

Dog Handler

Dog handlers work with specially trained dogs to help prevent and detect criminal activity and search for missing persons. They are responsible for looking after, feeding and keeping the dogs under control.

Dog handlers mainly work for the police, the Armed Forces, customs and excise or private security firms, although they work for other organisations such as the fire and rescue and prison services.

The Work

Police dog handler Police dogs are trained in police dog training centres. The dogs live at home with their handlers. You could be:

- searching for a missing person across open country or within buildings using a trained victim recovery dog
- tracking a criminal who may be carrying a knife, gun or other weapon
- searching for evidence
- guarding prisoners
- controlling a crowd, perhaps at a football match or other sporting fixture
- searching for explosives or illegal drugs
- making sure your dog gets regular training to maintain high standards
- feeding and exercising the dog
- looking after your dog in your own home, after it is 'retired' from work.

Army and RAF dog handler Army and RAF dogs are trained at the Defence Animal Training Regiment. The dogs live in kennels. You could be:

- guarding military bases or aircraft in hangars
- tracking down terrorists
- locating wounded casualties
- searching for landmines and other explosives
- making sure your dog gets regular training to maintain high standards
- feeding and exercising the dog.

UK Border Force anti-smuggling detector dog handlers Detector dogs are trained in-house, by the Metropolitan Police or the Defence Animal Training Regiment. The dogs live in kennels. You could be:

- detecting tobacco, illegal drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and cannabis or banned food substances or animals
- watching passengers at a sea port or airport, with a 'passive response' dog trained to sit when it detects drugs
- working with a 'pro-active' dog trained to find illegal items, including people being smuggled, hidden in aircraft, boats, cars or lorries
- making sure your dog gets regular training to maintain high standards
- feeding and exercising the dog

- looking after a 'retired' dog in your home when it stops working.

Private security firms The firm would train you to work with your dog. You could be:

- guarding a building or building site, possibly overnight
- walking round site boundaries looking for intruders
- responding to and investigating reports of intruders
- asking for police help when intruders are found
- guarding valuable goods when they are being moved
- making sure your dog gets regular training to maintain high standards
- feeding and exercising the dog.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

For details of starting salaries with the police, the army or RAF, and Border Force, see the information given in the job profiles - [Police Officer](#), [Army Soldier](#), [Royal Air Force Airman or Airwoman](#) and [Border Force Officer or Assistant Officer](#).

Starting pay rates for new entrant trained dog handlers with a private security firm in the UK vary, but tend to be in the range of £18,000 to £20,000 a year. Experienced or specialist dog handlers would expect to earn up to £26,000 a year or more.

Conditions

- Conditions vary according to the organisation you work for. These are detailed in the job profiles mentioned under the 'Pay' section above.
- In private security work, you would be active most of the time. You may have to work shifts including nights and weekends, and be on call for emergencies.
- In all cases you would develop a very close working relationship with your dog.
- There is always some risk of being injured or bitten by a dog.

Getting In

Police dog handler

- You must first join the police force.
- The entry requirements are in the job profile on [Police Officer](#)
- You must work a 2-year probationary period before you can apply to join the dog section.
- Entry to the dog section is competitive and there is sometimes a waiting list.

- You would spend a number of weeks doing specialist training with your allocated dog.

Army and RAF dog handler

- You must first join the army or RAF.
- The entry requirements are in the job profiles on [Army Soldier](#) and [Royal Air Force Airman or Airwoman](#)
- To be an army dog handler, you must do your basic training first.
- To be an RAF dog handler, you must be a member of the RAF police.
- You would complete the necessary police training and then a further 2 weeks training with an RAF dog.

UK Border Force anti-smuggling detector dog handler

- You must first join UK Border Force.
- The entry requirements are in the job profile [Border Force Officer or Assistant Officer](#)
- You must gain experience as a Border Force officer before you can apply to train as an anti-smuggling detector dog handler.
- You then do a dog handling course and an anti-smuggling course.

Private security firms

- A good general education is useful.
- Previous work experience with animals can be valuable.
- You would normally have to be 18 or over.
- By law, security guards including dog handlers must have a [Security Industry Authority \(SIA\)](#) licence.
- You have to undergo identity checks and attend an approved training course.
- You need to be fit enough to do active work.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- interested in working with and caring for dogs
- assertive in dealing with people and dogs
- able to handle large dogs
- observant
- reliable and responsible
- able to make good judgements
- able to work as part of a team or alone without supervision
- able to cope with difficult or dangerous situations
- physically fit.

Training

- Training varies according to the organisation you are working for.
- In the police, Armed Forces and Border Force, you would do general training first before going on to train in dog handling.

- In all training for dog handling, the aim is to make sure that the handler and the dog learn to work as a partnership.
- In the private security industry, there are several organisations which train dog handlers. Some courses lead to a qualification from the [National Association of Security Dog Users \(NASDU\)](#).

Getting On

- There are wide-ranging opportunities for promotion in the police, armed services and Border Force.
- In these cases, however, promotion may mean that you have to leave dog handling.
- In the private security industry, dog handlers may go on to become supervisors or managers.
- They may also be able to set up their own private security firm.

Contacts

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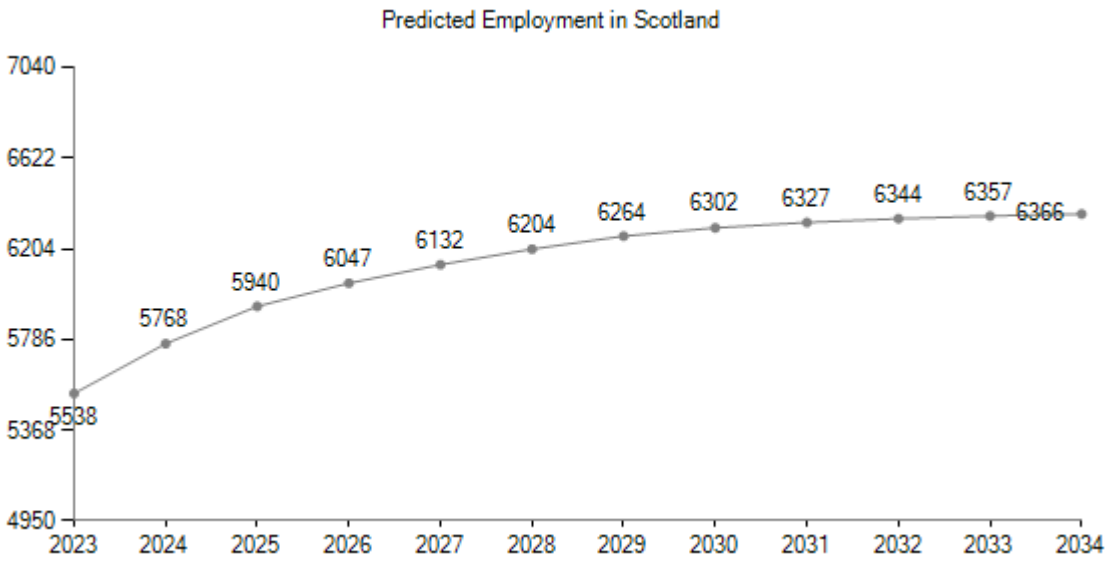
Facebook: www.facebook.com/lantrascotland

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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