

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 05

The Dog Walking Works

*How to build a recurring dog-walking round the right way
— trusted, licensed and full.*

The Dog Walking Works

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WHAT THIS MANUAL IS — AND IS NOT

This manual is a detailed account of how a dog-walking and pet-care business works, written with care and published in good faith. It is information, not professional advice. Read these points before you walk a single dog for money:

- **The numbers are honest examples, not promises.** Prices, costs and incomes reflect the UK market in 2026 and the worked examples we built. Your results will depend on your patch, your effort and your decisions. Nobody can guarantee you an income, and we do not.
- **Tax, legal, licensing and insurance specifics change and vary by council.** Verify any figure that matters — thresholds, rates, regulations, your local dog-number cap — with HMRC, your council, your insurer or a qualified professional before relying on it. The templates in your bundle are working documents, not legal advice.
- **You take charge of living animals and enter people's homes.** You take care, custody and control of dogs and hold clients' keys, so proper pet-business insurance (public liability, care/custody/control and key cover) and a DBS check are essential, not optional. Home boarding and doggy daycare require a council licence under the *Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018*, with inspection and a star rating — no licence, no boarding or daycare, and no grey area. Transport dogs safely and legally: Highway Code Rule 57 requires a dog to be suitably restrained by a crate, a dog guard, a pet carrier or a seat-belt harness. Many councils cap how many dogs one person may walk in public. This manual is guidance, not training. You must follow the licensing, insurance, animal-welfare and road-safety requirements that apply to you, and carry out your own risk assessments. You are responsible for working safely, kindly and lawfully.

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BEFORE CHAPTER ONE

Your first weekend.

You do not need to read the whole manual before you walk your first dog. This page is the shortest honest path from here to your first paying client — the chapters fill in everything else as you need them. Get legal and insured before you charge a penny.

1 Saturday morning

Decide the setup and place the order: the low kit list — slip leads, harnesses, water bowls, poo bags, towels, treats, a secure key store and a canine first-aid kit — runs about £500–£1,500 with the vehicle fit-out. Chapter 4 makes the case. Buy the safety-critical items properly and everything else just good enough to start.

3 Saturday afternoon

Start your DBS check and look up your council's rules. Dog walking usually needs no licence, but many councils cap you at four or six dogs at once in public and some need a park permit. Note your local cap — it shapes every package you will build (Chapter 3).

5 Sunday afternoon

Post to your local Facebook dog groups and set up a simple, free Google Business Profile. Name your area. Message three dog-owning contacts you know, offering a free or discounted first walk, and start booking your first meet-and-greets — the free home visit that is the real booking step.

2 Saturday midday

Sort safe dog transport in your vehicle before you carry a single dog. An estate car or small van needs a crate, a dog guard or a seat-belt harness — the three methods named by Highway Code Rule 57, which requires a dog to be suitably restrained. Line the boot. A loose dog in the car is a fail on safety and on the law.

4 Sunday morning

Walk two or three friends' or family dogs, free. These are your practice runs and, more importantly, your first photos — the single most persuasive thing you will own. Read the dog, keep it safe, and shoot the happy-dog shot that will sell the round.

6 Sunday evening

Reply to every enquiry the same day and book those meet-and-greets. A named day closes better than a polished quote. Get legal and insured before you charge — HMRC, pet-business insurance and the DBS all come first (Chapter 3).

IF YOU ONLY READ FOUR CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 (is this for you) · Chapter 4 (kit and the vehicle) · Chapter 6 (first customers) · Chapter 7 (pricing and getting paid). Everything else will be waiting when you need it.

THE ONE-WEEK TARGET

Your first two paying weekly clients, booked through a meet-and-greet. A kit on order, safe transport sorted, a handful of happy-dog photos shot, the first enquiries answered — that is a round starting, not an idea. Get insured and DBS-checked before you charge (Chapter 3).



PART ONE

Foundations

The trade, the money, the setup.

01

CHAPTER 1 · PART ONE

The Dog Walking Opportunity

Why this trade. Why now. And the one hard limit.

On a cold Tuesday in February, Hayley is back at her front door in Harrogate by two in the afternoon, hanging up a wet coat, with the day's work already done and paid for. She has been out since half past eight. Three group walks, eleven dogs in total, collected from doorsteps across Starbeck and Bilton, walked on the Stray and along the old railway line, dried off, watered, and returned. Her phone has sent eleven owners a photo of their dog mid-walk and a short note. By the time she sits down with a cup of tea, the money for those walks has already left the owners' accounts by standing order. She did not send an invoice this morning. She did not chase anyone. She walked dogs in the cold and came home.

This is the shape of the trade. Not glamorous, not complicated, but steady in a way very few small businesses are. Owners need their dogs walked on Monday and they need them walked again on Wednesday and again on Friday, every week, because their lives are built around the assumption that you will turn up. That assumption is the whole business. When you become the person an owner plans their working week around, you stop being a one-off purchase and become a fixed cost in someone else's life. There is no better foundation for a small service business than that.

This chapter is about why dog walking and pet care is worth your time and money in 2026, what it actually pays, and the one hard limit you need to understand before you start. We will be honest about who it suits and who it does not. By the end you will know whether to keep reading or close the file.

Why this trade, why now

Start with the thing that matters most: recurring revenue. Most trades sell a job once and then go looking for the next customer. A roofer fixes your roof and may not see you for ten years. A dog walker who wins one good client wins a payment every week for years. The work renews itself. A full diary of regular walkers is the closest a solo operator gets to a wage that arrives whether or not you went out selling that week.

The demand underneath it is real and it is growing. UK dog ownership rose sharply through the early 2020s and stayed high. Roughly a third of UK households own a dog, and a large share of those owners work patterns that do not allow for a midday walk. Commuters who are out of the house for ten hours, hybrid workers with back-to-back calls, elderly owners who can no longer manage a strong dog in the rain, families who have just taken on a puppy that cannot be left for long. These people do not want a luxury. They need a reliable solution to a daily problem, and they will pay for it for as long as they own the dog — which for a dog is a decade or more.

Word-of-mouth runs this trade more than any other marketing. Owners talk to each other at the park, at the school gate, in the local Facebook group. A dog walker who does the job well and never lets anyone down becomes the name that gets passed around, and that recommendation is worth more than any advert because it carries trust with it. The flip side is that the trade punishes carelessness fast: one missed walk, one dog returned muddy and miserable, and the same network that built you up will quietly warn people off. The reputation is the asset, and it is built or lost one ordinary day at a time.

The cost of getting started is low. You can equip yourself properly for £500 to £1,500 — slip leads, harnesses, water bowls, towels, poo bags, a canine first-aid kit, treats, and a secure key store. The one genuine asset is a **reliable vehicle that can carry dogs safely**, usually an estate car or a small van, fitted with crates or guards or harnesses (the law on this is in the next chapter). Your phone is your office: it takes bookings, tracks your walks, and sends the photo updates that owners love. There is no shopfront, no stock, no expensive machinery. The overheads stay low for the life of the business, which is why the margins are strong.

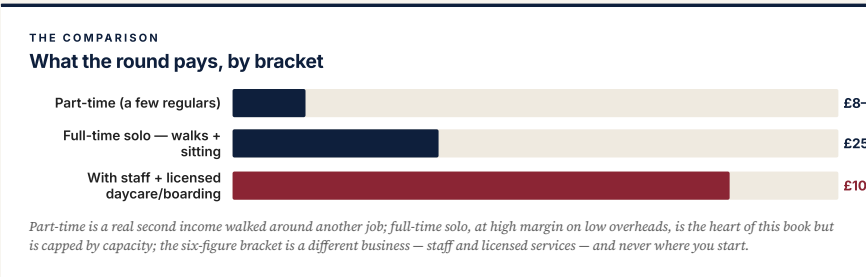
And then there is the work itself. You are outside, in all weather, with dogs, away from a screen and a desk. For the right person that is not a downside to be tolerated but the entire point.

COACH MOMENT

Write down the three streets nearest your home and how many dogs you reckon live on them. You are not guessing at a market in the abstract. You are guessing at a market you could walk to. The whole trade is local, and your first twenty customers almost certainly live within a couple of miles of where you are sitting now. Chapter 6 turns that instinct into a plan.

What it pays, honestly

Here are the numbers, and they are the same numbers every chapter in this manual uses, so you can trust them.



The per-service prices across the UK in 2026 look like this:

Service	Typical price (2026)
Solo walk (30–60 min)	£12–£18
Group walk (per dog)	£10–£15
Puppy visit / drop-in	£12–£18
Pet sitting / home visit	£12–£20
Home boarding (overnight, in your home)	£25–£40/night
Doggy daycare (per day)	£20–£30

Group walking is where the daily maths works hardest. If you walk five dogs together at £12 each, that single hour brings in £60. Do three such walks across a morning and you have earned £180 before two o'clock, which is roughly what Hayley does on a full day. The licensed services pay more per booking — a night of home boarding at £35 earns more than three group walks — but they need a council licence and they take more out of you. Most operators build the walking round first and add the higher-value work later, which is exactly the order this manual follows.

Across a year, the trade falls into three honest brackets:

- **A part-time round** brings in roughly £8,000 to £18,000 a year. This is a few regular clients walked around another job or around school hours. Real money, modest commitment.
- **A full-time solo operator**, doing walks plus some sitting, earns roughly £25,000 to £50,000 a year. The margin is high because the overheads are so low, but — and this is the part you must understand — it is **capped by capacity**.
- **With staff and licensed daycare or boarding**, revenue of £100,000 or more becomes possible, because you are no longer limited by your own two hands. That is a different business, covered in Chapter 16, and it is not where you start.

MENTOR MOMENT

Notice that the full-time bracket tops out around £50,000 for a reason, not by accident. One person can only safely walk so many dogs. The operators who break past that ceiling do it by adding licensed services or by hiring — never by simply cramming more dogs onto more walks. If your plan to earn more is "walk faster and take more dogs," the plan will hit a wall and so might a dog. Earn more by selling higher-value work to the same trusted clients, not by overloading the lead.

The capacity cap — the one hard limit

This is the single most important fact in the trade, so read it slowly. You cannot scale a solo dog-walking round indefinitely, because **many councils limit how many dogs one person may walk at once in public spaces, commonly to four or six**. Some also require a permit to walk dogs commercially in particular parks. Dog walking itself usually needs no licence, but this cap is real, it is local, and it is enforced. Check your own council before you build your packages, because the cap sets the ceiling on every walk you do.

The cap is why pricing and packaging matter so much in this trade. If you can only ever take, say, six dogs on a walk, then the difference between charging £10 and £14 per dog is the difference between £60 and £84 for the same hour and the same effort — and over a full diary that gap is thousands of pounds a year. You cannot make it up on volume. You make it up on price, on filling every slot, and on selling the higher-value services to the clients you already have. Chapter 10 is built entirely around earning well inside this cap.

The cap is also why the licensed services matter. Home boarding, daycare and pet sitting are not bound by the dogs-per-walker limit in the same way, and they pay more per booking. They are how a capped walking round grows into a proper full-time income. We come to them properly in Chapters 14 and 15.

It helps to do the arithmetic of the ceiling early, because it shapes every decision you make about pricing and packaging. Say your council caps you at six dogs. If you run three group walks a day, five days a week, at £13 a dog, that is a maximum of around £58,000 a year of walking revenue if every slot is full — and slots are rarely all full, dogs move away, owners change jobs, and you take holidays of your own. So the honest planning figure for a solo walking round sits inside the £25,000 to £50,000 bracket, exactly as the figures this manual uses say. The way to push toward the top of that band is not more dogs per walk. It is fewer empty slots, slightly firmer pricing, and the higher-value services layered on top.

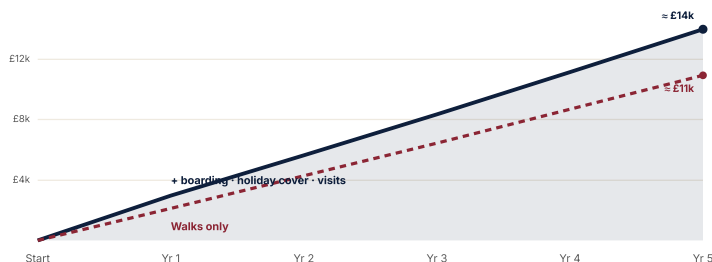
The backbone and the upside

Think of the business as having two layers.

The **backbone** is the recurring walk. Regular, weekly, paid by standing order. It is not the highest-margin thing you do, but it is the most valuable, because it is predictable. It pays the bills every month whether or not you feel like selling. A round of twenty regular dogs, walked in groups, is a real living on its own. Build this first. Get it solid. Make yourself the person these owners cannot do without.

THE VALUE OF ONE LOYAL CLIENT

One household, five years, standing every week



One weekly household is not a £14 walk; it is a stream that renews for the life of the dog. The dashed line is walks alone — around £11,000 across five years. The solid line is the same household once boarding, holiday cover and visits sit on top: roughly £14,000. Nobody was re-won; the recurring slot simply kept paying, which is why this trade's moat is the book, not the advert.

The upside sits on top: the higher-value licensed services — pet sitting, home boarding at £25–£40 a night, doggy daycare at £20–£30 a day — plus holiday cover. These earn more per booking and they smooth out the one soft spot in the calendar. The trade is genuinely year-round and daily, the strongest recurring revenue of any Works Co. trade we have published. There is a slight dip in summer when owners take their dogs away on holiday with them, but that dip is offset almost exactly by the surge in holiday sitting and boarding demand from the owners who travel without their dogs. The same season that quiets your walks fills your home with boarders.

The best part is that both layers sell to the same people. The owner who books your weekly walks is the owner who needs you over the bank holiday and over the summer fortnight. One household can become walks plus sitting plus holiday cover, for years. The add-on stack in Chapter 17 does the lifetime-value maths on exactly this.

Who it suits, and who it does not

We would rather you walked away now than spent £47 on a manual for a trade that was never going to be yours. So here is the honest sorting.

This suits you if you are genuinely good with dogs and calm around big or boisterous ones; if you are utterly reliable, the sort of person other people can build their week around; if you are physically up to being outdoors in all weather, every day; if you stay level-headed in an emergency, because one day a dog will be hurt or will bolt and the owner will need you to have handled it well; and if you can be trusted completely with someone's house keys and someone's home.

This does not suit you if you are nervous around strong dogs, or squeamish, or unreliable about time. It does not suit you if the responsibility of holding a living animal's safety in your hands would keep you up at night in the wrong way. It does not suit you if you want to skip the daily graft and scale to a big team in month one. The graft comes first, always, and the trust is earned one walk at a time. Chapter 2 turns this into a proper self-assessment, with a scorecard in the Toolkit, so you can decide with your eyes open.

If that honest list left you keen rather than deterred, you are likely the right sort of person for it.

How to use this manual

You are holding three things, not one: this manual, a **15-file Excel Toolkit**, and a **95-prompt AI Prompt Library**, for £47 all in, with free updates for life. If it turns out not to be for you, email refunds@theworksco.co.uk the same day for a no-friction refund and keep the materials anyway. We would genuinely rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a trade that wasn't yours.

Read the chapters in order. Part One sets up the business and gets you legal and insured. Part Two covers the kit, the vehicle, and the real craft of handling dogs. Part Three is about customers — winning your first twenty and pricing them right, the make-or-break part. Part Four adds the higher-value licensed services. Parts Five, Six and Seven cover growth, the modern tech stack, and the long view.

Each chapter tells you the toolkit file and the prompts that go with it. The Toolkit does the maths and the admin so you do not have to build it from scratch — the self-assessment scorecard, the accounting setup, the Job Database that becomes your CRM, the pricing calculator, the service agreement, the 90-day checklist. The Prompt Library compresses the writing and the marketing: client messages, profile copy, post-walk reports, leaflet text. Use them. They are most of what you paid for.

What success looks like in a year

Picture Hayley twelve months from her first nervous meet-and-greet. She has around twenty regular dogs on standing order, walked in small groups across the morning, which alone covers her bills. She has a council licence for home boarding and takes two or three dogs into her home over busy weekends and holidays at £35 a night. She is DBS-checked, properly insured, and holds a canine first-aid certificate, which is exactly why the careful, well-paying owners chose her over the cheaper amateur down the road. She is turning new walk enquiries away or putting them on a waiting list, because her round is full and she knows better than to break the capacity cap. She is somewhere in the full-time bracket, working outdoors with dogs, home by mid-afternoon, paid like clockwork.

That is a realistic year, not a fantasy one. It is built one honest walk at a time. The next chapter helps you decide, properly and without flinching, whether you are the person to build it.

That was Chapter 1.

The other twenty chapters, the Excel toolkit and the AI prompt library are in the full bundle.

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