

FAQs for licensing Home-Boarding Franchise operations, AKA “Arranger’s Licences”

What sort of evidence are we requiring to demonstrate that Hosts are operating beneath the business threshold?

*We will accept a statement to that effect from the **Host** in the form of an email or letter. (We cannot accept any such statement on behalf of a Host from their Arranger, or anybody else.)*

We will not require Hosts to supply a more detailed income/expenditure account of numbers of dogs, expenditure on facilities, consumables, cleaning etc. unless credible evidence comes to light which suggests a Host may have increased their activities to a point which has taken them above the ‘business threshold’. If we think this has happened, we will discuss this with the Host.

We will expect Arrangers to supply details of numbers of dogs hosted with any given Host in a given period on our request. Arrangers must keep sufficiently detailed records to enable them to fulfil this requirement.

What depth of examination/inspection of individual Hosts will be undertaken?

The DEFRA guidance says that we should rate the Arranger’s licence on the basis of the poorest performing Host.

*It is therefore absolutely necessary for the Arranger to provide us with full details (name, address, telephone number/s and email addresses) of **all** their Hosts at the time of application.*

Arrangers must have robust policies and processes for inspecting and approving their Hosts.

They must be able to provide evidence of their rational efforts to assess each of their Hosts against the standards applicable to Home Boarding. Such efforts would include the Arranger visiting each of their Hosts to make their own assessments.

The Arranger must keep detailed records of those inspections.

Provided an Arranger has a robust process of inspection and approval for their Hosts, we will do a paperwork review of their policies, procedures and relevant documentation. We will expect copies of the policy and procedural documents to be supplied to us with the application paperwork.

We will arrive at a risk rating/star rating on the basis of these records and only make visits where circumstances dictate. Such inspections will be unannounced where the need has arisen due to complaints having been received. Otherwise, at least 24hr notice will be provided to the Host.

We will expect Arrangers to supply copies of their inspection records relating to any Host upon request. Arrangers must keep sufficiently detailed records to enable them to fulfil this requirement.

Can Arrangers be notified in advance of inspections of their Hosts? And will Arrangers be permitted to attend such inspections?

Where we plan on giving notice prior to inspection, we will leave it to the Host to notify the Arranger and to arrange their presence if that is what they wish.

If an unannounced inspection is deemed necessary, no notice will be given to either the Host or to the Arranger.

How are fees calculated for Arrangers?

Same basis as other Animal Activity fees, (cost recovery); however, the additional work involved in reviewing paperwork and inspections for Arrangers with larger numbers of Hosts will be accommodated by

applying an 'Additional Activity' fee where the number of Hosts exceeds 6, and 2 'Additional Activity' fees where the number of Hosts exceeds 12 (and so on, in multiples of 6 Hosts)

What happens if an Arranger reduces their number of Hosts on their books or takes on additional Hosts during the life of a licence?

We will require Arrangers to notify us of any additional Hosts taken on by them (within 1 month of their appointment as a Host). We would expect this notification will be accompanied by a copy of the Arranger's inspection record for that host.

We will also expect Arrangers to notify us in writing (email or letter) promptly when they terminate any arrangement with a Host.

This is important for us to be able to plan Host interim inspections properly.

This is also very important where an Arranger has become aware of one of their Hosts whose standards have slipped to a point which might threaten the Arrangers risk-rating/star rating. We would expect an Arranger to act to rectify the state of affairs by securing improvements through their own processes or by terminating their agreement with that Host.

*If the Arranger elects to terminate the agreement with any Host, they will need to notify us immediately. If we have not been notified of a termination of a Host agreement and a subsequent inspection by us indicates a reduction in star-rating for the Arranger, the Arranger will not be entitled to recover their position by notification of termination **after** the fact, otherwise than by using the (chargeable) "re-rating inspection" process.*

In the event of additional Hosts being taken on during the licensing year will an additional fee be payable and how will these additional Hosts be checked or inspected?

We will not charge where an Arranger notifies us of a change in the number of Hosts unless the net result is an increase in the number of Hosts into the next charging band (see "How are fees calculated", above.) in which case a "variation fee" will apply (see the scale of fees and charges for details of 'Variation Fees')

We will not charge a variation fee where the net result is a decrease in the number of Hosts into a lower charging band.

What standards are we applying to the facilities offered by Arrangers through a network of Hosts?

A home-boarder operating below the business threshold and outside the aegis of a licensed 'Arranger' has free-reign to operate in whatever way they like (subject to basic animal welfare legislation) without submitting to the costs, bureaucratic overheads and inspections associated with the licensing regime.

If a Host decides to attach themselves to an 'Arranger' they are benefitting from the marketing "clout" of the larger franchise, including the star-rating applicable to that franchise.

Therefore it is reasonable to expect them to meet the requirements which are used to calculate that star rating, hence we must apply the conditions as written down in the guidance, with no lesser attention to detail than we would apply to a stand-alone home-boarder.

Hence, we will apply the General Home Boarding standard guidance and conditions to each Host in exactly the same way we would to a stand-alone Home Boarder.