



# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

*A guide to volunteering with us*



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Charity Registration No. England and Wales 1092960      Charity Registration No. Scotland SC039828

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## WELCOME FROM ED BRACHER

Dear Volunteer

Welcome and thank you so much for deciding to volunteer with Dogs for Good. You are joining an amazing and talented team that is committed to the power of the partnerships between dogs and people and the value that this brings to individuals and society. We couldn't achieve much of what we do without the support our amazing volunteers, so I am delighted that you have chosen to get involved.

As you know for more than 30 years we have been bringing dogs and people together to enable people to overcome specific challenges and to enrich the lives of both. There is incredible (and growing) potential for us to do more to help more people in more ways. This doesn't necessarily mean just training more dogs (although that is important), but as we develop we know that we can both support people with different challenges and also support them in different ways. As we continue on our journey it is clearer than ever that the input of our volunteers will not just remain at the core of what we do, but will increase in importance. As I write this we are embarking on the development of a new strategy, so we will keep you updated and involved in that process. The future for Dogs for Good is exciting and full of opportunity and I very much hope you can play a full part in shaping and delivering that.

This handbook provides you with much of the information you need to know about volunteering with Dogs for Good – including how to get the most from volunteering with us; what to expect; and how to get help. It also contains the relevant policies and procedures; apologies if this is sometimes a bit dry and formal, but I hope you will understand that it is important to make sure you have all the necessary information. If you have any questions, please be sure to ask and we will be happy to help.

As I am sure you are aware, we rely entirely on the generosity of individuals and organisations to deliver our life changing work. Volunteers are both part of that community and are vital in enabling it, so once again, thank you for your commitment to this cause.

I hope you have a great time being part of our team and if you are ever in Banbury please come and say hello!

With best wishes

**Ed Bracher**  
**Chief Executive**



## INTRODUCTION

Volunteers enable us to continue to provide our vital services:

### **ASSISTANCE DOGS:**

We train assistance dogs to support people in their homes and in the community.

Our Assistance Dog services support children and adults with physical disabilities and families with a child affected by autism.

### **FAMILY DOG:**

We provide specialist advice and support to help people get the most of out of their relationship with their pet dog.

Our Family Dog service provides workshops and on-going support for families with a child affected by autism who wish to explore the helping potential of a pet dog.

### **COMMUNITY DOG:**

We train activity and therapy dogs to work with specialist handlers in communities and schools.

Our Community Dog service helps adults and children to overcome specific challenges and develop life skills.

## VOLUNTEERING WITH DOGS FOR GOOD

To become a volunteer requires serious consideration. For this reason, we feel it is important that all volunteers are made aware of our policies, procedures, and guidelines, and are asked to sign a volunteer agreement.

There are a number of reasons why people choose to volunteer, and these include:

- Using talents and experience to help others
- Learning new skills with training provided
- Trying something different
- Being a valued member of a team and making a real difference by helping others
- Having a sense of personal achievement
- Having the satisfaction of seeing results
- Meeting new people, making new and lasting friendships, and sharing experiences with others

Dogs for Good endeavours to offer all volunteers a worthwhile volunteering experience and you can expect from us:

- A clear role outline and guidance information
- Relevant training
- Advice and support as you need it by means of a volunteer co-ordinator
- Opportunities for regular two way feedback
- Out of pocket expenses as detailed in the volunteer expenses policy

In return for providing a worthwhile volunteering experience, the Charity asks you:

- For regular commitment
- To adhere to all of our policies and procedures
- For a positive attitude towards our work
- For the use of your time and skills to the benefit of the Charity
- To avoid undertaking any actions that could bring the Charity into disrepute
- To inform us of any changes to your contact details

Dogs for Good has a number of different roles for which it is seeking volunteers, and each role has a member of staff who acts as the volunteer coordinator for that role.

Our full volunteer charter sets out our code of practice for working with volunteers.

If you need more detailed information about any aspect of your volunteering role or anything contained in this handbook, please contact your Co-ordinator.



“We hesitated for some time about becoming Volunteer Puppy Socialisers. We were worried that it would be too hard to give the puppy back.

Our only regret is that we didn’t do it sooner”

“I offered to volunteer with Dogs for Good due to the fact that the organisation provides dogs for children as well as adults. It’s incredibly moving to see how much benefit the dogs can bring to a whole family. The dogs are loved every step of the way, from breeder to puppy socialiser to trainer to client – they are constantly fussed over and rewarded for their good behaviour. I work in the fundraising office helping organise visits to clubs and societies and liaise with other volunteers and clients. It’s great to hear about what people are doing and know that you’re a part of that too”



“Being part of one of the Volunteer Supporter Groups for Dogs for Good has been great. We meet regularly and we’ve done lots of different things because we’re involved in the charity, everything from parachute jumps to supermarket collections and it’s great to know that we’re raising money for a really good cause

## DOGS FOR GOOD VOLUNTEER CHARTER

The Charity receives no government funding and relies solely on public generosity to ensure that we continue to partner adults and children with a life-changing assistance dog; support families to explore how a pet dog can benefit them; place our activity and therapy dogs in schools and communities and to explore new ways dogs can help many more people in the future. Volunteers are vital to the work of our organisation.

In line with our mission and values we seek to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure that our services meet the needs of clients
- Enable adults and children with disabilities to lead full and active lives
- Provide new skills and perspectives
- Increase our contact with the local communities in which we work

### **Principles of the policy**

Our volunteer charter is underpinned by the following principles:

- The Charity firmly believes that volunteers offer an extremely valuable contribution to the achievement of our mission.
- Although the Charity does not use volunteers as a substitute for employing paid staff, we want to recognise their importance by actively encouraging and supporting them and ensuring that they are treated with fairness and consistency.
- The Charity will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into its work enabling them to contribute to the Charity's work effectively.
- The Charity expects staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, actively seek to involve them in their work.
- The Charity recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development opportunities and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs.
- The Charity recognises that volunteers often need flexible arrangements with regard to time and level of commitment and we will try to work within these constraints.

## **Recruitment**

The Charity will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers taking into account the principles of our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policies. Volunteer applicants will have to complete an application form (help can be given with this if necessary). The applicant may be required to have a short face-to-face/telephone interview and two references provided at the application stage will be taken up. All voluntary roles will be clearly defined. If an applicant is not deemed suitable for the voluntary role for which they have applied, a co-ordinator may suggest an alternative role or the application will be declined.

As our charity works with vulnerable people, a criminal records check with the Disclosure and Barring Service will be made when relevant to the specific voluntary role. The volunteer will be made aware of this at the onset of the application process.

If successful the applicant will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement, which acts as a safeguard for both the volunteer and the Charity. The agreement is not a formal contract.

## **Expenses**

As we value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement, out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed for certain volunteer roles.

However, before incurring any out of pocket expenses paid by the charity, you should contact your volunteer co-ordinator for clarification and approval in advance.

Where approval is granted, an expenses form must be completed and sent to the volunteer co-ordinator for the relevant department. Details of the expenses policy are available in the Appendix.

## **Support**

The volunteer co-ordinators will support all volunteers and have regular meetings with them to discuss any problems or issues that may arise.

## **Volunteers' voice**

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the Charity and its work. The first contact for these views is their volunteer co-ordinator.

## **Insurance**

Volunteers must be over the age of 18. The Charity has a valid insurance policy, a copy of which can be provided on request.

## **Confidentiality**

The Charity's processes require an explicit confidentiality policy which all staff and volunteers are obliged to observe.

## **Resolving problems**

The relationship between the Charity and its volunteers does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the Charity is able to maintain agreed standards of service and that volunteers enjoy making their contribution to this service.



**If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your experience, you should:**

**Step 1**

Explain your dissatisfaction to your volunteer co-ordinator. If your complaint involves your volunteer co-ordinator, please proceed to step 2. Your volunteer co-ordinator will investigate your complaint, attempt to resolve it and respond to you within 14 working days.

**Step 2**

If the complaint is not resolved in Step 1, then a meeting will be arranged with your co-ordinator's Manager who will investigate your complaint, attempt to resolve it and respond to you within 14 working days.

**Step 3**

If the complaint is not resolved in Step 2, then a meeting will be arranged with the Head of Department who will investigate your complaint, attempt to resolve it and respond to you within 14 working days

If after this we are unable to resolve your grievance, then it would be inappropriate for you to continue to be a volunteer.

If you are not satisfied with the decision, you have a right to appeal. In this event, you may request a review, in writing, to the Chief Executive. At all times you will be freely able to state your case and can have a friend to accompany you to any meeting you may attend.

Information concerning a complainant dispute will be confidential. Those who investigate a complaint may discuss it only with those individuals who have a "need to know" about it or who are needed to supply necessary background information or advice.

**If the Charity is dissatisfied with your work as a volunteer**

Volunteers give their time and effort freely, and taking action to address poor performance or behaviour is one of the most difficult tasks faced by those staff supporting volunteers. If the Charity is dissatisfied with your work as a volunteer unfortunately it is sometimes necessary to take action to avoid volunteer performance or behaviour that is inappropriate for clients, other volunteers, staff or for the Charity. In most cases concerns about volunteers should be addressed and resolved amicably without the need for formal escalation. Concerns about volunteer behaviour and competence will be addressed supportively and sensitively, but swiftly, fairly and objectively.

**Step 1**

Your Volunteer co-ordinator will hold an initial meeting with you to explain the concerns

**Step 2**

If the concern is not resolved in Step 1, then a meeting will be convened with your Co-Ordinator's manager.

**Step 3**

If the complaint is not resolved in Step 2, then a meeting will be arranged with the Head of Department

If the concern persists then we shall have to stop using your services. Termination of volunteering or volunteer activity in a specific role may only be terminated by a Head of Department. A letter should be sent to the volunteer within five days of the formal meeting explaining the reason for revoking the volunteering activity.

At all times you will be freely able to state your case and can have a friend to accompany you to any meeting you may attend. If you are not satisfied with the decision, you may have a right to appeal. In this event, you may request a review, in writing, to the Chief Executive. After any appeal process or time allowed for an appeal, if upheld a letter requesting the return of any charity property should be sent. If a volunteer has several roles, the management team will decide whether the action requires the termination of all volunteering or the revoking of specific roles.

## POLICIES

The purpose of this Handbook is to guide and help you in your relationship with Dogs for Good. The policies may be subject to changes from time to time at the Charity's discretion and as required by legislation. Such changes as are required by law will be deemed to take effect as of the effective date of the legislation.

It is important that you familiarise yourself with the contents of this Handbook. The following policies will apply to you as a volunteer.

### **Confidentiality**

It is important that volunteers maintain confidentiality throughout their time with Dogs for Good. Confidentiality prevents disclosure of your personal details. At the same time it protects clients, supporters, other volunteers and staff, as well as the Charity. This applies whether information is received directly or indirectly, deliberately or accidentally, is written or spoken. All volunteers are required to sign a privacy statement which is stored on our database. If you wish to change your mind or withdraw your consent at anytime, please let your volunteer co-ordinator or the Communications Team know so that we can amend your records.

### **Safeguarding**

At Dogs for Good we are passionate about bringing people and dogs together. We are committed to providing services in a professional and safe way. We have a responsibility to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults who we come into contact with are protected from abuse – that is what safeguarding is about.

Our approach is pragmatic and down-to-earth. We want to ensure that all our staff and volunteers know what safeguarding is and, most importantly, what to do if they have any concerns about safeguarding issues. We run basic training on safeguarding for staff and volunteers to ensure we meet our responsibilities.

Whatever role you have at Dogs for Good, we hope you will support this commitment and work with us to ensure that responsible safeguarding is part of our day to day work, thereby protecting the people we work with and the reputation of the charity.

### **Photographic use consent**

Using photos and video helps us to promote our work to new and existing audiences. We will ask you to provide your photo consent preferences which will be stored on our database. If you wish to change your mind or withdraw your consent at anytime, please let your volunteer co-ordinator or the Communications Team know so that we can amend your records.

### **Signing in when on Charity premises and ID badges**

All volunteers working at a Dogs for Good training centre should sign in at reception. This does not apply to those that are briefly picking up or dropping off dogs.

Some volunteers will be provided with an ID card or letter of authority depending on the nature of their role. If you require a volunteer identification card or letter of authority, for example if you have a speaking or fundraising engagement, please contact your volunteer co-ordinator.

**Out of pocket expenses**

Expenses paid by the Charity should be agreed in advance with your volunteer co-ordinator and are a reimbursement of actual out of pocket costs and do not include a profit element. Please see the Appendix for full details. Expense forms can be obtained from your co-ordinator and need to be returned to your co-ordinator for approval within four weeks of the expenses being incurred.

**Meeting the highest possible standards**

The Charity has to meet extremely high standards in all aspects of its work in order to provide its unique service. All volunteers are asked to adhere to the advice and instructions given by the Charity's staff, and to abide by the policies and procedures and work in accordance with the legal framework in which all charities have to operate. If these guidelines are not adhered to it will cause considerable disruption to the charity's work and may cause additional costs.

**Other relevant policies**

All volunteers will be covered by the Charity's Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Lone Worker Policy, Pet Dogs Policy, Expenses, Data Protection and Safeguarding policies.

The majority of these policies can be found in the Appendix to this handbook. If your role requires a DBS check, you will receive details of the DBS application procedure during your application process. If you require any further details or have any questions relating to any of these policies please contact your volunteer co-ordinator.

## APPENDIX

### Equal Opportunities Policy

Dogs for Good is committed to promoting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination. This Policy applies both to service delivery and its own employment practices.

Dogs for Good is committed to opposing direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability, ethnicity or national origin, colour, race, gender, marital status, domestic circumstances, age, religious beliefs, HIV status and sexual orientation. Dogs for Good recognises there are groups in society who are disadvantaged through discrimination and will work to redress any inequality in its own service delivery and employment practices.

This Policy recognises and incorporates the implications of legislation relating to equal opportunities. Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent Dogs for Good from following best professional practice in recruiting the person most suitable for the role.

Dogs for Good requires its employees, committee members and volunteers to behave in a non-discriminatory manner and expects their full support in changing any organisational practices which deny or limit equality. Dogs for Good will take positive action and make reasonable adjustments as necessary, as a service provider and an employer, to uphold this policy.

Dogs for Good recognises the need to develop procedures to support the implementation of this Policy, for instance guidelines for those involved in recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.

Dogs for Good recognises that the Equal Opportunities Policy will require regular review.

### Legal Requirements

The policy will be revised in line with changes in legislation, as appropriate.

### Definitions

The following terms are legally defined in the Acts and relevant Codes of Practice. For the purposes of this policy they are defined as follows:

**Direct Discrimination** - This is treating a person or group of people less favourably than other people in the same or similar circumstances. For example, refusing to employ people who meet the requirements for the job because they are black, married with children, deaf, lesbian or over 55, would all constitute direct discrimination.

**Indirect Discrimination** - This takes place when a requirement or condition has the effect of discriminating unfairly and unjustifiably between one group or individual and another group or individual. This can happen quite unintentionally. For example, asking for a degree as an essential criteria for a post. In many cases a degree may not actually be relevant to the specific needs of the post. Including a requirement to have a degree may merely discriminate against people who have not had the opportunity to gain a degree without meeting the needs of the job.

**Discrimination** - This also covers actions, both intentional and unintentional, which amount to abuse or harassment of a client, volunteers, an employee, group of employees as listed in the second paragraph of this policy.

**Positive Action** - Positive action for disadvantaged groups does not mean discrimination against others, but a sustained effort to identify areas of service delivery or employment where those groups are at a disadvantage, and to take whatever steps are necessary to create equal opportunities.

**Reasonable Adjustment** - This applies to the steps that it is reasonable for an employer to have to take in all circumstances to prevent disadvantage to a disabled person. The reasonable adjustment refers to any physical feature of premises occupied by the employer or any arrangements made by or on behalf of the employer, which cause a substantial disadvantage to a disabled person compared with non-disabled people.

## **Health and Safety Policy**

The Trustees and Executive of Dogs for Good regard the promotion of health, safety and welfare of its employees, volunteers, visitors and members of the public as a mutual objective for all the charity's employees.

Dogs for Good believe that health and safety ranks equally with all other management responsibilities.

It is therefore the charity's policy to do all that is "reasonably practicable" to mitigate the risk of injury, ill health and / or damage and to maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

Dogs for Good commits itself to achieving full compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation as a minimum, along with a continuing improvement in standards.

The charity shall:

- Provide and maintain safe working conditions and methods of work.
- Provide appropriate training, instructions, information and supervision relating to all activities.
- Consult, inform and involve employees and volunteers, either directly or via their representatives, in matters of health and safety whenever possible.

In turn, volunteers have a duty to co-operate in the spirit and operation of this policy by:

- Working safely in accordance with relevant procedures and systems.
- Reporting accidents and near misses.
- Co-operating in all matters relating to health and safety.

This statement and the Dogs for Good Health & Safety Policy and Procedures will be kept up to date with changes in statutes and working practices. Our policies, procedures and this statement will be reviewed annually or whenever work place changes occur which require their amendment.

A copy of the charity's Health & Safety Policy and Procedures Manual is available on request. If volunteers have any specific concerns relating to Health & Safety, they should discuss these with their volunteer co-ordinator at any time.

## **Personal Safety Guidelines**

Personal safety is something that we all should be aware of. Here are some guidance notes which will be relevant to those of you who carry out a volunteering activity alone:

- The most important aspect of safety if you are working alone is to ensure that you let other people know who you are meeting, when and where, so that someone is looking after your welfare.
- It is advisable to set up a 'buddy' system where you contact someone everyday with an itinerary of who you are meeting and at what time.
- It is also advisable to make a phone call when you set out; telling someone at the other end of the line that you will get back to them at a certain time after the event is over. This acts as both an information call and a deterrent.
- Be careful not to tell anyone unknown to you that you will be travelling or visiting alone
- Do your own risk assessment when you arrive at a venue and do not let yourself be pressured into working practices that put your safety in danger.
- If you feel uncomfortable about leaving your car on arrival at a venue, try phoning to ask the organiser to walk out and meet you, and make sure that you are escorted back to your car afterwards. If all else fails, turn round and go home, but please do not put yourself in an uncomfortable position.

## **Pet dogs on Charity premises**

It is not recommended that you bring your pet dog on site unless specifically requested to do so as there are no facilities available for them. In exceptional circumstances pet dogs may be left in your car whilst on charity property if it is safe to do so i.e. care must be taken to be aware of the effects of extremes of heat or cold. If you need to take your dog out of your car permission must be obtained in advance from your co-ordinator who would be required to check that you have an up to date vaccination certificate. No dog should be let off the lead at any time.

## **Expenses policy**

Certain volunteer roles may be able to claim out of pocket expenses reimbursed in line with this policy. For clarification on whether you are able to claim, please speak to your volunteer co-ordinator before incurring any expenses.

Volunteers are never remunerated, they are simply reimbursed for approved out of pocket expenditure. This is to prevent problems both for the organisation and the individuals themselves in respect of tax and income maintenance benefits.

## **Allowances**

As previously stated, some volunteer roles are able to claim out of pocket expenses with the prior approval of their volunteer co-ordinator. Where applicable, the following rates apply:

### Travel:

- If travelling by car the rate of 45p per mile may be claimed to a maximum of 100 miles (per round trip) unless previously agreed with a volunteer co-ordinator
- If travelling by public transport, the actual cost of any standard class fares may be reimbursed on production of receipts
- If travel necessitates the use of a taxi, the actual cost may be reimbursed on production of a receipt. Travel by taxi must be agreed in advance
- Pool vehicles are available for use by staff and volunteers on undertaking specified charity business and use of these vehicles will be co-ordinated by a volunteer co-ordinator.

### Refreshments:

- If volunteering for a full day, a subsistence rate for a meal may be reimbursed upon production of an expenses claim form including all receipts, subject to agreement in advance with your volunteer co-ordinator
- Tea/coffee will be available to volunteers whilst working at the training centre

### Stationery and communication:

- The cost of any stationery or other equipment not belonging to the Charity which is used by the volunteer may be reimbursed
- The Charity may also reimburse the actual cost of any postage, telephone calls, etc on production of receipts or copies of the relevant bills

## **Procedure for claiming expenses**

- The volunteer must agree any expenditure beforehand with their volunteer co-ordinator
- Receipts must be produced for all expenses claims, except the mileage allowance
- An expense claim form must be completed and submitted to the departmental volunteer co-ordinator
- Reimbursement will be made by cheque or BACS
- Expenses must be claimed within two months of being incurred, otherwise they will not be payable



## **Data Protection Policy**

The Data Protection Act 1998 exists to protect information held about people and to enforce a particular set of standards when this information is processed. An individual has the right to ask what information is held about them and with certain exceptions to be supplied with a copy of this on request. All Volunteers are required to sign a GDPR document.

Staff and volunteer files are treated as confidential at all times. Every member of staff or volunteer may be granted reasonable access to the papers on their file and has the right to challenge information that he or she considers to be incorrect or misleading. It is not policy to disclose any references, either incoming or outgoing, unless written authority is obtained from the referee.

Volunteers should provide Dogs for Good with current and accurate contact information, including home phone number, email and address and the home phone number and address of the person you would wish to have notified in the event of an accident, illness or other emergency affecting you whilst volunteering.

You must ensure that no information concerning individuals (whether they be clients, supporters, donors, staff or the general public) is made available to any person who does not have a demonstrable "need to know". In all cases such information must not be made available to any person outside the Charity.

## **Safeguarding policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Dogs for Good recognises that the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance and that safeguarding their welfare is the responsibility of everyone who works within Dogs for Good, whether staff or volunteers.

## **References and Related Documents**

There are three key documents that relate to Dogs for Good's Safeguarding work as follows:

- **Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults and children** This code gives staff and volunteers clear guidance on acceptable conduct when working with vulnerable adults and children.
- **Procedures for protecting vulnerable adults and children** The procedures give staff and volunteer information on what abuse is, how to recognise it and what to do if they have any concerns.
- **Safeguarding Record of Concern Form** This form should be used to record all safeguarding matters.

## **Support and Advice**

If you have a concern regarding a potential safeguarding issue, please do not hesitate to talk to your Volunteer Co-ordinator or the charity's Designated Safeguarding Officer, Duncan Edwards, on 01295 262600 or [duncan.edwards@dogsforgood.org](mailto:duncan.edwards@dogsforgood.org)

## **Charity equipment**

Any equipment provided for your specific role remains the property of the Charity and must be returned when no longer required or on request by the Charity. Please take every care to look after any equipment provided, as it may be expensive to replace.

## **Personal property**

The Charity does not accept any liability for the loss of, or damage to, your property brought onto the Charity's premises, whatever the cause, although investigations will be carried out on matters brought to the Charity's notice.

1. Should you damage or be unable to find personal property that is essential for the performance of your role, whilst you are on Charity premises, then the matter should be reported immediately to your Co-ordinator.
2. Any personal tools or equipment brought onto the Charity's premises or used on the Company's behalf, must comply with the relevant Health and Safety regulations regarding Electricity at Work – Portable Appliance Testing. Unless the Charity is satisfied as regards their condition, authorisation will not be given for their use. It is your responsibility to ensure the safe working condition of such personal items.
3. If you bring a motor vehicle or cycle onto Charity premises, it must be parked in the authorised parking places provided. Any vehicle or cycle is parked entirely at your risk and the Charity accepts no liability in respect of damage to or loss from such vehicle or cycle.

## **Representing the Charity**

You must not act as an agent or representative of the Charity except in the course of your duties as a volunteer, or where you are specifically authorised to do so; this includes usage of e-mail or social networking sites, i.e. Twitter / Facebook.

If your voluntary relationship with the Charity terminates for whatever reason, you must agree that you will not hold yourself in any context whatsoever as being a volunteer, agent or representative of the Charity.

The Charity operates a no-smoking policy in all its buildings and vehicles. Members of staff and volunteers who wish to smoke may do so outside the charity's buildings but away from the entrance areas, provided they dispose of rubbish safely.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING DOGS FOR GOOD



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