*[Insert organisation logo]*

***Date MM/YYYY***

*This policy has been developed by Together Through Homelessness to support services delivering outreach or floating support. It is intended as a template that can be personalised to reflect your organisation’s specific approach, while maintaining consistent principles and framework across the sector.*

***Please do not edit or change any part of this document unless the text appears in blue italics****. These sections are intentionally left open for you to tailor to your service.*

***By using this template, you agree to respect these usage guidelines.***

***Dog Policy for homelessness organisations providing an [Outreach/Floating Support] service.***

**Background**

This policy covers *Outreach/Floating Support* workers supporting people experiencing street homelessness with their dog(s). The origins of the policy lie in the fact that many people who are experiencing homelessness have not been able to access services with their dog. *[Service name]* aims to address this issue by supporting dog owners and making our *Outreach/Floating Support* service dog friendly. An *Outreach/Floating Support* service enables service users to receive a wide range of help and support, and we recognise that it is important for dog owners to feel comfortable during a *visit/external meeting* and for staff members to feel confident engaging with dog owners in varied locations. Animal welfare as well as health, safety and support for its staff and the people accessing the service are central to the development and delivery of this policy.

Many of the people we support have experienced significant trauma in their lives, excluding someone from accessing a service because of their dog creates barriers and reinforces trauma in their lives.

Where services embrace a dog friendly approach it has clear links to a Person-Centred approach to service design and delivery. Dog ownership and being in the company of animals, can be a social icebreaker, and have a positive therapeutic impact on the person's ability to engage in support.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that dog owners can be supported by *[Service name],* to ensure that Health & Safety issues are addressed and to ensure the health and wellbeing of the dogs are met whilst accessing the service. This policy takes into consideration the unique environment of supporting people experiencing street homelessness with their dog(s) and it is intended as a guide to cover the main areas which apply to an Outreach setting and to provide guidance to Floating Support services when meeting clients in various external settings. Please be aware that there may be a range of additional considerations that need to be assessed by the service.

**Location and provision of services**

[for the service to specify location]

**Health, Safety and Hygiene**

Health & Safety – Managing risk and preventing incidents or accidents occurring when providing an *Outreach/Floating Support* service is an important part of supporting *[service name]* staff members and people with dogs. Supporting people with dogs is included in the service risk assessment, including safe management of dogs around people working in the service, service users, members of the public and other animals. Staff recording basic information on the dog’s behaviour (e.g. sociability around people and animals) will help the service understand more about the dog and any associated risks. The Dog Policy will help the service introduce effective measures to keep risk of accident or injury low.

Alongside the risk assessment for each dog, a dynamic risk assessment should be conducted when meeting a client with their dog. This requires carrying out the continuous process of observing, assessing and analysing the dog and/or the environment to identify hazards and remove risk, in public or in their home.

Risk assessment considerations are provided as part of the Dog Friendly Outreach Toolkit.

Hygiene- Dog owners have a legal duty for cleaning up after their dogs. Poo bags can be provided for free via Dogs Trust. Basic hand hygiene control measures should be in place to manage the risk of transmission of zoonotic diseases between people and animals.

**Allergies to dogs**

If staff or volunteers are allergic to dogs, the staff lead should be notified, they will be asked or advised to limit their contact with dogs being supported by the service.

**Fear of dogs**

If staff or volunteers are afraid of dogs, the staff lead should be notified, and contact can be limited with dog owners. Dog owners will be made aware and will be asked to keep their dogs on a lead and under control at all times.

**Control of dogs and managing behaviour**

Dog owners are responsible for their dog at all times and should be aware that it is a criminal offence (under Control of Dogs Order 1992) to allow their dogs to frighten or injure a person in a public or private place. This includes dog owners ensuring that their dogs do not cause a nuisance, disturb, frighten, or display aggressive behaviours to other service users, team members, members of the public or volunteers.

Dog owners who fail to prevent their dogs from biting people or other dogs may risk being reported to the police.

**Staff Lead for Service Users with Dogs**

Our *[insert team member role]* have overall responsibility for managing any situations that may arise with any dog being supported by the service. Staff will ask dog owners basic information about their dogs and will liaise regularly with the dog owner and colleagues regarding the health and welfare of the dog and will raise any issues that arise.

**Dog Health** **and Welfare**

All dog owners have a legal duty to care for their dog under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The *[outreach workers/floating support staff]* will monitor the welfare and behaviour of the dogs they visit. Issues identified should be escalated to the *[insert role]* and recorded on the client’s file.

The *[insert role]* will keep a register of the people we support and their dogs, available to staff and volunteers. This should include confirmation that the service user has been provided basic information on responsible dog ownership, where to access support, a completed dog referral form and any health, safety, welfare and behaviour notes the team should be aware of.

The staff team are aware that difficulties may arise in relation to caring for a dog. We also understand that dog owners may not have a complete knowledge of all aspects of looking after their particular dog. The service aims to provide basic information and advice in the form of a dog information resource to staff and service users to execute their responsibilities fully and effectively. We will however maintain a firm approach with regard to taking action to any possible form of mistreatment or neglect of animals.

If a dog owner is neglecting or mistreating their dog then team members will discuss the matter with the owner. If an owner fails to follow advice then appropriate action will be taken. In clear cases of neglect or maltreatment, team members will inform the RSPCA and police, and appropriate action will then be taken by these authorities. The dog owner may also face prosecution.

**Veterinary care**

Dog owners should ensure that they can access veterinary treatment for their dogs whenever needed. Registration to the Together Through Homelessness Vet Scheme provides free preventative treatments (vaccinations, flea and worming microchipping and neutering) as well as essential and emergency veterinary treatment.

Please note that it is a requirement of the Vet Scheme that all dogs are neutered within 12 months of registering. If dog owners have any concerns about neutering, then staff should speak to the Together Through Homelessness team (tth@dogstrust.org.uk / 020 7833 7611). Further information on vet registration will be provided during the dog owner’s first interaction with an Outreach Worker.

Pregnancy

If a dog is found to be pregnant then the dog should be taken to the vets for a health check.

Please contact tth.endorsment@dogstrust.org.uk to speak to us about our process as soon as possible.

* Accommodation should be arranged for the period of the pregnancy, birth and weaning, either with a trusted person or with an animal charity if available. The dog should be settled in alternative accommodation before birthing.
* The dog can be returned to her owner once the puppies have been responsibly rehomed but should be neutered as soon as the vet advises it is safe to do so. This can be provided through the Together Through Homelessness Vet Scheme for free.

**For further information and advice on supporting dog owners accessing your service, please contact the Together Through Homelessness team by emailing** **tth.endorsement@dogstrust.org.uk****.**