate under.
- Never exceed the maximum number of pets on the premises specified on their licence, ensuring that each animal receives individualised attention.
- Have an open-door policy and be willing to show potential puppy owners the parents of the puppy (at minimum the mother), as well as presenting and explaining health checks and screening tests for both parents.
- Allow vets to report operations that alter natural conformation (e.g., brachycephalic corrective surgery) or caesarean sections to the Kennel Royal Kennel Club (if the dog is a pedigree).
- Agree to a 'no culling' policy. Puppies not meeting breed standards must still be placed in suitable homes.
- Not sell puppies to commercial wholesalers or retail pet shops.
- Commit to a lifelong responsibility for the puppy; assisting with rehoming if a buyer's circumstances change at any point in the dog's life.