

## **Cariad Dog Wellbeing Dogs – Training Methods Policy**

### **Positive Training Methods**

Cariad Dog is committed to positive, ethical and welfare-centred training. All training and handling must promote trust, confidence and a positive relationship between the dog and handler.

### **Goodness of Fit**

Wellbeing dogs are selected because they demonstrate a natural disposition and goodness of fit for wellbeing work. Training must never be used to make a dog tolerate interactions or environments they do not naturally enjoy.

### **Reward-Based Training**

Where training is required, positive reinforcement and reward-based approaches are used to encourage and reinforce appropriate behaviours. Rewards may include praise, play, access to preferred activities, environmental rewards and, where appropriate outside wellbeing interactions, food rewards.

### **No Aversive Training**

Cariad Dog does not support training methods or equipment intended to cause pain, fear, intimidation or distress. Physical punishment, coercion and harsh corrections are not acceptable within our wellbeing dog programme.

### **Dog-Led Wellbeing Interactions**

Dogs must never be trained, lured, physically positioned or pressured to interact with a service user. During wellbeing visits, engagement must be initiated willingly by the dog and remain voluntary.

### **No Food Luring During Wellbeing Interactions**

Food or treats must not be used to entice a dog towards a service user or persuade them to remain in an interaction. This enables handlers to assess the dog's genuine willingness to participate.

### **Choice and Consent**

Every Cariad Dog must have the freedom to approach, engage, disengage and move away. Handlers must continually observe their dog's body language and recognise when consent to an interaction has changed.

### **Training the Handler**

A significant focus of Cariad Dog training is on developing the handler's knowledge and skills, including canine communication, stress signals, consent, safe interactions, appropriate boundaries and advocating for their dog's welfare.

### **Welfare Before Performance**

A dog's emotional and physical wellbeing always takes priority over achieving a training objective, completing a visit or meeting the expectations of a service user, volunteer or organisation.

### **Ongoing Suitability**

Suitability for wellbeing work is not considered permanent. Handlers continually assess their dogs, supported by regular Cariad Dog check-ins. Changes in behaviour, health, confidence or enjoyment must be reported and may result in additional support, a break from visits or reassessment.

### **Right to Withdraw**

A dog may be temporarily or permanently withdrawn from wellbeing activities whenever participation is no longer considered appropriate or beneficial. There is no requirement to train a dog through discomfort in order to return them to wellbeing work.

### **Our Core Principle**

Cariad Dog's approach is based on goodness of fit, positive methods, choice, consent and reciprocity. Our aim is not simply for dogs to tolerate wellbeing work, but for our dogs to be willing participants who positively benefit from the experience alongside the people we support.