



ADCH
Association of Dogs and Cats Homes

STRATEGY

2026 - 2031



TOGETHER FOR DOGS & CATS

Our overarching aim by the end of the decade is to have a strong and sustainable Association and sector that is consistently making a real difference enhancing the lives of the dogs and cats.

The main ways by which we seek to achieve this are:



To help raise the welfare of more animals by giving support to raise standards across the dog and cat welfare sector,



While also supporting Members with more aspects of what they do.



Positioning both the ADCH and its Members as leaders of the wider animal welfare sector to raise standards for more animals.

We aim to have the biggest impact, and believe that improving the standards of care within rescue organisations, supporting our members and promoting collaboration between organisations, is the best way to deliver this. ADCH, often through its Members, has been helping rescues, including non-members, in this way for many years so this is a proven model for success. We support rescues through training and other services, government advocacy, assessments against our standards, and support through mentoring and advice.

OUR WORK



THE THREE PILLARS OF OUR WORK

1 Membership Services & Engagement

2 Our Standards & Support

3 Advocacy on behalf of our members



OUR VALUES

Leadership

Collaboration

Integrity

Professionalism

Support

OUR CHARITY



THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR WORK

HOW WE ARE RUN

4 Trustees, Committees & Membership Model

5 Finance & Funding

6 People & independence





Our overarching aim by the end of this strategy period is to have a strong and sustainable Association and sector that are consistently making a real difference enhancing the lives of the dogs and cats in our jurisdictions.

To achieve this, we will address needs where we can make the most difference. We will create an externally focused peer-community, keen to collaborate to achieve a better future.

Our new strategy focuses on leadership by ADCH and its Members within the wider sector. We will create pathways for organisations to become members, with a focus on ensuring that we provide opportunity and support for our members and that our members reflect our minimum welfare standards. Income generation and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our organisation are core to success within this strategy.

Our services to members will be enhanced with a range of dedicated support to help meet Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards as well as ensuring our events programme extends our beyond our traditional areas of welfare to support whole animal charity operations. We will seek two-way engagement with our members from all jurisdictions, respond to member needs and continue to build on the initial success of the ADCH facilitated regional group network. A key element of our support will involve the extension of our mentor and advisor scheme, to provide subject, expert support for our members.

We will continue to represent our members and our Sector with policy makers. Our advocacy work and consultation responses will be based around our Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards and values and include advocating for the need for licencing of the sector with appropriate enforcement.

Our Standards and assessments will be supportive tools to drive improvements in welfare. We will enhance our training for assessors and provide training to members on self-assessment. We will aim to achieve a 3-year cycle for external assessments.

We will aim to meet the Charity Governance Code and ensure our Trustees have the necessary skills to carry out their duties. We will develop a financial strategy to plan for sustainability and will ensure our plans are costed and funded. ADCH's income generation streams will be diversified by working with commercial partners and sponsors.

We will look to ensure our activities make a difference to our members and the cats and dogs they care for. We will measure our impact appropriately, working collaboratively with members and strategic partners to maximise opportunities.

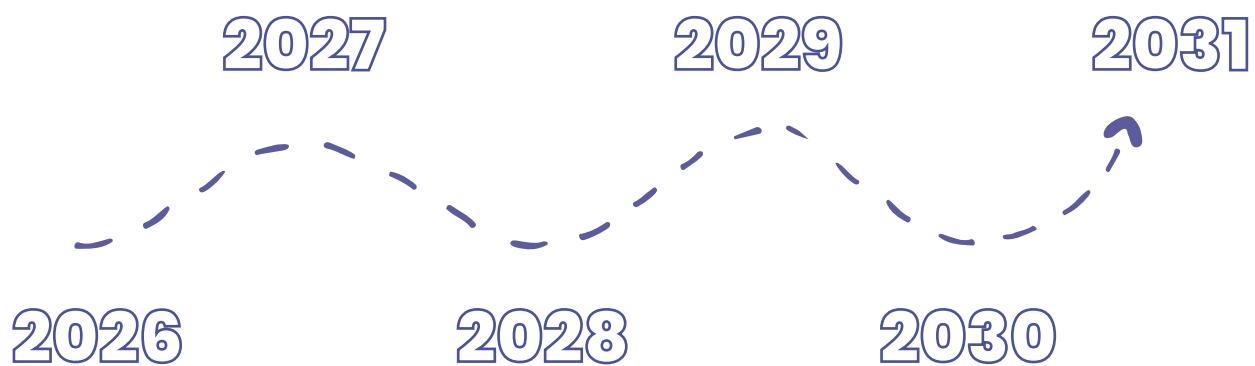


MOTIVATION FOR REVIEWING OUR STRATEGY

The world continues to change and our members are facing high demand for services and rising costs. ADCH members and the wider sector are positioning their plans and activities to best meet these changes, to ensure they are able to best support dogs and cats.

ADCH itself has, under its former strategy, made huge strides in its professionalisation agenda, leading governments and members as they worked to improve standards of dog and cat welfare, while developing and extending our range of support offerings to members. These have included the development of regional group networks and mentoring support.

Our members have also developed their work, raising standards and extending their offerings, whether they operate via staff, volunteers or a combination. Members' new strategies often address their sustainability, collaboration and responsible pet ownership.



Our members have had great success in developing up-stream services to help prevent relinquishment with support from ADCH. Our communities face new challenges like the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, increased behaviour issues and high levels of relinquishment, where ADCH can provide leadership and support, and the future will bring new and ever more complex challenges.



There remain many (mainly small) rescue organisations which have not yet achieved the welfare standards of our members while, in contrast, some new ones are still joining ADCH and displaying impressive welfare for the animals they support. We want to help improve welfare standards within organisations and provide credibility for our members through their membership status.

So, the motivation underpinning our new strategy is to address these issues, to update our role, our identity, our distinctive position and our activities as the umbrella charity, focussed on the future and leading and serving those working in our sector.

We have a unique understanding of our sector and beyond, and ADCH's voice is collective and authoritative. We will develop relationships with members, some of whom feel disenfranchised, and beyond our membership with a wide range of partners, professional, commercial and charitable. We will be inclusive and brave in challenging times, generating collective support and joint action where it adds value with members supporting ADCH, and ADCH supporting members. In the dog and cat ecosystem we will build on each other's strengths and leverages. We recognise that the changes we seek will be built on and driven by human behaviour change, which therefore will be a foundation of our work.

Our overarching aim by the end of the decade is to have a strong and sustainable Association and sector that is consistently making a real difference enhancing the lives of the dogs and cats within our jurisdictions.



OUR VISION

A positive life for all dogs and cats

OUR MISSION

ADCH is an umbrella organisation which works on behalf of its members to create a professional and sustainable sector which improves the lives of dogs and cats.



OUR VALUES

ADCH is committed to:



LEADERSHIP

ADCH and its Members leading the sector and proactively tackling future issues and facilitating solutions while listening to all involved



COLLABORATION

We all share knowledge, expertise and actions for excellence



INTEGRITY

High standards including transparency, respect and inclusion



PROFESSIONALISM

Innovative experts with ambition for the sector



SUPPORT

Helping members to grow and develop together for dogs, cats and people too



ABOUT ADCH

The ADCH is a small charity focused on dog and cat welfare, currently in 8 nations / jurisdictions. We are a membership body, and our focus is on creating a network of charities, leading and organising the cat and dog sector, including those individuals and organisations who support us.

Our relationship with individual people is restricted to:



We aim to offer the same level of support to animal welfare organisations and members across our jurisdictions. Where this is not possible, we will look for equivalent opportunities, and we will be open about the challenges in delivering against this aim.

We recognise that there are additional challenges facing some groups of our members. Action Plans will be implemented to focus our support for groups facing particular challenges.

We will continue to give our support to dog and cat organisations, rather than wider animal welfare, but will provide opportunities for those caring for other domestic species to come together (but not as part of ADCH).

MEMBERS' STRATEGIES

As part of our preparation and thinking for ADCH's strategy we contacted a range of members.

Areas of synergy with ADCH's new strategy include:



Creating an externally focused community that is keen to collaborate to achieve a better future for dogs and cats



Fostering networking and peer support across members to share experience, learning and practical solutions



Addressing needs where we can make the most difference and measuring impact



Facilitating and/or delivering training in areas other than our core work of welfare to deliver sustainability and quality



ADCH being better known across the dog and cat sector



Supporting collaboration and professionalism, including training in finance, fundraising, people, dog training and behaviour, etc.



Giving members the support and tools they need to succeed

PESTLE SUMMARY

Every organisation operates within a world which can be analysed using a PESTLE analysis (the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental outlook).

For ADCH's strategy this analysis includes:

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

We operate in multiple jurisdictions whose politics can be different and move at different speeds. Conflict and uncertainty is a major threat to the world and displacement of people and animals affects priorities.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The global economy is challenging and unsettled. Cost of living and the rising costs of vet care impacts our members and their beneficiaries. Labour shortages affecting vets and vet staff, animal welfare and other charity jobs and volunteering.

SOCIAL & CULTURAL OUTLOOK

Dietary changes might affect people's views of animals. Increased importation brings associated welfare and zoonotic disease risks. Increased animal behavioural issues and challenging breeding practices, so our sector becomes mainly a safety net of difficult animals.

TECHNOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

The impact of AI within our sector and ensuring digital resilience. The development of integrated systems to minimise waste and maximise efficiency.

LEGAL OUTLOOK

Legal demands are becoming more onerous on charities, and environmental legislation is increasing. And for animal welfare: Licencing of Animal Welfare Establishments and rehoming activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTLOOK

Increased exotic / zoonotic disease risk. Rising need to consider Environmental Impact of organisations.





THE THREE PILLARS OF OUR WORK

1

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES &
ENGAGEMENT

2

OUR STANDARDS & SUPPORT

3

ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF OUR
MEMBERS



We will seek two-way engagement with our members from all jurisdictions and take into consideration how relevant topics and information are to each type of Member (based on geography, size or setup). We will aim to identify any barriers to engagement (e.g. finance, technology, time) and target our offers of support. We will aim for increased access for our Member organisations to enable them to attend ADCH events, both in person and online.

We will actively facilitate the continued development of our regional group network and our scheme of mentors (for broad support) and advisors (topic expert support).

We aim to hear about problems before they become a crisis, and ensure welfare standards do not slip, so that the animals in our Members' care have a good life.

We will review our work across each of our jurisdictions ensuring that we consider effectively our impact and relevance within that jurisdiction. We will also develop partnerships that strengthen collaboration and delivery across the jurisdictions in which we operate.

We need more information on the wider sector, beyond our membership. We want to understand what dog and cat welfare organisations are operating, what services they provide, where they provide them, and how. This will better enable us to shape our relationship with them and work towards improvement in the sector, as well as future-proofing our membership model.

We will also work to keep abreast of technological developments in our sector that may support our members.

We will increase our visibility to our members and the wider sector, working towards getting information and resources to the members in greatest need, and throughout Member organisations.

We will articulate more fully what being an ADCH Member means, the value of our Standards and why these are important to legislators, rescues and the population of dogs and cats.

We will ensure the benefit of membership is understood by members and those on the Pathway to Membership.

We will expand the range of our toolkits and resources to support members in meeting Standards.

We are aware of good work already being carried out by members on their environmental engagement. We will develop an ADCH environmental policy including seeking to source appropriate support to members keen to develop their environmental sustainability and reduce their environmental impact.

THE THREE PILLARS OF OUR WORK

ADCH will work to improve animal welfare across the sector. Our Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards exist as a way to drive this improvement in animal welfare.

We will review our Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards to ensure they retain their rigour and authority, while improving how they are presented, structured, and communicated so they are clear, navigable, and accessible to our members within organisations of all sizes.

We will provide a differentiated offering of services to 3 levels of dog and cat welfare organisations:

- 1) Those who rehome and care for dogs and cats but are at an early stage of a pathway to fully meet our standards but are not currently seeking ADCH membership
- 2) Those who are working to achieve membership and need help to meet ADCH's Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards (including any who have a temporary period of non-membership before returning)
- 3) Our core membership who will enjoy the full range of Member benefits.

We will continue with our Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards and the associated assessment programme. Where rescues do not currently meet these, we will offer a pathway as a means of engagement to help them achieve these. This will include access to mentors (general) or topic-specific advisors who are experienced professionals, normally from our membership, willing to volunteer their time and knowledge, often with support from their employer, to help other organisations provide for dogs' and cats' needs.

Where existing or new members do not fully meet our Standards, we will better monitor and follow up on their action plans to make sure that animal welfare standards are raised across our membership.

We will understand better how our Standards apply in different settings and, where relevant, show the science-based reasons behind standards. We will respond to new science in our standards updates.

We will ensure that our Assessors carrying out assessments against Standards are trained and experts in their role, and we will provide training to members for self-assessments.

We will aim to achieve a 3-year cycle for external assessments.



We will take positions on animal welfare topics that align with our Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards, since our Standards are agreed by our members as a foundation of the ADCH.

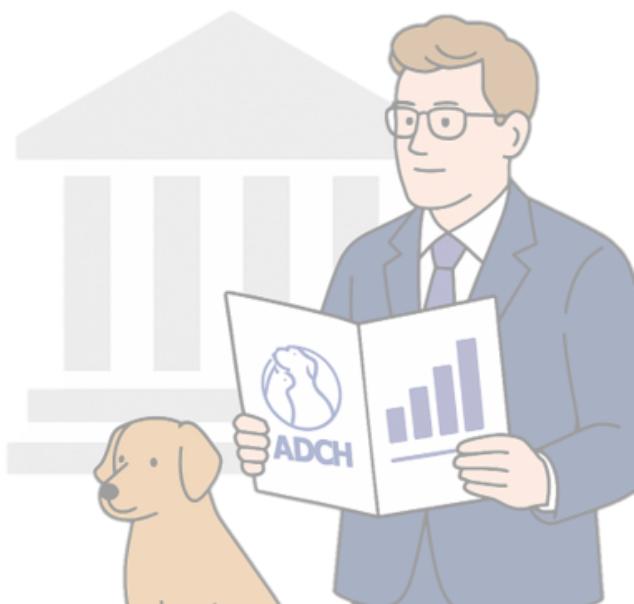
We will use these positions to form the basis of government consultation responses where appropriate.

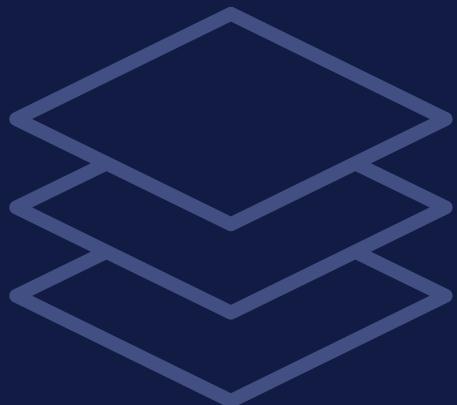
We will encourage governments to adopt ADCH Minimum Welfare and Operational Standards for their own licencing of animal welfare establishments and rehoming activities. We will actively engage with legislators to improve legislation in Scotland and Jersey which already have licencing, and to secure this licencing elsewhere. Our aim is that governments within our jurisdictions refer to ADCH standards in their licencing.

We will not be trying to mobilise public campaigns, but instead work through our members on these key issues in animal welfare that align with our Standards, and we will issue statements about these.

We will keep members updated and informed about relevant legislative matters in their jurisdictions.

We will raise our profile, based on information from members' annual returns, by issuing a 'State of the Nations' report for the rescue sector, an almanac for our members and industry professionals and an impact report for ADCH.





THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR WORK

HOW WE ARE RUN

4

TRUSTEES, COMMITTEES &
MEMBERSHIP MODEL

5

FINANCE & FUNDING

6

PEOPLE & INDEPENDENCE



We will aim to meet the Charities Governance Code, reviewing our governance structures including committees and task-and-finish groups, to ensure they are purposeful, proportionate and aligned with the needs of the organisation. As our Executive Team continues to strengthen, we will ensure that governance arrangements compliment rather than duplicate operational work with clear roles, effective communication and an appropriate balance between oversight and efficiency. Compliment and support the work of our Executive Team. We will also place greater emphasis on succession planning, ensuring continuity of leadership and the effective use of the diverse skills and experience across our Board.

We will re-establish a Nominations Committee from within the Governance Committee which will carry out interviews of potential Trustees to ensure our board is balanced and fit for purpose, including looking at the representation from different sizes of organisation. We will look at putting other safeguards in place around board composition, such as managing conflicts when we might have multiple trustees from one organisation.

We recognise the importance of broad engagement from across our membership in shaping ADCH's governance. We will do more to encourage participation in trustee elections and committee roles, helping to ensure that our governance reflects the diversity, experience, and perspectives of our members



5 THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR WORK

We will develop a financial strategy to plan for sustainability

ADCH's income generation streams will be diversified by working with commercial partners and sponsors, as well as our membership where appropriate. We will also look to raise funds from a wider pool of grant-funders and will enable people to leave us gifts in their wills.

We will examine charging, and grant support, to fund services to those not in membership.

We will define our operating model and cost this in the case for support. Part of the added value of our strategy is that it can be expected to attract income into the sector.

We will identify and confirm the necessary funds before committing to resourcing new activities.

To deliver our ambitions effectively and sustainably, we will strengthen the internal foundations that support ADCH's work. This includes streamlining processes, and invest in technology, including our IT systems in Year 1, to work more efficiently. By enhancing our systems and organisational capacity, we will ensure that ADCH remains agile, resilient, and able to deliver maximum value to our members.



Our people, staff, volunteers and trustees, are central to ADCH's success. We have established ourselves as an independent employer, a key step in strengthening our organisational identity and resilience. This independence brings opportunity and responsibility; we will continue to refine the systems and support that enable our team to work efficiently and sustainably.

We will foster a culture of professionalism, collaboration, autonomy and wellbeing, ensuring our people have the skills, support and confidence to deliver our ambitions and uphold ADCH's values in a way that is proportionate to our resources.





ADCH
Association of Dogs and Cats Homes



Registered charity no. 1180574