

# Mutual enjoyment and freedom of choice: The dog's role in HAI

*Exploring how the quality and safety of HAI is dependant upon the mutual enjoyment and freedom of choice for both the humans AND the dogs involved.*

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# Introduction

- Paws for Progress is a small, local Community Interest Company
- Today we will be focusing on our Community projects for children and young people
- Many HAI programmes focus on the benefits for the people taking part
- **We believe that the enthusiastic and willing participation of the dogs involved is key to the quality of the interaction**
- Balancing the well-being and benefits for the children and dogs in harmony is essential



# Maximising the benefits of Human Animal Interactions

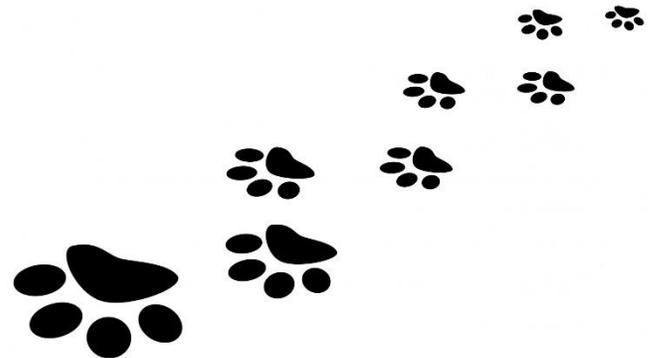
- ❖ The benefits of interacting with a dog are widely known
- ❖ Oxytocin, cardiovascular, cortisol / stress
- ❖ We aim to go above and beyond through maximising the engagement of the interaction to have an even greater impact
- ❖ We build upon the interactions the dogs choose to offer

# The dog as a sentient being

- ❖ Many of our children have under- developed empathy
- ❖ We don't use the dogs as tools. We work together with them.
- ❖ Don't objectify the dogs.
- ❖ Show-case the dogs' skills and personalities
- ❖ Value the dogs as individual animals
- ❖ Ensure that the dogs have a choice

## Activity 1

Why do you think giving the dogs a choice is important?  
What impact could this have on the human participants?



# Enthusiastic Engagement

- Dogs stay with the children because they choose to – not because they have to
- Build strong relationships between child and dog
- Rewarded for doing the right thing (R+) = high welfare for dogs, high safety for children
- Nurturing and respectful relationship modelled
- Remember that safe mistakes are part of the learning process
- Provide a better alternative behaviour



# Communication is key

- Communication – read, understand, respond
- Essential skill for anyone involved in HAI
- High welfare = high safety = high enjoyment

## Activity 2

Watch the following video & write down any observations about:

- What you see the dog do
- The dog's interaction with the people.



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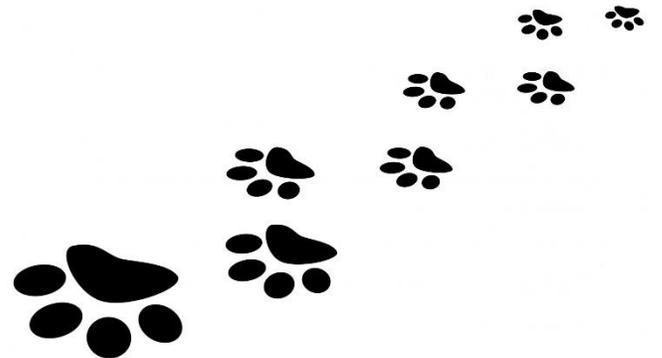
Video 1

Video 2

DO MORE WITH YOUR DOG  
TRICK CHALLENGE

# Preparing for interactions

- Dog selection
- Teach the dogs to be effective co-workers
- Habituating them to the environment, sights, smells that they might be exposed to.
- Training based around real life scenarios
- Engaging with students, whilst checking in with handler
- Building the dogs' resilience
- Communication (different accents, physical abilities )



# Prepare for success

We need to know that if the dogs are involved, they are thoroughly enjoying it:

- Quiet, people free zone
- Breaks
- Down time
- Non slip floor
- Space
- Heat / temp
- Ability to let you know they need the loo
- Space should allow the dog to exhibit natural play behaviours.



# Choice from start to finish

- Getting into the van
- Entering the building
- Entering the room
- Choices continue throughout session
- Disengage, choose new activity
- Flexibility within the session
- Our job to observe and respond
- There can be a conflict of needs if the dog indicates they would prefer not to take part. But beware of the negative impact not listening to your dog can have!



# Activities

- Train dogs to make choices / behaviours which will be safe at school
- Listen and respond when the dog tells you they aren't comfortable
- Natural behaviours need to be expressed – allow them to be a dog!
- Authentic interactions, not blind obedience
- Express their own characters. Draw parallels between the children and dogs
- E.g. dogs looking in bags to get a different toy
- Preference games (treats and toys)



# Equipment

- We recommend a harness because it does not restrict their ability to communicate or move their head
- Once we have evaluated the group we prefer the dogs to be off lead
- When on lead, recommended length is 2m
- Freedom to leave PLUS ongoing evaluation of body language.

**THANK  
YOU!**  
Any  
questions?

- Choices, choices, choices!
- Relationship
- Communication
- Respect
- Maximises the positive effects of HAI!
- Contact us:
  - Community projects: [kirsty.macqueen@pawsforprogress.co.uk](mailto:kirsty.macqueen@pawsforprogress.co.uk)
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  - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PawsforProgress>
  - Website: <https://pawsforprogress.co.uk/>
  - Mailing list: <https://mailchi.mp/cb5a9e6a5bdc/want-to-stay-in-touch-with-paws-for-progress>



## Useful links and references

Leonardi, R.J.; Buchanan-Smith, H.M.; McIvor, G.; Vick, S.-J. "You Think You're Helping Them, But They're Helping You Too": Experiences of Scottish Male Young Offenders Participating in a Dog Training Program. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2017**, *14*, 945.

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Observation Skills for Dogs: Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/observationskillsdogs/>

Canine Behavior Interpretation and Observation: Facebook group

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/126656794212315/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/groups/126656794212315/?ref=br_rs)