

## APDT Ireland – Professional Member Code of Practice

There is no one specific route or qualification to follow in order to become a successful professional pet behaviourist or dog trainer, and neither title has, as yet, any legal protection to prevent unqualified people from assuming them, in the way doctors or vets have. Anyone can set themselves up as a dog trainer or behaviourist.

A member of the public seeking help with their dog's training has no way of easily identifying a 'good' trainer from a 'traditional' trainer who is out of touch with modern dog training techniques and is using outdated and unnecessarily punitive training methods, or who may have little practical experience.

To meet this challenge, APDT Ireland has developed a thorough assessment process that applicants undertake before gaining Full Membership of the Association. This ensures, as far as possible, that our members can offer the highest professional standards of practice and modern, ethical approaches to dog training.

The Association was founded to promote a positive impact on dog training in Ireland and help create a standard amongst dog trainers, to provide educational support for dog trainers and to provide an easily accessible place for dog owners to search for a trainer who is competent and who works safely with a reward-based, non-abusive training ethos, and who has the dog's welfare in mind as a priority.

Ethical dog training means that no pain-inducing or fear-inducing methods of training are utilised, with the dog's wellbeing remaining paramount. All training that we promote is based on the science of animal learning and up to date theories, and so is evidence-based and research-led. Full Members of APDT Ireland must conform to a Code of Practice and conduct, and must, as a condition of membership, carry suitable public liability insurance.

APDT Ireland has created the following Code of Practice in accordance with our Mission Statement. This code frames our ethos and objectives and will guide members to understand and adhere to a training approach incorporating kind, efficient and ethical dog training practices.

The Association's code and practices are designed to give owners confidence that APDT Ireland accredited trainers have a scientifically based dog-training education which will enhance a caring, compassionate and rewarding learning experience for both themselves and their dogs.

### Code of Practice

1. Members shall be of good character
2. Members shall at all times act within the laws of the Republic of Ireland.
3. In relation to applicants seeking membership of APDT Ireland;
  - a. Any **applicant** that has been found guilty of cruelty and/or neglect to animals by a court of law will not be permitted to apply for membership.
  - b. Any **applicant** that has been convicted of a serious criminal offence will not be permitted to apply for membership.
4. In relation to existing members of APDT Ireland;
  - a. **Existing members** of APDT Ireland convicted of animal abuse, cruelty or neglect under the relevant legislation in any jurisdiction will immediately have his/her membership terminated, as well as forfeiting all related membership dues and/or fees.

- b. **Existing Members** of APDT Ireland convicted of a serious criminal offence will immediately have his/her membership terminated as well as forfeiting all related membership dues and/or fees.
5. Members shall not practice when deemed physically or psychologically unfit to do so by a medical professional.
6. The Association embraces the development and use of scientifically-based research and knowledge, and appropriate practical experience, in furthering effective and ethical dog training techniques, adopting this ethos as a cornerstone of its foundation. All members are required to adhere to this ethos and philosophy.
7. Members shall not give their clients unrealistic expectations of the outcome of any training techniques used.
8. Members of APDT Ireland have a responsibility to their clients and to society in general. Members' interventions should not knowingly cause avoidable psychological or physical distress or damage to any person or animal. Where such damage, or the risk of it, is unavoidable, this should be explained to and discussed with the client, so that the client can make an informed decision regarding the intervention.
9. Where experimenting with unproven techniques, the client and, if necessary their referring veterinary surgeon, must be so informed. The client must be made aware of why the member is diverging from proven techniques. The client must be made fully aware of the potential consequences, risks or drawbacks which may arise from the use of any unproven techniques. All unproven techniques must conform to the above required standards of ethical and reward-based dog training.
10. Members must recognise the limits of their qualifications, certification and experience when dealing with dog behaviour issues, and where necessary must refer their clients on to a suitably qualified and accredited dog behaviour specialist. Members shall not perform any dog training- or behaviour-related activities for which they are not qualified.
11. Members shall never act in such a way as to bring into disrepute, or to undermine public confidence in, the profession of dog training or The Association and its members. They may not misrepresent their activities or make unrealistic claims. They may not make assertions that are not justified by evidence, and it must be made clear whenever they are expressing personal opinion or speculating beyond available evidence.
12. Members must have appropriate Public Liability insurance and/or Professional Indemnity insurance, proof of which will be required for annual renewal of membership.
13. Members may accept clients through direct advertising or by veterinary referral. If advertising as part of a club or society, such advertisement should not imply that The Association endorses such club or society, other than to state that instructor(s) are members of The Association. Membership of the Association by any instructor(s) shall not be used to endorse the activities of any club, society or organisation to which they belong.
14. Professional Members should use the formation APDTIre (Member No.) under or alongside their name.
15. Professional Members **ONLY** may use their membership status and the APDT Ireland logo in any literature/advertisements. Student members may not use the logo in literature or adverts. They must clearly show their membership status (e.g. 'Student Member of APDT Ireland') in any literature.
16. Professional Members who work with assistants who are not members of The Association are responsible for ensuring that their assistants adhere to the spirit of this Code of Practice.
17. Members must ensure that they limit class sizes so that each client and dog gets appropriate attention and tuition, and that the member can react quickly to inappropriate behaviours. Care must be taken to ensure that the training venue

allows for adequate space between each dog. A training assistant is required once the class exceeds 8 dogs.

18. Professional members who allow their membership to lapse for 13 months or more after their last membership remittance was paid will be deemed to have left the Association. Should they wish to re-apply for membership they must undergo the full application and assessment procedure as if they were new applicants
19. Members must understand that the prescribing or administering of prescription medication and/or diagnosing suspected medical conditions are restricted to the Veterinary Practitioner as is set forth in the laws of the Republic of Ireland. Where a behaviour is suspected in full or in part as being the result of a medical condition, members will advise clients to seek veterinary opinion prior to embarking on any training or behaviour modification program.
20. Members shall not act as spokesperson for the Association without express written permission from the Committee.
21. Any member acting consistently in a manner that contravenes this code or general ethics of the APDT Ireland will have their membership dissolved after a reasonable mediation as set out in the Disciplinary Procedure.
22. Appeals by any member must be submitted to a tribunal approved by the Board of Directors, which will review the application and provide the member/applicant of their conclusions within 30 days of receipt of such appeal.
23. The Committee of The Association shall advise and give guidance on all matters or principle and conduct of members. Any complaint or dispute arising therefrom shall be dealt with by reference to the Disciplinary Code of The Association. The Disciplinary Code is available on request.
24. Members, member applicants and non-members may file alleged violations of the Code of Practice. In the event of any person being unsatisfied with any member's behaviour and being unable to first resolve the issue(s) with that member, the action outlined below in "Complaints and Appeals" shall be taken.
25. Members are required to adhere to this Code of Practice and to supply The Association with a signed statement to that effect.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

Members, member applicants and non-members may file alleged violations of the Code of Practice. In the event of any person being unsatisfied with any member's behaviour and being unable to resolve this with that member the following action shall be taken:

### **Complaint Process**

The Association will always embrace transparency in the way the Association is run, and take all steps necessary to prevent any conflict of interest from arising.

On receipt of a complaint the APDT Board of Directors will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint immediately via written communication without bias, prejudice or comment to all parties involved
2. The Board will also advise that all documentation relating to the allegation is surrendered and that all information given will be held in the strictest confidence whilst investigations are ongoing.
3. If any member of the Board or Tribunal has any relationship whatsoever with either party they must inform the Board at once and step down from the investigation and findings process.
4. If the investigations reveal there is no case to answer or there is unsatisfactory evidence to proceed with the complaint the case will be suspended, pending any

future developments or closed due to lack of evidence. Any decision by the Board must be made within 60 days and all parties must be informed within 10 days of any decision being made. The Board will inform all parties involved of their findings and decision, and if applicable, any recommendations.

5. If the complaint is upheld due to the Board's findings then both parties will be advised and the accused party will be invited to respond.
6. The complaint at this stage will be passed onto a special Tribunal of 3/5 members composed of Directors and an independent advisor who will review the evidence and information submitted. Any decision by the Tribunal must be made within 60 days and all parties must be informed within 10 days of any decision being made. If additional time is needed for further investigation both parties will be notified within the 60-day period.
7. This Tribunal is authorised to make decisions regarding the status of the accused member/applicant if found in violation of the Code. The accused member/applicant will be advised of said decision and will have 30 days to appeal.

### **The Appeal Process.**

The Full Board of Directors will reassess the case and conclude a decision as to uphold or reverse the Tribunal's decision. Notice of conclusion must be given within 30 days of appeal being filed.

The 30-day deadlines may be extended with notice to all parties. Throughout investigations up until the full and final decision all details regarding the case, including names of all parties and Tribunal members shall remain confidential. Only after the full and final conclusions have been agreed and terminated shall details be available to all members on request.

### **Assessments:**

The assessors' decision upon the success of a candidate for membership is final and is not open to appeal unless the candidate can show that there was a failure in the proper procedure. All candidates will be invited to complete feedback forms, which will be addressed by the assessors and/or chairman.

The Committee of The Association welcomes suggestions for alterations to this Code of Practice, all of which will be duly considered by the Committee. Any such alterations will be notified to all members.

## **The Association of Pet Dog Trainers Ireland**

Mission statement: To set a standard of excellence for dog training professionals and to foster the human/canine bond through education and the promotion of reward-based, dog-friendly training methods.

APDT Ireland has created the Code of Practice in accordance with our mission statement and State-applied legal requirements. The Code of Practice frames our ethos and objectives and will guide members to understand and adhere to a training approach incorporating kind, efficient and ethical dog training practices.

The Association's code and practices are designed to give owners confidence that APDT Ireland accredited trainers have a scientifically based dog-training education which will enhance a caring, compassionate and rewarding learning experience for both themselves and their dogs. Below is an abridged version of the APDT Ireland Code of Practice, to include the most salient elements of the Code of Practice. The full code may be obtained at any time from our administrator at [info@apdt.ie](mailto:info@apdt.ie).

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### **APDT Ireland Abridged Code of Practice**

As a member of APDT Ireland, I shall:

- Provide an honest, professional service which at all times embraces humane, scientifically-sound training practices based on learning theory and understanding of canine behaviour, and excludes any pain-inducing, fear-inducing, or avoidance-based techniques.
- Work within my own knowledge, experience and qualifications and to recognise when I should refer to the Association for advice.
- Continue my own professional development and education by attending pertinent canine related seminars, conferences, workshops and pursuing other educational opportunities.
- Respect clients' wishes regarding treatment and training of their own dogs, and refrain from giving guarantees as to the result of any training programme.
- Provide information and develop behaviour modification and training methodologies based on research and recognised, peer-reviewed scientific research.
- Advise clients to seek suitable professional veterinary advice prior to or before the continuation of an ongoing training programme if an underlying medical condition is suspected.
- Be professional, respecting the privacy of clients at all times, and hold any information provided by clients in confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Be respectful of other dog trainers and canine professionals and not falsely condemn their character or professional acts.
- Ensure that class sizes are limited so that each client and dog gets appropriate attention and tuition and to utilise competent training assistants in each class when necessary.
- Have public liability insurance, which is required for annual renewal of membership.
- Not bring the Association of Pet Dog Trainers Ireland into disrepute, or undermine public confidence in the organisation.
- At all times act within the laws of the Republic of Ireland. Persons convicted of animal cruelty, or convicted of a serious criminal offence, are not accepted for membership.

Existing members will have their membership terminated should they be convicted of either type of offence, or other offences deemed serious enough by the committee, during the term of their membership.

- Be of good character.
- Adhere to the Professional Code of Practice and to supply the Association with a signed statement to that effect.
- Ensure that working assistants, who are non-members, adhere to the spirit of the Professional Code of Practice.

**In addition, all members who engage in dog training classes or consultations which may bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults, are strongly urged to obtain certified Garda Clearance due to the requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016, if they have not already done so. This will become a requirement for membership in due course.**

This is my commitment to the Association, my colleagues, my clients and their dogs. I agree to adhere to this code as long as I am a member of the Association and I understand that any infringement on the above code may result in termination of my membership.