



Pets change lives  
We change theirs



# Giving back to pets in need

The difference your  
support has made

# WHO WE ARE

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Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping sick, injured, abandoned and homeless pets since 1897. Pets help us in so many ways and they depend entirely on us. That's why we believe in helping pets.

We help thousands of pets every month and with your support we will continue giving back to more pets in need.

## Rehoming

We find new homes for homeless and abandoned cats, dogs, horses and small animals

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## Veterinary

We care for sick and injured pets when their owners can't afford private treatment

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## Behaviour

We help pets with behavioural issues to have happy, healthy futures

.....

## Education

We educate pet owners of the future by giving talks and offering advice

.....

## Pet bereavement support

We support people struggling to cope with the loss of a much loved pet

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# INTRODUCTION

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In 2017 we were there for many thousands of vulnerable pets who needed our help. And we were only able to achieve this thanks to pet lovers like you.

You're at the heart of everything we do at Blue Cross, and it's vital that you can trust us to use your donations well and help as many pets as possible.

So I hope you enjoy reading about the life-changing difference your support has made to vulnerable pets over the last year, and the plans we have to make even more of an impact in the future.

Thank you once again for your generous support. We really can't help so many vulnerable pets without you.



**Sally de la Bedoyere**  
**Blue Cross Chief Executive**



# REHOMING

## Matching homeless pets with their new best friends

Our Rehoming Team helped 8,950 homeless and abandoned pets in 2017, slightly less than in 2016. This was due to major refurbishment work taking place at our Burford and Lewknor centres. In future, these vital improvements will allow us to rehome more pets, work more efficiently and reduce the cost of rehoming each pet.

### Companion

Eight-year-old terrier Flora was found wandering the streets with hair so heavily matted she struggled to walk, a lump the size of a melon on her side and multiple lumps on her stomach.

After three months of operations and care, we found Flora a loving home with Mike Elliston, who had recently lost his wife and dog in quick succession. Mike says: "She's brought me companionship and some joy back into my life."



# VETERINARY

## Every pet deserves access to healthcare

Thanks to your support our four animal hospitals and network of clinics are able to treat sick and injured pets when their owners cannot afford private fees.

In 2017 our veterinary services helped 28,059 pets. We microchipped 2,109 fewer dogs than in 2016, suggesting that the introduction of new legislation is having an impact.

We also saved 436 pets' lives through our grants and Emergency Care Fund. Our Emergency Care Fund was launched with 35 partner vet practices around the country.

### Family

**Toothless the cat was treated by our Cwmbran pet care clinic in September 2017. When he was hit by a car, his owner would have faced euthanising Toothless due to financial worry. We saved Toothless's life and kept him and owner Caschella together.**

With your support we aim to treat  
**33,600**  
sick and injured  
pets in 2018



# BEHAVIOUR

## Helping pets and their owners enjoy happy lives

Our dedicated Behaviour Services help pets who arrive at Blue Cross with behavioural problems, and offer lifelong support for pets rehomed from us. Last year 3,732 behaviour consultations helped pets and their owners get the best from their relationships.



You  
helped fund  
**3,732**  
consultations  
in 2017

### Happy pets

Cookie was only a year old when she gave birth to Crumble (pictured). With no littermates, Crumble relied on his mum to teach him good dog manners. But Cookie was scared of people and didn't even know how to play with toys.

Our Behaviour Team stepped in and developed tailored plans for both dogs. Over a few weeks the team helped Cookie and Crumble learn not to fear people or being handled, and that playing can be fun.

# EDUCATION

## Improving pet welfare around the country

We promote animal welfare to current and future pet owners by giving talks and offering advice.

By helping us spread knowledge your support improves the lives of pets everyday.

### Spreading the message

We were delighted to welcome TV presenter Chris Packham as an Education Ambassador in 2017. A passionate animal welfare advocate, Chris won't just help promote Blue Cross's free educational talks, workshops and curriculum-linked learning materials.

He has also recorded a series of videos to engage school pupils and bring to life lessons about the Five Welfare Needs and the Dangerous Dogs Act.

Chris said: "It is very important to me to be part of encouraging current and future pet owners to learn more about the needs of the animals that share our lives."

**2,553**  
educational talks  
reached  
**95,622**  
young people  
in 2017



# PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

## Supporting people struggling with the loss of a much loved pet

Our pets bring us so much joy and play a central role in our lives. Losing them is heartbreaking. Thanks to your support, our dedicated team answered 6,554 calls and 1,676 emails from pet owners in 2017, helping them to cope with their loss and grief.

The team's hard work was recognised with the award of Animal Charity Team of the Year in the Petplan and ADCH\* animal charity awards.

### Giving back to grieving owners

Pets are part of the family, and when they pass away the grief can be just as raw as losing any other family member. After having to put her beloved pets to sleep, Tessa was bereft. "I was in the first stage of grief," she remembers: "deep, painless shock."

Tessa was able to work through her grief thanks to Blue Cross's Pet Bereavement Support Service, and once stronger decided to turn her experience into a positive one. After full training she now works on the support line herself, helping others who are suffering the pain of loss. "I can tell them with conviction I understand what they are going through," Tessa says. "I can offer them hope and a promise that they will recover."

**8,230**  
calls and  
emails  
answered

\*Association of Dogs and Cats Homes

# INFLUENCING POLICY

## Standing up for pets

Following the launch of our *Unpicking the Knots* report into the pet trade in 2016, our Public Affairs Team held 160 meetings with politicians throughout 2017. These meetings resulted in a parliamentary debate and questions, a roundtable event and draft private members bill in Scotland.

In 2017 we also launched our *Online pet sales in the EU: What's the cost?* report at the European Parliament in September, the first event Blue Cross has held there.

### House mates

A pet shop sold degus Piper and Chloe as a bonded pair, but it turned out they were not happy in each other's company. They were rehomed by our Burford centre in September 2017 when their new family couldn't cope. Irresponsible pet sales are targeted in our latest report.

**160**  
meetings  
with  
politicians



# LEGACIES

Gifts left by supporters in their Wills allow their love of pets to live on. These very personal and inspiring gifts fund half of all our work, and we are humbled that so many supporters choose to remember us in this special way.



## Giving back to pets in need for years to come

Mrs Joan Dorothy Barton kept dogs for the best part of 60 years. “[Joan] and her husband did not have any children and Joan’s dogs were a very important part of her life,” said Father John Walker, Mrs Barton’s friend and executor.

When her pets became unwell or needed routine treatment, Mrs Barton took them to the Blue Cross animal hospital in Victoria, central London.

“Joan sang their praises to everyone she spoke to for the care her dogs received and the kindness and compassion shown to her,” Father Walker said.

Mrs Barton showed her love of pets by generously leaving her flat to Blue Cross in her Will. Emma Colborne, Head of Legacy Administration at Blue Cross, said: “Mrs Barton’s legacy will ensure other sick and injured pets receive the same care as her many dogs did over the years and we are extremely grateful for that.”

# VOLUNTEERING

Our terrific team of volunteers grew to 4,470 people who gave back an amazing 459,136 hours of their time to pets in need. That's almost a third of all hours worked at Blue Cross!

We couldn't help so many pets without them, and we're incredibly grateful for their hard work and dedication. We'd like to say a huge thank you to each and every volunteer.

1 .....

## John Mann

Thirsk rehoming centre volunteer, hopes to become a vet

2 .....

## Lucy Pringle and ex-gun dog Jasper

Lucy wants to work with animals when she's older

3 .....

## Jane Denton

Volunteer at our Burford centre, enjoying a cuddle with Keanu the rat

4 .....

## Carol Hulme

Having been around horses most of her life, Carol started volunteering at our Rolleston centre in 2017



**4,470**  
volunteers  
**459,136**  
hours dedicated

# WORKING TOGETHER TO MEET THE NEED

**Very few issues facing pets have a straightforward solution. Here are a few examples of how your support helped our services work together in the past year to have the biggest impact on pet welfare.**

**THE NEED:** Brachycephalic (flat-faced) and 'teacup' dog breeds are increasingly fashionable. Sadly, animals that are bred for extreme features often suffer health problems that require treatment their owners can't afford.

**OUR IMPACT:** In 2017, we treated 3,174 flat-faced dogs compared with 2,947 in 2016. Our Education Team engages with school children about pet welfare at an early age to encourage behaviour change across a generation. We provide honest advice on our website and at public events, and increase public knowledge and understanding through media stories about the affected pets we've helped.

**THE NEED:** We've seen particularly high numbers of unwanted dogs and cats in the north of England compared with the south.

**OUR IMPACT:** We take pets in where they need us and transport them to our centres and network around the country where we know we can find good homes for them quickly. Work started in 2017 on a new rehoming facility which will open in Sheffield in 2018, and we hope to follow this with additional new facilities that will help more unwanted pets in the north.

**THE NEED:** Poorly bred and unsuitable pets continue to flood the UK due to the ease of buying pets online. In 2017, 139,176 cats, 291,740 dogs and 58,062 rabbits were advertised for sale on Gumtree, Preloved and Pets4Homes websites alone. While responsible breeders do use these sites, a lack of regulation of sellers means many buyers end up with a pet whose illness or behavioural issues only come to light once the pet is in a home.

**OUR IMPACT:** The teams at our animal hospitals are on the frontline, receiving sick animals and those who are too young to be separated from their mothers. Poor breeding and lack of care means we treat many young pets for malnutrition and easily-preventable diseases. Animals that have been used for breeding before being discarded often require costly treatment due to breeding-related illness.

Many pets that come to our Rehoming Services haven't been trained or socialised in early life. Our Behaviour Team helps them overcome issues until they are ready to be rehomed.

We're also having an impact on the cause of these issues, with our Public Affairs Team asking politicians to reform pet breeding and sales legislation.

**THE NEED:** Wages are failing to keep up with the rising cost of living and more people are relying on Blue Cross to help their sick and injured pets.

**OUR IMPACT:** We've opened a new pet care clinic in Cwmbran, South Wales; extending our reach to a new area of need. We will open a further four clinics this year in Ashford, Luton, Torbay and York. We've also extended our Merton and Victoria animal hospital opening hours so pet owners can access our support outside of working hours.

## Working together for Dorothy

French bulldog Dorothy is a victim of the trade in fashionable breeds. Cast aside when she was no longer useful as a profit-making breeding machine, she was left for dead in a park with gaping cavities in her abdomen. Our Merton hospital treated Dorothy's wounds then she was transferred to our Victoria hospital for round-the-clock care. Over time, our Lewknor rehoming centre nursed Dorothy back to health and finally found her a loving new home.



# OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

**We're committed to working in new and efficient ways to make the biggest difference to pets in need. Here's how we will ensure your donations help as many pets as possible in 2018.**

- Open two new rehoming and advice units in the north of England, where we know there is great need
- Expand our national rehoming network by partnering with two more animal care colleges
- Complete refurbishment of our Lewknor rehoming centre, increasing efficiency and reducing both the time and cost incurred to rehome a pet
- Open four new pet care clinics to help pets in areas of high need
- Expand our Emergency Care Fund to 80 partner veterinary practices
- Raise the funds required to rebuild our Hertfordshire rehoming centre
- Help grieving owners by training staff at veterinary group Vets4Pets in pet bereavement support
- Trial a new approach for our educational talks aimed at teenagers
- Publish an in-depth report into the online sale of pets, and meet with Westminster politicians about our findings to encourage changes to legislation and regulation
- Highlight our pet sales and enforcement work with politicians, including exhibitions at the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly
- Work with animal welfare associations in the Czech Republic, Finland and Portugal to assist in the setting up of Pet Advertising Advisory Groups

We receive no government funding, but thanks to your support we will get closer to our goal of doubling the number of pets we help.



## “He’s my best friend”

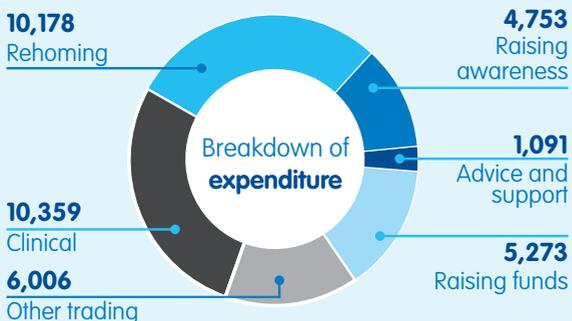
Rachel was confined to a wheelchair and unable to walk after complications during routine surgery. She didn’t leave the house for a year and while husband Jeff was out at work she felt isolated and lonely.

After rehoming two-year-old Hunter from Blue Cross, all that changed. “He’s my best friend during the day, someone to stroke and talk to and keep me company,” Rachel says. “When I don’t feel like leaving the house Hunter looks at me with his big eyes... So he gets me out of the house and we go for a walk with him walking alongside me in my mobility scooter.”



# BREAKDOWN OF INCOME/EXPENDITURE

All amounts are in £'000



## THANK YOU

To each and every person who has helped us change pets' lives, thank you.

We don't receive any government funding, so we are grateful for your vital support. If you would like further information about our work, please call our Supporter Care Team on:

**0300 790 9903**

or visit

**[bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)**



Read our full annual report and financial statements at [bluecross.org.uk/publications](http://bluecross.org.uk/publications)