



Sussex North & Brighton Branch
Registered Charity No.206630

Why we set rehoming criteria for individual dogs

We understand it can sometimes be a frustrating process when you are trying to rehome a rescue dog and find that your application for a specific dog is not successful. We want to explain why we put rehoming criteria in place following our assessments of the dogs. Each dog that comes into our care is an individual, with different levels of socialisation and varying trauma and so have their own unique needs. For this reason, we do not have a one size fits all rehoming criteria. Rehoming criteria for each dog are set with the dogs needs in mind and rehoming matches are made considering the type of home and lifestyle that would suit the dog, but also considering the owners lifestyle and what would suit them. We do this as good match benefits everyone and reduces the chance of the dog having to be returned to our care. See below some of the rehoming criteria we may set and why it may be in place. If a dog has to be returned to us because their new home hasn't worked out, it is traumatic for not only the dog, but the adopters too, who wanted to give that dog their forever home, so we do whatever we can to make the right match that will last a lifetime.

No other dogs in the home

Reasons why we may say this:

- *The dog is known not to like other dogs.
- *The dog is frightened of other dogs.
- *The dog is reactive to other dogs.
- *The dog has been attacked by another dog.
- *The dog has been in a multi dog household and has had issues with other resident dogs.
- *The dog has medical/health issues, that means it would not be suitable to live with another dog.
- *We have no clear information about the dog and as a result, cannot be sure it can live safely with another dog.

Why this is important:

- *To stop a potential dog fight. We have a duty of care to make sure both your own dog, and the dog we are looking for a home for, are not put in a position that may lead to a fight.

*To prevent the dog being returned to us because it doesn't get on with the current resident dog/dogs.

*To prevent injury and trauma to either your resident dog or the dog we are looking for a home for, because one dog has attacked the other or has been attacked themselves.

*To prevent high vet bills that may result from a dog fight/attack.

*To make sure the dog feels safe in their own home and are thriving, not just surviving.

*To prevent your own dog being injured and/or traumatised by an incident.

*Not all dogs need or want a dog friend and some dogs will find this aversive. This is certainly true in situations where either the resident dog, or the dog in our care is fearfully reactive to other dogs, but another example of this could be a situation where you have a senior resident dog, who in many cases, would struggle to cope with a puppy invading their space and their retirement. There is also a high rate of senior or older dogs already resident in the home being given up to rescue or abandoned, when they are not getting on with a new puppy or younger dog who has been bought into the home.

No children or, No young children

Reasons why we may say this:

*The dog has been treated badly in the past and we have history of the dog growling and asking for space when their other body language signals have been ignored or not read correctly by children.

*The dog hasn't been around children and is unknown how it reacts to children and there is no way to safely test that.

*The dog is too boisterous/large, for small/young children.

*The dog is showing signs of fear and trauma and requires a quiet and predictable home (Yes, we know some children are quieter and more predictable than others but can the same be said for their visiting friends or the fact that kids grow up and change?).

*We do not have enough history around a dog and so can't guarantee the dog and the child's safety.

*The dog has a bite history - a dog does not bite for no reason and despite many people saying "there was no warning" there is always a warning, us humans just can't speak dog and once a dog has bitten or attempted to bite, no risks can be taken.

-The dog is a very mouthy puppy.

-The dog is a puppy, but they have already experienced trauma.

Why this is important:

- *The dog may be returned to us if it knocks over, or accidentally scratches a child.
- *The child may be injured or frightened if knocked over by a boisterous dog.
- *The dog is already traumatised, so no further risks can be taken, as any more trauma, could mean there is no way back for that dog.
- *If the dog bites a child, not only would the child be injured, but the dog would likely be put to sleep.
- *The child may have serious injuries or worse if bitten or attacked by a dog who has not been assessed to live safely and happily with children.
- *We do not know enough about the dog and are not willing to risk finding out the hard way when the dog is already in the home. The risk is not worth it for the child and the dog's safety.
- *The puppy is a very strong mouther and that along with puppy needle teeth, means we will not take the risk that a young child may be accidentally injured. Puppies become adolescents very quickly and many adolescent dogs are returned or given up to rescue centres, due to mouthing behaviours that have been unintentionally escalated, particularly by young children.
- *Despite being a puppy, they have had very early trauma, or lack of quality socialisation during the "sensitive period" and as a result have a nervous temperament. Despite popular belief, puppies are not blank canvases, as by 8-12 weeks their sensitive period is usually over and so temperament is already partially or fully formed and that teamed with the fact that we cannot ignore the genetic element of behaviour, means that despite being young, not all puppies can learn to be comfortable in any given situation or environment.

No cats

Reasons why we may say this:

- *The dog has been known to chase/attack cats.
- *The dog has never lived with a cat and there is no way to test for it accurately and ethically, that won't either stress out the cat or the dog.
- *The dog has a known high prey drive.
- *The dogs breed type has been selectively bred for the parts of the canine predatory sequence that encourage the chasing and killing of smaller animals.

Why this is important:

- *We cannot guarantee the safety of your cat or the dog.
- *Cats have been known to move out/run away if unhappy in the home and this will be more likely if the not cat tested dog turns out to react aversively towards the cat. We feel we have a duty of care to protect pets already resident in the homes of our adopters, as well as the animals in our care.
- *Because the dog may be returned if it doesn't like your cat/ cat doesn't like the new dog.

Must have a garden

Reasons why we may say this:

- *The dog is used to having a garden and would struggle to cope without one.
- *The dog is high energy and requires more space and different locations for a varied home experience.
- *The dog is large and so requires more space than an indoor only environment can provide.
- *The dog is a working breed and so requires outside space.
- *The dog has health issues that affect mobility and so requires a garden.
- *The dog is nervous and finds walks worrying and so requires a garden.
- *The dog is not housetrained and doing the training is made much easier with a garden.
- *Most dogs quality of life will be improved by a garden.

Why this is important:

- *Dogs who have been used to secure, private outside space and the benefits that it provides, can struggle to adjust to not having it. This can lead to unwanted behaviours developing because of frustration and boredom. This will cause unhappiness in the dog and can lead to the dog being returned due to the problem behaviours that can develop because of the dogs negative emotional state.
- *The dog may become destructive in your home, causing damage to your property and possessions.
- *It can be tricky to fully meet the needs of a working breed in a home environment, with no outside space and as a result, problem behaviours can develop because of the negative emotions the dog will be feeling if they have unmet needs.

*The dog struggles to go out on walks and so a garden is vital, so they can go to the toilet and get some outside time without having to be either taken out on a walk, or potentially having to navigate stairs to get outside.

*The dog is finding the outside world worrying and will need exposure at their own pace, so having a garden is vital for toileting and for safe and predictable outside space for the dog.

*Housetraining can be tricky to master, and it is made all the trickier, by not having easily accessible private outside space. This is particularly true for puppies, who to get the hang of toilet training and prevent accidents, will need to be taken outside every 1-2 hours, as they simply cannot hold their bladder longer than that, depending on their age. Lack of house training still present into adolescents and even adulthood, is a reason we hear quite often for why people no longer wish to keep their dog.

*When we rehome some dogs, particularly young puppies, they are not always fully vaccinated and so having a garden is vital for the dog, as they cannot go out on walks until fully vaccinated.

Adopters must be around most of the day

Reasons why we may say this:

*The dog has separation anxiety and so will not cope with being left alone.

*The dog is a puppy, who will benefit from having their new humans around most of the time, to meet the vast needs of a young dog and to help with the puppy feeling safe and bonding with their new humans.

*Dogs are social animals and are usually happiest when their humans are around.

*Being left alone for too long can be detrimental to the dog's physical and mental wellbeing.

Why is this important:

*The dog finds being left alone extremely distressing and will need their humans to be around most of the time, whilst work is being done to make them feel safe enough to be left alone. Stress can have huge mental and physical health impacts on a dog, including anxiety disorders, health issues such as Cushing's disease and even in extreme cases, self-mutilation.

*The dog has been known to, or is likely to, become destructive in the home and/or bark/vocalise when left alone, because of boredom, anxiety, or frustration. This is a common reason for dogs being given up and returned to rescue.

*Most dogs are happiest when their humans are around, and we owe it to the dogs in our care for them to have as happy a life as possible after leaving us.

*Our policy is that dogs without separation issues can be left up to 4 hours. This is not because dogs can tell the time (they can't) but due to studies that have found that that is how long it usually takes for the human's immediate scent to disappear and so alert the dog to the fact their humans have been gone for a while which can trigger negative emotions. It is also not possible to fully meet the needs of a dog who is regularly left for longer than that, leading to them become bored, frustrated, and lonely.

Experienced homes/owners only

Reasons why we may say this:

*The dog may display behaviours that are harder to manage and so would be better handled by someone who has dealt with the issue previously.

*The dog may display breed specific behaviours that are more complex in nature when compared to some other breeds and so would likely be easier to manage by someone with experience, as they will be more likely to know what to expect and so what to prepare for.

*The dog may have more complex or breed specific needs, that in most cases, would likely be expected and so could be better planned for by owners with experience of meeting those needs.

*The dog may have a health condition that requires regular treatment and monitoring, which is more likely than not to be managed with more ease by someone with experience of this.

Why is this important:

*Behaviour issues are one of the main reasons that dogs are given up to rescue centres and if someone has not had experience of a particular behaviour issue, it is more likely to be mismanaged and escalated, which may lead to the dogs' return.

*Behaviour issues can be a lot to deal with, not only for the dog, as there is usually a negative emotional component behind most behaviour issues, but also for the owner and you never really know how difficult something is to manage until you are having to deal with it yourself, which could lead to the dogs return if the owner decides that they in fact can't manage it.

*Certain breed groups, such as working breeds, can develop issues with anxiety and frustration if appropriate outlets for their breed specific behaviours are not met. This will

result in not only the dog not being as happy as they could be, but behaviours that are hard to manage developing because of these negative emotions.

*Some health issues require ongoing treatment and management, such as monitoring and knowing what signs to look for that may indicate the dogs needs further medical intervention. Experience with monitoring health issues means signs are less likely to be missed that could indicate decline or improvement. A lot of treatment also requires a certain amount of formal handling, to administer treatment, such as restraint for medications such as eye drops and confidence in giving medicines that may require injections etc. For the best chances of accurate monitoring and treatment, experience would be preferred.

Why is all this important?

Dogs who end up in a rescue centre have already been through so much trauma. They have lost their home, their humans and everything they know and are now in a strange place, where despite staff and volunteers trying their best to care for them, isn't a home and can be a very stressful experience for them. In addition, they may have been the victim of abuse and neglect and that is why they have ended up in our care. It is our responsibility to make that the home we choose for these dogs, is going to be the right home where they will thrive and to reduce the risk of them being returned and having to go through that traumatic experience all over again. We do not work on a first come first serve basis. We work on a basis of choosing the home we believe is the very best home on offer for every dog that comes into our care, and we have a skilled and dedicated team who have experience matching dogs to potential adopters, in a way that will benefit not only the dog, but also the humans. We understand that it can be frustrating when you want to get a dog and this does not happen as quickly as you would like, however being patient can really pay off, as you will be more likely to end up with a dog that truly suits your home and lifestyle, and a rescue dog will find their forever home.