

Preface

A note on how this book came about, which is in large part through my work with The Dog Hub (www.thedoghub.co.uk/ (accessed September 2023)). On account of its close association with the local authority of Camden, London, The Dog Hub, built and developed by Susan Close, offers an unusual – and potentially radical – model of support for dogs, handlers and communities. Since 2008, Camden Council has provided The Dog Hub with funding, a dedicated indoor space, and permission to work in all open spaces where dogs are allowed (such as parks). In return, The Dog Hub provides free, non-judgemental dog training, support and advice to anyone living or working in Camden. The Dog Hub liaises with and across nearly all the council's departments (especially housing, social services, parks and open spaces, reparation, supported living, police etc.) with the aim, on the one hand, of helping council staff to better understand dogs and their lives and, on the other, of responding to council requests for problem solving, which usually means preventing situations involving dogs from escalating out of control (escalation being nearly always detrimental to the dog). Over the past seven years, I have participated in Dog Hub activities in numerous capacities, including being a volunteer in dog classes; shadowing Susan on home visits; attending dog welfare stakeholder meetings; participating in reading groups with canine behavioural professionals; and, above all, being in the privileged position of sometime sounding-board for Susan when challenging issues arise. At the same time, I have been working on an advanced diploma (Ad.Dip.) in applied animal behaviour (canine).

My work with The Dog Hub and on the Ad.Dip. have together motivated this book. Inadvertently, they have highlighted to me

how substantial is the gap, often, between what humans feel about the dogs with whom they live and/or work, and what those dogs, as far as it is possible to tell, are feeling. This gap can be identified across the social spectrum, and across many varied ways of being with dogs in different social settings. Although ultimately the gap cannot be closed, most of the dogs I have met would certainly benefit if it was at least narrowed. There is no substitute for practical, on-the-ground support, especially when it is aimed at understanding a dog's singularity, the organisation of their life as a whole and the relationships that shape it. My hope, however, is that this book too will change in some small way how we think about dogs, and therefore what we expect from them, and how we treat them.