

Dogs Trust **Hope Project** – supporting people and their pets to stay together

Walking and caring for your dog in relation to COVID-19 Advice for homelessness services on homeless people with dogs

For many homeless dog owners, their dog is their main companion and source of love, support and warmth. Recent measures introduced in relation to coronavirus have led to homeless people being housed in hotel accommodation to allow them to self-isolate.

This information sheet is designed to support and aid homelessness services who support service users with dogs, in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their service users and staff as well as ensure the welfare of the dogs.



Advice on walking dogs

Where possible, only the dog owner should walk their dog. However, if the owner has to self-isolate, it would be good if the dog can still be exercised once a day by someone else, such as their support worker, provided that this can be done in a safe way to avoid spreading the virus.

There is currently no evidence that dogs are affected by COVID-19 or that they can transmit the virus to humans. However, it might be possible for the coronavirus to be transferred from person to person via any surface, and here this could apply to a dog's fur. Therefore, good hygiene protocols should be followed when walking a dog.

- The dog owner should consent to having their dog walked and should discuss their dog's behaviour with the nominated walker.
- Ask the owner if the dog's microchip details are up to date, if not then please contact the Hope Project and we can arrange this free of charge. The dog should also have a tag on their collar with up to date contact details for the owner. These are both legal requirements.
- The dog should only be walked in the surrounding area of the owner's accommodation.
- When collecting the dog social distancing guidelines must be followed – there should be 2 metres between the dog owner and the person walking the dog at all times, including when handing over the dog.
- Use a different lead to the owner's and make sure that you wash the lead with soap and water once you have finished walking the dog. Dogs Trust Hope Project can provide additional new leads.
- Before and after walking the dog, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Wear gloves while walking the dog and dispose of these afterwards.
- Try to restrict how much you touch the dog and make sure that you do not touch anything else whilst walking the dog, such as your phone or your face.

Advice on caring for dogs

- It is important that dog owners can access a local vet practice if their dog becomes unwell. Dogs Trust Hope Project can provide access to free vet care - homelessness services should speak to the Hope Project about registering their service users. **Please note that vet practices are currently only providing very limited essential and emergency treatment based on government guidelines.**
- Some dogs may not be used to being inside for long periods of time. Enrichment toys can be really useful for keeping dogs entertained whilst inside – Dogs Trust Hope Project are able to provide these during this time.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the hotels, hostels, accommodation providers and key workers who are doing everything they can to support people and their pets during these challenging times.

Dogs Trust Hope Project has been supporting homeless dog owners for more than 25 years, providing access to free vet care and working with hostels and accommodation providers to encourage them to accept dogs.

We are here to help

For guidance on producing a dog policy for hotel, hostel or emergency accommodation, as well as provision of dog items, access to free vet care, and emergency boarding, please contact the Hope Project direct.

020 7833 7611

hopeproject@dogstrust.org.uk

www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk

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