

Freedom Project Referral Policy

The Freedom Project provides a free dog fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse in Greater London & the Home Counties, Yorkshire, the North East, the North West and Scotland.

The aim of the project is to enable people to flee domestic abuse safe in the knowledge that we will care for their dogs whilst they are in a refuge or temporary accommodation. Dogs are cared for in the homes of volunteer foster carers for up to 6 months and as a result we are only able to accept well socialised, established family pets.

We normally need at least 3 days to arrange a foster placement once we have received the referral paperwork and have confirmed that we are able to accept the dog on the project. In some cases it may take up to or longer than a week to arrange a foster placement if we don't have a foster carer available. If the owner has to leave home immediately then they should arrange temporary care for their dog with family, friends or a boarding kennel.

In order for us to consider a referral on to the Freedom Project, the owner will need to complete a dog information form and agree to our client service conditions. In some cases we may also require photos of the dog (see point 11). If we agree to accept a dog based on the information provided by the owner, we will also carry out a behavioural assessment of the dog at the time of collection or in some cases before collection. If at this point we deem the dog to be unsuitable for this project, we reserve the right not to proceed further with the placement.

Referral Guidelines

1. We are only able to help people who are fleeing domestic abuse from or in Greater London & the Home Counties, Yorkshire, the North East, the North West and Scotland. We require written proof to confirm that the owners is fleeing domestic abuse which can be provided by a referral agency such as a refuge, Women's Aid, Police, Social Services or a Local Authority.
2. In most cases, those accessing our service will be going into a refuge or emergency temporary accommodation. If the owner is not going into refuge or council provided accommodation, we would need to discuss their long term housing plan to assess whether they would be eligible for this project.
3. We can offer pet fostering for a maximum of 6 months, and we review all placements at 3 and 6 months. If the owner has not been able to secure housing within this time frame then we may be able to offer extensions in exceptional circumstances.
4. We are only able to consider referrals for dogs over 8 months old. This is due to the length of foster placements as a puppy may end up being on our project longer than they have lived with their owner. For very young dogs we would recommend the owner considers permanent rehoming and Dogs Trust may be able to help with that.
5. We are only able to foster established family pets so the owner will need to have owned their dog for at least 6 months in order to refer them to the project.
6. For safety and confidentiality reasons the owner will not be able to visit their dog whilst they are being fostered on our project. In some cases it may be more practical for family or friends to care for the dog so that the owner can visit them regularly.
7. If a dog is not neutered or microchipped this will be done whilst on the project. Neutering, microchipping and all other preventative veterinary costs will be covered by Dogs Trust. If the owner does not agree to this policy we will be unable to foster their dog.
8. If the dog being referred has ever travelled outside of the UK we will require information about the dog's travel and veterinary history and in most cases blood tests will need to be carried out prior to accepting the dog on to the project. Further details will be given on referral and in most cases we will be able to cover the cost of the blood tests if the dog fulfils our other referral criteria.
9. We are unable to accept referrals for dogs that have shown any aggression towards people. If a dog has shown any aggression towards other animals we will need to discuss this in more detail with the owner. If we consider the aggression to be unmanageable for a volunteer foster carer then we will be unable to accept the dog on this project.
10. We cannot take referrals for dogs that are registered on the IED list (Index of Exempted Dogs) or any of the breeds banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act – Pit Bull Terrier, Dogo Argentino, Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro.
11. If the dog being referred is a bull breed or bull breed cross, the owner will be asked to provide a set of recent clear photos of the dog. Further details will be given on referral.
12. We can collect dogs directly from the owner at a safe location within our project areas. Due to our lone working policy, we cannot attend the property that the owner has fled from unless we have received confirmation that the perpetrator is in custody/prison.
13. We are unable to accept referrals for dogs that have been used in any capacity as a guard dog or dogs that have been kept outside.

If you have any questions about referring a dog to our service please email freedomproject@dogstrust.org.uk or visit www.dogstrustfreedomproject.org.uk