

The family structure

- The positive team leader

Here at Dogs for Good, we have found that successful training depends on how clear and positive you can be with your dog.

Often it can be difficult to avoid confusion and inconsistency in the family home. To help maintain structure, even amongst the chaos, we would advise that one adult member of the household takes on the role of the TEAM LEADER.

The family and the dog are the team, and the leader of this team is the adult that is key in the training, care and welfare of the dog.

In the early days of taking on a dog, when he or she first joins on to the family, it is important that this nominated member of the household spends time to bond with the dog on a one-to-one level.



Attending the Family Dog workshops will provide you with more tools, ideas and tips to help you with the practicalities for achieving this. Taking time to establish this team leader role will help you and the family in the long term, reducing the chances of behaviour or training problems occurring, and enhancing safety in the home.

The more positive learning that your dog has about and with the team leader, the more effective this structure will become.

Lots of people have heard of 'dominance theory' which likens domestic dogs to packs of wild wolves, suggesting that humans must dominate the dog, such as by taking food and toys away from them, and trying to be the 'alpha'. However more recent research has improved our understanding of dog behaviour, and we now know that these aversive and punishing methods do far more harm than good to our dogs' behaviour and indeed welfare, and 'dominance theory' has since been scientifically retracted and invalidated.

How to establish Positive Team Leadership:

- Set clear rules for behaviour.
- Communicate the rules by rewarding correct behaviours as they occur and using visual prompts for what is expected e.g. If you don't want your dog on the sofa all the time, only allow them on it when their blanket is out, so rules are clear and predictable.
- Consistently reward desirable behaviours to reinforce and encourage them, and ignore undesirable behaviours to phase them out, until your dog learns good habits and appropriate decision making. Avoid accidentally rewarding and reinforcing an undesired behaviour (e.g. if your dog jumps up, make sure you don't even speak or make contact with them, as this attention is still rewarding, and reinforces the behaviour).