



## **KC Dog Briefing – Professional Dog Walkers/Maximum Numbers of Dogs**

The Kennel Club believes that an arbitrary maximum number of dogs a person can walk is an inappropriate approach to dog control that will often simply displace and intensify problems in other areas. The maximum number of dogs a person can walk in a controlled manner depends on a number of factors relating to the dog walker, the dogs being walked, whether leads are used, and the location where the walking is taking place. We note Defra guidance which cites expert advice that the maximum number of dogs someone can control is six.

However an arbitrary maximum number can also legitimise and encourage people to walk dogs up to the specified limit, even if at a given time or circumstance, they cannot control that number of dogs.

We therefore suggest that defined outcomes are used instead to influence people walking more than one dog, be that domestically or commercially, such as dogs always being under control, or not running up to people uninvited, or on lead in certain areas etc.

For example, an experienced dog walker may be able to keep a large number of dogs under control during a walk, whereas an inexperienced private dog owner may struggle to keep a single dog under control. Equally the size and training of the dogs are key factors; this is why an arbitrary maximum number is inappropriate. The Kennel Club would recommend the local authority instead uses 'dogs on lead by direction' orders and targeted measures such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Community Protection Notices (CPNs) to address people who don't have control of the dogs they are walking.

A further limitation of a maximum number of dogs per person is that that it does not stop people with multiple dogs walking together at a given time, while not exceeding the maximum number of dogs per person. Limits can also encourage some commercial dog walkers to leave excess dogs in their vehicles, which can give rise to welfare concerns. We understand that one reason why this measure is considered by some local authorities is because of multiple dog walkers (i.e. commercial dog walkers) walking in groups together. However If this is the case, PSPO should be worded to specifically prohibit this activity. PSPOs provide significant flexibility to address problem behaviours, without having to impose arbitrary restrictions.

We would strongly encourage local authorities to consider CPNs for multiple dog walkers who are not behaving appropriately or are walking in groups. CPNs allow for specific restrictions and requirements to be placed on individuals or businesses and

the potential penalties for breaching a CPN are significantly greater for a business than a PSPO, therefore considerably more likely to act as a deterrent.

If a maximum number of dogs is being considered due to issues arising from commercial dog walkers, we suggest councils look at accreditation schemes that have worked very successfully in places like the East Lothian council area. These can be far more effective than numerical limits, as they can promote good practice, rather than just curb the undesirable activities of just one aspect of dog walking. Accreditation can also ensure dog walkers are properly insured and act as advocates for good behaviour by other dog owners.

More information on measures to deal with this issue can be found in our report: [KC Dog Report 'Out of Order: The Impact of Access Restrictions on Dogs and their Owners \(link do download\)](#)