

From *Lisbon* to leading a national franchise.

How Ritchie & Amber Clarke turned entrepreneurial ambition into a business built on joy, animals, and family



RITCHIE, AMBER & HAPPY CLIENTS

2018

First client: a Bengal cat called El. PHG Southampton was open for business.

5★

A five-star reputation built from scratch, and every regular client came back after lockdown.

2025

After 7 years building one of Southampton's top-rated businesses, Ritchie and Amber take over the entire PHG franchise.

Some career changes begin with a careful plan. Ritchie's began with an entrepreneurial awakening in Lisbon.

"I had a first-class degree and an entrepreneurial drive that had nowhere to go. I knew my talents deserved a better outlet."

RITCHIE CLARKE

In 2018, Ritchie travelled to Lisbon with university friends. He was always the upbeat one in the group. This time was no different. But something had been building for a while. He had a first-class degree in Tourism Management and an entrepreneurial drive that had nowhere to go. Working as a Business Analyst for a cruise line looked impressive from the outside. But his talents weren't being stretched, and he knew it.

He sat down with his wife Amber and said it out loud: he was built to build something of his own. He handed in his notice, and made himself a promise: he would never work for anyone else again.

He had just four weeks, a mortgage, and no plan. Animals were his passion, so he began researching how to set up a dog walking business. The more he looked, the more overwhelming it became.

And then, there it was: **Pets, Homes & Gardens**. "The pictures of all the pets made me smile. The wording was friendly. There wasn't an ounce of corporate tone anywhere," Ritchie says. "It felt like a match made in heaven."

THE FIRST WEEK

From a corporate desk to a *Bengal cat* called El.

Ritchie and Amber launched PHG Southampton in July 2018. His first official client? A Bengal cat called El.

"Going from a corporate office to caring for beautiful pets – and getting paid for it – meant Monday blues disappeared overnight," Ritchie says. Together, they introduced themselves everywhere they could: vet clinics, pet shops, and local businesses. Enquiries arrived, the diary filled, and five-star reviews followed quickly behind. Amber was right alongside him from day one. For the first time in years, Ritchie felt like himself again.

A FEW YEARS IN

The world changed. *Except what pets mean to people.*

Even with owners working from home, demand stayed strong. Dogs still needed exercise and socialisation; owners still wanted the very best care. That period revealed something important: theirs was a business that didn't just work in good times – it held its ground in difficult ones.

"We saw first-hand just how resilient the pet care industry is to external shocks. The reason is simple – pets are family."

RITCHIE CLARKE

AND THEN...

A newborn, a mortgage, and a country in *lockdown*.

Amber and Ritchie had just welcomed their son Oliver. Then, weeks later, the UK went into lockdown. Overnight, the phones went quiet. Walks paused. Visits cancelled.

With a newborn at home, a mortgage to cover, and no income coming in, Ritchie wasn't eligible for government support either. The situation was genuinely frightening. Walking away never crossed their minds. They held on and trusted that people would always care about their pets.

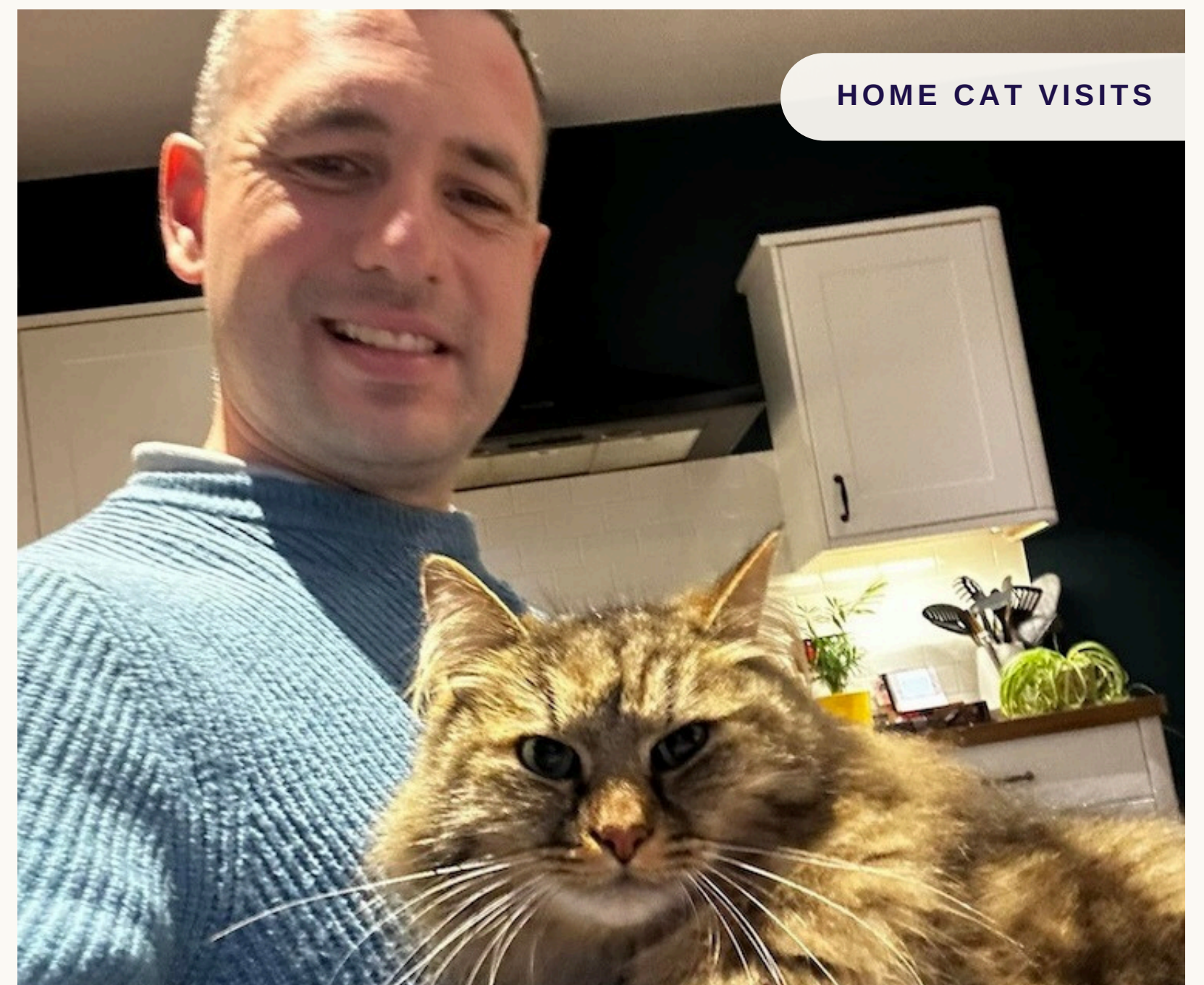
"I began to see lockdown as extended paternity leave. I built the most incredible bond with my son during that period. That time was a gift – even if it didn't feel like it at first."

RITCHIE CLARKE

WALKS, SUNSHINE & A HAPPY DOG



HOME CAT VISITS



FRANCHISEE → FRANCHISOR

Early 2025: another *unexpected opportunity*.

In early 2025, the PHG franchise came up for sale. For Ritchie, it felt like the moment he'd been building towards since the day he first discovered the brand. Amber left her role at John Lewis, and together they took everything they'd learned as franchisees and set about making a great business model even better.

MY MONDAYS NOW

"I smile and laugh *all the time* now."

Back in that Southampton office, Mondays filled Ritchie with dread. Today, they bring excitement. Working with animals – the unconditional love, the joy of being outdoors – makes every day feel worthwhile. PHG Southampton has earned a perfect 5.0 from 196 customer reviews. That is the transformation he and Amber now want to help others experience.

Everything sorted, so you can *step into your new business* with confidence.

New franchisees go through a four-to-six week onboarding, usually completed alongside a notice period, with just a few hours each week. At its heart: a two-day training weekend in Southampton, where you'll meet other new franchisees starting at the same time. "It tends to be a lot of fun. Everyone usually becomes friends," Ritchie says.

01

Onboarding, paced for life

4-6 weeks, just a couple of hours a day. Most finish before their notice period ends.

02

Certifications & diplomas

K9 Communication Diploma, Animal Care diplomas and Advanced Pet First Aid – all sorted.

03

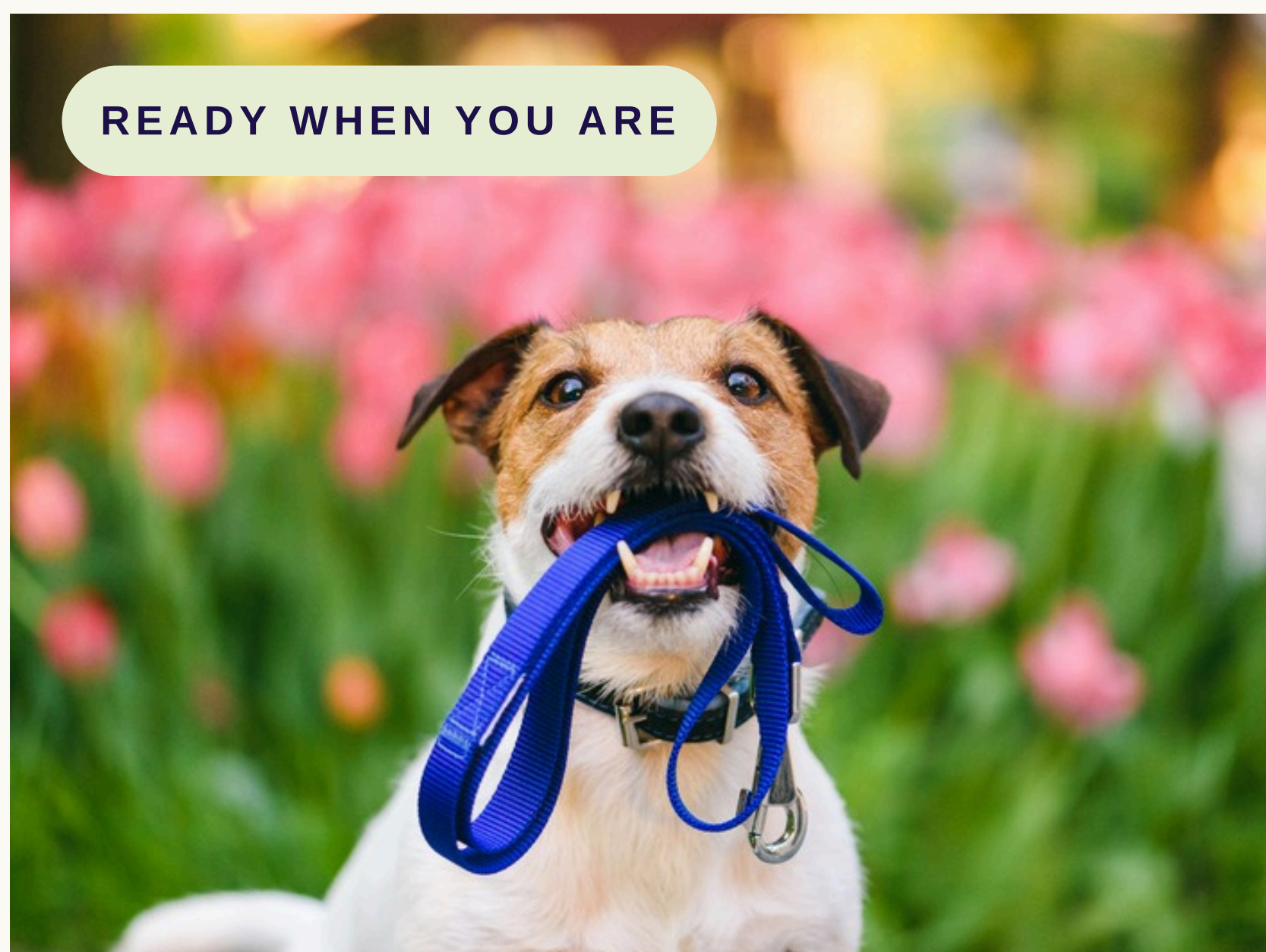
The Startup Kit

Walking leads, an advanced pet first aid kit and equipment tailored to your specific goals.

04

Support that doesn't stop

Monthly Masterclasses, a full marketing toolkit – and bespoke support directly from Ritchie and Amber.



A business with genuine *variety* – and a real client base to grow into.

Services span dog walking, small animal visits, house and dog sitting, and rabbit and guinea pig boarding. Plenty of variety in the work, and real opportunities to build a full, rewarding diary.

"Our aim is for you to spend the minimum time on paperwork and the maximum time doing what you love," Ritchie says.

Dog walking

Small animal visits

House & dog sitting

Rabbit boarding

Guinea pig boarding

Pet first aid

"I have been a Franchisee since 2019, and it has been amazing. I wish I had joined sooner." - Janis Byne

IMAGINE THIS TIME NEXT YEAR

Heading out the door to spend the day with dogs who are *genuinely excited* to see you.

If you're curious whether a PHG franchise could be your next chapter, start with a friendly chat over the phone. No pressure, and no expectations. Just a conversation with someone who's been where you are now.

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RITCHIE & AMBER CLARKE

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