

Our position on social licence to operate and ethical responsibility

1. Overview

Dogs for Good is founded on the belief that dogs, and the bond we share with them, enable people to live happier, healthier lives. We are committed to ensuring that every dog in our care experiences a life that is healthy, positive and respectful of their individual needs and limitations.

This statement sets out how we understand and maintain our social licence to operate and our ethical approach to working with dogs across our breeding, training, and service delivery.

2. Social licence to operate

Public expectations regarding the treatment of animals are evolving, with increasing ethical scrutiny of all forms of animal work. Some people hold the view that involving animals in any activity intended to benefit humans is inherently exploitative.

We recognise that these concerns are rooted in serious ethical positions that prioritise animal sentience, rights, and protection from harm. In many cases, the discomfort expressed is not with the outcomes of our work, but with the methods used to achieve them.

Our social licence to operate depends on sustaining trust that our work with dogs is ethically grounded, transparent, open to challenge, and a willingness to evolve in response to legitimate concerns.



For getting out



For making life possible



3. Partnership

Dogs for Good does not accept that all human–animal engagement is inherently exploitative. However, we take exploitation seriously and define it clearly.

We understand exploitation to occur when:

- A dog’s wellbeing is compromised or seen as less important than human outcomes
- A dog is treated solely as a means to an end, rather than as a partner with intrinsic value
- Harm, distress, or excessive pressure is justified by organisational or human benefit
- Dogs are regarded as interchangeable, disposable, or valued only for their work

We explicitly reject any model of practice in which dogs are treated as tools, assets, or commodities. Instead, we commit to a partnership-based approach, in which dogs’ wellbeing, agency, and lived experience are central to our decision-making.

4. Core ethical principles

Our work with dogs is guided by the following principles:

- **Individuality:** Every dog is treated as an individual, not a role, function, or outcome
- **Wellbeing:** A dog’s physical and emotional wellbeing is never secondary to human benefit
- **Agency and choice:** Dogs are prepared and continuously evaluated for suitability, enjoyment, and stress, and their responses inform decisions about their involvement
- **Lifelong responsibility:** Our responsibility to a dog does not end when a working role ends



For getting out



For making life possible



In practice, this means that dogs:

- May change roles, be withdrawn from training, or retire early if circumstances change or their wellbeing can no longer be guaranteed
- Are supported throughout their lives, including after retirement or withdrawal
- Are not progressed or retained in programmes where wellbeing cannot be assured
- We are committed to positive reinforcement in training and do not use aversive methods

We proactively manage the wellbeing and health of our dogs, with a dedicated team meeting this need, that includes a vet to advise and support our work.

5. Ethical basis for our programmes

Dogs for Good believes that assistance dog partnerships and animal-assisted services can be ethically justified when they are designed around the wellbeing, agency, and individuality of the dog, alongside meaningful benefit for people.

Our ethical position is grounded in the understanding that:

- Dogs are sentient, social beings capable of forming meaningful, reciprocal relationships with humans
- Many dogs demonstrably thrive in structured, supportive environments that include purpose, routine, and strong bonds
- Human need alone is never sufficient justification for a dog's involvement
- Where a dog's wellbeing cannot be assured, the partnership does not proceed, regardless of potential benefit to a person

We continuously monitor wellbeing across all programmes to ensure that our work does not cause undue stress or harm.



For getting up



For getting out



For making life possible

6. Breeding

Breeding dogs for assistance roles raises ethical concerns for some people, particularly regarding perceived human control over reproduction and selection.

The reasons we breed our own dogs are based on increasing the likelihood of success for our dogs and partnerships by:

- Improving the health, temperament and suitability of our dogs
- Reducing withdrawals due to health or behavioural factors
- Minimising disruption caused by unsuitable placements or repeated rehoming during socialisation or training
- Managing and carefully supporting dogs through the transitions in their journey, to minimise the impact on them
- Breeding creates long-term responsibility for the dogs we bring into the world. For this reason, we are committed to:
 - Prioritising health, wellbeing, and quality of life over scale or efficiency
 - Ensuring that breeding practices meet the highest wellbeing and ethical standards we can reasonably achieve

7. Monitoring and accountability

We recognise that our social licence to operate is neither permanent nor guaranteed. It must be continually earned through transparent practice, ethical vigilance, and a willingness to listen, learn, and adapt.

Our work is regularly assessed and accredited by external organisations – principally Assistance Dogs International (ADI), Animal Assisted Services International (AASI), who set and maintain high standards that we aim to exceed. We are also actively engaged with ADI and work to continually improve and develop those standards, keeping ourselves and our sector working to maximise the experience for our dogs.



For getting out



For making life possible





DOGS FOR GOOD

We hold ourselves to account not because our work is beyond question, but because working with dogs in this way carries ethical responsibility and demands ongoing reflection.



For getting out



For making life possible

