

Registration Council for Dog Training and Behaviour Practitioners

Report of the Re-Launch meetings: Tuesday 23rd February 2016 11am-12.45pm & 1.20pm-4.10pm

Venue: The Mary Probert Hall, Church Way, Euston, London NW1

This meeting was planned to consist of two parts: An open introductory discussion in the morning and a formal re-launch meeting in the afternoon, subject to the outcome of the first part.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSIONS (11am – 12.45pm)

Attendees: Sue Evans (Registrar), taking on the role of Chair in the absence of Chris Bloomfield, Julie Love (Acting Secretary), Alison Burgess, Susan Close, Grahame Godby, Sally Marchant, Stephanie Presdee, Andy Tough, Rachel Worley and Jackie Barnett (arrived 12pm).

The morning started with a round of introductions with declarations of affiliations and or interest. The morning meeting was noted as informal, and attendees were given the opportunity to express their general concerns, encouraged to openly share their views on 'registration', and the potential role of the RCDTBP.

The background of the RCDTBP was reiterated with a brief potted history of events including: the remit of the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) by the Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), to produce a report regarding the situation on Dog Behaviour and Training Services in the UK, published in 2008; two years of follow-up meetings which led to the CAWC Code of Practice being devised and agreed (2010) setting minimum professional standards for all Practitioners; the setting up of an organisation (RCDTBP) in the same year to manage the Code through voluntary registration of individuals and organisations wishing to sign up to it; the role of the Kennel Club in agreeing to act as the 'Secretariat' of it under the Chairmanship of the late Bill Hardaway; lack of activity in 2013-14 following the loss of Bill in March and appointment of a new Chairperson, Fiona Whelan; a meeting in October 2014 co-opting new members on to the Committee, including a new Vice Chair and Secretary; all three subsequent resigned in early 2015 (due to lack of time and amount of work involved); 2015 saw further research carried out by the remaining members by questionnaire and an open meeting in July; further revisions put forward through a Yahoo development group with 23 participants, finalising in today's proposed re-launch meeting.

The research carried out over 2015 supported the general concerns of attendees at the meeting, much of which was based on lack of current transparency and misleading claims. Eg service providers allowing assumption of experience / qualifications of instructors /advisors, with no mention of names or fees on their advertising or course providers giving potential or graduating students unrealistic expectations for doing the job eg 'qualifying' them over a weekend course, a practical award without sufficient knowledge, or a theory certificate without practical skill or experience. The research also highlighted that no other 'independent' organisation was currently offering full inclusivity, and in a position to act effectively as a governing authority for all those prepared to be bound by the Code in offering suitable services to the dog owning public as part of a united national network.

Funding was discussed and the open-endedness of formulating a business plan. It was noted that the only current 'paid' job was for the website. Andy Tough stated he was prepared to take on the role having freely started preliminary work on building a new website, capable of operating the extensive database(s), however, he would have to be paid due to the high level of work involved. It was noted that John Bowe (current and efficient webmaster) has been paid a fee and will be asked to update the current website.

The morning concluded with the question of help, as being fundamental to driving the RCDTBP forward. In appreciating that all attendees were really busy people, and as many hands make light work, the more people involved, the more the workload could be divided to smaller working groups, eg course providers, conflict resolution, qualifications, so the job would not be too onerous for any one individual. It was further noted that in setting up as a not-for-profit or charity-incorporated organisation, two face-to-face meetings plus the AGM (which could be on the same day) would be necessary, however all routine work would be carried out by email and telephone. With unanimous support for moving forward with a re-launch, all attendees were prepared to stay on for the formal afternoon session to discuss and agree paperwork.

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REPORT OF THE RE-LAUNCH MEETING (1.20pm – 4.10pm)

Attendees: Sue Evans (Registrar) acting as Chair, Julie Love (Acting Secretary) (until 2.55pm), Jackie Barnett, Alison Burgess (until 3.30pm), Susan Close, Grahame Godby, Sally Marchant, Stephanie Presdee, Andy Tough, Rachel Worley and Barbara Nedas (arrived 2.00pm)

Apologies Chris Bloomfield (Treasurer & Acting Chair), David Cavill (Committee Consultant)
With interest in further involvement, albeit limited: Kay Atwood, Zoe Axford, Hev Bushnell, Dawn Cox, Gail Gwesyn-Pryce, Julia Langham, Anthea Lawrence, Iris Thompson (Kennel Club) and Anna Webb.
With further support for Registration: Dave Bain, Teresa Bronson, Evelyn Chaplin, Fiona Henderson, Dale McLelland, Kerry Pain, John Rogerson, Wendy Shufflebotham and Allyson Tohme.

AGENDA

Item 1. Introduction and aims:

The meeting aimed to approve a re-launch of the Registration Council with commitment to move forward, amend and approve changes to the Rules & Regulations, including 'purpose' and activities. Documents for items highlighted with a double asterisk** below were provided by email before the meeting to allow attendees to make appropriate notes in preparation, and sent to several other interested parties for comment, each has been updated separately for the website.

Item 2. Declaration of interest(s)

Attendees were asked to complete and sign a formal committee member form to respect confidentiality and declare experience, qualifications, interests and affiliations. It was agreed to send out the form by email for attendees to complete, due to time required to do so accurately.

Item 3. **Website overview

This document provided a layout to the pages expected on the revised website and attendees were asked to consider, either through the meeting or after, whether other pages would be required. It was noted that pages highlighted with an asterisk and number had been drafted.

Item 4. **Home Page (*1)

This was accepted without amends

Item 5. **Practitioner Information Page (*2)

Attendees were reminded that the defined remit of the Registration Council was to register signatories, ie all individuals and organisations wishing to sign up to it, inclusively and without prejudice, and to manage the Code with the aim of upholding it. It was noted that it had been previously agreed for the application form to include a declaration of any criminal record as an exception. This register aims to be a who's who directory of every person involved with advising others, regardless of level of experience, academic or practical qualifications.

It was noted that a great many individuals work as part as a club or business which was providing a service and individual roles varied from ownership to a new assistant. Service providers therefore needed a separate register to advertise the overall services of the club / business. The role(s) allocated to their individual 'staff' members would then be the responsibility of the club / business.

In discussion, the question arose that in taking responsibility for staff, would each individual still need to register? It was noted that service providers should encourage their 'staff' to sign up individually, within a set timescale, as Individuals need to take personal formal ownership of their commitment to the Code and accept feedback on the advice they give, as a benefit for the

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club/business. It was also noted that a full list of practitioners was important to help everyone feel they were part of a national network, not just a club member. It was further noted that not all group nominated people were necessarily good at passing on information to all.

Proposed fees were considered acceptable, however benefits should be further emphasised. It was agreed that all individuals should be invited to register their commitment now, with a reduced registration fee, on the grounds that processes will be developed through the website to fully fulfil the aims of the Council over the next year or so.

The Public Services (*6) document had been through the yahoo group, it listed areas of training and behaviour more specifically under six categories, which would be the basis of registering Service Providers and individual Practitioner expertise.

The Executive Committee need to ensure that its' own members are not dictatorial or seen to be 'judging' others on specifics, due to their own personal opinions. The Code of Practice (*5) was already a published document and was referred to during the meeting. It was agreed that the Code was sufficient at this point to cover any bad practice or welfare issues that might arise.

Item 6. **Public Information Page (*3)

The subject of 'feedback' versus 'complaint' was discussed and it was agreed that 'feedback' should be collected; however the page should include a statement about confidentiality to reassure the public as well as the practitioner. It is obvious that being judged on venue, in particular was, in many cases, not something the club / business was responsible for.

The formal more serious 'complaint' procedure, with a £25 fee, was approved and it was noted that it was based on the tried and trusted model drawn up by the Kennel Club, who were instrumental in devising the original regulations.

Item 7. Further Information, Documents and Registers

With time limited, it was noted that information for Related Organisations Page (*4) was not discussed. It was noted that the following pages consisted of lists of related organisations, which, following comments of the yahoo group, have been divided into four separate registers as below:

- Membership Bodies (*8)
- Activity & Working Groups (*10)
- Course Providers (*9)
- Welfare Groups and Charities (*11)

It was noted that the lists need to be completed, aiming to list all and encourage 'affiliation'. No fee was proposed for affiliation however a 'Memorandum of Understanding' [MoU (*12)] is proposed, to agree mutual support.

A fee is proposed for 'Course Providers' who also wish to advertise their courses. It was noted that any document requiring further comment will be sent out to attendees and interested parties as they become available.

Item 12. Moving forward

With overriding positive enthusiasm for taking the re-launch forward, attendees were asked to let us know how they felt they could help further. It was noted that 'Officer' roles will need to be filled, approved or officially confirmed, in particular Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

The meeting ended at 4.10pm, Susan Close was thanked for hosting the meeting at her training venue, and all attendees were thanked for their interest and very constructive comments.