



The Time is Meow

Cats can benefit wellbeing and help with loneliness

Why it matters

Loneliness affects millions of people across the country¹. Both young and old can suffer its debilitating effects and the government has produced a loneliness strategy to help address the problem. However, the benefit of pets for those experiencing loneliness has still not been fully explored.

Owning a cat can bring companionship, laughter and comfort into people's lives. But those struggling with loneliness may not be aware of the benefits owning a cat can bring or may need support to enable them to care for a pet. Others may not be in a position to own a cat themselves, perhaps due to financial or health reasons, but could benefit from volunteering with an animal charity like Cats Protection.

What the government can do

1. Commission further research on how pet ownership can help combat loneliness so that the benefits of pets can be properly understood.
2. Encourage health and social care workers to consider the role of pets in social prescribing. This can include volunteering with an animal welfare charity.
3. Ensure that individual care plans include consideration of pets. This should include recognising how important pets can be to those with chronic health problems or limited mobility, and liaising with animal welfare charities. It should also include ways to provide practical support with pet care and prevent relinquishment when a pet is clearly providing companionship and enhanced wellbeing.



Nine out of 10 cat owners think that owning a cat has a positive effect on their mental wellbeing.

Nearly two thirds of owners who regularly worked from home said their cat helps them by calming them down².

Turn over to read Amy's story



Volunteering: helping cats, helping people

Cats Protection's Cat Watch scheme has developed community hubs in deprived areas across the country, bringing local people together to monitor stray cat populations. The scheme in Everton has been praised for building a social support function, with over half of residents in the area saying the project had achieved a positive impact for cats and the community.

Cats Protection Community Neutering Officer for the Everton Cat Watch, Rachele

Follini said: "The volunteers and helpers that come along to our weekly hub meetings tell us it's been a great way to meet new friends in the community. Many have told us it gives them something to look forward to each week and a chance to learn new things. It's been great to see so many cats benefit from the scheme, but also to see the camaraderie develop between people who may otherwise have never met or become involved in a community activity."

After completing a law degree, Amy Griffin found herself at a difficult crossroads in her life and returned to live with her parents in Andover, Hampshire. Finding it hard to adjust and missing the familiarity and routine of university life, she found comfort from family cats, Harry and Holly.

She said: "The company of the cats was just what I needed – they didn't ask me stressful career questions or expect me to have a life plan. They helped me take one day at a time, and calmed my mind when everything seemed on top of me." Five years later, Amy now works in financial services and is a volunteer for Cats Protection.



For further information about our advocacy work visit www.cats.org.uk/timeismeow or email advocacy@cats.org.uk

1 www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness

2 Survey of 2,000 cat owners was conducted for Cats Protection by 3 Gem Research and sights during August 2019