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Pet Fostering for Victim Survivors of Domestic Abuse: A UK Perspective

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When animals are abused, people are at risk

When people are abused, animals are at risk

Phil Arkow, 1996



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We raise awareness of the link between abuse of people and animals through support, training and inter-agency working

Our vision is a world free from abuse of people and animals

The Links Group

Phil Arkow (1994)

Child Abuse, Animal Abuse and the Veterinarian
JAVMA, 204, (7), 1004-1007

Munro and Thrusfield (2001)

JSAP (2001): 42 (5) 218 – 226

JSAP (2001): 42 (6) 279 – 290

JSAP (2001): 42 (7) 333 – 337

JSAP (2001): 42 (8) 385 – 389



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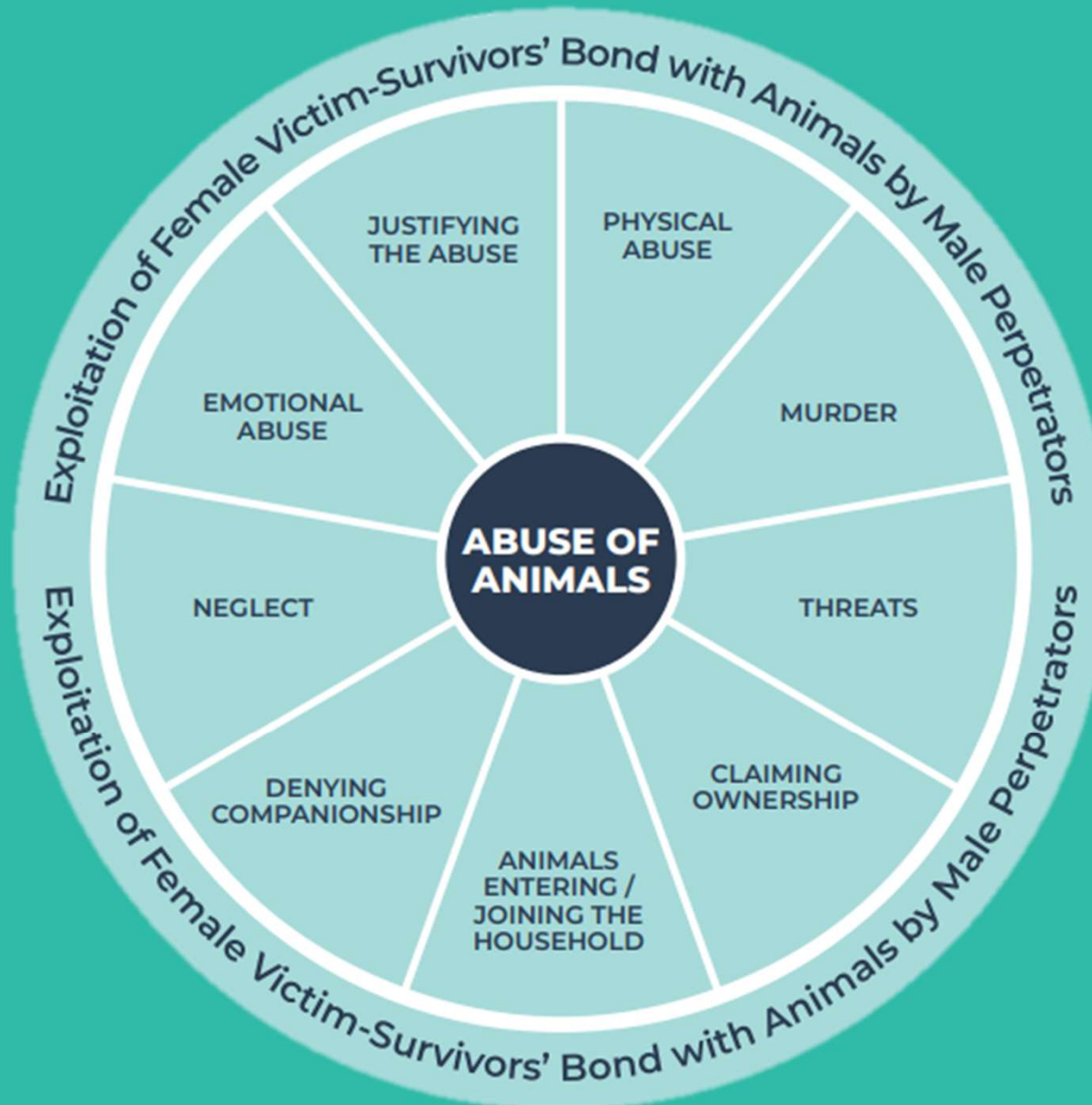
Links Pet Fostering Group




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Power and Control Wheel - Abuse of Animals



independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dogs-trust-domestic-abuse-pets-b1962996.html

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Nine in 10 domestic abusers also target pets, survey finds

The Dogs Trust said pets can be used to ‘coerce, control, physically harm and threaten’

Joe Middleton | 2 days ago | comments





26 November 2021



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<https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/animal-abuse-as-a-strategy-of-coercive-control>



Without support...

Owner feels they have no other option but to stay with the abusive person

...pets and people remain at risk



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Where will the owner go?

- Refuge
- Emergency accommodation
- Friends or family

Where will the pet go?

- Friends or family (risk of harassment by perpetrator)
- Private boarding facilities (pet may not cope, cost)
- Permanently rehomed (not desired outcome)
- Left behind (risk to life)



Specialist Pet Fostering

Endeavour Domestic Abuse Services

*- North West
1997*

Refuge4Pets

*- Devon & Cornwall
2017*

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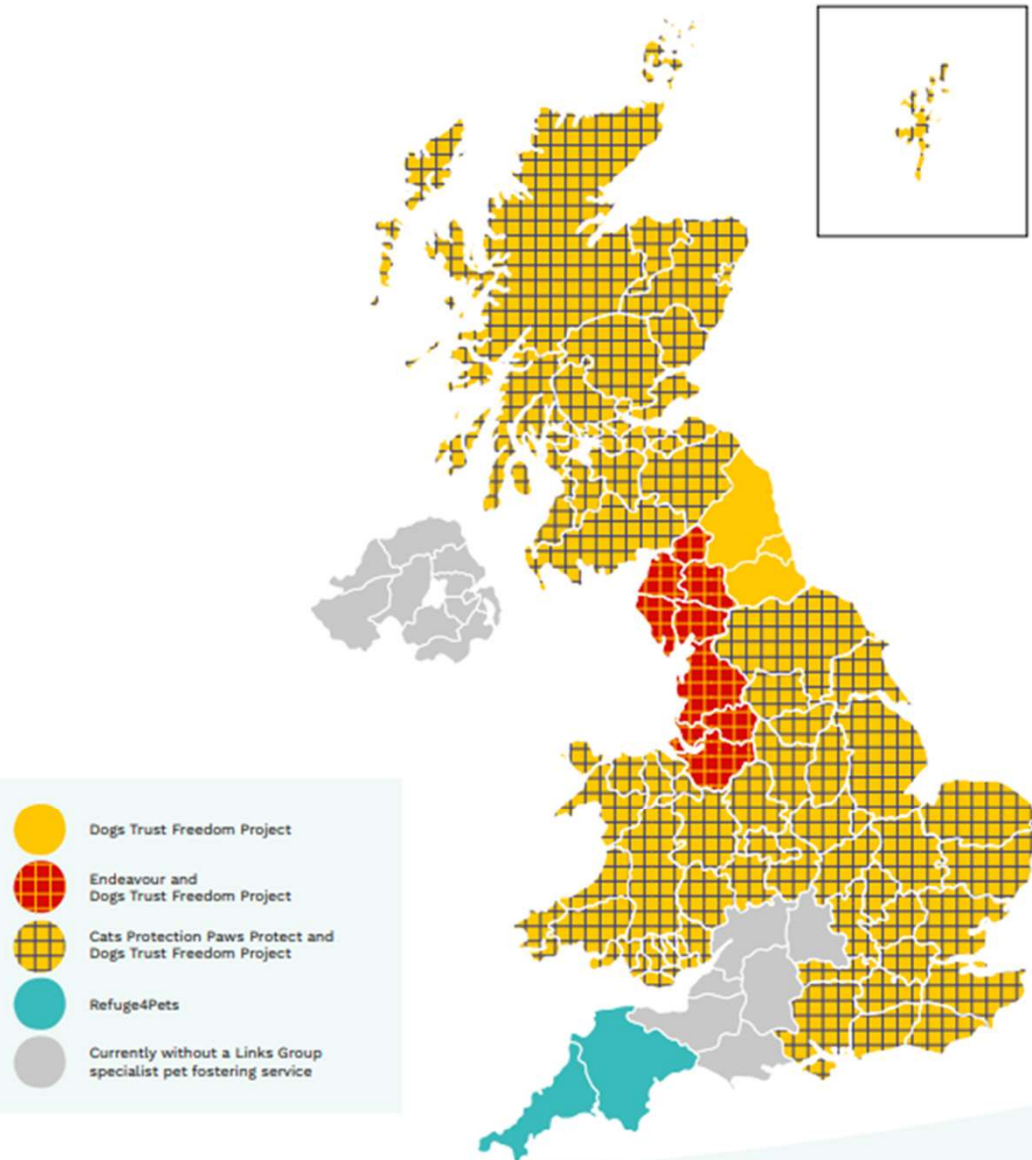
Cats Protection Paws Protect

*- South East, East Anglia,
Yorkshire, Midlands
2004 / 2017*

Dogs Trust Freedom Project

*- South East, North of
England, East Anglia,
Scotland, Wales, Midlands
2004*

Specialist Pet Fostering Services



Setting up a Service

- It's not easy
- Start small
- Do not underestimate perpetrators



Setting up a Service

- Some people do not understand why companion animals are so important to so many people
- For the majority of individuals the family pet is, literally that, a member of the family. Therefore, for example, in situations such as death or serious illness of the pet, feelings can be intense.
- Can be challenging engaging human health professionals if they do not appreciate the importance of the human – animal bond
- Perpetrators will use the bond to exert power and control over their victim



Preparing: Establish the Need

- DA agencies in the region (meet them)
 - Accommodation offered / pets included
 - Assess need for pet fostering
 - Timelines (be realistic)
- What pet fostering services are available? (don't overlap)
 - Partnership opportunities
 - Lessons learnt



Preparing: Service Set Up

- Policies / procedures
- Secure data storage / IT systems / GDPR compliance
- Staff
- Foster carers
- Veterinary Care
- Emergency pet accommodation

Promoting the service



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Policies

- Referral criteria
- Assessment & monitoring of the animals
- Length of foster offer / placement
- Support provided to the client
- Equipment and support provided to the foster carers
- Lone worker protocols
- OOH protocol



Paperwork

- Pet owner foster care agreement
- Pet foster carer agreement
- Referral form
- Confidentiality and info sharing form
- Intake health check
- Journey plan
- Home check paperwork
- Surrender form
- Risk assessment template



External Contacts

- Rehoming / AW agencies (ADCH)
- Animal training and behaviour organisations (APBC; ABTC; APDT)
- Microchip databases
- Animal legal services
- When ready to go live
 - Specialist DA referral agencies
 - Police, medical services, housing departments



Staff Recruitment

- Females only
- Knowledge
- DBS checked (disclosure and barring service)
- How many staff
 - Cover lone working, OOH
- Training
 - Lone working, DA, animal handling, confidentiality, GDPR



Vehicles

- Unmarked
- Where will pets be collected from?
- Fit out of vehicle:
 - Crates for safe transport
 - Air con (front and rear)



Animal Welfare and Human Transportation Impact Assessment

This is a dynamic risk assessment and should be reviewed throughout the journey. Please also refer to the journey plan. Should you need any additional support or advice during your journey please contact your lone worker buddy.

<u>Identified Risks</u>	<u>Who is at Risk</u>	<u>Likelihood of Occurring (low, medium, high)</u>	<u>Steps to Reduce Risk</u>

- Dynamic document
- Risks to consider:
 - Time / temperature on the day (heat related illness)
 - Location of pick up
 - Home / neighbour (risk of perp returning)
 - Car park (risk of pet escaping / being seen / is it near where the perp works)



Impact assessment completed by:	
Date impact assessment completed:	
Team member making the journey:	
Vehicle being used:	
Lone worker buddy and contact number:	



Note record of lone worker buddy and contact re staff safety



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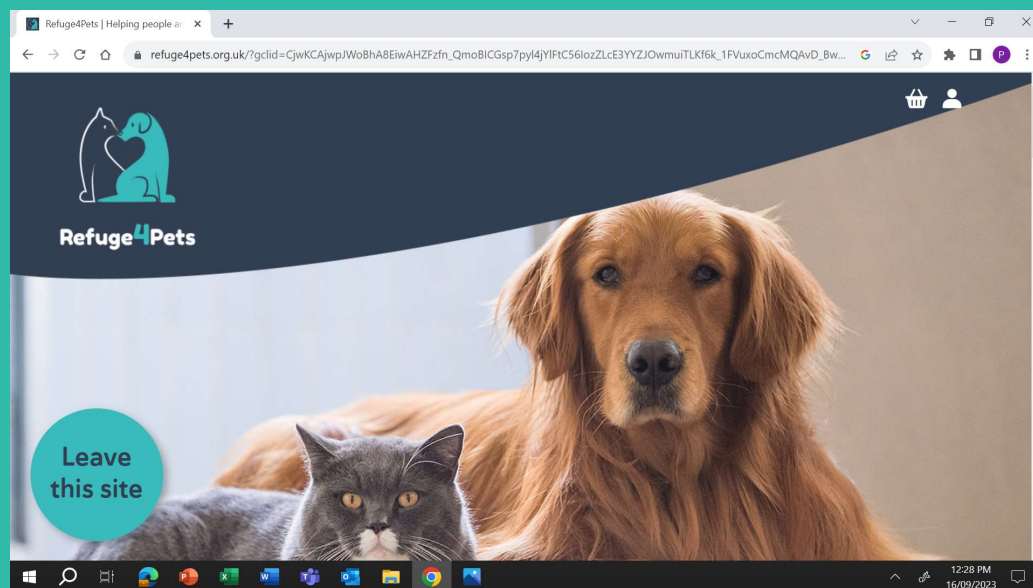


Veterinary Care

- What are your expectations of veterinary care:
 - Neutering
 - Microchip
 - Routine preventive healthcare
- What about emergency treatment
 - Cost
 - Ability of foster carer to cope
- Agree standards of care with vet
- Be aware that may not always be feasible to use your preferred vet. What contingency is there for this?

Promoting Your Service

- Need to promote:
 - Funders
 - Other stakeholders
 - Clients
- Website needs to be **SAFE** for clients
 - Ensure a 'leave this site' facility



Output of leave this site:

Goes to a totally unrelated site (weather in this case)

Notice the previous site reverts to search engine so no traceability

The screenshot shows a web browser with two tabs: 'Google' and 'BBC Weather - Home'. The address bar shows 'bbc.co.uk/weather'. The BBC logo and navigation menu are visible at the top. The main content area features a 'WEATHER' header with a search bar containing the text 'Enter a town, city or UK postcode'. Below this is a 'UK Summary' section with a map of the UK and weather icons for Lerwick, Inverness, Edinburgh, Belfast, and Hull. To the right of the map are two warning banners: 'UK weather warnings issued' and 'UK flood warnings issued'. Below the warnings is a 'Today' section for 'Home LU7' showing a temperature of 24° and 12° with the description 'Sunny intervals and a gentle breeze'. A forecast table at the bottom shows dates from Sun 17th to Wed 20th. The Windows taskbar is visible at the bottom with the system clock showing 12:29 PM on 16/09/2023.

Governance: Is it a Charity?

- £££ / \$\$\$ / € € €
- Trustees
 - Governance; finance; human advocate; animal advocate
- Compliance with charity regulator



Funding (sustainability)

- Don't put all your eggs in one basket
- Who are the key funding bodies?
- Plan ahead (funding cycles)
- Tailor to the funding body
 - Animal
 - Human
 - HCAB
 - Novelty (i.e. no other facility like it in an area)
 - Geography (some funders may wish to focus on a particular area)



Foster Carers

Foster Carer Support Pack



**“I wouldn’t have left if it
wasn’t for Refuge4Pets”**

Victim-survivor

**“We are helping animals
and people, when they are
at their lowest point”**

Foster Carer



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Your assigned Project Worker:

Name	
Usual working days/hours	
Email	
Contact number	

If you have a question, please contact your Project Worker but only during their usual working days/hours shown above. Your Project Worker will not be available to answer phones or emails on their non-working days.

Outside of their working hours, if you have an urgent question or a veterinary emergency, please call our main service number on **0300 4000 121**. If your call isn't answered straight away, please leave your name, number and a short message and one of the Refuge4Pets team will get back to you as soon as possible.

In an emergency, do not call, text or WhatsApp your Project Worker as they will not answer quickly enough!

Please phone our main service number on **0300 4000 121**.

If your foster animal needs life-saving emergency care and you can't get through to Refuge4Pets, please contact the veterinary practice they are registered with...

Your foster animal is registered under our Refuge4Pets account at this veterinary practice:

Name	
-------------	--



What we ask of you

- Please follow the instructions and care plan provided by your project worker and the team
- Do not share photos or put any details of the animals you are fostering on any social media platforms
- Keep cats indoors, keeping doors and windows closed (be aware of children opening doors/windows)
- Dogs must always be walked on a lead, with a Refuge4Pets tag on the collar. Please also keep their collar on in the house, in case of escape or any animal conflicts between dogs in multi-animal households
- Send photos/short videos of the animals to your project worker at regular intervals, to be sent on to the owner (no obvious geographical identifications, no foster carer family images). You can send these via WhatsApp or email, but we will forward these pictures/videos by email only to avoid any location settings
- Keep in contact with your project worker and the team. If they leave you a message, please respond as soon as possible - it may be urgent
- While we aim to visit, call, deliver supplies at agreed times, please appreciate that our days may change quickly and last minute, due to the nature of our service. We may at times seem chaotic, we do not mean to, it is just that we often have to respond to urgent requests to collect animals, which can change our plans at short notice. We are also a small team covering a big area so please be patient with us...



What you can expect of us

- When considering a new referral, we take as much information as possible and we use this information to match animals with suitable foster carers. We hope that we get this right first time!
- Please don't struggle on if we don't, because sometimes animals act very differently than we anticipate they will in certain situations.
- All information we receive about animals we pass on to you in the form of a risk assessment and care plan so that you have as much information as possible to help them to settle in with you.
- We will call you on days 1, 2, 3 and 7 of having a new foster animal in your care, to check in and see how it is going for all of you.
- Monthly face-to-face visits and regular contact to see how you and the animal are getting on together. This is also the time when we deliver the animal's supplies of food, accessories and flea/wormer treatment etc.
- Confidentiality - we do not pass any information about you to the owner, and vice versa - this is for your safety, the animal's safety and the safety of the victim-survivor.
- If required, we can support you with transporting the animal to relevant appointments including to their vet and grooming visits
- Holiday cover, should you go away while looking after one of the animals
- Relevant updates regarding the owner's situation and plans for reuniting them with their animals
- Advice, information, support, out of hours emergency telephone support 24/7

“Myself and my children will be forever grateful”

Victim-survivor



3-3-3 Rule for animals settling into your home

The 3-3-3 rule is a general guideline. Every animal is unique and will adjust differently. Give your foster animal space and allow them to go at their own pace and hopefully they will roughly follow this pattern...

3 DAYS

- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Feeling scared/ unsure**
- **May not want to eat/drink**
- **Shut down and want to hide**
- **Test boundaries**

The first 3 days tend to be the most difficult, but each animal is different. It is important to remember animals may not feel comfortable enough to be themselves. Do not be alarmed if animals are reluctant to eat for the first couple of days, many animals do not eat when they are stressed. They may shut down and want to curl up in their safe place or under the table.

Animals may be scared and unsure what is going on. They may be unsure about you. Or they may be the opposite and test you to see what they can get away with. It is important not to overwhelm your

3 WEEKS

- **Starting to settle/feel more comfortable**
- **Understanding new home/routine**
- **Beginning to build relationships with people**
- **Letting guard down and may start to show true personality**
- **Behaviour issues may start to arise.**

After 3 weeks animals are usually much more settled. Usually, it is when the animal's true personality becomes visible. They will be mostly relaxed about the stability of their environment. You might find that your foster animal is more ready and willing to play, feels more energetic, has settled, and will begin to show their true character.

3 MONTHS

- **Comfortable in home and surroundings**
- **Building trust and true bond**
- **Gained sense of security with family**
- **Set in a routine and understanding boundaries/rules**

After 3 months your foster animal should now feel secure in their new home. You have built a bond of affection and trust, as well as a routine you can both rely on.

In summary

Your foster animal will take time to settle in, please remember to be patient whilst they adjust to this.

Having a new temporary addition to your family is **exciting** but please keep your foster animal's first week as calm as possible



Dogs and the law

When you foster a dog, there are some specific UK laws that you must adhere to:

- All dogs must be microchipped - we will ensure this is completed for your foster dog and the microchip is registered to Refuge4Pets.
- All dogs must wear a collar and identification tag at all times (inside and outside your home) - we will provide the collar and ID tag for your foster dog, which will have our contact details on.
- It is an offence to not clean up after a dog. We will supply the poo bags and please ensure you always have these on you when out walking your foster dog.
- When travelling in a car, dogs must be suitably restrained so that they cannot distract the driver. You can use a dog guard, crate or a properly fitted car harness to secure them. Refuge4Pets can supply these items for you if required.
- It is not illegal to leave a dog unattended in a car, but we strongly advise against it. You must never leave a dog in a car on a hot day (even with the windows down) as this is dangerous for the dog in case they overheat.



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When it's time for your foster animal to be reunited with their family

For you as the foster carer, this will probably be the hardest part and sadly (due to the importance of confidentiality) you won't get to see the joyful moment when we are able to reunite the victim-survivor with their animal. Seeing the victim-survivor being reunited with their dog or cat is one of the most rewarding parts of our job, and we couldn't do this **without you**.

Please take comfort in the fact that you have enabled a victim-survivor and their much-loved animal to escape from domestic abuse. In some cases, your selfless act in welcoming a Refuge4Pets foster dog or cat into your home, will have saved the life of that person and/or their pet. We cannot thank you enough for the amazing role you have played in helping victim-survivors to rebuild their lives.

“It's hard to say goodbye to any pet you have fostered, but it is wonderful knowing they are going back to their family who are now safe and happy.”

Foster Carer

“This is our second chance to be happy again. Thank you.”

Victim-survivor



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Challenges



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Freedom Project

- Helping and supporting clients fleeing abuse
- Substantial cuts to refuge/DA support services in the UK
- Recruiting and retaining suitable volunteer foster carers for long-term placements
- High number of bull breed referrals
- Managing ongoing behaviour problems / abused pets
- Promotional limitations due to confidentiality



Be prepared.....

- Emergency vet care
- Dog bites person / another dog whilst in foster
- Pet escapes
- Client returns to perpetrator
- End of agreed foster period



Freedom Project

Making a referral:

- The owner can contact us themselves, or an agency supporting the owner can make the referral
- We will send out an information form about the dog to help us match it to a foster carer
- We will always ask for written confirmation that the owner is fleeing domestic abuse and accessing refuge/emergency/temporary housing
- Providing the referral meets our criteria then we will arrange collection at a safe address



Client Agreement

- Temporary care
- Length of time cared for
- Foster environment
- Location
- Min age / length of ownership
- Charges that apply
- Ability to visit / dog updates



Client Agreement

- Veterinary records / care / neutering
- Injury / illness / death / loss
- Accuracy of pet information
- Unwanted / unmanageable behaviours / aggression



Client Agreement: Contact

- Veterinary treatment
- Euthanasia
- On leaving the refuge / temp accommodation
- Returning to the abuser
- Keeping in touch



Dog Information Form

Section 1 – OWNER DETAILS

Name of owner:			
Mobile no:		Email Address:	
Refuge/hostel/temporary address:			
Refuge/hostel tel no:			
Name of keyworker:			
Keyworker tel no:		Keyworker email:	
Previous Address:			
Location of dog now:			

Section 2 – DOG DETAILS



Dog Information Considerations

- Neuter / microchip status
- Type of property (house, apartment)
- Vaccination / preventive healthcare status
- Veterinary care to date
- Any signs / incidents of aggression to people / other dogs
- Lived with children?
- Lived with other pets? Type
- Any fears / phobias (fireworks, shouting, thunder)
- Where does pet sleep
- Leave alone?
- Exercise needs, ok off lead, recall
- Travel in a vehicle
- Feeding
- Grooming, sensitive to touch



Other Considerations

- Things that may be unique to your country / region:
 - Banned / restricted breeds
 - Pet from other countries / risk of non-endemic disease / any testing required?



www.thelinksgroup.org.uk



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