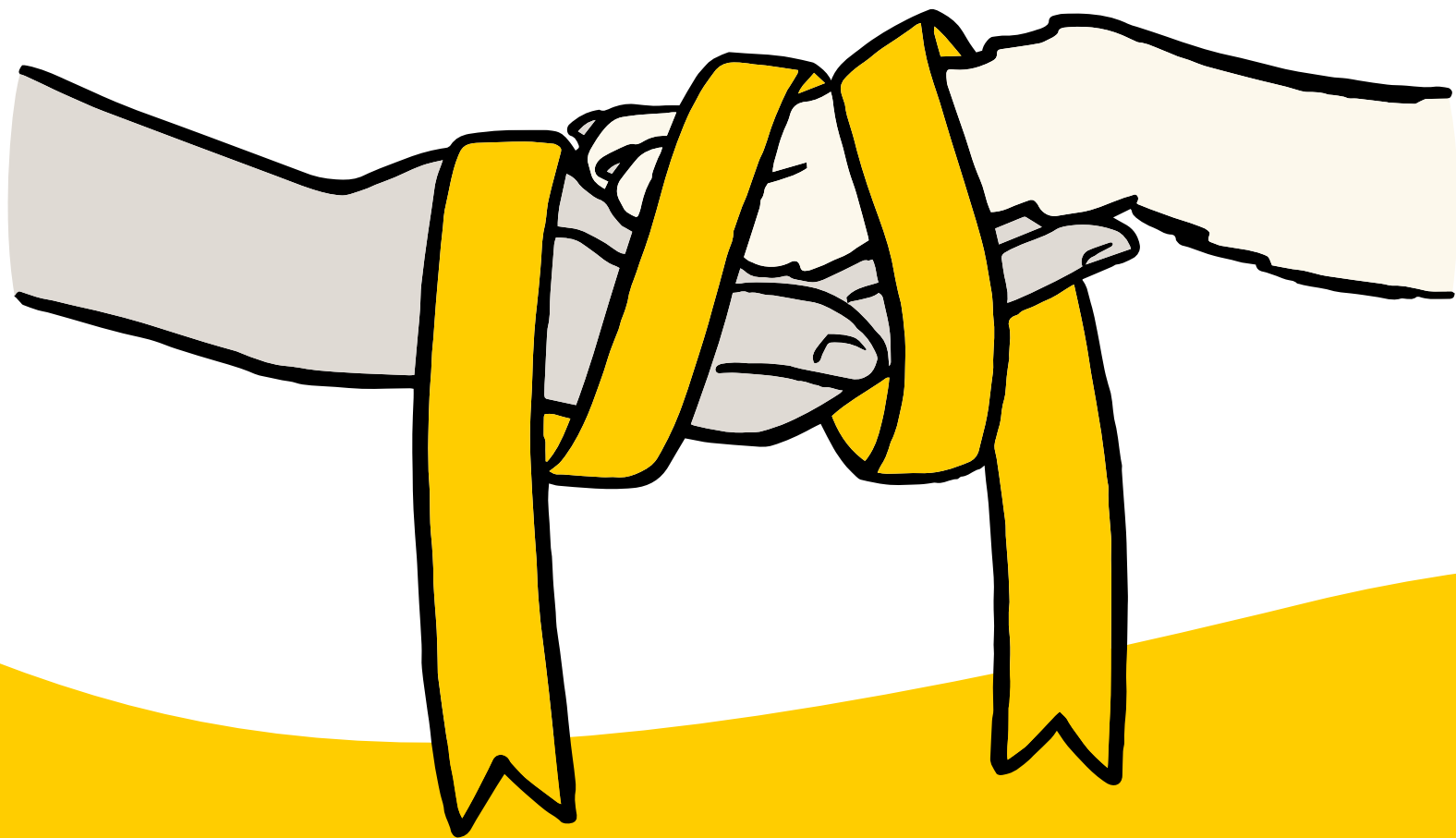


**For Dogs,
Then, Now,**



Always.



**Dogs Trust Manifesto for the
2026 Scottish Parliament Elections**

Historic highlights and laws shaped by Dogs Trust

TIMELINE KEY
Legislative change

1891
The National Canine Defence League (now Dogs Trust) was founded.

1914 & 1945
Throughout the First and Second World Wars, the NCDL produced doggy gas masks and helped to find dogs who'd had wartime roles new homes.

2001
We created the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) to tackle irresponsible pet advertising.

2010
The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 passed with measures to encourage responsible dog ownership.

2017
Our first Holyrood Dog of the Year!

2020
Tougher penalties for animal cruelty offences introduced under the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020.

2025
The Welfare of Dogs (Scotland) Act and the Housing (Scotland) Act became law.

1912
Our first rehoming centre opened its doors.

1993
Dogs Trust West Calder opened.

2006
Dogs Trust Glasgow opened.

The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 became law introducing better protections for animals.

1995
Our Hope Project, now Together Through Homelessness, launched, providing free veterinary treatment for the dogs of owners facing homelessness.

2019
We launched Freedom in Scotland; a service to support pet owners experiencing domestic abuse.

2021
Stricter rules for breeders and rescues introduced under new licensing regulations.

2022
The Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022 passed, placing further restrictions on the use and sale of fireworks.

2016
Compulsory microchipping of dogs introduced.

Freedom



Foreword



Owen Sharp
Chief Executive

This year marks the 135th anniversary of Dogs Trust loving dogs. Over this time, we have observed a significant transformation in dog welfare, driven by improving societal attitudes toward animals and the introduction of laws designed to prevent suffering. However, it would be a challenge to measure a more dramatic, concentrated change than in the last five years which have significantly altered the landscape of dog welfare. The pandemic and cost of living crisis drastically changed the nature of dog ownership, and the rehoming sector. Demand for our services hugely increased, as did challenges with rehoming dogs, more of whom are arriving into our care requiring additional support. To enable us to help dogs when and where they need us most, we have put extra focus on services that will increase our impact as the UK's dog welfare charity. We want to rehome even more dogs and place even more of a focus on prevention services to keep dogs and their owners together.

There has never been a greater need for support from policy makers to ensure the health and welfare of dogs is always taken into consideration.

Working with MSPs and the Scottish Government over the years, we have seen much progress. Legislation we have successfully advocated for includes: The Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016, which introduced compulsory microchipping to improve traceability of dogs; the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020, which increased the maximum sentence for those prosecuted for animal welfare offences; and The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 which placed tighter restrictions on breeders, those carrying out rehoming activities and operating animal welfare establishments.

Last year we celebrated the Welfare of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2025, which encourages responsible dog ownership. We have also been campaigning in support of the Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill to bring a phased end to greyhound racing in Scotland, as well as the Dog Theft (Scotland) Bill, to reflect in law the distress this offence causes to the dog and their owners. We welcome the progress made on these issues, having campaigned for their resolution over many years.

But our work is not done. We will not stop striving for a better life for every dog, now and always.

We are here for dogs, then, now, always.

Here are the changes we want to see in the next Parliament:

- 🐾 An end to puppy smuggling
- 🐾 Policies that promote Responsible Dog Ownership
- 🐾 Dogs to be traceable for the duration of their lives
- 🐾 Further regulation of the sale and use of fireworks
- 🐾 Efficient enforcement of licensing legislation
- 🐾 Effective pet-friendly housing policies
- 🐾 A ban on electric shock collars
- 🐾 A phased end to greyhound racing



Read more about our key priorities in our manifesto.



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Supply and demand - tracing every dog

Transparency and traceability

There are an estimated 1.16 million dogs in Scotland¹, and public demand for dogs is high. It's incredibly concerning that we don't have full transparency or traceability across the UK of all dogs bred and sold.

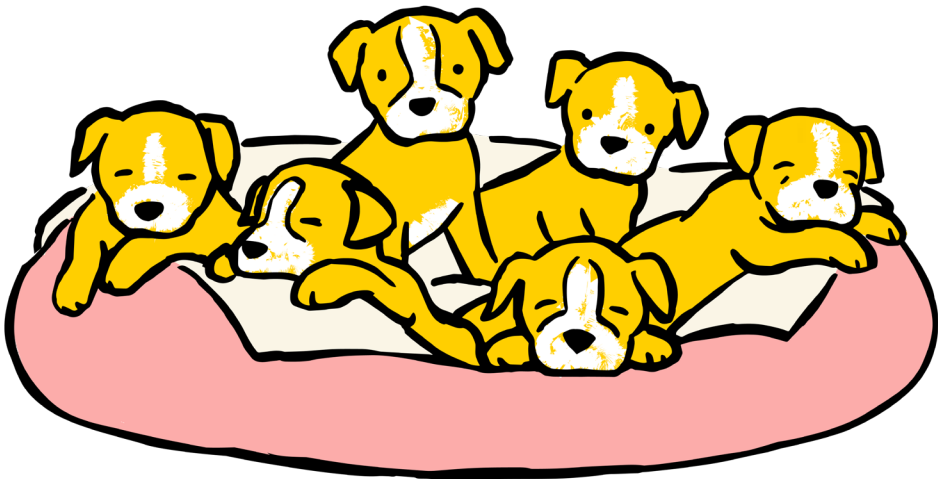
Breeding and selling

Currently, breeders only require a licence if they are breeding three or more litters a year. This means that some breeders and sellers evade the licensing system by posing as small-scale breeders. Low welfare can also occur regardless of the scale of breeding operations. Furthermore, the welfare of stud dogs is not protected by the legislation. To tackle this, we urgently need an improved, robust system of registration and licensing.

We want to see:

A robust system of registration and licensing:

- Anyone breeding, selling or transferring ownership, regardless of any financial transaction or gain, of more than one litter of puppies in a year, require a licence.
- Anyone breeding, selling or transferring the ownership of a puppy (a dog up to 6 months old), regardless of any financial transaction or gain, be required to be registered.
- A robust system of registration and licensing should also include mandatory requirements to protect the health and welfare of stud dogs.



1 <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/downloads/estimation-UK-pet-dog-population-2024.pdf>

Enforcement of licensing regulations

We have concerns that currently, some local authorities do not have the resources to be able to carry out inspections of breeding establishments. Furthermore, inspections are often conducted by local authority officials with limited knowledge or experience of animal welfare.

We want to see:

- Local authorities appropriately and adequately funded and resourced to ensure trained inspectors can effectively undertake the enforcement responsibilities allocated to them.
- Enhanced enforcement of licensing legislation to ensure that no dog may be kept for breeding if breeding from them could have a detrimental effect on their health or welfare, or the health or welfare of their offspring.
- Local authority enforcers should be provided with training and clearer guidance which addresses the at-risk breeds, signs of inherited health issues and when welfare is endangered for breeding females and any offspring.



Advertising

Dogs Trust chairs the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG). This group was created in 2001 following growing concerns regarding the irresponsible advertising of pets for sale online.

Shockingly, regulation of online pet advertising and sale is still extremely limited, and we have seen cases where people have unknowingly purchased poorly dogs or have been tricked into buying dogs that don't actually exist.

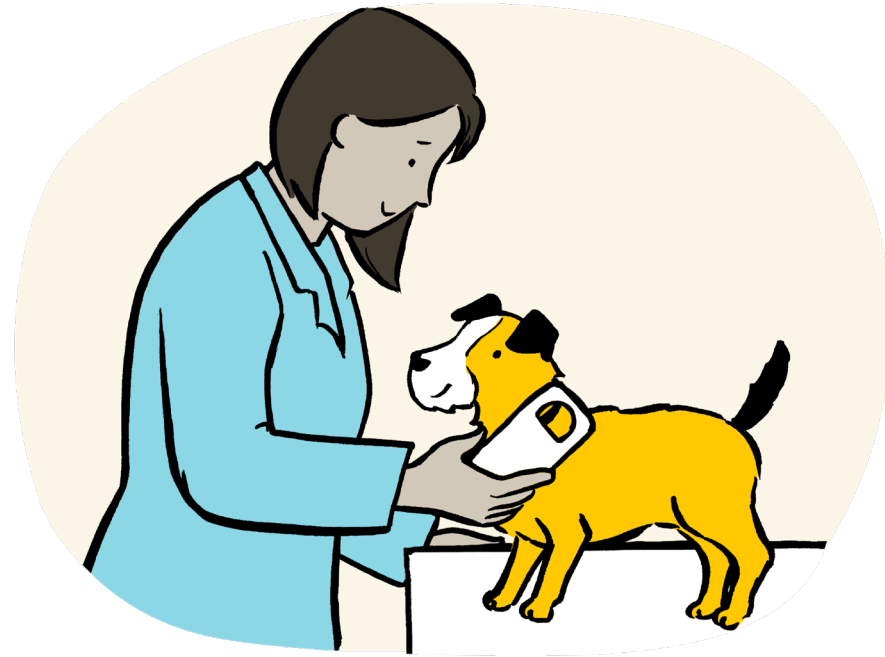
Currently, licensing legislation requires licensed operators to display their licence details on adverts. However, due to licensing thresholds this is unenforceable and provides limited transparency and traceability due to the licensing threshold.

In the absence of regulation, PAAG has developed a set of Government-backed Advertising Standards. However, whilst these remain voluntary, there is a limit to their impact.

We want to see:

- PAAG's Advertising Standards to be implemented in law to improve the standard of all pet adverts.
- Anyone selling a dog, either online or through other means, to display either their registration or license number to improve traceability.





Puppy smuggling

For more than a decade, we've been exposing the widespread abuse of the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). The scheme, intended for people taking their pets on holiday, has long been used as a cover by unscrupulous traders. These traders take advantage of the simple set up to illegally import puppies and pregnant mums into Great Britain for sale.

We celebrated the passing of The Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025



We want to see secondary legislation brought forward without delay to:

- Increase the age at which puppies can be imported to six months.
- Ban the import of pregnant dogs in the last 30% of their gestation period (more than 42 days pregnant) as a minimum.
- Ban the importation and sale of dogs with cropped ears and docked tails.
- Reduce the number of pets that can be brought into the country from 5 per person to 5 per vehicle.

Microchipping

We welcomed the introduction of compulsory microchipping under the Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016. This law intended to make it easier to reunite lost and stolen dogs with their owners, as well as improve the traceability of breeders. However, there are several compliant databases now in operation in Scotland and no system to search them through a single point of search portal.



We want to see:

- The Scottish Government work with the UK Government to introduce a UK-wide single point of search for records held across all microchip databases.
- A requirement for dog breeder information to remain as a permanently accessible part of the microchip record.
- The introduction of fixed penalty notices to encourage dog owners to get their dog microchipped and keep the database details up to date.



Preventing welfare problems evolving

Dog control

We have been shocked and saddened by incidents involving dog bites and aggression, some of which have led to tragic fatalities. We understand and share concerns following these incidents, and it is clear the law has not prevented a rise in serious dog bites. We therefore believe that reform of dog control legislation is long overdue and that Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) that targets specific breeds of dogs needs to be repealed and replaced.

Scotland has more robust legislation than the other UK nations with the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 which aims to promote responsible dog ownership before a dog becomes dangerous. The Act allows local authority inspectors to issue Dog Control Notices (DCNs) which are unique to Scotland. Scotland also has the Dog Control Notice Database which is accessible to Police Scotland and the Local Authority.

There are still further improvements that can be made to dog control legislation to safeguard dogs and people.

We want to see:

- Effective breed neutral legislation and enforcement, with measures that allow for early intervention.
- Standardised recording and reporting of dog bites and strikes, to better understand the extent and demographics of dog bites and how they can be avoided.
- Interventions that focus on safe behaviour around dogs, including the introduction of dog bite prevention on the school curriculum.
- Improved enforcement of the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 through adequate resourcing and for Fixed Penalty Notices to be introduced for breaches of the legislation.



Pet Friendly Housing

It is essential that all dogs and their owners have a place to call home, whether it's temporary or emergency accommodation, or permanent housing in the private and social rented sectors. We have long called for an end to blanket "no pets" policies. However, despite the benefits of pet friendly properties for both tenants and landlords, sadly so many pet owners still struggle to find housing.

In 2024 we received 43,230 handover enquiries from individuals across the UK. 3,492 of all handover enquiries came from Scotland. 370 handover enquiries mentioned a change in accommodation. This equals to around 10% of all enquiries in Scotland.

We welcomed the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 which includes a new right for private and social tenants to request permission from their landlord to keep a pet, which landlords must not unreasonably refuse. The Act also gives powers for Scottish Ministers to introduce regulations setting out when it is reasonable for a landlord to refuse a request. We want to see further measures to increase pet friendly housing for both current and prospective dog owners.



We want to see:

- Secondary legislation and accompanying guidance to be produced without delay under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 with clear definitions of when it would be reasonable to refuse a request to keep a pet, ensuring that there are no loopholes that would allow landlords to unreasonably refuse pet ownership.
- The Scottish Government to work with landlords and social housing providers to promote pet-friendly rentals.
- A requirement for local authorities to record the number of pets that are kept in temporary accommodation, and the number of people who refuse temporary accommodation due to the offered property not being pet friendly. This will allow accurate data recording to accurately assess the scale of the issue.

Fireworks

Fireworks can be extremely stressful for dogs, with an estimated 49%^{2,3} of the UK population affected. This can put them at greater risk of hurting themselves and, in some cases, lead to long-term changes in behaviour which may become challenging for owners.

Easy access to fireworks means dog owners are facing a constant waiting game when it comes to loud noises and scared pets.

We are disappointed that the licensing scheme outlined under the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022 for those wishing to use fireworks, and plans to restrict the days on which fireworks could be used and sold, have been paused and placed on review. To combat the trauma that can be caused by fireworks, the use and sale of fireworks must be tackled.

We want to see:

- **The Scottish Government work with the UK Government to introduce further restrictions on fireworks, limiting them to licensed, organised public occasions at certain times of the year only.**

In the absence of the above, we would like to see:

- The Scottish Government to review and introduce a licensing scheme and effective licensing training course that covers the impacts of fireworks on animal welfare, and results in human behaviour change.
- Restrictions on the days on which fireworks can be sold or set off to be implemented.
- The application process for Firework Control Zones (FCZs) to be open to all local authorities in Scotland and the establishment of means to record animal welfare incidents that can be used as evidence to support the implementation of FCZs.
- Lower decibel fireworks, ideally below 74dB, used to reduce the number of animals affected.



² Cooper, B., 2022. Fireworks Survey- Behavioural Analysis. Internal Report Dogs Trust.

³ Riemer, S., 2019. Not a one-way road—Severity, progression and prevention of firework fears in dogs. PLoS One 14, e0218150. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218150>

Protecting dogs from abuse

Greyhounds

Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved. Running at speed around oval tracks causes significant injury to many dogs, and in some cases the injuries are so severe that it is necessary to euthanise the dog. Due to the absence of regulation and a lack of transparency regarding industry practices, there are welfare concerns at every stage of a racing greyhound's life.

Our expectation is that a phase out of the industry across the UK should be possible within five years to allow Dogs Trust and partners to carefully plan and coordinate the care for the dogs affected. As Scotland only has one active track remaining, we expect this phase out period to take less time.

We want to see:

- A phased end to greyhound racing in Scotland as soon as possible.

Electronic shock collars

We have been campaigning for cruel electronic shock collars to be banned for many years. We welcomed the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's recommendation in 2023 to prohibit the use of electronic shock collars.⁴

There have been multiple opportunities for a ban on these devices to be implemented to improve dog welfare and encourage reward-based training methods.

We were delighted to see electronic shock collars banned in Wales in 2010, and it's time this ban was replicated in Scotland.

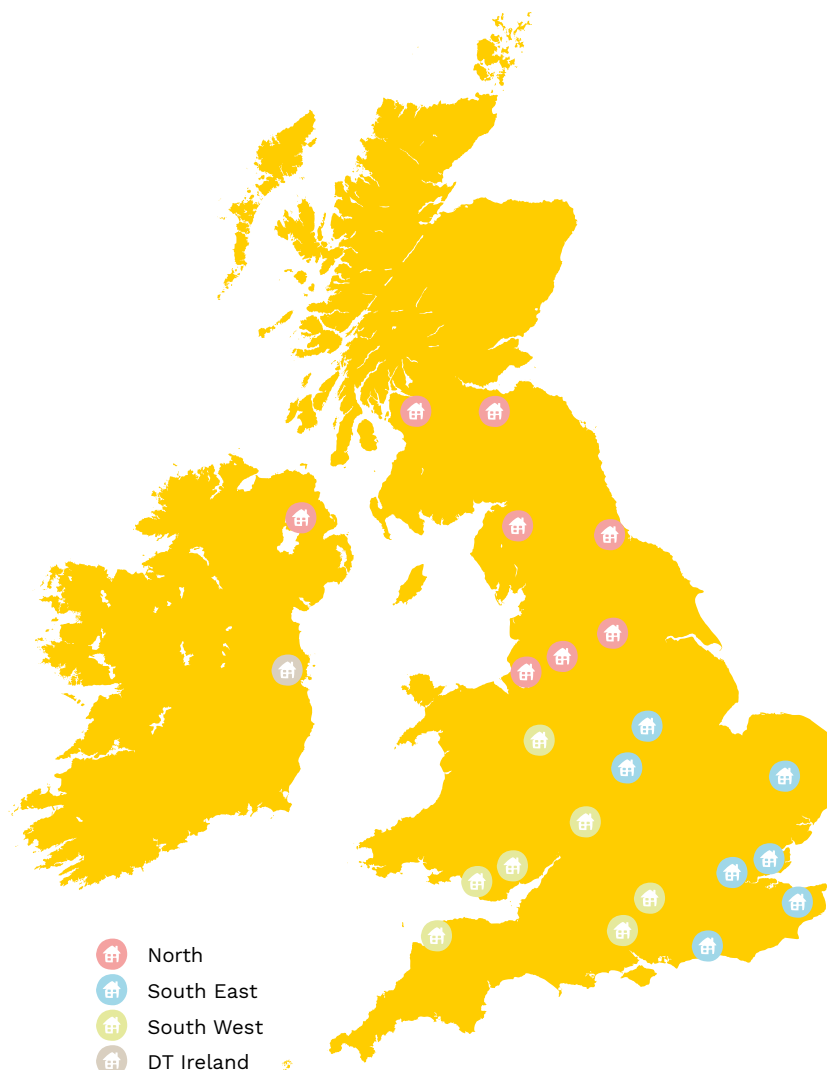
We want to see:

- The Scottish Government introduce a ban on the **use** of electronic training devices in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government work with the UK Government to introduce a complete ban on the **sale** of electronic training devices in the UK. Only the UK Government has the power to do this.

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-use-handheld-remote-controlled-training-devices-e-collars-dog-training-scottish-animal-welfare-commission/pages/7/>

About Dogs Trust

Dogs Trust is the UK's largest dog welfare charity, normally caring for around 11,000 dogs across our network of **21** rehoming centres in the UK, plus one in Dublin. We have two centres in Scotland which are based in Glasgow and West Calder, where we cared for 608 dogs in 2024.



If you are interested in setting up a meeting, visiting your local rehoming centre, or would like more information about the work that we do, please contact our Public Affairs team via publicaffairs@dogstrust.org.uk.

@ publicaffairs@dogstrust.org.uk
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www.dogstrust.org.uk/publicaffairs

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