

Dog Fostering Volunteers

Our foster volunteers and their families are an essential part of the DSPCA community. Without their ongoing support, we couldn't provide the level of care that so many of our animals—particularly the young, sick, or injured.

For puppies under 6 months old who are unvaccinated, a busy shelter is simply not a suitable place. These young animals need a calm, nurturing environment where they can receive plenty of TLC, proper socialisation, and individual care to grow and thrive.

Similarly, dogs who are sick or recovering from injury often find the shelter environment stressful, which can slow down their healing. We've seen time and again how a loving foster home can significantly speed up recovery and improve overall wellbeing.

When you foster a dog for the DSPCA, we will do our best to provide everything you need throughout the foster period. While we greatly appreciate it if you're able to supply some of the essentials yourself. You won't be on your own, our on-site veterinary team will oversee all necessary medical care, and regular appointments will be arranged for check-ups.

You'll also have ongoing support every step of the way. Your foster coordinator will be your main point of contact, by phone, email, or in person and you'll receive contact information for emergency veterinary out-of-hours care. Thank you for considering fostering and for being such an important part of what we do here at the DSPCA.

Foster Volunteer Requirements

- Must be over 18
- Must have their own car or access to private transport
- Be available during the week to attend veterinary check-up appointments and drop off/collect animals
- Live within a reasonable distance from DSPCA, Mount Venus Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin, D16 F9C4
- Be at home during the day. Please do not apply if you work full time out of the home
- Sign our volunteer agreement upon acceptance to the foster volunteer programme

Time Commitments

- Vary from 3 days to 6 months plus, please see different types of fostering below for more details



Dog Fostering Volunteers

Requirements and Responsibilities:

- All dogs must be walked by someone over the age of 18 years of age
- A safe, quiet, and clean home environment for the dog
- Have a secure garden/access to green space for toileting
- Observe and report behavioural and health changes regularly to the Foster Coordinator
- Assist in socialising shy, nervous, or under socialized pups/dog where needed
- Ensure the dog receives proper nutrition, enrichment, socialisation and gentle handling
- Adhere to all shelter policies, procedures, and veterinary care instructions
- Assist with toilet training
- The foster volunteer is solely responsible for the dog while they are under your care, including during walks, within your home, and in any public or private setting
- All restricted/cross breeds **MUST** wear a muzzle and be kept on a short lead when out of the home. Retractable leads must not be used

Support Provided by the DSPCA:

- While we greatly appreciate it if you're able to help supply any essentials items, we do supply you with all food, bedding, and any medication that's required
- Ongoing medical assistance and support from the shelter's veterinary team
- Advice and guidance for behavioural needs from the foster team.

Types of Fostering Dog roles

There are many types of fostering which all have different requirements.

Please read and consider each foster role's specific requirements carefully and only apply for roles that suit your home, family, pets and work schedule.

Unvaccinated healthy puppies (under 6 months of age)

When an unvaccinated puppy comes into the shelter we try and get them out on foster as soon as we can, usually within 24 hours. They are too young to spend too much time in the shelter when they are not yet fully vaccinated.

Time Commitment → 1 – 6 weeks

Extra requirements and responsibilities:

- Must be at home during the day and only leave animals alone for a minimum of 4 hours at a time
- Have a house with a secure private garden
- Have no unvaccinated dogs in the home
- Previous puppy care experience (preferred but not required)
- Be available during the week to attend regular veterinary check-up appointments

Puppies and dogs under veterinary care

Our main priority here at the shelter is to help the sick, injured and cruelly treated animals. Some of the things we see in the shelter are dogs suffering from mange, kennel cough or have injuries requiring medical attention along with pups who test positive for Parvo virus or Giardia. These sick pups and dogs need foster homes to go to for rest and recovery.

We need foster homes that have no young children or other pets in the home as not to pass anything along to your own pets. These conditions can be very serious and life threatening for a puppy so being in a home environment and receiving the love, attention and medication they need is a real benefit and helps them get better quicker.

Time Commitment → 1 – 6 weeks

Respite for long term shelter dogs

This is for an adult dog who is finding shelter life stressful or a dog who hasn't had a chance to experience a home environment yet. Opening your home to a shelter dog even for a short time is so beneficial for them. For a dog who is stressed in the shelter a few nights away can be great to help them destress and enjoy some R&R.

Very often dogs come into us and we don't know their background or if they have ever been in a loving home environment before. Having short term foster families who can offer these dogs some respite but also give us feedback on how they get on is beneficial in ensuring we find them the best forever home possible.

Time Commitment → One weekend or up to 2 weeks

Extra requirements and responsibilities:

- Observe and report behavioural and health changes regularly to the Foster Coordinator.
- Assist in socialising shy, nervous, or under socialized dogs
- No children
- Ideally no other pets in the home
- Previous experience handling dogs



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Emergency Weekend Foster

This is for puppies/dogs that arrive late into the shelter on a Friday and need urgent temporary accommodation over a weekend. We contact volunteers on Fridays about animals that require foster care for 3 nights over the weekend.

Time Commitment → 3 days

Extra requirements and responsibilities:

→ You need to be free to be collect animals before 4.30pm on Fridays and returned them to the shelter Monday mornings between 9am – 10am

Time Commitment → 1 – 6 weeks

Hospice Fostering

Fostering a dog at the end of its life is a compassionate way to provide a loving and comfortable home away from the shelter for a dog in their final weeks or months. It involves opening your home to a dog needing palliative care, and offering companionship during their last days with comfort, love, and dignity.

Time commitment:

Time Commitment → A few weeks to a few months, depending on the dog's condition

Extra requirements and responsibilities:

- Potentially managing and administering medications
- A quiet home



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Pregnant dogs/Mum & Pups

We take in a lot of dogs who may be pregnant and close to giving birth or who have just recently given birth, so we are always in need of maternity foster homes. When you take in an expectant mother the most important thing they need is a safe space where they can relax and raise their babies. At 8 weeks of age (minimum) the pups can be separated from mum and go off to their own foster homes. Mum usually comes back into the shelter at this stage to find her forever home. We will talk you through what to expect before, during and after the birth and all the other stages in between.

Time Commitment → 8-12 weeks

Extra requirements and responsibilities:

- Must be at home during the day and only leave animals alone for a minimum of 1 hour at a time
- Transport foster pups and mum to and from the shelter every two weeks for vet appointments
- Have a house with a secure private garden
- Previous young puppy care experience (preferred but not required).
- Help with toilet training

Seized dogs/pups

In cases of cruelty and neglect we do take legal action, so we require long term foster homes for these animals until the court case has been settled. It would not be fair on a dog who has been seized to spend this time waiting in a shelter. Long term foster families provide a loving home environment to give them a chance to gain back their confidence, recover and be happy dogs.

Time Commitment → from 4 weeks to long term (We can never tell how long a court case may go on for, so the minimum length we would ask for fostering a court case animal would be 3 months)

Key requirements and responsibilities:

- Can commit to long term fostering
- Observe and report behavioural and health changes regularly to the Foster Coordinator
- Assist in socialising shy, nervous, or under socialised pups
- Agree to not post the animals on any social media channels

