

Adoption Information Pack

Finding dogs better homes

Introduction

Firstly, thank you for making the decision to look for a dog to rescue - you are doing a truly wonderful thing by offering a home to a dog in need. At Dogs Friends we firmly believe that all dogs are good dogs, but we know that some need a little extra support on their journey through life so this pack has been put together to prepare you for adopting a rescue dog and to help you through your settling in period and beyond.





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The Adoption Process

1. [Submit your application](#) online, remember to read the [dogs' profile](#) fully before applying.
2. Applications are reviewed
 - We try to notify all applicants about the outcome of their application but this is not always possible. Regularly check our website for updates on [reserved](#) and [adopted](#) dogs.
 - A volunteer may phone you to discuss your application further
3. If successful, a vet and home check will be arranged. You'll then be invited to a meet and greet; this will typically happen within a few days.
 - All members of the household (including dogs) must attend the meet and greet)
4. If all agree it's a good fit, the adoption will be finalised. You will need to pay the non-refundable adoption donation and will be issued a guardianship agreement to read and sign.
5. Handover is arranged. This will typically happen within a week of the meet and greet.
 - You will need to bring a collar, lead, harness, ID tag, and safe mode of transport (crate, seatbelt etc.) to the handover.
6. Bring your new friend home!

Preparing Yourself and Your Home

It is essential to ensure that you put plenty of thought into preparing yourself to bring a rescue dog home - a strong start in the first days, weeks and months are essential to building a solid foundation for integrating your rescue dog.

The biggest piece of advice is not to expect too much of your dog, they may have had a very unsettled start in life and as such will need reassurance, patience and understanding.

Practical changes

When a rescue dog arrives at their new home they may still be adjusting to living in a loving home and therefore you may need to make some changes such as removing any valuable, delicate, or sentimental (including electronics and wires/cables) items away from curious teeth.



Most dogs won't have any house training when they arrive with us and some may regress in their training when unsettled, it is often a good idea to bring up any rugs or fabrics to avoid spoiling them in the event of accidents!

Clearing your diary

It is essential to maintain calm and consistency in the first stages, and so you should be prepared to adjust your schedule to avoid leaving the dog for long periods of time, and also avoid visitors to the home, particularly in the first week.

Training

It is advisable to start doing research into training classes or sessions, but be aware that you will need to allow your dog to settle and decompress before starting this. You should ensure that your selected trainer uses positive reinforcement training. We do not advocate force-based training or the use of adverse training methods such as using prong collars, specialist collars (such as e-collars), or shouting and frightening dogs in response to undesirable behaviours.

Supplies

You should have your dog's bed, food and water station, and other supplies ready and set up before you bring them home. This will ensure that you can focus on your dog straight away, rather than having to dash out to the shops etc as soon as you bring them home. Read our [things to buy section](#) to find out more.

The journey home

The day you bring your new rescue dog home can be very exciting for you, but for the dog it is turning their world upside down so it's really important to make the trip home as calm as possible.

Below are a few points to help with this:

- You must collect the dog in a car. You cannot bring dogs home on public transport as this would be very overwhelming and potentially unsafe.
- It is not recommended to bring the whole family to collect the dog, to avoid overwhelming or crowding them. It is however ideal to have two people, one to drive and one to monitor the dog and also provide a second set of hands to unload the dog when you arrive home.

- Prepare a secure crate in the car (especially for very nervous dogs), or a seatbelt clip ready to attach to the dogs' harness.
- Please do not stop on the way home for the dog to have a 'break' - it's best to make it one straight journey with minimal risk of escape.



Things to Buy

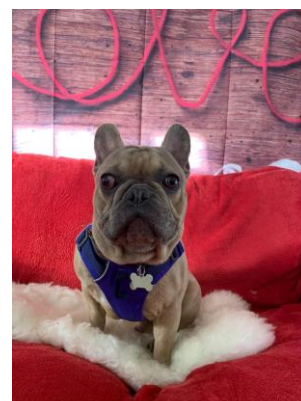
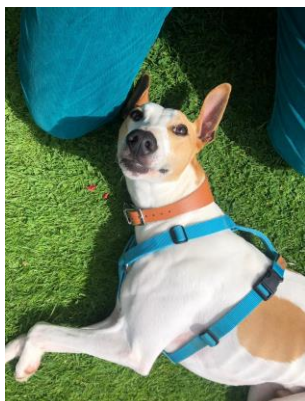
ID Tag

You must have a legally compliant ID tag to take any dog you adopt home with you. You can buy these on the spot in Pets at Home. You can find out what to include on the [Your Dogs Needs website](#). Please note you should not include the dog's name on the tag.

Harness, collar and lead

The dog will need a secure **harness, collar (for ID tag) and lead**. As rescue dogs can be a high escape risk, harnesses provide the most safe and secure solution. You must use a secure Y or H shaped harness - you may choose to have one fitted to ensure it is safe and suitable for your dog. You can also purchase seat belt clips which attach to the harness which prevents any escapes when a car door opens (these are available at Pets at Home).

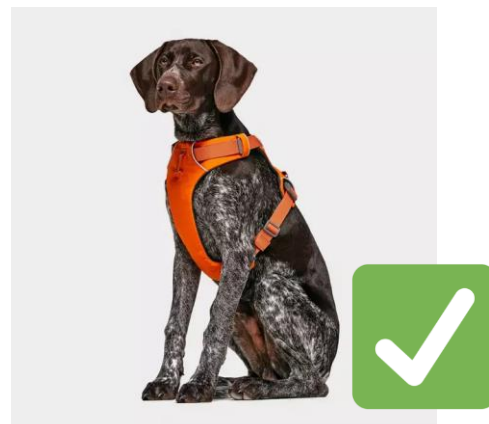
Please note: The dog must **not** be walked solely on a neck collar or retractable lead for safety reasons. It is also advisable to double lead more nervous dogs.



As a small charity, we are passionate about supporting small businesses (many of whom are a great support to us) as so we recommended these places for the above supplies:

- Platinum Petcare (Harness Fitting available). Platinum Petcare Ltd, 94 Broad Street, Staple Hill, Bristol, England BS165NJ - 0117 9561941 - info@platinumpetcare.co.uk
- The Muttly Professor (Harness Fitting available). 122 West St, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 3LT - [07939 323625](tel:07939323625).
- Dog House Clifton, 18 Portland St, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JH, [0117 911 3721](tel:01179113721)
- The Independent Pet Co. Ebdon Rd, Weston-super-Mare BS22 9NY - [07825 394152](tel:07825394152)
- The Pet Pantry. 14 Old Church Rd, Clevedon BS21 6NA, [01275 340677](tel:01275340677)
- Dog House, Lamb Yard, Bradford-on-Avon BA15 1FG, [01225 864767](tel:01225864767)
- The Petshop. Saxon Court, 2 Union St, Cheddar BS27 3NA, [01934 741199](tel:01934741199)
- The Pet Shop. 792 Fishponds Rd, Bristol BS16 3TE, [0117 336 8519](tel:01173368519)
- Petmania. Unit 8, Coker Rd, Worle Industrial Estate, Weston-super-Mare BS22 6BX, [01934 522542](tel:01934522542)
- Pets Corner. Hillier Garden Centre, Whiteway Rd, Bath BA2 2RG, [01225 337568](tel:01225337568)

When choosing a harness, you must consider both comfort and security. Harnesses that cross the shoulders such as those in the image below (left) are not as secure, they allow the dog to 'back out', can also shorten strides, and impact movement due to where they sit. Those that are Y or H shaped (pictured right) are more secure and comfortable. For dogs that are an extreme escape risk or especially talented escape artists, a double strapped harness such as a Ruffwear Webmaster or 3 Peaks Excursion harness would be recommended.

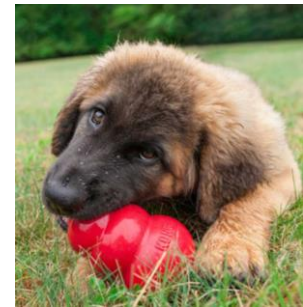


Bowls, bed and treats

You will need to ensure you have the basics such as bowls and beds, and plenty of treats for training. This should be set up before the dog arrives at your home, to ensure that their welcome is as calm as possible and that they know where their spaces are right from day one.

Enrichment

Enrichment toys are an ideal way to stimulate a dogs brain when at home and in the garden whilst they are settling in - things like Lickimats and Kongs (pictured) are often popular.



Gates

You may wish to use a stair gate for confining to certain rooms (for example only allowing the dog to have access to the kitchen when you are out until the dog is settled fully in the home).

Diet

There are many foods and diets to choose from - including Kibble, 'wet' food and raw food. It is important that your dog's diet is 'complete', in that it provides all the nutrition that they need. Many popular brands are actually very poor in terms of nutrition, and you should always check the ingredients and nutritional information of the food you feed. The [All About Dog Food website](#) can be a good reference point as part of your research as it allows you to compare ingredients in different foods:





Administration

Vets

You should start looking at registering with a vet as soon as possible after adoption. Find a vet close to you here - <https://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/home/>. Whilst your dog may have some outstanding veterinary treatment which is usually carried out by Axe Valley Vets (as agreed at adoption), you may open up a new account and have your new vets request their records be transferred by emailing info@axevalleyvets.co.uk

If you need to book your dog in for post-adoption neutering or vaccination this can be done by [contacting Axe Valley Directly](#) - the phone number is 01934 712229. This will be billed directly to Dogs Friends, although voluntary contributions are appreciated.

Insurance

When adopted, our dogs come with 5 weeks of Agria insurance (terms and conditions apply). Please note that insurance covers the basics and so you may wish to have your own, more comprehensive policy in place as soon as possible. We strongly encourage that you obtain insurance (3rd party liability as a minimum). Information on the Which website may help guide you: <https://www.which.co.uk/money/insurance/pet-insurance>

Microchip

The dog's microchip will remain registered to Dogs Friends until your follow up session (usually 4-6 weeks post adoption), a volunteer will phone you and it is essential you make contact if you miss this call.

Guardianship agreement and adoption fee

To complete the adoption, we will issue a guardianship agreement for your signature and request a non-refundable adoption donation. It is important that you read the agreement carefully to fully understand your responsibilities and the dog's needs. The adoption donation instructions are below - both must be completed prior before a dog can be released to your care.

Adoption donation bank details -

Adoption donation fee is to be paid via bank transfer using the below details:



- Dogs Friends
- Reference: Please use the dog's name as a reference
- Sort Code: 30-91-84
- Account Number: 0102 0810

Follow up session

You will receive contact (either text, call or email) from a volunteer approximately 4 – 6 weeks post adoption to check in and see how everyone's doing. Typically, we'll discuss how settling in is going, any vet care that was/is required, and answer any questions you might have. If you have any questions or concerns to raise before your follow up call, please contact info@dogsfriends.me.uk

Post Adoption Care

It is exceptionally important to carefully manage settling your adoptive dog into your home so they are not overwhelmed and you have the best chance at a successful adoption. In many cases, rescue dogs are very good at masking their fear and may present as confident and playful, however underneath they may be nervous and confused. The below points are exceptionally important, although we will provide more in-depth advice for your specific dog.

Household

When your dog first arrives home, do not try to do too much. You should keep the household calm and quiet and do not expect too much of the dog(s). You should avoid having visitors for the first week (at least), to allow the dog to get used to the new environment and people without external stimulation.

Walking

For ex-breeding or particularly nervous dogs, you should avoid walking the dog for at least one-week post-adoption to allow the dog to settle in the home and build a bond with you first. For 'pet' or more confident dogs, you may find they are ready for walks within a few days. You should not walk the dog(s) within the first few days of bringing them home.

Once you do start walking your dog you should start with short, calm walks, and the dog must be wearing a secure harness and collar. You should not allow the dog to be off-lead until completely recall trained using a longline - this usually takes several



months. There is no guarantee that your dog will definitely be able to be walked off lead in the future.

Sleeping

Your dog may take some time to settle into the usual pattern of sleeping at night, however, maintaining consistency and routine will help this. You must expect sleepless nights whilst your dog adapts to their new environment - this can include crying and barking at night. Finding a calming bed time routine is essential - some adopters even swear by reading a bed time story!

Security

Rescue dogs often come with a heightened escape risk, especially whilst they are first settling in, therefore extra caution should be taken with opening the front door etc. Wherever possible you should operate an airlock system using doors or stair gates to avoid a dog bolting outside. As with any dog, they should absolutely never be left tied up outside shops etc, regardless of how busy or safe the area may seem.

Introducing dogs to each other

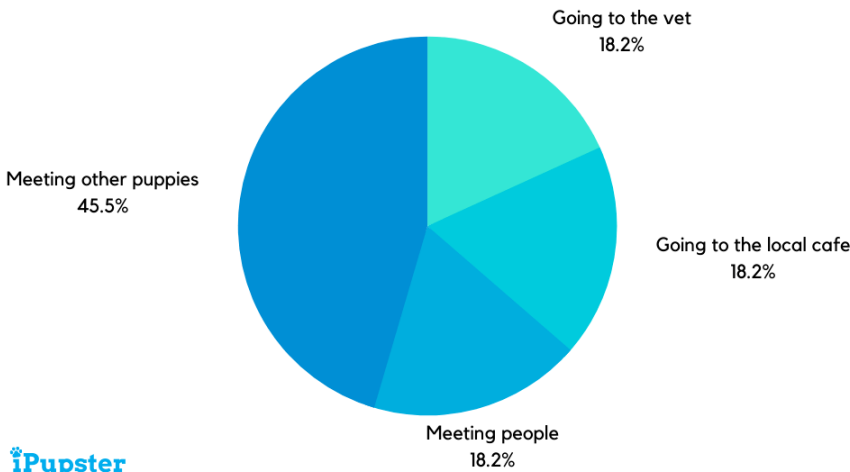
Before applying to adopt, you should be sure that your resident dog will be accepting of a new dog. Even if your dog is friendly outside of the house, you should consider if they will accept another dog in their space.

It is important to do introductions in a careful and well managed way to avoid overwhelming either dog - you should not expect animals to be fully integrated straight away. Even dogs who have previously lived happily with a dog can react very differently to a new dog. Regardless of your dog's previous experience with others and irrespective of their personality, always err on the side of caution and introduce them slowly and carefully ideally through a stairgate.

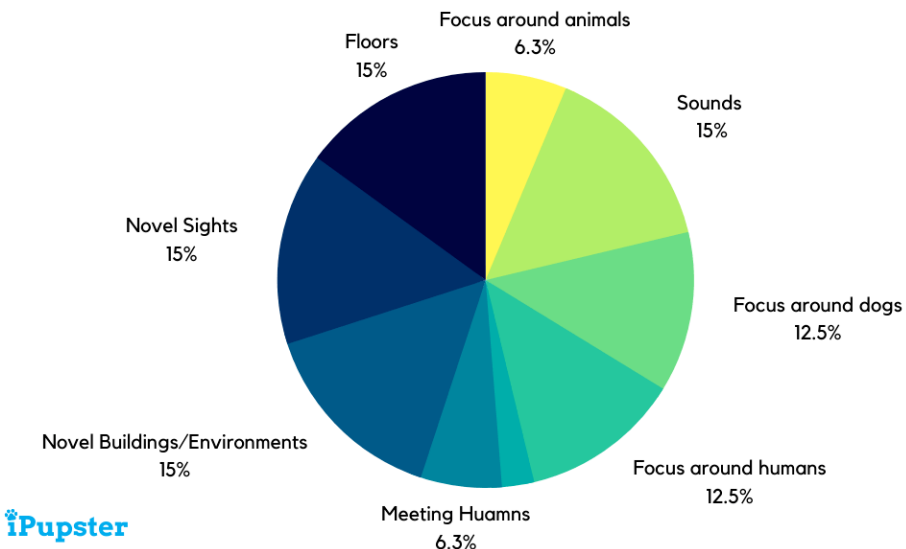
Socialising your rescue dog

The term 'socialising' is used a lot when raising dogs - but what is it? Socialisation is the process of introducing your dog to any and all new experiences, not just people and other pets. This usually occurs when your dog is a puppy (primarily 3-16 weeks), during a time when they are learning about the world and open to new experiences however many rescue dogs will have missed out on key socialisation.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE THINK SOCIALIZATION IS



WHAT SOCIALIZATION SHOULD BE



Socialisation do's

- **Learn your dog's body language, and listen to it!**
Learn to recognise when your dog is happy, anxious, nervous - a happy dog may have relaxed ears and mouth, a high wagging tail and relaxed stance or posture, whereas an anxious or nervous dog may show flattened ears, tucked tail, licking of lips, shaking or growling. Learning to recognise these signs will help identify when your dog is fearful and ensure you respond accordingly - in this situation it is best to retreat where possible and bring your dog back to a level of comfort.
- **Graduate from smaller to bigger challenges in manageable steps**
It is essential with rescue dogs not to do too much too soon, especially as we are often unaware of their previous experiences and as such you could come across an unexpected response to a trigger. For example, the first time you introduce your dog to a stranger you could walk by at a distance (dog on a lead), if this goes well you could walk by in closer proximity and so on until you come into closer contact. Whilst doing this you can form a positive association with seeing strangers by praising your dog or offering a treat. Desensitisation is key and you may need to repeat the first step many times if you have a dog that is fearful.
- **Small, manageable interactions**
Whilst your dog may seem very confident in some situations, it's important to err on the side of caution. For example, if you adopt a dog who loves to play with other dogs it can be tempting to go to 'puppy parties' or dog parks straight away - please don't do this! It's best to build up gradually, for example find a dog walking buddy who has a well socialised and calm dog first.

Socialisation don'ts

- **Do not force an anxious dog to approach something they are scared of**
If a dog is pushed into 'fight or flight' mode, no learning or training is happening and your dog will likely exhibit a panic response. Build up gradually - if you have to physically force your dog towards people, dogs etc then they are not ready!
- **Do not set your dog up to fail**
If you know your dog will not cope with certain environments or situations - don't put them in it. Doing this could run the risk of overwhelming the dog and undo the progress they have made.

DOGS FRIENDS

Rehoming Charity | No 1129794



The below image may also be helpful to explain your dogs mind -

A Dog's Emotional Cup

Every dog has a cup that needs to be filled—with social connection, security, access to reinforcers, and enrichment.

Some dogs seem to have a full cup most of the time, either because of a genetic pre-disposition, or because they have learned good ways to get a refill.

Most things that dogs do are completely normal—including the annoying stuff, like DIGGING up the garden, CHASING cats, or BARKING at the mailman. But all dogs show signs of stress when their cups get near empty.



Signs your dog may be coping with an empty cup

- * hoarding resources, over-protective
- * over-reacting, or shutting down when exposed to new things
- * restlessness
- * slow to recover from exciting events
- * changes in appetite
- * escalating behaviors to get something or to get away from something
- * increased grumpiness, or flare-ups
- * intense social appeasement

What refills a dog's cup:

- ♥ Doing Dog Things: SNIFFING, CHEWING, FORAGING, BARKING, DIGGING, PLAYING
- ♥ Being included in the family (dogs/humans)
- ♥ Freedom to move
- ♥ Freedom to make choices
- ♥ Ability to control outcomes and get reinforcers
- ♥ Unconditional love and attention
- ♥ Good health: nourishing food, no parasites, etc.
- ♥ Having a safe, quiet place to rest
- ♥ Predictable routines and interactions
- ♥ Getting to do things a dog loves to do

Words by Sarah Owings

Art by Lili Chin

What empties a dog's cup:

- ♣ Social isolation
- ♣ Long periods of confinement with no enrichment
- ♣ Poor nutrition, untreated illness, or pain
- ♣ Denied access to reinforcers
- ♣ Scary or unpredictable reactions from important humans
- ♣ Over-stimulation (over-exercised) or not enough
- ♣ Set up to fail, and then punished for it
- ♣ No preparation for challenging situations
- ♣ Unclear training: not knowing how to get reinforcement
- ♣ No one responding when expressing a need
- ♣ Too much "impulse control" (i.e. no sniffing, no eating, no exploring, no barking, no doing Dog Things) for too much of the day

Inspired by THE EMOTIONAL CUP by Upbility

General Care

Grooming

Grooming is a serious matter of welfare and it is essential that you manage your dog's coat, nails and cleanliness as a matter of priority. Whilst some dogs may be well managed with the occasional brush and bath, others require more complex grooming care which includes daily brushing and frequent professional grooming.

A grooming care guide has been kindly provided by Platinum Petcare, and there are many wonderful groomers available but it's important to carry out research when it comes to choosing the right one.

- Ask to see the environment your dog will be groomed in - is it safe, secure, clean and calm? You should also check how many dogs the groomer has on the premises at any time - this can have a huge impact on how calm the environment is.
- Does the groomer offer groomer socialisation sessions? Do they have experience with nervous rescue dogs? It's often the case that rescue dogs are not used to grooming care and as such they will often need time and patience to be more comfortable with grooming.
- Check local reviews, ask about insurance and qualifications and seek recommendations - you can never be too careful!





Health management and veterinary care

Keeping a dog healthy is a huge responsibility as a guardian and something that should be closely monitored throughout their life. It is your responsibility to:

- **Keep your dog at a healthy weight**

Sadly there has been a huge increase in obesity amongst dogs, in fact the Royal Veterinary College published a study in 2021 showing that 7.1% dogs under veterinary care were recorded as overweight in a single year. You should ensure you feed a good quality food that is NOT high in cereal and fillers, and opt for low fat, natural treats where possible. Processed human foods are not for dogs - no matter how sweet they look when they beg for a bite of your toast in the mornings!

- **Keep on top of veterinary care**

Even if your dog is generally well and fortunate enough to appear completely well, they should still receive a veterinary check annually as an absolute minimum. If your vet identifies a health issue this must be addressed as a matter of priority.

- **Exercise your dog in a way appropriate for their age, breed and health needs**

A young collie may need to walk for several hours a day and perhaps may enjoy agility, whereas an elderly greyhound may be happy with a gentle stroll round the block and the occasional zoomie in the garden, but all dogs must be exercised daily (even if they are lazy!) unless they are unable for medical reasons.

Adoption Process Frequently Asked Question's (FAQs)

How long does it take for the adoption process to finalise?

When you apply to adopt a dog, you should be available to meet them within a few days. We then offer a 24 hour cooling off period for everyone to make a decision about if they wish to proceed, and if everyone is content we arrange a handover within a few days. Whilst we may sometimes be able to offer multiple visits in very special circumstances (for example, dogs who have very complex behavioural needs) we generally expect applicants to commit to adoption after 1 visit.



Will I get to meet the dog before adoption?

Yes, all members of the family must come and meet the dog (usually in their foster home), and everyone living in the house must attend, including any resident dogs. You will not be able to take the dog home the same day and will need to make a return visit to collect them. There may be times where a meet and greet could be split into two different sessions, for example in the cases of larger families or with very young children.

What about outstanding veterinary treatment?

If the dog is part way through a course of treatment for an acute health issue, then Dogs Friends will continue to provide this treatment via Axe Valley Vets, and sometimes this may continue post adoption. There may be times where Dogs Friends agree to cover the cost of future surgery, however we are a small charity and funds are tight so this can only happen if/when we can afford to do so, and any contributions from adopters are gratefully received.

What happens about vaccinations and neutering?

Vaccinations are usually completed by the time a dog moves to their adoptive home, however if they are part way through a course then they will be provided by Dogs Friends via Axe Valley Vets. If the dog has been released to you on a neutering agreement, then neutering will be provided by Dogs Friends via Axe Valley. Provided this is carried out by Axe Valley then Dogs Friends will cover the cost*, however if you chose to have this carried out by your own vet then this will be at your own cost, but must be carried out within the agreed timeframe.

*Please note that for dogs adopted under the age of 12 months, adopters will be expected to cover the cost of neutering themselves but will be able to access this at a reduced cost at Axe Valley Vets.

What does the dog come with?

You will usually need to have things like collars, harnesses and leads ready for when the dog comes to you (Dogs Friends will provide an adoption preparation sheet), however we may sometimes be able to lend the existing items on the basis that these are returned to Dogs Friends when you have your own. This is dependent on supplies at the time.



What paperwork will I need to sign?

You will need to sign a guardianship agreement which contains all information about the dog being adopted, including medical history and behavioural details.

Is the dog microchipped?

Unless there is a medical reason to delay, all Dogs Friends dogs are microchipped as this is a legal requirement. The microchip will change over to the adopters 4-6 weeks post adoption following the follow-up call.

Does the dog come with insurance?

All Dogs Friends dogs come with 5 weeks of free Agria insurance. The adoption pack contains guidance on setting up own insurance, but Dogs Friends is not able to recommend specific insurance providers.

Is there any post adoption support?

Dogs Friends offer ongoing support with adoptive dogs. If you have any post adoption queries these must be sent to info@dogsfriends.me.uk

How much is the adoption fee?

The adoption fee is listed on each dog's profile, and must be paid via bank transfer prior to the dog moving to their adoptive home. This is not returnable in any circumstances; it is a donation to the charity and not a 'payment' for the dog.

Can we have more visits after the meet and greet?

Applicants are expected to commit to adoption after the first visit (if everyone is in agreement that it is the right match) but familiarisation visits are welcome if the foster carer is able to facilitate this and this does not delay the adoption process. In the case of dogs who have more complex needs, familiarisation visits are recommended.



Summary

We hope that this guide is useful, but if you have any questions at all please do get in touch. If you require post adoption support, please email info@dogsfriends.me.uk.

Please be aware that post-adoption support may not be provided by the same volunteer who supported you during the adoption process, and so please ensure you make initial contact via email.

If you are experiencing challenges

If you do come across any challenges with your adopted dog, we do expect adopters to invest time and effort into working on these. The decision to return a dog should not be made lightly as this is traumatic for the dog and often avoidable. We do expect adopters to engage with behaviourist support when challenges come up and returning a dog should not be the first port of call.

If you do sadly come to the decision that you genuinely are not able to keep a dog even after engaging with support, you should be aware that we will not be able to take the dog back immediately and we will need time to find a suitable alternative placement for the dog which you will be required to transport the dog to (this can be anywhere in the South West).

And, finally we wish you a happy life with your dog!

Dogs Friends Rescue