



I R E L A N D

# **Dog Fostering**

## HANDBOOK

# Thank you for fostering a Dogs Angels Dog!

By opening your home and your heart to a foster dog, you're doing something truly extraordinary. Your compassion gives a dog in need a safe place to heal, grow, and prepare for their forever home.

This handbook is here to guide and support you throughout your fostering journey, helping to make it a positive, rewarding, and joyful experience for both you and your foster dog.

From all of us at Dogs Angels Ireland, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making such a life-changing difference.



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# Health and welfare

## General Medical Concerns

If you have any medical concerns about your foster dog, please contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. They will advise you on the appropriate next steps and ensure your foster dog receives any necessary care as quickly as possible.

## General Behaviour Concerns

At Dogs Angels Ireland, we carry out a series of behavioural and personality assessments to evaluate each dog's suitability for fostering and rehoming. We will always share all known information with you before your foster dog arrives.

Please keep in mind that your foster dog may need time to adjust to their new surroundings. As they begin to feel safe and less stressed, it's natural for their behaviour to change, sometimes subtly, sometimes significantly. This is all part of the transition process.

If you notice any concerning or unexpected behaviour, don't hesitate to reach out to your Foster Coordinator for support and guidance.



# Important things to remember

## Golden Rules of Dog Fostering

To ensure the safety, well-being, and successful rehoming of your foster dog, please follow these essential guidelines:

- Never let your foster dog off lead in unsecured or public areas.
- Do not leave your foster dog unattended in a car, outside a shop, or alone in your garden.
- Only household members should care for your foster dog, do not leave them with friends, neighbours, or others outside your home.
- Always ensure your foster dog is wearing a collar with their Dogs Angels Ireland ID tag attached.
- Secure your foster dog safely when travelling in a vehicle, use a dog seatbelt, crate, or barrier.
- Attend all scheduled medical and rehoming appointments. If you're unable to attend, please give us advance notice so we can make other arrangements.
- Keep us updated on your foster dog's progress, regular updates help us support both you and the dog effectively.
- Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions, concerns, or doubts. We're here to help and support you throughout the fostering journey.

Thank you for your dedication and care, your role makes a life-changing difference.



# Equipment and Food

Dogs Angels Ireland will supply all the equipment and food your foster dog requires.

Please do not purchase any additional items, including food, accessories, or medical supplies, without first discussing it with us. We cannot reimburse expenses that have not been pre-approved.

## We will provide:

Leads, harnesses, and (if required) muzzles  
A collar and ID tag, which must be worn at all times  
All food required for the dog's individual dietary needs  
Any necessary medical supplies or medication

Important: All equipment provided must be returned at the end of your foster placement, so it can be used again for future dogs in our care.

## Muzzle Requirements

Some dogs may need to wear a muzzle during public walks. If this applies to your foster dog, we will provide clear guidance and training support. Please follow all instructions carefully to help ensure the safety of your dog, other animals, and local wildlife.

Thank you for your understanding and support, your attention to these details plays a vital role in the success of each foster placement.

## Microchipping

All dogs over the age of eight weeks will be microchipped and registered to Dogs Angels Ireland prior to being placed in foster care.

If your foster dog remains with you for more than 30 days, we may update the microchip registration to include your name and address for legal and practical purposes.

Please note: This administrative update does not indicate a change in ownership. The foster dog will continue to remain under the legal ownership and care of Dogs Angels Ireland until officially adopted.

If you have any questions about microchipping or registration details, please contact your Foster Coordinator.

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# Bringing your foster dog home

Before bringing your foster dog home, please ensure you feel confident and comfortable with the information and guidance provided by Dogs Angels Ireland. If you have any questions or uncertainties, don't hesitate to ask, we're here to support you every step of the way.

Every foster dog is unique. Some may settle in quickly, while others may take more time to adjust. Please be patient, offer reassurance, and avoid expecting too much too soon. Your calm, consistent care will help them feel safe and secure.

## Helping Your Foster Dog Settle In

### House Training Tips

House training varies from dog to dog, some may be fully trained, while others might need a little extra support, especially in a new environment. Here's how to help ease the transition:

- Introduce your foster dog to the designated toileting area as soon as you arrive home.
- Stay with them during their first few toilet breaks, this may take time initially, so be patient.
- If you don't have a garden or yard, take them on a short walk to encourage toileting.
- Praise and reward your foster dog when they go in the correct spot to reinforce positive habits.
- Accidents may happen, this is normal during a transition period. Respond with patience, not punishment.

Consistency, encouragement, and calm guidance will go a long way in helping your foster dog feel at home.

# Setting Boundaries & Establishing Routine

Establishing a clear routine and consistent boundaries is essential for helping your foster dog settle in and reduce stress. Dogs thrive on structure, it gives them a sense of security and helps prevent behavioural issues from developing.

## Routine & Consistency

- Agree on a household routine before your foster dog arrives. Everyone in the home should understand and follow the same rules to avoid confusing the dog.
- Consistency is key, dogs learn faster when their environment is predictable. Ensure routines for feeding, toileting, walking, and rest are followed daily.

## Setting Boundaries from Day One

- Set clear rules as soon as your foster dog arrives. For example, if you don't want them in certain rooms, keep doors closed to reinforce that boundary from the start.
- Please avoid allowing your foster dog on furniture or beds. Since they won't be staying with you forever, it's important not to encourage habits that may not be allowed in their future home.
- Designate a sleeping area and gently encourage your foster dog to use it. This helps foster independence and provides them with a secure space of their own.

## Encouraging Positive Attention & Independence

It's natural to want to shower your foster dog with love, but helping them develop confidence and independence is equally important. Be mindful of how you respond to their behaviour:

- Avoid giving constant attention, as this can lead to anxiety or clingy behaviours. Teach them it's okay to be alone sometimes.
- Reward calm and relaxed behaviour such as sitting quietly, lying down, or staying in their bed, with gentle praise or attention.
- Ignore undesirable behaviours like jumping up, whining, or barking for attention. This includes no eye contact, touching, or speaking. Once they are calm and have all four paws on the floor, you can offer praise or affection.
- To discourage following you from room to room, consider using baby gates or closing doors to help your foster dog learn to be comfortable in separate spaces.

By establishing clear routines and boundaries early, you help set your foster dog up for success, not just during their time with you, but also in their future forever home.





### Feeding Your Foster Dog

To keep your foster dog healthy and comfortable, it's important to follow the diet recommended by Dogs Angels Ireland. Sudden changes in food or feeding habits can lead to tummy upsets or gastrointestinal issues.

#### Key Feeding Guidelines:

- A change in environment can be stressful, so it's normal for your foster dog to experience mild diarrhoea or a temporary loss of appetite during the first few days. If symptoms persist, please contact your Foster Coordinator.
- Do not feed your foster dog from the table. This can encourage begging or problematic behaviours.
- If your dog becomes distressed while you're eating, try feeding them at the same time, but in a separate room to help them settle.
- Do not change your foster dog's food unless you have been specifically instructed to do so by Dogs Angels Ireland.
- If you have any concerns about their diet or digestion, please speak to your coordinator before making adjustments.

By sticking to the recommended feeding routine, you'll help your foster dog settle in more easily and avoid unnecessary health issues.

# Behaviour & Training

Understanding and managing your foster dog's behaviour is an important part of the fostering process. Many behaviours can improve with time, patience, and consistency and your observations help us better understand the dog's needs for their future home.

Key Guidelines:

- If your foster dog begins to display any behavioural issues, please ensure that all household members are aware and feel confident in how to respond appropriately.
- If a training routine or behaviour plan is recommended, it's essential that everyone in the home is on board and consistent in following the guidelines. Dogs learn best through repetition and structure.
- Ask other members of the household to observe how the dog behaves when you're not present. Noting any differences in behaviour when you're away can provide valuable insights.
- All dogs need time to rest and recharge. Please respect their personal space, especially when they are in their bed, resting, or sleeping, never disturb them during these quiet moments.
- If you notice any behaviour that you believe could become problematic, even if it seems minor, please inform us. Fostering is not only about care, but also about helping us better understand how the dog behaves in a home setting.

With your help, we can ensure each dog gets the tailored support they need on their journey to a forever home.

## Teaching Your Foster Dog to Be Comfortable Alone

Once your foster dog has had time to settle into your home, it's important to begin gradually introducing short periods of time alone. This helps build their confidence and reduces the risk of separation anxiety.

Key Guidelines:

- Start gradually. Once your foster dog seems relaxed in their new environment, begin increasing the time they spend alone in small increments.
- Note: Foster dogs should not be left alone for more than four hours at a time.
- Ensure they are well-exercised before being left alone. A walk or play session beforehand will help them settle more easily.
- Avoid fussing over the dog just before leaving or immediately upon returning. This can reinforce anxiety and make departures more stressful. Instead, keep arrivals and departures calm and low-key.
- Always leave your foster dog with a safe enrichment toy, such as a KONG® filled with treats or kibble, to keep them occupied and comforted in your absence.
- If your dog barks, howls, or scratches at the door, do not return immediately. Wait until they are calm and quiet before re-entering. This teaches them that calm behaviour is rewarded, and avoids reinforcing attention-seeking behaviour.

## Creating a Calm "Leaving Routine"

Help your foster dog become familiar with the signs that you're about to leave — without creating stress or anticipation:

- Practice your departure routine (e.g., put on your shoes, pick up your keys and bag), but don't actually leave.
- Instead, go to another room, the garden, or sit quietly elsewhere in the house. Ignore your dog's reactions completely.
- Do this at different times of the day, keeping your actions casual and calm.
- Give your dog a food toy just before "leaving" to create a positive association.

Take these steps slowly and gradually:

- If your foster dog shows signs of distress, go back a step.
- You may need to start with something as simple as walking to the other side of the room before progressing to leaving the house.

By building these habits patiently, you'll help your foster dog develop independence and confidence—an essential part of preparing them for their forever home.



### Socialisation Around People

Helping your foster dog feel safe and confident around people is an important part of their journey toward a successful adoption. However, it's equally important not to overwhelm them, especially while they're still settling into your home.

### Settling In and Building Trust

- Limit visitors in the first few days. Give your foster dog time to adjust to their new surroundings before introducing them to new people.
- Involve all household members in the dog's daily care (feeding, walking, playtime) to prevent over-bonding with just one person. Over-attachment can lead to anxiety and make future transitions more difficult.

### Walking and Safety

- Your foster dog should always be walked by an adult household member.
- No one outside your household should walk your foster dog unless approved by Dogs Angels Ireland.
- Always use a lead when walking your foster dog, no exceptions.

### Introducing New People

Once your dog has started to settle (typically after a few days or weeks):

- Begin gradual socialisation with friends or extended family in a calm and controlled manner.
- Keep initial interactions brief and positive. Allow the dog to approach people at their own pace.
- Never force interaction, ask visitors not to reach out or lean toward the dog. Let the dog initiate contact if they feel comfortable.

### Visitor Protocol

- Do not allow your foster dog near the front door when visitors arrive. Have them stay in their safe space until the door is closed and the guests are inside.
- Once calm, your dog may greet the visitors if they choose to, always under supervision.
- Ensure your foster dog has a designated quiet space in your home with unrestricted access, especially when guests are over. This gives them a retreat where they can feel safe and secure.

By approaching socialisation slowly and respectfully, you'll help build your foster dog's confidence around people, an essential step in preparing them for their forever home. Let us know if you notice any anxiety or concerning behaviour during these interactions. We're here to support you.



### Meeting Other Dogs

Dogs Angels Ireland will inform you of your foster dog's known history and behaviour around other dogs. Some foster dogs are very sociable, while others may be anxious, reactive, or unsure. Please follow our guidance carefully to ensure all interactions are safe and positive.

#### Before Any Interaction

- Make sure you fully understand your foster dog's behaviour around other dogs, as advised by Dogs Angels Ireland.
- Do not bring your foster dog to another dog's home, and do not allow other dogs to visit your home without prior approval from Dogs Angels Ireland.

#### Best Practices for Dog Introductions

- Stay calm and relaxed. Dogs are highly attuned to human emotions, and your body language and tone will influence their response.
- Keep initial greetings short and neutral, just a few seconds is enough. Avoid prolonged or intense face-to-face contact early on.
- If your foster dog becomes uncomfortable or overwhelmed, encourage them to move away using a gentle voice or distraction with treats, rather than pulling on the lead.
- Keep the lead loose and avoid tension. A tight lead can increase stress and trigger defensive behaviour.

#### Navigating Walks

- If you regularly encounter dogs that cause concern, either for you or your foster dog, try to adjust your walking route or time to avoid stress.
- Always prioritize safety and calm, positive experiences over social exposure.

By taking a slow, controlled approach to dog-dog introductions, you help your foster dog build confidence and avoid negative interactions. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact Dogs Angels Ireland before proceeding with any introductions.



# Communications

## Rehoming Enquiries

If your foster dog is ready for rehoming and someone expresses interest in adopting them, please follow these important guidelines:

- Direct all enquiries to Dogs Angels Ireland. Kindly refer interested individuals to our official Facebook page or website for more information.
- Avoid engaging in detailed discussions about the foster dog's personality, behaviour, or background. While well-intentioned, this may lead to misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations.
- Do not make any comments or judgments about whether the dog would be suitable for their home or family.
- All rehoming decisions are solely at the discretion of Dogs Angels Ireland, based on the dog's individual needs and best interests.

## Considering Adoption as a Foster Carer

Fostering is a vital part of our mission—it's about helping multiple dogs over time, not just one. We ask that foster carers commit to the process of temporary care and rehabilitation, understanding the broader impact they have on our rescue work.

That said, we understand that sometimes a deep bond can form. If you feel you may want to adopt your foster dog, please keep the following in mind:

- Adoption is not guaranteed. Even if your home is suitable for fostering, it may not meet the specific long-term needs of the dog.
- If the dog is already on reserve for another approved adopter, we will not be able to fulfil your adoption request.
- If you're seriously considering adoption, please contact us as early as possible. We'll discuss the possibility with you and explore what's in the best interest of the dog.

Your support as a foster carer is invaluable. Whether you help one dog or many, you are making a life-changing difference.

## Social Media Guidelines

Foster carers are encouraged to follow and engage with Dogs Angels Ireland on our public Facebook page and other social media platforms. These channels are valuable tools for promoting the work we do and helping dogs find their forever homes.

However, it's important to maintain professionalism and confidentiality in all public interactions. Please follow the guidelines below to help us represent the organisation positively and consistently:

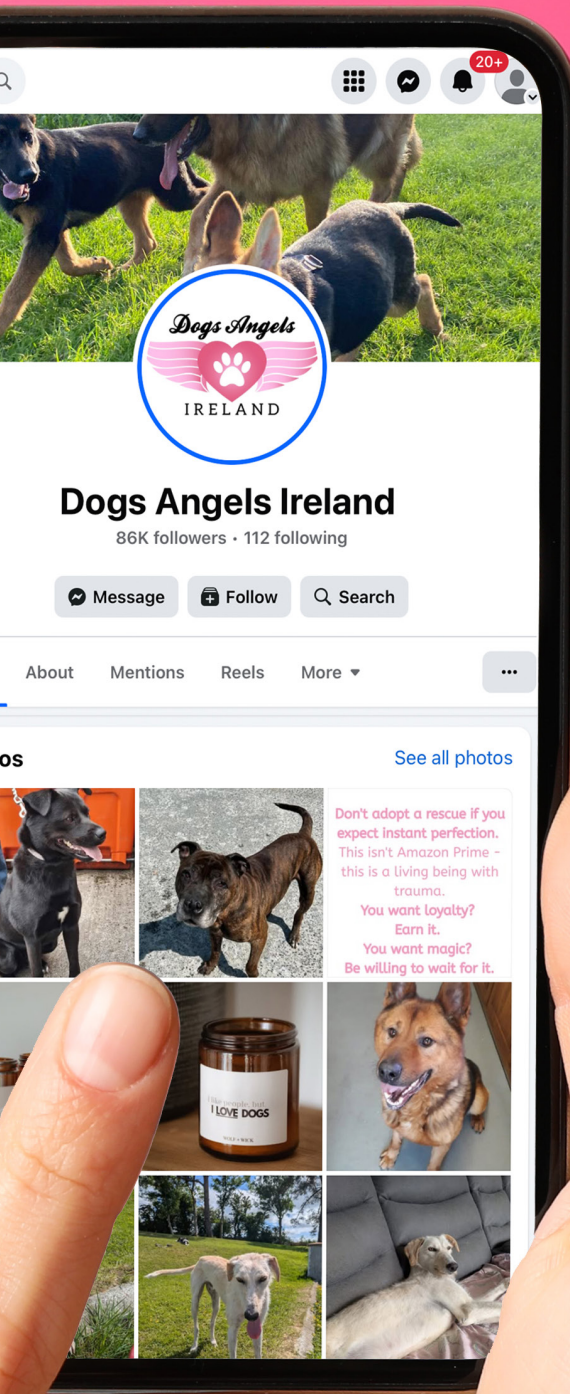
### Do's:

- Conduct yourself in a respectful, positive, and professional manner when posting or commenting on social media.
- Share general updates or public content from Dogs Angels Ireland to help spread awareness and support.
- If someone contacts you via social media regarding fostering or adoption, direct them to contact Dogs Angels Ireland directly through our official page or website.

### Don'ts:

- Do not post or share specific information about your foster dog, especially anything related to behaviour, medical treatment, or challenges.
- Do not discuss internal matters, including concerns about your foster experience or the charity, on public platforms. These issues should always be handled confidentially and directly with Dogs Angels Ireland.
- If you encounter negative or critical posts about Dogs Angels Ireland, do not respond yourself. Instead, please alert us immediately so we can address the matter appropriately.

By using social media thoughtfully, you help maintain the integrity of our work and ensure that the dogs in our care are represented in the best possible light.







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