

# PAWPRINTS 2024: CRITERIA



The PawPrints award scheme aims to recognise and celebrate individuals and organisations that meet and go beyond basic minimums to protect, promote and enhance animal welfare through the delivery of their service provisions.

Previous PawPrints awardees have discovered that the recognition not only safeguards their current funding but often secures increased support. Over the past 16 years, the PawPrints awards have served as a beacon of excellence across England and Wales, offering exemplary models of best practices to challenge and inspire other public bodies.

This document outlines the criteria for the 2024 PawPrints awards. While some criteria were updated last year, we granted previous entrants a one-year grace period to adjust their policies and procedures as needed. **Therefore, this year, we require evidence from all entrants, which must cover the financial year spanning April 2023 to April 2024.** Unless specified otherwise, these criteria are applicable to organisations based in England and Wales.

[STRAY DOGS](#)

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- The 2024 PawPrints award scheme **opens for entries on 29th April 2024.**
- **Take advantage of the Early Bird discount scheme by 30th June 2024.** After this date, entrants will no longer qualify for the discount.
- The **regular submission deadline falls on 28th July 2024**, requiring entrants to provide supporting documentation to be considered for the awards.
- **Winners will be officially announced on 26th August 2024**, coinciding with the commencement of ticket sales for the awards ceremony. Ticket sales will remain open until 29th September 2024.
- Mark your calendars for the **awards ceremony scheduled for November 2024**, promising an enjoyable occasion to announce winners, celebrate achievements, and mingle with fellow awardees.

As always, awardees will receive a certificate along with a logo for use on publications and websites. Please review and acknowledge the terms of entry and conditions of logo use, available on the PawPrints section of our website. **While you're there, don't forget to explore our brand new PawPrints Entry Toolkit, designed to facilitate your submission process.**

For any further information or support, please contact Lee Gingell ([lee.gingell@rspca.org.uk](mailto:lee.gingell@rspca.org.uk))

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## STRAY DOGS

Level	Criteria	Evidence req.
Bronze	<b>Dog Handling, Welfare, and Behavior Training:</b> All officers responsible for stray dog collection, including those covering holiday and sickness periods, must undergo comprehensive training. This training should reflect contemporary knowledge of dog welfare, emphasising ethical, reward-based methods.	Evidence of completion of relevant training from an accredited provider within the last three years is required, along with a detailed outline of the training content.
	<b>Treatment Protocol for Injured and Sick Stray Dogs:</b> A clear procedure must be in place to ensure prompt and humane treatment for injured and sick stray dogs, including those reported by the public. Additionally, contingency plans for staff absences and disease outbreaks should be documented.	<i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.</i>
	<b>Microchip Scanning and Reunification:</b> Procedures to scan all stray dogs collected or received for microchips or other forms of identification. Dogs with up-to-date microchips should be promptly reunited with their owners. Similarly, deceased dogs (and other pets) should be scanned for identification purposes.	<i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.</i>
	<b>Welfare Standards at Stray Dog Facilities:</b> Stray dog kennels and out-of-hours reception centres must adhere to the five welfare needs outlined in the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Information about facilities, protocols, and procedures should be provided.	<i>Details of relevant facilities, the relevant section of written policy and procedural documents.</i>
	<b>Out-of-Hours Facilities (If you have provision of an out of hours service (and reception centre)):</b> Clear details regarding out-of-hours facilities, including staffing levels and operational hours, should be outlined.	<i>Details of out-of-hours facilities, including staffing levels and operating hours.</i>
	<b>Responsible Ownership and Legal Obligations:</b> Basic information must be provided to owners reclaiming strays, emphasising preventative measures against future straying and the legal requirement for microchipping and maintaining up-to-date details.	<i>Examples of information and materials (eg leaflets, web links) provided to reclaiming owners.</i>
	<b>Stray Dog Records:</b> Comprehensive records on all strays received, which must be maintained and regularly updated. This includes the number of dogs returned to owners, rehomed, euthanized for medical or non-medical reasons, and instances where reunification was not possible due to lack of microchipping or inaccurate chip details.	<i>Example of records (a blank template is fine).</i>
Silver (all of bronze, plus:)	<b>Rehoming Policy:</b> A well-defined rehoming policy for kennels should ensure thorough assessment – both behaviorally and physically – of all dogs being rehomed. Potential new owners should undergo vetting procedures to ensure suitability. This policy should extend to any third-party kennels used by the council after the statutory seven-day period. Efforts made to address situations where rehoming is not possible should be clearly evidenced.	<i>The relevant section of the written policy.</i>

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	<p><b>Public Awareness:</b> Active public awareness campaigns, facilitated through council communication channels and community engagement events, should emphasise the legal requirement for microchipping and the importance of keeping details up to date. Campaigns should also highlight the significance of neutering and the duty of care to ensure the five welfare needs under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.</p>	<p><i>Example(s) of campaign materials and/or web link.</i></p>
	<p><b>Responsible Returns Policy:</b> Implement a policy to ensure that stray dogs returned to their owners are microchipped within a reasonable period, typically within 21 days. Additionally, ensure that stray dogs requiring rehoming are also microchipped to facilitate responsible ownership and identification.</p>	<p><i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.</i></p>
Gold (all of bronze and silver, plus:)	<p><b>Provision of Out Of Hours Service:</b> Ensure provision of an out-of-hours service that meets the needs of the local community, including evening and weekend provisions for collecting or depositing dogs by members of the public.</p>	<p><i>Details of out-of-hours service provision, the relevant section of written policy and procedural document and an evidence-based explanation of how this level of service meets local needs.</i></p>
	<p><b>Proactive Responsible Ownership Campaigns:</b> Engage in regular proactive work to encourage responsible pet ownership through public awareness campaigns and events covering broad and varied topics such as microchipping, neutering, dogs in warm weather, fireworks, and overall responsible dog ownership.</p>	<p><i>Example(s) of such work during the past year</i></p>

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## HOUSING

Level	Criteria	Evidence req.
Bronze	<p><b>Pet Friendly Housing Policy:</b> A clearly articulated and positive written policy for all housing under the control or influence of the local authority or housing associations, encompassing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defined guidelines, with flexibility to consider requests for pet ownership on a case-by-case basis, ensuring the welfare needs of the animals are met.</li> <li>Detailed specifications outlining the responsibilities of pet owners, including permissible species and quantity, while encouraging pet ownership where proper care facilities exist.</li> <li>Transparent procedures for addressing complaints and concerns raised by both pet owners and neighbours regarding issues such as nuisance animals, welfare, health, or cruelty.</li> <li>Prohibition of commercial breeding and vending of animals on the premises, while discouraging non-commercial breeding.</li> <li>Incorporation of relevant sections of written policies and procedural documents.</li> </ol>	Relevant section(s) of written policy and procedural documents.
	<p><b>Welfare Partnerships:</b> Provision of a compiled list of local, reputable animal welfare and veterinary organisations, offering information on reduced-cost or free veterinary services.</p>	A copy of this list or a link to where it can be found.
Silver (all of bronze, plus:)	<p><b>Advice and Support:</b> Written pet care advice from recognised and reputable animal welfare sources upon pet registration, including active promotion of permanent identification and neutering.</p>	Examples of this advice and information.
	<p><b>Registration and Records:</b> Maintaining a register of all animals kept within each dwelling, regularly updated as necessary.</p>	Details of your register with an example record if possible (a blank template is acceptable)
	<p><b>Dangerous Dogs Act:</b> A proportionate response to prohibited types of dogs (i.e. those prohibited under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991) which allows dogs on the Index of Exempted Dogs (IED) who are legally owned to be kept within properties as long as the owner continues to comply with the exemption conditions.</p>	The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.
Gold (all of bronze and silver, plus:)	<p><b>Temporary &amp; Emergency Housing:</b> Provisions for pet ownership in temporary or emergency housing.</p>	The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.
	<p><b>Microchip and Neutering Provisions:</b> Provision of discounted permanent ID and neutering services to prevent unwanted breeding.</p>	Examples of this work, including when last carried out
	<p><b>Advice and Support:</b> An established link with a recognised and reputable animal welfare organisation that provides residents with advice on pet care on request or by monthly or quarterly visits.</p>	Example of this work and when last carried out

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## CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Level	Criteria	Evidence req.
Bronze	<b>Animal Shelters:</b> Locations identified as temporary animal shelters with a pet evacuation plan.	<i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document, including details of temporary animal shelters.</i>
	<b>Preparedness:</b> Information on the website for pet owners that promotes preparedness, or a link to another website that does.	<i>A link to this information.</i>
	<b>Contacts &amp; Partners:</b> The establishment of a contact list of reputable animal welfare organisations and local vets who can assist in an emergency situation, and liaison with these.	<i>A copy of this list or a link to where it can be found and a brief explanation of what assistance the organisations will be able to provide in an emergency.</i>
	<b>Animal Welfare Inclusion:</b> Companion animal welfare is included in written contingency plans.	<i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural documents.</i>
Silver (all of bronze, plus:)	<b>NGO Involvement:</b> The involvement of reputable animal welfare organisations in contingency exercises and planning meetings.	<i>Example(s) of meetings/exercises that a relevant organisation has attended</i>
	<b>External Support:</b> Support for establishments involved with large numbers of animals in drawing up their contingency plans.	<i>Example(s) of relevant guidance document or other support offered.</i>
	<b>Regular Exercises:</b> The running of at least one tabletop exercise every two years specifically involves a companion animal welfare element.	<i>Details and date of exercise</i>
	<b>Allotment Holder Support:</b> Evidence that advice is provided, by the local authority, to allotment holders (where applicable) concerning the care of any animals in an emergency scenario.	<i>Example of advice.</i>
Gold (all of bronze and silver, plus:)	<b>Vari-kennel Access:</b> The ownership of, or access to, at least 50 kennel spaces or vari-kennels between members of the LRF, for use in an emergency.	<i>Details of ownership or access to kennel space.</i>
	<b>Proactive Awareness:</b> Proactive work, such as an awareness campaign, to ensure pet owners are prepared should they be evacuated.	<i>Examples of this work, such as a link to online material or details of a relevant event.</i>
	<b>Companion Animal Inclusive Exercise(s):</b> At least one live exercise every three years specifically involves a companion animal welfare element, enabling operations to be more flexible when setting up an emergency reception centre.	<i>Details and date of exercise</i>

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## ANIMAL ACTIVITY LICENSING

Level	Criteria	Evidence req.
Bronze	<b>Policy and Procedures:</b> A clear policy including documentation outlining the process for licensing animal activities.	<i>Written policy and procedural documents.</i>
	<b>Complaint Handling:</b> Established procedure for addressing public complaints regarding licensed animal activities.	<i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document.</i>
	<b>Inspection Management:</b> Defined procedures ensuring timely inspections with necessary personnel.	<i>Relevant section of the procedural document, including information about who attends inspections.</i>
	<b>Expert Consultation:</b> Compilation of qualified experts such as vets and behaviour specialists (ideally ABTC registered) and reputable animal welfare organisations, readily available for licensing officers to consult.	<i>A copy of this list.</i>
	<b>Primate Policy:</b> The recognition that primates are not suitable companion animals, as their welfare needs cannot be met in a domestic environment by adopting a policy recommending against keeping or selling primates due to welfare concerns.	<i>The relevant section of written policy.</i>
	<b>WALES ONLY:</b> A clear training procedure for licensing officers to ensure they can deliver their duties competently and have an understanding of the relevant legal standards as found in The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 and The Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 and best practice, and how they dovetail with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.	<i>Certificates of completion or upcoming bookings for relevant courses. Participation in the Welsh Government's local authority enforcement project.</i>
Silver (all of bronze, plus:)	<b>Welfare Promotion:</b> Actively promoting through the councils communication channels and community engagement events of microchipping, neutering, responsible pet ownership, and the duty of care to meet the welfare needs under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.	<i>A link to the relevant page on the council website.</i>
	<b>Specialised Training:</b> Additional training for licensing officers on the socialisation and behavioural needs of breeding puppies and dogs at breeding establishments.	<i>Example of relevant training attended or an upcoming booking.</i>
	<b>Establishment Transparency:</b> Publication of a list of licensed establishments, including their ratings, on the council's website.	<i>A link to the relevant page on the council website.</i>
Gold (all of bronze and silver, plus:)	<b>PET VENDORS AND DOG BREEDING ESTABLISHMENTS:</b> Clear written protocol for a procedure that enables vendors to be confident that customers are able to meet an animal's welfare needs, and are fully aware of their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.	<i>Example of guidance or information provided to vendors.</i>

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	<p><b>Prosecution Protocol:</b> Well-defined procedure for initiating and pursuing legal actions, supported by examples where applicable.</p>	<p><i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document, examples of any prosecutions taken</i></p>
	<p><b>Unlicensed Activity Monitoring:</b> Structured process for identifying and addressing unlicensed activities, with proactive measures to approach and, if necessary, licence offenders.</p>	<p><i>The relevant section of written policy and procedural document, an example of licensing or other subsequent enforcement activity as appropriate.</i></p>

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## KENNELLED DOGS

Please note the evidence required to support entries in his category are set out in the documents below:

[General Points of Good Practice - MUST](#)

[General Points of Good Practice - SHOULD](#)

Level	Criteria	Evidence req.
Bronze	Provisions of Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act are met and in accordance with the RSPCA guide to good practice - the welfare of seized dogs in kennels	Checklist of all <b>General Points of Good Practice Musts</b> is completed and evidence of how they meet at least two of the musts per welfare need is to be provided.
Silver (all of bronze, plus:)	Best practice is being met and in accordance with the RSPCA guide to good practice - the welfare of seized dogs in kennels	Checklist of all <b>General Points of Good Practice Musts</b> and <b>Shoulds</b> is completed and evidence of how they meet at least two of the musts and shoulds per welfare need is to be provided.
	A contract/policy which ensures compliance with provisions of section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.	Copy of contract or policy document.
	Additional provisions are in place for the management of puppies e.g. use of fosterers or other agencies	Information about the management of puppies.
Gold (all of bronze and silver, plus:)	A working relationship with i.e. regular visits to the kennels by a suitably qualified and experienced behaviour expert (ideally ABTC registered).	A document that illustrates the working relationship and regular visits by the behaviour expert
	Other initiatives which have been implemented solely to improve the welfare of kennelled dogs e.g. specific environmental enrichment programmes, provision of reward-based training, etc.	Details about initiatives e.g. details about enrichment programme, training provider, etc

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