

**Finn**



Finn is a gorgeous red setter, who was about 6 months old when I first met him and his owner Alison. He was quite timid outside, especially when there were noisy cars, motorcycles or the sound of the air brakes on the buses and he was unsure about bicycles, wheelchairs and pushchairs. He was also stealing and destroying washing-up sponges, socks and tissues and jumping up onto the kitchen worktops. He also didn't like the noise of the Hoover. Around 7.30 every evening he had a mad session which normally ended up with Finn being in his crate with a chew. Alison had done quite a lot of puppy training with Finn and was making good progress. Finn also went to doggy day care 2 days a week and was a very sociable puppy.

I did an initial assessment of Finn at Alison's house and she took me through all the issues, some were normal puppy behaviour, but the one I was more concerned about was Finn showing anxiety when we went to leave the house to go for a walk. He didn't want to go through the front door, but once he was through he was able to walk down the road, only reacting when the traffic spooked him. During the assessment it transpired that on his first day in their house, Alison's husband fell over Finn and a chair that he was carrying ended up crashing on the floor making a loud noise in the process. This has then led to Finn's anxiety over loud noises and not really wanting to go out through the door. We needed to build up his confidence and get him used to different noises. I pulled together the next steps:

1. Exposure to as many things as you can.

- Now that you know that Finn displays anxious signs when he meets different objects such as a bicycle that piece of fence wheelchair etc. you need to encourage him to go closer and sniff the object. Even getting him nearer to it is a good start.
  - Check how he is with the ironing board to see if that brings on the anxiety.
  - For the Hoover, try leaving it out for a while, don't use it and just leave it in a room so he has to walk past it, keep it out until he is calm around it and then put it away. Try this a few times and then when you think he's OK with it turn it on. If Finn runs off, turn the hoover off and then try again when Finn calms down and accepts the hoover in the room.
  - If this is successful we will move on to things that are outside the house
2. Noises - bangs, cars, motorbikes etc.
- Go down to Portland drive and sit on the seat where the bus stop is. Stroke Finn's chest and reassure him, whilst he gets used to all the cars, people and noises.
  - Take a walk through Holmethrope (local industrial park) during the day to see how he reacts. End the walk on a good note, so take him to Water Colours, Mercers or the park, making his last memory of that walk a positive one. Initially just walk him through the estate, after a couple of times stop and let him listen to noises all the while reassuring him.
3. Last meal of the day
- Make his last meal one that will take him a while to eat. Use his treat ball for the dry food or throw a small handful into the garden so he has to forage for it. This may calm him down a bit
4. Stealing
- Keep Mr Squeaky (a favourite toy) hidden from Finn, but make sure you can access it quickly. Each time Finn steals something offer him the toy.

**Outcome:**

Today Finn is a much more confident boy. He loves his walks and is now happy to leave the house through the front door without any issues. He has outgrown his cage and now has an enclosed area that he goes into at night. He is still a bit mischievous, but all in all he is a lovely dog. It has been really good looking at the dog/owner relationship and watching it change, so both owner and dog have a much better confident relationship.