



**UK Dog Behaviour
& Training Charter™**

Code of Ethics for Member Organisations and Individual Members

This Code of Ethics establishes the mandatory ethical and professional standards expected of all Member Organisations of The UK Dog Behaviour and Training Charter (“The Charter”) and all Individual Members operating through those organisations. It is intended to protect animal welfare and wellbeing, support safe and competent practice, safeguard clients and the public, and maintain confidence in the profession.

1. Status, Scope and Accountability

- This Code applies to Member Organisations, their officers and representatives, and all Individual Members.
- Compliance with this Code is a continuing condition of membership.
- Member Organisations must publish this Code, or an equivalent code meeting or exceeding it, online and make it readily accessible to the public.
- Member Organisations must apply, monitor and enforce the Code through documented complaints, disciplinary, audit and appeal procedures.
- Individual Members remain personally accountable for their professional decisions, conduct, records, communications and services, including work delivered remotely or through third parties.

2. Core Ethical Principles

Member Organisations and Individual Members must:

- Place animal welfare and wellbeing at the centre of all decisions and interventions.
- Use humane, reward-based, evidence-informed approaches and the least intrusive effective intervention.
- Act with integrity, honesty, fairness, respect and professional independence.
- Work within the limits of their competence and seek advice, supervision or referral where required.
- Protect clients, animals, colleagues and the public from avoidable harm.
- Respect lawful rights, privacy, confidentiality and informed decision-making.

- Maintain accurate evidence and be accountable for outcomes, errors and corrective action.
- Promote inclusion and provide services without unlawful discrimination.

3. Animal Welfare and Wellbeing

- Members must assess and respond to the individual animal's behavioural, emotional, physical, environmental and social needs.
- Members must minimise foreseeable risks of pain, fear, distress, intimidation, injury or deterioration in welfare or wellbeing.
- Members must not use, recommend, promote or depict as acceptable any aversive method or tool prohibited by The Charter framework.
- Any equipment permitted only under the Controlled Exception Protocol must be used strictly within that protocol, for an immediate safety risk, with no viable lower-risk alternative, and never as a routine means of reducing behaviour.
- Interventions must be proportionate, time-limited where appropriate, actively monitored and adjusted or stopped when adverse welfare indicators arise.
- Members must consider the animal's current welfare and longer-term wellbeing and must not infer overall wellbeing from a single observation.
- Where an animal's needs cannot be met safely or ethically, the member must decline, pause or end the service and make an appropriate referral.

4. Competence and Evidence-Informed Practice

- Members must provide only those services for which they have demonstrable knowledge, practical skill, experience and, where required, formal assessment.
- Members must apply current evidence-informed understanding of learning theory, canine behaviour and communication, welfare and wellbeing, ethics and behaviour modification.
- Members must complete and evidence the continuing professional development required by The Charter and their Member Organisation.
- Members must critically evaluate information, distinguish evidence from opinion, and revise practice when credible evidence or professional standards change.
- Members must seek suitable supervision or peer consultation for complex, unfamiliar or high-risk cases.
- Member Organisations must ensure that assessors and supervisors are appropriately competent, experienced and free from unmanaged conflicts of interest.

5. Duties to Clients and the Public

- Members must communicate clearly, accurately and respectfully, using language appropriate to the client's needs and understanding.

- Before services begin, members must explain the nature, purpose, likely benefits, material risks, limitations, costs and relevant alternatives to the proposed service.
- Members must obtain informed agreement from the person legally authorised to make decisions for the animal and must respect the right to ask questions, decline an intervention or withdraw from services.
- Members must set realistic expectations and must not guarantee outcomes that cannot be supported.
- Fees, cancellation terms, responsibilities and any material changes to the service must be transparent and agreed in advance wherever reasonably practicable.
- Members must take reasonable steps to protect the safety of clients, animals, colleagues and the public and provide clear risk-management advice.
- Members must not exploit a client's dependency, distress, lack of knowledge or trust for personal, professional or financial gain.

6. Referral and Collaborative Practice

- Members must refer promptly to an appropriately qualified professional when a case falls outside their competence, presents significant risk, or may involve pain, illness, injury, medication, safeguarding or another matter requiring specialist assessment.
- Potential clinical or medical contributors to behaviour must be referred to a veterinary professional.
- With appropriate authority and regard to confidentiality, members should cooperate with veterinary professionals and other relevant practitioners to support coordinated care.
- Members must not obstruct a client from seeking a second opinion or alternative support.
- Where urgent action is needed to protect an animal or person, the member must follow applicable legal, safeguarding and emergency procedures.

7. Professional Conduct and Respect

- Members must treat clients, colleagues and other professionals with dignity and professional courtesy, including in online and public communications.
- Members must not engage in defamation, targeted harassment, bullying, intimidation, retaliation or knowingly false allegations.
- Legitimate, evidence-based professional disagreement or good-faith reporting of concerns must be expressed accurately, proportionately and through appropriate channels.
- Members must maintain appropriate professional boundaries and must not misuse their position, access, status or Charter affiliation.
- Members must cooperate honestly and promptly with lawful investigations, audits and disciplinary processes.

- Members must report serious or systemic concerns to their Member Organisation, The Charter or an appropriate authority where required, while acting in good faith and preserving confidentiality as far as lawful and practicable.

8. Honest Marketing and Representation

- Members must represent their qualifications, competence, experience, services, methods, affiliations, fees and outcomes accurately.
- Members must not make misleading representations, omit material information, fabricate testimonials or results, or claim endorsement beyond that formally granted.
- Charter or Member Organisation names, marks and membership status must be used only as authorised and must not imply that every service or claim has been specifically approved.
- Marketing and educational content must reflect actual practice and must not normalise unsafe or prohibited methods.
- Images, videos and case material must not misrepresent an animal's behavioural or emotional state. Distress or unsafe practice must not be shown without legitimate purpose, clear context and an appropriate resolution.
- Comparisons with other professionals or services must be fair, verifiable and not denigrating.

9. Confidentiality, Privacy and Records

- Members must protect confidential and personal information and process it lawfully, fairly, securely and only for legitimate purposes.
- Information must be shared only with valid authority, consent or another lawful basis, and only to the extent necessary.
- Confidentiality may be limited where disclosure is required by law or reasonably necessary to address a serious risk of harm; where practicable, the client should be informed of the disclosure and its basis.
- Case material used for education, supervision, assessment, research or marketing must be appropriately authorised and anonymised where required.
- Members must create and retain clear, accurate, contemporaneous records sufficient to evidence assessment, advice, agreed plans, consent, risk decisions, referrals, outcomes and material communications.
- Records must be retained, accessed and disposed of in accordance with applicable law, insurance requirements and Member Organisation policy.

10. Legal, Regulatory and Organisational Compliance

- Members must comply with applicable animal welfare, consumer protection, data protection, equality, health and safety, safeguarding, employment, advertising and other relevant laws and regulations in every jurisdiction in which they operate.

- Members must maintain any licence, registration, permission and professional insurance required for their work.
- Where legal requirements and this Code differ, members must comply with the law and, so far as lawful, follow the higher welfare and professional standard.
- Members must comply with the published requirements of The Charter and their Member Organisation and must notify the appropriate body of any material matter that may affect their eligibility, competence, insurance, legal authority or professional standing.

11. Raising Concerns, Complaints and Cooperation

- Member Organisations must maintain clear, accessible and publicly available procedures for concerns, complaints, disciplinary action and appeals.
- Members must tell clients how to raise a concern and must not penalise, intimidate or disadvantage anyone for making a good-faith complaint or protected disclosure.
- Members must respond candidly to concerns, preserve relevant evidence, meet reasonable deadlines and implement agreed corrective action.
- Complaints must be considered impartially by persons without unmanaged conflicts of interest, with appropriate confidentiality and documented reasoning.
- Matters indicating organisational failure, conflict of interest, systemic non-compliance or significant risk may be escalated to The Charter or an appropriate external authority.

12. Adoption, Review and Member Declaration

- Member Organisations must formally adopt this Code or an equivalent code meeting or exceeding its requirements.
- The current version must be publicly accessible online and supplied to The Charter. The Charter must be notified in writing of changes within 14 days.
- The Code must be reviewed at planned intervals and whenever there is a material change in law, evidence, professional standards or The Charter requirements.
- Members must confirm on admission and renewal that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the Code.

Member declaration: I confirm that I have read and understood this Code of Ethics. I agree to place animal welfare and wellbeing at the centre of my practice, to act competently and honestly, to work within my professional limits, and to be accountable for compliance with this Code, my Member Organisation's requirements and The Charter standards.