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# Research Team Year in review 2025

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## Welcome from our Head of Research

What a year 2025 has been! We are excited to present this review of just some of our key work from the past 12 months. As always, the focus of our work is to support teams across Dogs Trust to deliver the best for dogs in our care, enhance our rehoming services and improve our support for dogs, owners and all dog lovers across the UK, and beyond. We continue to share our research far and wide, through reports, publications, presentations and more – you'll find more about these in this report!

We were also incredibly proud to be named joint winners of the 'Data for Good Initiative of the Year' at the British Data Awards 2025, recognising the impact of our data-driven work to improve dog welfare and the rehoming journey. Being selected from a record 448 entries, and shortlisted in three additional categories, is a fantastic testament to the collaborative efforts of teams across Dogs Trust.

Last year, the Generation Pup study reached a major milestone, completing recruitment with 10,000 puppies enrolled. We will continue to engage closely with our wonderful participants, whose invaluable data are helping us better understand dogs' lives and how Dogs Trust and others can support owners throughout their pups' lives.

The Dogs Trust Stray Dog Survey has been running every year for over 25 years. This has demonstrated a marked reduction in stray dog numbers over this time, and reduction in the number of stray dogs that are put to sleep. But this trend has changed in the last few years – nowhere near numbers seen in the past, but worrying, nonetheless. We continue this important work, and Dogs Trust is finding new ways to support owners and dogs when they need us most.

An important focus of our work has been to better understand the factors that lead owners to consider giving up their dogs. We have surveyed and interviewed people considering, or who have considered, this terrible decision to understand the multiple issues they face, and the support that could help them keep their dog.

As always, our work this year has only been possible because so many people have given their time to talk to us, complete our questionnaires or otherwise enable us to do the work we do. To each and every one of you, I give my thanks on behalf of the Research team and Dogs Trust.

There is so much more to tell you about, so please read on.

**Rob Christley**  
Head of Research



# 2025: Research outputs in numbers



8

peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals



11

presentations and posters to national and international audiences



41

internal reports produced to inform Dogs Trust's work

# Summary of the Research Team's long-term projects



Generation Pup is a groundbreaking study of dog health, behaviour and welfare. Recruited as puppies, the dogs are followed throughout their lives. In November 2025 we reached our recruitment target of **10,000 puppies** - an amazing achievement.



The National Dog Survey (NDS) is our enormous annual online survey about dog ownership experiences in the UK. We received over **340,000 responses** in 2025. Insights gained help us to shape Dogs Trust's services to meet the needs of the nation's dogs and the people who care for them.



Since 1997, the annual Stray Dog Survey has tracked dog-related services provided by UK local authorities (LAs). In the 2024-2025 report, we estimated that LAs across the UK handled approximately **33,270 dogs** - a decrease compared to 2022-23 and 2023-24, but still substantially higher than the 2020-2021 estimate of 23,088.



The Post Adoption Support (PAS) project collects information from adopters, allowing Dogs Trust to support them better. In 2025, we published **three papers** describing the project, uptake among adopters, dog behaviours post adoption and uptake of PAS behavioural advice.



Celebrating its **fifth** anniversary in 2025, the Post Adoption Welfare Study (PAWS) continues to provide insight into the lives of Dogs Trust adopted dogs, including the owner experiences with the rehoming process, health and behaviour problems in the home, and risk of re-relinquishment.



# Our featured research:

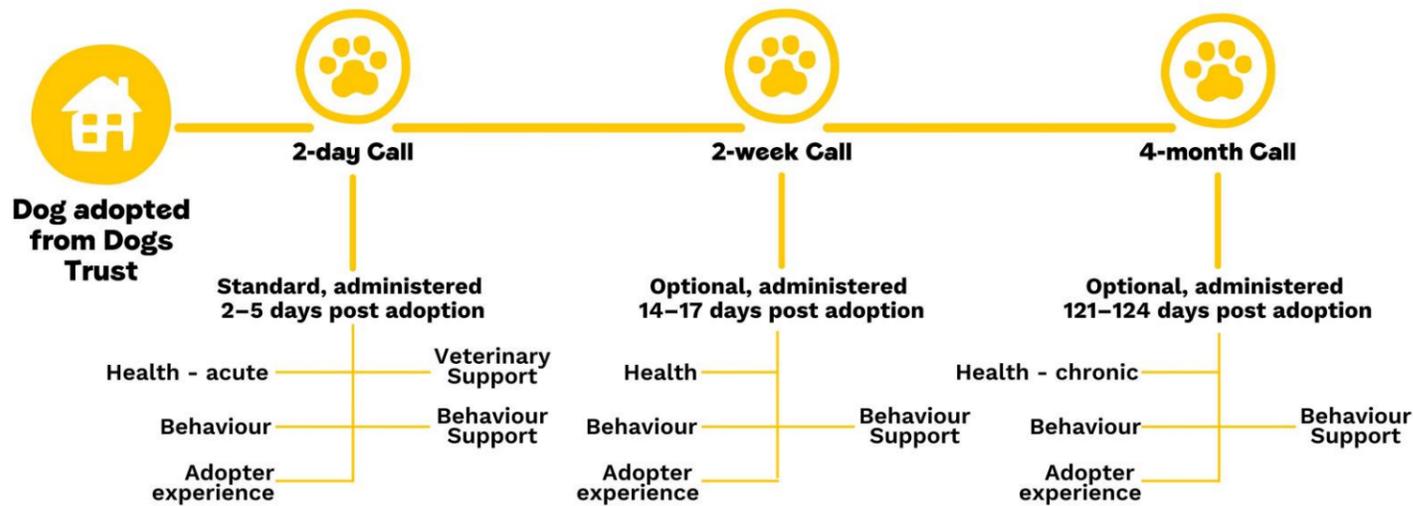
## New strategies of canine Post-Adoption Support: Methods for a prospective longitudinal cohort study

As part of the Dogs Trust Post Adoption Support, adopters are offered phone calls at 2-days, 2-weeks, and 4-months post-adoption. This study analysed this longitudinal dataset to evaluate:

**6,196** adoptions included in this analysis

- The extent of owner engagement with post-adoption support calls.
- The frequency of (owner-reported) dog health and dog behaviour problems at 2-days, 2-weeks, and 4-months post-adoption.
- Overall owner satisfaction with adoption and the adoption process.

### Post adoption support offered by Dogs Trust

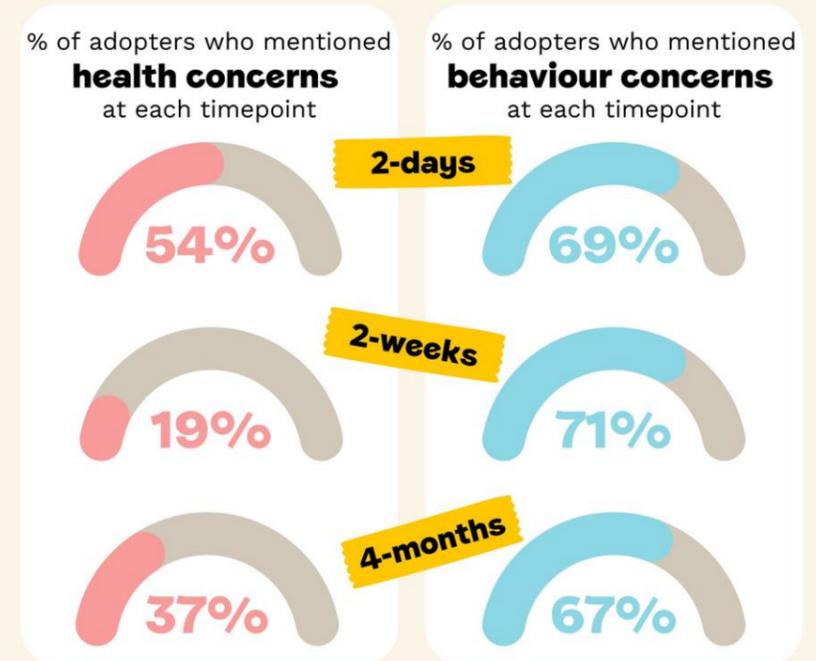


### Response rates

Percentage of eligible adopters who completed calls:



### Reports of health and behaviour concerns across timepoints

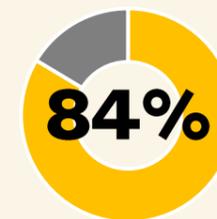


### At four months, adopters reported...

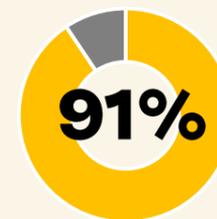
They were happy to have adopted their dog



The adoption experience was positive



The Post-Adoption Support calls were helpful



Overall, adopters valued their experience of adoption and the Post-Adoption calls.

Want to read more?  
[Click here to read the paper](#)



# Our work on preventing problems

## Measuring impact

Our Impact Evaluation (IE) work supports operational-focused teams across the organisation to define intended change and measure it. We guide teams to build theory of change (ToC) models, map existing evidence against current and proposed processes, identify evidence gaps, select meaningful impact metrics, and design evaluations that show what works and why. We translate outcomes into practical recommendations and performance indicators so services can demonstrate value and continuously improve. In 2025, we led the development of several theories of change and monitoring and evaluation frameworks in partnership with internal teams and external stakeholders, including:

- The **Pet Friendly Housing** team's work to encourage private landlords and letting agents to provide more pet friendly accommodation.
- The **Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG)**- a coalition of animal welfare organisations which aims to combat growing concerns regarding the irresponsible advertising of pets for sale, rehoming, and exchange.
- **Together Through Homelessness** initiatives to support dog owners experiencing homelessness to access veterinary care and dog friendly accommodation.
- The **Integrated Behaviour Services Project** team who oversee the development and integration of digital products with in-person services to support owners facing behavioural challenges with their dogs.



## Puppy training classes

As part of the Generation Pup project, we explored who attended puppy training classes and the reasons some owners gave for not taking their puppies to classes.

- Data were collected from surveys completed when puppies were aged <19-week-old.
- **67% of owners** reported having attended at least one puppy class before their puppy reached 19-weeks-old.

**2,187** dogs included in the analysis



### Owners more likely to attend a puppy class were:

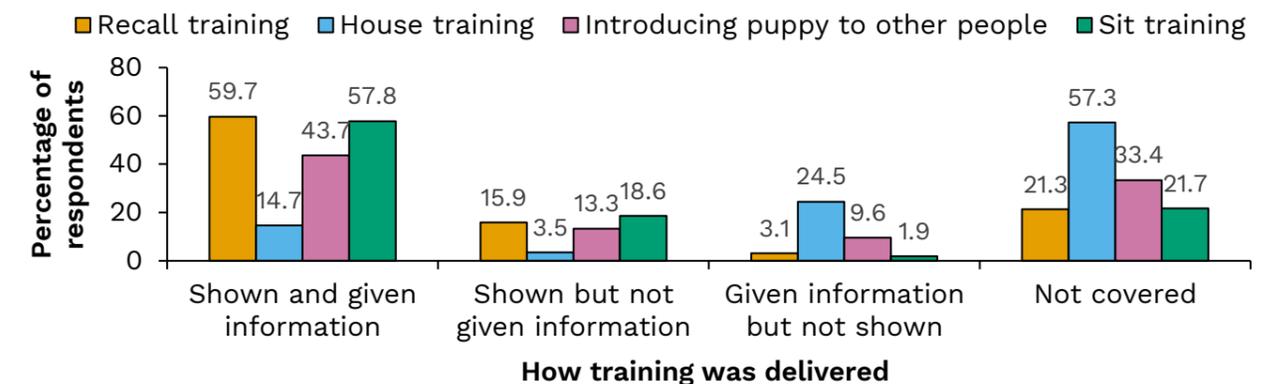
- First time dog-owners,
- Owners with a higher household income,
- Owners who received a puppy information pack when they acquired their puppy,
- Owners who reported an intention to attend in the earliest survey.

### Owners were less likely to attend a class if:

- Their puppy was older at the time of acquisition.

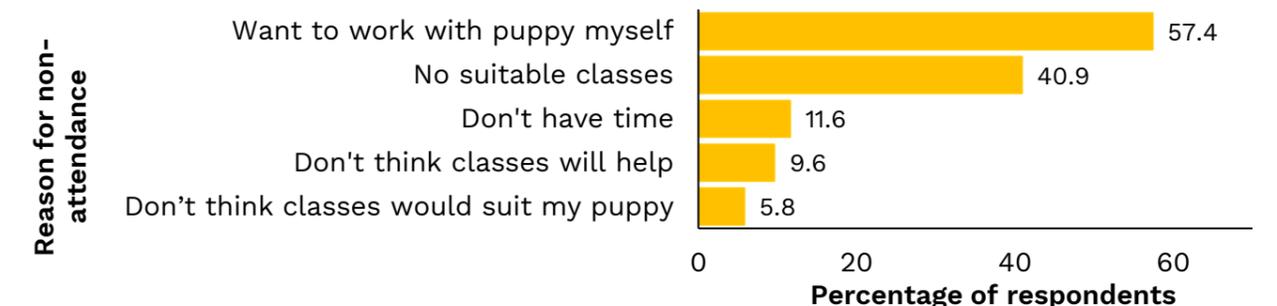
### Class content and structure:

1,468 owners described the characteristics and learning experiences of their last class attended.



### Reasons for not attending classes:

Of the 719 owners who had not reported attending a puppy class, 519 owners (72%) gave one or more reasons.



By better understanding these factors, we can begin to identify where support or information might help more owners access training class opportunities that suit their needs.

# Our work on rehoming and relinquishment

## Enhancing our veterinary processes



To understand the impact of recent improvements to our veterinary processes, we held focus groups with both external veterinary practices and Dogs Trust rehoming centre staff. The updates included a clearer framework for carrying out veterinary checks, better guidance for working with dogs who find handling difficult, and tools to help identify early signs of welfare or health concerns. Qualitative analysis of the feedback revealed multiple benefits of the recent improvements, including greater standardisation of how dogs are assessed and quicker flagging of issues. Suggestions for further improvement focused on communicating the changes more effectively and ensuring they are applied consistently for all dogs.

## Mapping geography of adopters and those who relinquish

The research team has been monitoring the geographic distribution of adoptions and relinquishment across the UK throughout 2025 and sending out monthly reports to managers. The top three county areas with the highest adoptions in 2025 were **Kent** with 359 adoptions, **Warwickshire** with 338 and **Essex** with 304, while **Darlington, Vale of Glamorgan** and **Mid and East Antrim** had the highest adoptions per person, with ~6.67, ~6.56, and ~5.65 adoptions from Dogs Trust per 10,000 residents.

## Adoption experiences

Data from over **12,000** adopters participating in the **Post Adoption Welfare Study** were used to examine dog rehoming experiences at Dogs Trust. Upon completing the registration surveys, available for 20 days, most adopters reported feeling prepared (**88%**) and aware of potential challenges associated with adopting a dog (**81%**) and



were happy with the information they were given prior to adoption (**76%**). However, there was a decline in two of these ratings (potential challenges and information given before adoption) at the '3-week' survey, especially in those who felt aware of potential challenges (**64%**). This suggests that owners may have faced some unexpected challenges with their dogs within the initial few weeks.

Among adopters who provided feedback for each survey timepoint ('2.5-month', '6-month', '1-year' and '2-year'), more than 80% reported an improvement in their dogs' behaviour, with the highest levels of satisfaction seen at six months post-adoption.

Our findings suggest that adopters in our cohort had a positive experience in adopting a dog from Dogs Trust, from high levels of reported preparedness and attachment to their dog, to the adjustment of the dog and positive change in behaviour over time.



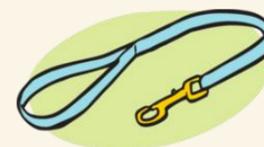
## Post Adoption Support study

This year, themes and factors associated with recent dog adopters declining free over-the-phone support for dog behaviors of concern were examined. Roughly one third of new dog adopters who reported a possible behaviour of concern accepted free over-the-phone behaviour support. Declining support was most likely at the 2-week post-adoption support call compared to the 2-day call or during calls when adopters were specifically asked about certain behaviours of concern related to when dogs were being left alone or potential signs of aggression.

Themes in adopters' reasons around declining advice included already managing the behaviour themselves, feeling like support was not needed, or a belief the cause of the behaviour justified or excused it. Knowing that the service was there if needed appeared to offer a welcomed form of indirect support for new adopters.

This research helps Dogs Trust gain insights into adopters' attitudes towards adoptive dog behaviour support and how to better support new adopters.

## Stray dogs



The 2024- 2025 Stray Dog Survey found that almost 700 more stray dogs were handed over to welfare organisations than were reunited with their owners by local authorities across the UK. This difference has increased by over 100 compared to the difference between these two outcomes in the previous years' survey (2023-2024). In all surveys prior to the 2023-2024 survey, more dogs were reunited than handed over to welfare organisations, so the figures for the last 2 years point to a worrying shift.



# Our hot topic - Dog relinquishment

Our **Relinquishment Study** explored the process of relinquishment, using a survey and in-depth interviews. Individuals who had relinquished a dog, considered relinquishing, or were currently considering relinquishing took part.

26 interviews completed

526 surveys completed

## Interview findings

- The decision to relinquish was not taken **lightly** and owners often went to great lengths to avoid this.
- Owners often **struggled to find adequate professional behaviour/training support**.
- Some owners discussed the **negative impact of the decision on family relationships** – particularly when they and their partner had conflicting thoughts about the situation.
- Some owners struggling with dog behaviour felt more able to keep their dog when they **believed the behaviour was improving**.

## Survey findings

- A large majority of owners considered relinquishing due to **multiple reasons and/or behaviours**.
- Of those who kept their dogs, **57% agreed that they were able to do so due to receiving behavioural, emotional, financial, and/or housing support**.
- Of those who relinquished but would have preferred to keep their dogs, **73% agreed that receiving one of these supports could have helped them keep their dog**.



### We learnt...

- Providing appropriate support to dog owners may **prevent more than half of all cases of relinquishment**.
- Identifying behaviour issues when they arise and getting support early on, before the problems escalate into crises, may be **vital in keeping dogs and owners together**.

# Spreading the word about our work

To ensure our research is as far reaching as possible, it is important we disseminate our findings to fellow researchers and the wider community. During 2025, our team presented our research at both national and international conferences including:



Our team are already working hard preparing abstracts for conferences upcoming in 2026!

# Our research in the media

The results of the 2023-2024 **Stray Dog Survey** were used in a Channel 5 News exclusive to highlight the increase in strays in recent years, and the decrease in the proportion of these dogs being reunited with their owners.



# Our team at New Scientist Live

In October, the Research Team returned to **New Scientist Live** in London, the UK's largest science festival, held over three days at ExCel London and attracting more than **21,000 visitors**. The team hosted an interactive stand showcasing the evidence-based research carried out by Dogs Trust, made possible through strong collaboration and careful planning.



Visitors of all ages took part in a range of engaging activities designed to highlight research into dog behaviour, relinquishment, and the UK dog population. These included a spin-the-wheel quiz featuring findings from major studies, a “tipping point” Jenga game illustrating the multiple factors that can lead to dogs entering our care, and other interactive activities focused on understanding dog body language and emotions. Conversations around behaviour also helped promote the Behaviour Support Line.

The stand additionally demonstrated data collection in action by inviting visitors to share what they love most about dogs, producing thoughtful and heart-warming responses. A dedicated Schools Day further inspired young visitors and future dog owners. We plan to attend in 2026 too!

# Collaborations with other researchers

We've enjoyed working and collaborating with various groups and researchers from Universities across a range of topics. We have worked with **16 external collaborators** including **universities, animal welfare coalitions, animal welfare stakeholder partnerships and other charities and NGOs**, and have supported **6 PhD students and 5 MSc students**.

**Interested in collaborating with us?**



# Research behind the scenes

This section aims to tell you a little bit about some of the research occurring behind the scenes at Dogs Trust.

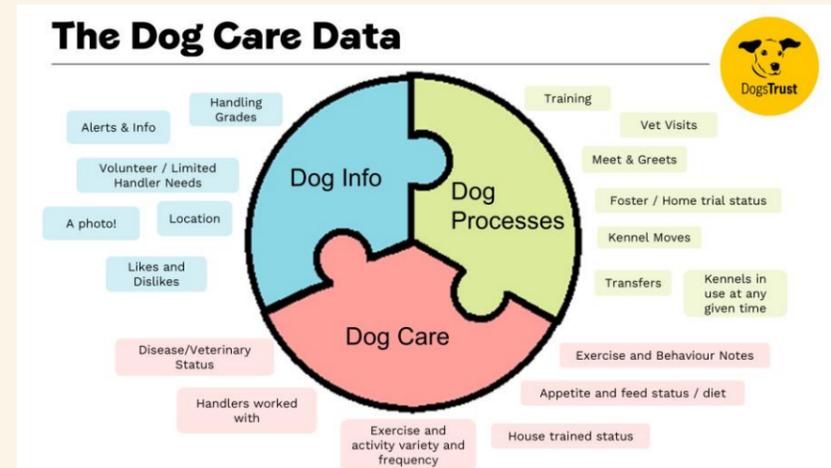
## Interactive Whiteboard Outputs

Dogs Trust is proudly at the technological forefront of animal care record keeping, piloting the innovative idea of **Interactive Whiteboards (IWB)**! Collecting husbandry data in animal care settings often requires separate record-keeping, which can take time away from busy kennel staff routines and increase the risk of incomplete logs and recall bias, making reliable welfare insights harder to obtain.

Thinking outside of traditional kitchen communication systems (dry marker pens and whiteboards), Dogs Trust have embedded digital kitchen whiteboards into three Rehoming Centres' kitchen areas to pilot the tech's ability to better support staff and dogs. Evaluating their use, IWBs are reported to save staff time and promote effective communication, while saving useful data about dogs' diets and exercise routine (e.g., variation in out of kennel activities, food consumption, and individuals' care preferences – more examples in image below).

Pilot data collected have already been used to carry out research projects and answer welfare related questions more directly. These include:

- **Disease transmission risk** - Modelling hypothetical outbreaks and control practices for important canine infectious diseases at two of our sites, should a dog ever come in without signs but develop them seven days post-intake.
- **Impacts of diet change** - Understanding impact of *Pro-Kolin* (a “digestive” supplement for dogs containing probiotics, prebiotics, kaolin, and pectin to support gut health) removal on rates of gastro-sensitive food use.
- **Providing suitable diets** - Understanding the feed brands and products we use most often.
- **Welfare monitoring** - Collecting data for the charity on the following...

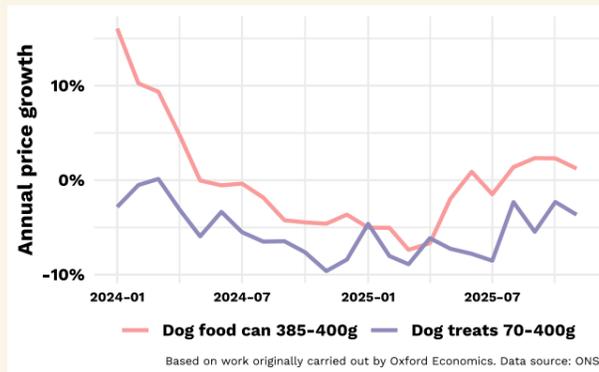


An **Annual Summary of IWB data** is currently in preparation. We will be presenting further details of the project at the EAZA Animal Welfare Forum in 2026.

# Research behind the scenes **continued...**

## Dogflation insights with DEFRA

In 2025, DEFRA was working on identifying potential policy options for pet food pricing. Members of Dogs Trust's Strategic Communications team met with DEFRA in June 2025 to discuss dog food inflation.



Dogs Trust's research team has been tracking inflation of various dog-related items including food and treats since 2023, and shared key figures from this, alongside relevant statistics from the National Dog Survey and contextual information regarding consumer perceptions of nutrition and quality versus cost ahead of the meeting to help inform the discussion.

## Interactive map of hospitalisation from dog bites engage MPs

Using Freedom of Information requests, the Public Affairs team collated data on hospital admissions due to dog bites or strikes for Scotland, Wales and England, with each nation providing the data aggregated at different geographies. The research team cleaned and processed these data, interpolating the admissions data to estimate admissions counts across Westminster parliamentary constituencies (and Senedd 2026 constituencies for future use) across the 3 nations so it could be presented in a consistent manner. These data were visualised in an interactive map which Public Affairs presented to MPs at an event in parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025, to lend weight to the key policy recommendation that there needs to be more cohesive and comprehensive data collection of dog bites and strikes across the UK.

## Big win!



Fireworks are a familiar part of autumn celebrations, but for many, including dogs, they can be frightening, triggering fear and anxiety. Dogs Trust has been working hard to gather evidence on the impact fireworks can have on dogs. In 2025, this research was used to help achieve approval of a Firework Control Zone (FCZ) beside our Glasgow Rehoming Centre. This is the first ban to be introduced next to a Dogs Trust centre in the UK. After an initial refusal in 2024, our second application succeeded thanks to strong research, data, and welfare evidence showing the harm fireworks cause to dogs, and considerable local support. MPs used heat maps created by the Research team to demonstrate how many individuals within their constituency had responded to a Dogs Trust 'call to action' on fireworks.

From 1<sup>st</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> November 2025, private fireworks were prohibited in the Broomhouse area. With 93% public support, this evidence-led change is a meaningful step forward for dog welfare and a powerful example of research driving real-world impact.

# Watch this space!

## In 2026 we will be...

### Fostering



Freedom, our specialist dog fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse, has seen growing demand in recent years. In 2026, we will interview volunteer foster carers to understand their motivations and foster caring experiences, aiming to use these insights to attract and retain more foster carers so we can support more dogs and owners.

### 10-year licence breeding report

A report will be completed by the end of this year which will show insights from licence breeding Freedom of Information (FOI) data in Great Britain between 2017-2021. A new Freedom of Information request will be sent to local authorities in the new year to gather updated data and breeding numbers from 2022 to 2026.

### The longevity of cross breeds dogs

This analysis is currently in the works, and a report is due to be ready in early 2026 to showcase the results.

### Behavioural problems in adopted dogs

Our work to better understand undesirable behaviours in the early post adoption period will be published in early 2026.

### The use of behaviour medication reported in Generation Pup



We're planning to use data from several of our surveys to quantify chemical interventions (both prescribed behavioural medications and non-prescription products) reported to be used by owners for their dogs. This will give us an overview of the chemical interventions reported by owners both as dogs' age, but also over time.

... and much, much more!



## Some of our 2025 publications

**Owner-Perceived Undesirable Behaviours in Young Dogs and Changes with Age.** From our Generation Pup study, this paper examined the types and frequency of undesirable behaviours in dogs aged 6 to 18 months, using owner-reported survey data. The highest proportion of undesirable behaviours was reported at 12 months (42.1%), with barking, jumping up, pulling on the lead, and recall issues being most common. The prevalence of barking, pulling on the lead, and recall problems varied significantly with age, while jumping up did not. These findings highlight the importance of educating owners, particularly first-timers, about potential behavioural challenges and where to access appropriate training or advice to prevent or resolve these issues.

**Factors Associated with Puppy Training Class Attendance.** Another study using data from Generation Pup, this paper analysed data from 2,187 owners about their puppies under 19 weeks, finding that 67% had attended at least one class. Attendance was more likely for higher-income households, first-time owners, those who planned to attend, or who received an information pack, and less likely when puppies were acquired at an older age. Classes differed in size, age range, and content, while common reasons for non-attendance included owners preferring to train their puppy themselves or a lack of suitable classes.

**No Callback Required - Themes and Factors Associated with New Adopters Declining Free Dog Behavior Support.** This study explored why many recent dog adopters turned down free phone support for behavioural issues, as part of our Post Adoption Support. The study analysed 6,317 post-adoption calls to 3,782 adopters at different stages after adoption. Although most reported some concerning behaviour – such as aggression, separation problems, or other issues – nearly 69% refused the offered help. Statistical analysis showed refusals were most common two weeks after adoption and varied depending on the type and mix of behaviours reported. Thematic analysis revealed four reasons for declining support: awareness without action, managing the issue themselves, feeling help was unnecessary, and personal beliefs about the cause. The results highlight how adopters think about and handle behaviour problems, suggesting future studies should examine whether refusing this support relates to seeking other help and how that affects successful adoptions.

**“I just don’t know if I can do it”: A qualitative exploration of how owners contemplate whether to relinquish their companion dog.** This study interviewed 26 people who had either relinquished their dog, considered relinquishing, or were actively considering relinquishment, primarily due to unwanted dog behaviour. The insights offer a rich understanding of the emotional turmoil experienced by owners considering relinquishment. Rather than a quick, frivolous decision to rehome their dog, owners emphasised how they had gone to great lengths to avoid relinquishment. The effort owners invested in seeking a solution appeared to be motivated by their belief, or hope, that their dog’s behaviour was modifiable or manageable – and that something would be available that could help them achieve this. In cases where owners identified progress being made, or had hope that this was possible, their thoughts of relinquishment reduced or ceased. A sense that any hope for seeing a positive change in their dog’s behaviour was gone appeared to lead some owners perceiving relinquishment as their only option. These insights indicate the potential value of embedding hope and monitoring progress in owner support offerings and highlighted the difficulty some owners faced in obtaining adequate professional behaviour or training support to help with their dog’s behaviour or training.

**The impact of a rabies prevention workshop on children’s understanding of dog bite avoidance and safety in Bali primary schools.** This study, funded by Dogs Trust Worldwide and conducted in collaboration with our research team, examined whether a single creative workshop could help children learn how to prevent rabies and avoid dog bites. The Bali Animal Welfare Association ran the sessions in Bali, Indonesia, where rabies remains a serious threat. Using a quasi-experimental design, 349 pupils aged 8 to 12 were randomly assigned to complete a quiz before or after the workshop. Results showed a large improvement in knowledge among those who participated, confirming the workshop’s effectiveness. The findings suggest that creative teaching can improve children’s understanding of rabies prevention, though more research is needed to assess long-term outcomes and behaviour change.



 [dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/professionals/research](https://dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/professionals/research)

 [generationpup.ac.uk](https://generationpup.ac.uk)

 [research@dogstrust.org.uk](mailto:research@dogstrust.org.uk)

 [@DTScholars](https://twitter.com/DTScholars)

 [@dogstrust\\_research](https://www.instagram.com/dogstrust_research)

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