

# Animal magic

THE BENEFITS OF BEING AROUND AND CARING  
FOR ANIMALS ACROSS CARE SETTINGS

## Foreword



In the Care Inspectorate, we work across a wide range of registered care services, social work services and local partnerships. Our resource *Animal Magic* celebrates the amazing difference being around and caring for animals can make, while managing risk, for many children and adults using a range of care services. For many of us, animals enhance our quality of life and bring us great joy. They help us connect in different ways and can bring comfort and nurture as well as real, tangible benefits. We feel better physically and emotionally when we spend time with pets and care for animals. I believe in the special role that animals can play, when managed appropriately, within care settings.

I was fortunate enough to experience this first hand when I visited an early learning and childcare service, where it was evident just how much importance is given to innovation, learning and care. The visit was all the more special because of a guide dog that the children loved having in the nursery. The examples featured in *Animal Magic* highlight the positive difference animals can make to people's lives in a range of settings. I am particularly pleased that we have examples that cover the lifespan, ranging from very young children right through to older adults living with dementia. For those living alone, multiple studies have shown that stroking animals significantly reduces blood pressure and improves cardiovascular health. Recent research has also shown that over-70s who have a pet are considerably less likely to feel lonely or isolated. It is also widely acknowledged that animal therapy can boost mental and physical health and help people to become more active.

I am delighted that this resource features the personal voices of people using and living in care services. We hear about their animals and what they mean to them, through a special bond. The Care Inspectorate is a committed corporate parent and we want to do all we can to support looked after children and young people to be heard, enabled and included. This resource is part of that and, of course, it extends to all those experiencing care, whatever their age and whatever kind of service they use. The stories in *Animal Magic* are very personal but practical too; they demonstrate how much can be achieved when services are person-led, empowering and ready to challenge themselves.

Scotland's new Health and Social Care Standards firmly embed a rights-based approach, where quality in care is assessed through the lens of the person experiencing care. This resource includes the relevant health and social care standards and the underlying principles and I hope the learning from this report can help care services make the standards a reality for everyone experiencing care. *Animal Magic* takes a collaborative approach and I would like to thank all the organisations and services who have co-produced this exciting resource with us.

*Karen Reid*

Karen Reid  
Chief Executive

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## Introduction

Our role regulating and supporting improvement in care services in Scotland gives us a unique overview of the quality of care. We are focused on supporting innovation and enabling services to deliver high-quality services and the best outcomes for people. This resource will, in turn, support people who experiencing care to have high-quality, meaningful experiences that enhance their lives.

Across Scotland are excellent examples of how animals are playing a role in providing high-quality care support. In Animal Magic, people involved in this work tell us their own stories of success, in the hope this will inspire others to do the same.

The Health and Social Care standards ([www.newcarestandards.scot](http://www.newcarestandards.scot)) were published in June 2017 by Scottish Ministers. They are designed to drive improvement, promote flexibility and encourage innovation in how people experience care and support.

Based on human rights and wellbeing principles, the Standards set out what people should experience from their care and support, written from the perspective of the person experiencing care and support. Almost all of them begin with “I am” or “I am experiencing” to emphasise the need for care and support to be person-led, with staff working innovatively to meet people’s needs and wishes.

The Standards are designed to apply across a broad range of care and support service types. Animal Magic models this approach by including examples of people experiencing care across the lifespan in a range of settings. There is a strong focus on what matters most to people.

**I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.** Standard 1.6

Animal Magic highlights the ways many people get the most out of life by being around or caring for animals and pets. However, not everyone enjoys being around animals and people’s individual choices should always be understood and respected. Animal Magic gives examples of animals enhancing the quality of life of children and adults. People experiencing care have told us that being around animals helps them relax, provides companionship, enhances their relationships, gives them a positive focus to their lives, encourages them to be active and makes them feel happier. The principle of compassion runs throughout the Health and Social Care Standards. People experiencing care identify strongly that being around and caring for animals links to compassionate and nurturing care. Contact with animals can provide something special and magical in addition to human interaction. Contact with animals can also enhance relationships with their families, their friends and with care professionals. The examples you will read about in Animal Magic show that having animals around services promotes a culture of kindness and tenderness for people of all ages, from young children to older people living with dementia.

**I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.** Standard 3.9

Some of the examples in this resource show that for some people, spending time with and caring for animals has specific therapeutic benefits and helps them process trauma and loss and become more emotionally resilient.

**I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experience of trauma or neglect.** Standard 1.29

We have included examples that demonstrate that communicating with animals can make a huge difference for some people and offer them transformative connections. Alex Busch, Deputy Executive Director of Camphill School in Aberdeen describes this for many children on the autistic spectrum.

“It can be easier to build up a relationship with an animal than a person. There is warmth, affection and trust.”

Gillian McDonald, coordinator of Jarvis Court Sheltered Housing describes the difference a visit from Therapy Ponies Scotland made to one woman living with dementia.

“She had been withdrawn and not shown her communication skills but when she saw the ponies, she laughed and showed joy.”

**I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.** Standard 2.8

We also heard from people experiencing care and the care professionals that support them that having animals in their lives allows them to form natural connections to the local community. This may be walking a dog or going to agricultural shows. Animals bring people together in a unique way and reduce isolation and loneliness. A shared focus on animal welfare provides bonds across communities and generations.

**I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.** Standard 1.10

Talking about death or dying is something that can be distressing and often avoided. Along with the joy that animals can bring into people's lives, there is sometimes pain and loss. Again, we have heard from people experiencing care and care professionals that caring for animals allows for sensitive and natural discussion around these issues.

**I am supported to discuss significant changes in my life, including death or dying and this is handled sensitively.**

Standard 1.7

We have included examples from a range of settings across Scotland including care homes. Children and adults have told us of the positive difference having animals and pets makes for them. Amber, a young person told us:

**"Some of us would not be able to cope without them."**

**If I live in a care home and want to keep a pet, the service will try to support this to happen.**

Standard 5.24

Care professionals have told us that there may sometimes be challenges to overcome in order to keep pets in care services. There is a balance to be struck to ensure that everyone's choices and rights are respected. However, there are often ways to overcome these challenges and there are organisations that can provide support. For each of the examples, we included a section on things to think about based on others' experience and signposts to helpful resources and research.

**I experience high-quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.**

Standard 4.11

Our Improvement Strategy 2017-19 clarifies our improvement support role and reinforces the importance of effective practice and continuous improvement to a good quality of life. Sharing best practice widely across all services, at all levels and between people and communities both experiencing and providing care and support is a good thing. It fits in with the wide-ranging scope of the Health and Social Care Standards. We hope that the examples and messages included in this resource lead to increased sharing of ideas. With this in mind, we include information about the innovative work of the NSPCC Young Witness Service in Northern Ireland even though the service is not within our regulatory jurisdiction.

The Young Witness Service is an NSPCC support service for children and their families who have to attend courts across Northern Ireland to give evidence. It aims to reduce stress and anxiety for children and young people giving evidence and to reduce the potential risk of secondary trauma that giving evidence can present. They introduced a pilot scheme and quickly realised the positive

difference having a therapy dog could make to children and their families who have to give evidence. The presence of Connie the therapy dog reduces some of the stress and anxiety in what can be a highly charged situation. Billy Eagleson of the NSPCC Young Witness Services told us:

*"For this pilot scheme to have become such an integral part of the system so quickly is incredibly unusual."*

The Young Witness Service got their inspiration from a service in Washington DC that involved court dogs helping to relax vulnerable witnesses in the court setting. In turn, we hope that care professionals in Scotland will be inspired to consider similar approaches for children and adults experiencing a range of traumatic situations such as giving evidence in court.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out public bodies' responsibilities as corporate parents. This includes the Care Inspectorate and we are committed to supporting care experienced children and young people and promoting their needs and interests. We want to ensure that young people's voices are at the heart of all we do. Animal Magic supports young people living in residential and foster care by highlighting the positive difference being around animals makes for them.

In the examples relating to children's services, we make the link to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators: safe; healthy; achieving; nurtured; active; respected; responsible; and included.

Animal Magic hears directly from children and adults and the people supporting them. It is important that the voices of people experiencing care are listened to and that services respond positively. Experiencing care should not be a barrier to getting the most out of life. Care settings should support everyone to reach their full potential. Services should overcome challenges and barriers and be inventive in their approaches supporting people to benefit from having animals in their lives. We hope that these stories inspire all services to explore the benefits and magic of animals.

**I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.**

**Standard 4.25**



## Key to the symbols we use in case study examples

### Health and Social Care Standards

After each case study example that follows, we give a list of the relevant Health and Social Care Standards. So you can reference which elements of the examples demonstrate particular Standards, we have inserted symbols in the relevant sections of text. The symbols are colour coded according to each of the five principles that the Standards sit under.

Look out for these symbols throughout the case study examples. They will help you see how the Standards are demonstrated.



**Dignity and respect**



**Compassion**



**Be included**



**Responsive care and support**



**Wellbeing**

### Wellbeing indicators: Getting it Right for Every Child

In the children and young people's case study examples, we begin each one with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators, which are demonstrated in the example. We use our wellbeing symbols so you can see at a glance which indicators are relevant.

#### Key to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators:



**Safe**



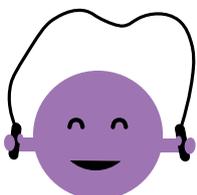
**Healthy**



**Achieving**



**Nurtured**



**Active**



**Respected**



**Responsible**



**Included**

### Animal Magic is on YouTube

We have produced 18 short documentary videos to accompany Animal Magic. Both care staff and people experiencing care, in all kinds of settings, tell us their own stories of the benefits animals bring to their service and how they made it work. You can watch them on our YouTube channel.

[www.youtube.com/user/careinspectorate](https://www.youtube.com/user/careinspectorate)



computer

Kodak  
Jenn

Guide dog  
training

## Collaborative working to support children's development: Balmullo primary school nursery

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Balmullo Primary School Nursery is in the village of Balmullo, near St. Andrews in Fife. The service is registered for a maximum of 30 children and was inspected in November 2016 when we evaluated the care and support as excellent and the environment as very good. During this inspection, we saw the impact of the innovative partnership with guide dogs and the nursery. We observed puppies Bill and Jeeves with the children as part of their training to be guide dogs. We noted the positive impact of this experience on children's learning and the overall ethos of the service.

Trainee guide dogs support the children to be responsible and respectful as they learn the importance of the puppies' job and how they could help the dogs learn. This in turn supports their learning, social interactions and contributes to the evident calm ethos.

Staff are confident in the children's ability to interact positively with the dogs and understand the role of a guide dog. This is a positive and innovative learning opportunity as children increase their knowledge of the dogs' capabilities. The links created within the community, across the school and with the guide dogs provide meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to the children's lives. 

Staff sensitively remind children about the how they should behave with Bill and Jeeves. As a result, children adapt accordingly, including being gentle in their approach, helping Bill and Jeeves adjust to the noises and role modelling to them. Children enjoy showing Bill and Jeeves how to sit and listen well at story time and were aware of how they behave telling us "Jeeves was listening as well". Identifying and praising the dogs' behaviour impacted positively on children's own interactions and levels of engagement. 

The children develop an awareness of the needs of others as they consider Jeeves' needs. During one visit, they spontaneously provided Jeeves with a bowl of water telling us "Jeeves is thirsty; I bring him water every day because he might be thirsty".

We were struck by how kind the children were to Jeeves and each other, and noted the high quality of learning taking place throughout the session.

The calm, relaxed and inviting atmosphere was enhanced by the dogs' presence, supporting children's emotional wellbeing. As children listen to a story, they stroked Jeeves promoting feelings of calmness and relaxation. 

The presence of dogs reduces anxiety and builds trust. One of the nursery staff, Mrs Duncan, commented "I find it quite calming for the children; we had one child who was scared of dogs and she now pats him confidently. That's due to being exposed regularly to a dog". 🐾 It is fantastic to see how relaxed the children are around the dogs; they have a clear understanding that the dogs are there to work and learn from them, which builds their respect for the dogs, themselves and each other.

The dogs' time in the nursery is managed well to ensure it does not interrupt children's play and gives them choice. The dogs enhance the children's experiences and allows them to be in control over the level of contact. A teacher in the school and a guide dog boarder, Mrs MacPherson, explained that "the dog can be present when the children play and it is always under supervision by me". Story time with the children can sometimes take place in the school library and children could choose to join this group, telling us "we go for a story with the dog". Children can also choose to go on occasional trips out in the local community with the dogs. Head teacher Mrs Coggins told us how much the children love taking the dogs to the local shops. The regular outings in the community also increase children's opportunities to be active along with learning about road safety as they 'teach' the dog how to cross safely.

The presence of a dog in the nursery encourages children's participation in activities at their own pace. Children who may not visit the story corner often are happy to join Bill the dog for story time in the school as they want to be around him and read to him. During outdoor play, one child was very happy to see Bill. The connection between the child and Bill supports his communication as he was relaxed enough to engage with him. He was excited to tell Bill all about his ice experiments and then showed him around the garden pointing things out. He was so thrilled with the dog's response to him and told us "the dog likes me". It was clear from this reaction that Bill supports children's self-esteem and socialisation through learning how to interact with and talk to the dog.

Children were also able to confidently give instructions such as telling the dog to "sit nice" during story time and during outings in the community. Children told us "the dog knows what he's doing" and that "he stood very still" in the shop.



These interactions support speech and language development and build confidence in speaking to others and forming friendships. 

The service carefully considered and planned how to introduce guide dog puppies building on previous fund raising links with the charity Guide Dogs. 

A comprehensive risk/benefit assessment and policy has been developed along with a full consultation carried out with parents and staff to ensure appropriate practice and children's wellbeing. The policy informed parents of the benefits for their children and detailed how it would be implemented.

Any specific allergies to animals had been discussed and considered for children and staff to ensure their continued wellbeing. Children were fully aware of hygiene and safety during visits from the dog and were able to explain how to approach the dog and the importance of hand hygiene telling us "you need to wash your hands after touching the doggie".

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

1.30 As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.

### Principle: Compassion

#### Standards:

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me and at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

3.9 I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.

### Principle: Responsive care and support

#### Standard:

3.18 I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and plan for any known vulnerability or frailty.

### Things to think about:

- How could you take a partnership approach such as working with guide dogs and what would the mutual benefits be?
- Consider the benefits of having animals in your service for children who do not have pets and for children who may at first be anxious around animals.
- What might be the benefits for children in terms of building relationships and trust?
- How could having animals in a care setting help support children's learning and communication?
- How can you keep parents fully informed and involve them in planning and development of policies?
- How can engagement with animals help children learn about risks and think about how to keep safe?

### Find out more:



The Health and Safety Executive's statement about taking a balanced approach and carrying out a risk/benefit approach:

[ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5369070/](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5369070/)

Article about the impact of interaction with a dog on children with additional support needs: [sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/07/160720094602.htm](https://sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/07/160720094602.htm)

A case study that highlights the building of resilience and responsibility through interactions with and training of a puppy: [naturenurture.org.uk/our-impact/](https://naturenurture.org.uk/our-impact/)

The Kennel Club's resource about using a dog for pet therapy and promoting a love of books: [thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread](https://thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread)

Guidance on the Guide Dogs website;  
[guidedogs.org.uk/resources/guide-dogs-in-school](https://guidedogs.org.uk/resources/guide-dogs-in-school)

These links are some examples of settings in England where there are dogs in residence in schools and nurseries:

[hollyparkschool.co.uk/about-the-school/our-school-pets](https://hollyparkschool.co.uk/about-the-school/our-school-pets)

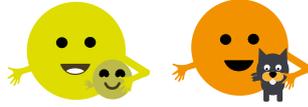
[charlotte-school.co.uk/derbyshire/primary/charlotte/site/pages/allaboutus/doristheschooldog](https://charlotte-school.co.uk/derbyshire/primary/charlotte/site/pages/allaboutus/doristheschooldog)

[greenvale.medway.sch.uk/medway/primary/greenvale/site/pages/woodythedog](https://greenvale.medway.sch.uk/medway/primary/greenvale/site/pages/woodythedog)



## Creating responsibility using innovation: Carol Westby, Childminder (Little Tots Farm)

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Little Tots Farm in Leswalt, Stranraer is Carol Westby's childminding service.

We inspected Little Tots Farm in November 2016 and evaluated the care and support as very good. We found that Carol provides a welcoming and safe environment for the children and their families. Children can access an interesting outdoor space, where they can play and helped to feed the animals and collect eggs.

Carol is very interested in animals and has built up a selection of breeds of rare sheep, pigs, horses and guinea pigs. She told us that having animals in her life helps her and the children to feel special and valued because "you can instantly have a bond with them and they don't make judgements about people".

Carol has observed that children can often find it easier to relate the animals than to other children and adults, as they are more relaxed. She tells us about children who have arrived feeling unsettled and that by taking them to the window to look at the sheep the children have instantly started to relax. This also helps parents to go away happy in the knowledge that their children are settled and okay.

For minded children it is great that they have some responsibility for caring for the animals. They learn how to care for them and it helps them to learn how to look after their own pets, if they have pets at home. The children have daily routines that include caring for the animals, which helps them learn that there are things they have to do every day at the farm and at their own home. Some children do not have pets at home but can still enjoy caring for them and being around them at the childminders.

Carol believes that everybody gets something from the animals. Children develop an understanding of risk and how to keep safe. Children understand the importance of washing their hands to keep themselves safe. 📦

Being around the animals helps children make friends more easily because they learn how to trust and this helps them to relax and mix with others. Carol has observed them chatting away to dollies and teddies indoors and then taking this imaginative role play outside, where they can chat away to the animals. This can enhance children's language and communication skills. 📦

Sometimes, the children have learned to cope with difficult life experiences. One of their favourite animals, Fudge the donkey, sadly died last year. The children coped well with this experience and it has also helped them cope with loss in their own lives. One of the boys processed this when his own dog died, rationalising that it had “gone to visit Fudge in donkey heaven”. 📦

Carol encourages other services thinking of having animals to go for it, as “there is nothing nicer than having animals around you. They bring so much joy and happiness and brighten your day.” For children cared for by childminders, having opportunities to be around animals can enhance their lives in a range of ways. 📦 Carol also highlights the importance of making sure that all the risks have been considered and safeguards need to be in place.

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### 📦 Principle: Wellbeing Standard:

2.24 I make informed choices about the choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks that enhance the quality of my life.

### 📦 Principle: Compassion Standards:

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

1.7 I am supported to discuss significant changes in my life, including death or dying, and this is handled sensitively.

1.6 I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.



### Things to think about:

- How do animals help children to feel valued, loved and secure? What helps them to build relationships and trust?
- How does having animals support children to be responsible and understand about caring for others?
- How do animals help children to develop resilience and to cope with life events?
- What safeguards are needed to make sure that children and animals are safe and at the same time support children to learn about risk?
- Consider how children who have not met or cared for animals before can gradually build up their knowledge and confidence.

### Find out more:



Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings, 2016, Health Protection Scotland and NHS Nation Services Scotland.

Advice on safety around horses: [bluecross.org.uk](https://bluecross.org.uk)

Advice on pet loss and support for children: [bluecross.org.uk](https://bluecross.org.uk)

When a Family Pet Dies: A guide to dealing with children's loss, J Tezeo-Jarolmen, 2007, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

## Supporting including and additional needs: Pre-School Additional Support Needs Service, Aberdeen

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators: 

The Pre-School Additional Support Needs Service (PSASN Service) works out of two locations in Aberdeen; Orchard Brae School and the Ashgrove Centre. It is for children with complex additional support needs. The service is registered to provide care and learning for 22 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The school had been specially designed to reduce environmental challenges experienced by children with complex support needs as far as possible, enabling them to focus more on their learning.

We inspected the service in January 2016 and evaluated the care and support as very good. One of its aims is to “ensure everyone within the nursery community is encouraged to reach their full potential”.

Sheila Macgregor, head of nursery and early years, recognises the benefits that having access to animals in different ways brings to the children. They have large fish tanks with tropical fish in both settings. They have found that many of the children respond positively to the fish. They like the sound of the bubbles and the movement. Some children are mesmerised by the bright colours. Sheila describes the fish as being very relaxing. For some children, if they are unsettled or anxious, coming to look at the fish can really help them to feel calmer.

Some of the children from the nursery also enjoy horse riding and this opportunity to have contact with animals. Nursery teacher Jane Noble feels this is especially beneficial for children on the autistic spectrum. “The children are able to interact with living things and make a connection between what they do and what the horse does.” For some children, this connection can be transformative and is a way in to a child’s world. Sheila describes the interaction with the horses as allowing ‘a chink into the children’s world’. 

Riding also helps some children in their physical development and building their core muscles, and it improves their overall confidence. Some of the parents have been a little reticent at first but have seen the progress their children have made.  Parents are encouraged to come and watch their children. The nursery has very good links with Aberdeen Riding for the Disabled. Nursery teacher Roddy Mckinnin describes the helpers as being very calm and clear with the children. Children are able to follow the instructions they are given and focus on the experience in a very different way to a more formal or classroom setting. Some children have continued with riding after they have left the nursery. Recognising the potential benefits for their children of interacting with animals inspired one family to explore other options. Harry attended the nursery and his Mum tells us about him and the difference that having Flora, his assistance dog, has made to him and their family.

## Harry and Flora

Harry was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder around his third birthday. He is now eight. He has complex needs and is non-verbal, although very recently he has been able to say the odd word. Harry attended the PSASN Service for two years prior to starting school, a hugely positive experience for him. With a very limited range of interests Harry really enjoyed the weekly horse riding lessons he was offered. He enjoyed watching the horses and happily sat on them for supported walks. The rhythmic movement of the horses walking was very calming and Harry really connected with them. He would always be very vocal during the sessions. The horse riding also supported him to develop his waiting skills (waiting for his turn) and to follow simple instructions, such as to keep his back straight or to remember to hold on to the saddle. Harry continues to go riding now and again and still loves it. We could see from Harry's response to horses and to other animals he saw, for example friends' pets or at local petting farms that animals were a particular interest to him. As a younger child, Harry would also spend hours every day lining up his extensive range of plastic animals, taking great pleasure in changing the formations and studying the animals from every angle.

Harry's mum told us: 'We had heard about how assistance dogs had the potential to make a very positive difference to children like Harry and we researched this. Flora, a beautiful golden Labrador, came to join our family when Harry was five. She had been trained prior to coming to live with us and the trainer then spent some time training us. It was a challenging and exhausting experience but very exciting too.

Flora has made a really positive difference to our family life. Prior to her coming along we found it difficult to get Harry to walk anywhere. He has no physical disabilities but would often just drop to the floor and refuse to move. This was becoming an increasingly difficult situation to manage as Harry got bigger and stronger. Flora has transformed this. When out walking Harry is attached to Flora through the use of a harness around his waist and will happily walk with her for several miles. She encourages him to walk but also keeps him safe as he has very little awareness of danger. Having Flora allows us to be out and about much more. One of my most cherished memories was of last summer when we were holidaying in Aviemore. We decided to go for a walk at Loch Morlich. We had no great expectations of this as we have found we need to just 'go with the flow' but it ended up being such a beautiful experience. Harry enjoyed walking with Flora. We let her off her lead to



go in the water and he was so very engaged, giggling and laughing, watching her run in and out. Our younger daughter enjoyed the calmness of the activity, collecting pinecones, heather and other forest treasures to explore later. We ended up walking around five miles. It was simple and something others may take for granted. For us it was very special family time.

We used to find cafes and restaurants a difficult environment to take Harry into. Harry would get stressed and then we would get stressed. Our son finds it difficult to sit still and is always moving about. Not long after we got Flora, we had a meal at a local hotel with our extended family. We had chosen well, somewhere that had outdoor space we could take Harry to if he needed some time out, and a table in a corner of the room where there would be no guests coming and going. However, we were astounded to find that Harry sat for over two hours with Flora at his feet. No one could believe it! I had hoped for 20 minutes!

As parents, we get some clear benefits from having Flora. We are less stressed in public places. When we are out with Flora and Harry and she is 'working', she becomes the focus of people's attention, which then gives them awareness that Harry has additional support needs. With this usually then comes a level of understanding. Prior to this, we would sometimes find people being judgemental, or catch people looking at us disapprovingly, which then created a stressful situation. That has stopped and for that I am thankful. Many people are very interested in Flora and will converse with us and ask about how she supports Harry. Much to people's disappointment they cannot pet Flora while she is "working" as she can't be distracted from supporting Harry.

Any dog can have a major positive impact. Having a dog means you have to commit to walking outdoors on a regular basis. When I take Flora out for a walk, when she is not working, this has huge benefits for me. Exercise and fresh air and the interaction of a four-legged friend can have such a boost to mental wellbeing. I can feel very stressed leaving the house and come back feeling refreshed and with a more positive mental attitude. It's often hard to prioritise time for yourself but having a dog means you have to prioritise time for them, which can also be valuable time out for yourself.'

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Compassion

#### Standard:

-  2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standard:

-  2.24 I am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life.

### Things to think about:

- How can you think about linking in with resources and in the community?
- How can you engage with parents about the potential benefits, reassure them about the risks?
- What ways can your service create an environment that supports children with severe and complex needs?
- How families can be supported and benefit from assistance animals?
- Consider how animals can break down barriers and enhance understanding of some of the difficulties children with complex additional support needs have.

### Find out more:



Journal article: Effects of Equine Assisted Activities on Autism Spectrum Disorder, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, August 2014, Volume 44, Issue 8.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10803-014-2062-5>

Journal article: The Social Skills and Attachment to Dogs of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, May 2015, Volume 45, Issue 5.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10803-014-2267-7>

Research findings: What Factors Are Associated with Positive Effects of Dog Ownership in Families with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder? The Development of the Lincoln Autism Pet Dog Impact Scale, Hall, Wright, Mills, 2016.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4760734/>

## Intergenerational connections: Jarvis Court very sheltered housing support service and Playbarn Too nursery

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Jarvis Court is a modern, purpose-built development of very sheltered housing accommodation for older people. It is a housing support service provided by Aberdeenshire Council, located in Fraserburgh. We inspected it in December 2017 and evaluated the care and support as excellent and the leadership and management as very good.

Playbarn Too is a nursery in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, registered to provide a daycare service to up to 44 children aged two years up to those not yet attending primary school. We inspected the service in November 2017 and evaluated the care and support as excellent and the quality of staffing as very good.

The children and adults in the two services regularly come together to socialise and spend time with each other. Instead of just an annual get-together at Christmas, the children and tenants now meet up much more frequently. This is an innovative partnership that has benefits for everyone involved. Warm relationships have been established between the children and adults that allow meaningful contact that benefits everyone involved. 📧 The tenants living at Jarvis Court enjoy the socialisation and fun they have when the nursery children visit. They are motivated to be involved and engaged and as a result are less isolated. The children learn new things from chatting with the older people. Warm and caring relationships bring joy to both groups. 📧

Some of these visits have been further enhanced by animals. Bringing in animals adds a different dimension and talking point. They have had joint visits from owls, dogs and more exotic animals such as snakes and lizards. We see the amazing range of animals that 'The Critter Keeper' has and the fun the children and adults have seeing them and touching them. Talking about the animals is stimulating to everyone, with the adults sharing their knowledge, for example explaining what a herbivore is. Terry



Wiseman, 3 to 5 coordinator at Playbarn Too tells us “the animals can be an ice breaker; they can break down that wee bit of resistance”. 📦 The older people are animated, chatting to the children about animals they have known. (Link to standard 2.22) 📦 Gillian McDonald, coordinator at Jarvis Court tells us “the children and animals evoke memories for the older people that they can share. It is a joy to see our tenants and service users so happy. It is special to see the moment when they are together with the children and the animals”.

Playbarn Too manager Julie Wiseman is delighted with how the project between the two services has evolved; “The developing relationships give us a fantastic opportunity to build this further; who knows what the impact might be”. In the nursery, animals play a big part and are used in a variety of ways. Some children don’t have pets at home. One little girl had a real fear and anxiety around dogs but has been gradually helped with this by spending time with Ruby, Julie’s dog. Over time, the child has become more confident and she is happy to pet and stroke Ruby and is much less anxious. 📦 Time is spent exploring how animals communicate and what they do when they are upset or worried. Children bring in their own pets and recent visitors have included horses and a potbellied pig. Children in the nursery are deciding which pet they would like in the nursery. This exciting project means they spend time finding out about different animals, what their needs are and whether they could be met. This learning acts as an impetus to children’s natural curiosity and creativity. 📦 Julie says that having this approach to animals “enables children to understand everyone needs to be respected and valued; animals too”.

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### 📦 Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

- 4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.
- 2.22 I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like.
- 2.24 I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks that enhance the quality of my life.
- 1.30 As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.

### 📦 Principle: Responsive care and support

#### Standard:

- 2.19 I am encouraged and supported to make and keep friendships, including with people my own age.

 **Principle: Compassion****Standard:**

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

**Things to think about:**

- How can a partnership approach between services be developed? How can different groups benefit?
- How can your service develop staff skills and knowledge to support the introduction of animals in your setting?
- How can animals stimulate interaction and connection between different groups and help build warm relationships.
- Think about how animals can be introduced in services. Find out about the range of visiting services.
- Think creatively about how individual fears and anxieties about animals can be reduced.
- How can finding out about the needs of animals help children develop empathy?

**Find out more:**

[brighterfuturestogether.co.uk/brighter-futures-together-toolkit/create-intergenerational-projects-in-your-community/](https://brighterfuturestogether.co.uk/brighter-futures-together-toolkit/create-intergenerational-projects-in-your-community/)

[generationsworkingtogether.org/](https://generationsworkingtogether.org/)

[generationsworkingtogether.org/networks/case-studies/strive-wellbeing-intergenerational-project](https://generationsworkingtogether.org/networks/case-studies/strive-wellbeing-intergenerational-project)

Web article: Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future, White, 2004.

<https://www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/childrennature.shtml>

Research findings: Children and Animals, Melson, 2017.

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791231/obo-9780199791231-0136.xml>



## Building trust and responsibility: Aberlour fostering service

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Aberlour Fostering Service is based in Kirkcaldy, Fife and is managed and provided by Aberlour Childcare Trust. The service aims to “provide high-quality, therapeutic family placements to children and young people that will then allow them the opportunity to achieve their full potential and experience family placements. This family experience could be in the form of a full time permanent basis or short breaks”. We inspected the service in January 2016 and evaluated the care and support and staffing as very good and staffing and management and leadership as good.

Jane, one of the foster carers, lives on a farm in Fife and offers children an individualised service to meet their needs. There is a strong focus on the powerful benefits for looked after children who have experienced trauma, of working with and being around horses, the other animals there and interacting with the surrounding environment and wildlife. Jane offers one-to-one sessions that involve observing the horses and how they communicate, offering unconditional and calm acceptance.

The service is flexible and able to support children in a way that works best for them. For example, children living in Aberlour’s residential units can benefit from experiencing respite foster care and being in a different environment. We met Shane, who is 13 and lives in one of the Aberlour Childcare Trust residential units. He describes the environment there, living with five other boys as “getting a bit hectic sometimes”. Shane had identified riding as something he was keen to try and the team supporting him were able to respond positively by including time with Jane as part of his overall package. 📩 Jane quickly realised how able and enthusiastic Shane is and was able to match him with Tinby, who is good at jumping. Shane has recently progressed to riding Fingle, a much larger horse. Shane identifies that one of the reasons he really likes coming to the service is that “I am good at something”.

Sometimes, for a range of complex reasons, looked after children can struggle in services they experience as overwhelming or somewhere they don’t have a sense of achievement. Being able to respond to their individual interests and give them a totally different environment can allow them to achieve and be happy. Sometimes, children can struggle to accept praise but can feel more confident in praising the horses. For example, when we visited, Shane told us “Tenby is good at jumping”.

Gill Trowel, family worker for Aberlour Fostering, who supports Jane and Shane immediately responded positively to Shane by telling him “She takes her lead from you”. Jane reiterated this by reminding Shane “You have made such brilliant progress with her”. The individualised and constructive environment with the presence of animals allows children to hear different things about themselves in a unique and real way. 📩

Learning does not always have to take place in a classroom. The service allows for fun learning opportunities within safe boundaries. Jane and the team at Aberlour have identified this approach as equine-assisted learning. 📧

Nicola Fearon, fostering coordinator for Aberlour Fostering, appreciates the very different way that some children who may be displaying negative or challenging behaviour in one setting can present when they are with Jane and the animals; "I cannot stress enough the difference".

One of the important messages that children learn is that like humans, each horse is an individual; an approach that works with one horse does not necessarily work with another. There are rich and natural opportunities for meaningful discussion with the children that are not threatening. Talking about the horses allows children to explore relationships, feelings and experiences in a therapeutic way. For children who have experienced trauma and may as a result be angry and confused, this can be very healing. 📧 Jane is an experienced foster carer and over the years has seen the direct benefits that being with the horses and other animals on the farm has. She describes children becoming much more insightful and developing their self-esteem because of their experiences there.

As well as enjoying riding and competitions, Shane has developed a range of skills and is in tune with what the horses are communicating. 📧 When Shane was riding Tinbey, he was aware that she felt a little uneasy on the snow and ice and he responded to what she was communicating, by clearing the ice. Shane has developed expertise in grooming. As well as ensuring Tinby is clean, he knows that Tinby enjoys the benefits of massage, getting her circulation going and thoroughly checks Tinby for any injuries and cuts. Shane also very carefully attends to Tinby's hooves, clearing the ice and ensuring they are protected. Shane told us "when Tinby is licking and chewing, it is a sign she is relaxed". Being around the horses and the input from Jane is allowing Shane to develop understanding and empathy. 📧

Children coming to the service enjoy spending time with the other animals there as well as the horses, including Pie and Buzz, the border collies. Shane describes walking the dogs and being with Jane in this environment as making him happy.



## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

- 2.22 I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like.
- 1.27 I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.
- 1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma or neglect.
- 1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

### Principle: Dignity and respect

#### Standards:

- 3.1 I experience people speaking and listening to me in a way that is courteous and respectful, with my care and support being the main focus of people's attention.
- 3.5 As a child or young person, I am helped to develop a positive view of myself and to form and sustain trusting and secure relationships.

## Things to think about:

- Children can present differently in different environments. Some therapeutic time out with animals can be hugely beneficial for children who have experienced trauma. How can this be incorporated into planning for individual children?
- Listening and being able to respond to children's interests can give them new and enriching experiences in their lives. How do you ensure this happens?
- Being around animals allows children to be happy. Confidence and self-esteem can be developed gradually. What ways can animals enhance children's experiences and outcomes?
- How can you ensure communication is effective and captures children's experiences in different settings?
- Think about the skills, interests, qualifications, passions that foster carers have and how these can benefit children. How do you ensure a wide range?
- How can health and safety in a farm environment enhance understanding and learning for children?

### Find out more:



Advice on safety around Horses: [bluecross.org.uk](https://bluecross.org.uk)

Pet in the therapy room: An attachment perspective on Animal-Assisted Therapy, Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer, Shaver, Journal of Attachment & Human Development, Volume 13, Issue 6, 2011.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14616734.2011.608987?journalCode=rahd20>

Journal article: Evidence for Using Farm Care Practices to Improve Attachment Outcomes in Foster Children: A Systematic Review, Downes, Lakhani, Maujean, Macfarlane, Kendall, 2016, British Journal of Social Work.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4985735/>

Research findings: What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children? Luke, Sinclair, Woolgar, Sebba, 2014, NSPCC.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2014/what-works-preventing-treating-mental-health-looked-after-children/>

## Social pedagogy and living with animals: Camphill school and care home

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Camphill school and care home in Aberdeen is an independent charity offering education, care and therapy for children and young people with additional support needs using a social pedagogical approach based on the principles of Rudolph Steiner and is accredited with the National Autistic Society. It is registered to provide a care home service to a maximum of 64 children and young people across 11 houses. The service is set in two locations in a rural environment on the outskirts of Aberdeen. We inspected the service in August 2017 and evaluated care and support, and the environment as very good.

Animals are a big part of life at Camphill. There are goats, sheep, chickens, horses, donkeys and cows living there. In the individual houses there are also many pets. Alex Busch, Depute Executive Director describes the pets in the houses as forming “part of the team and helping to establish a homely environment”. 📩

In St Hilda’s, one of the residential houses, there are two gentle spaniels, Skye and Meg. The children enjoy talking them for walks. For some children taking them for walks is part of their individualised timetable, with children benefiting from the interaction, exercise and fresh air. An outing with Meg or Skye is much more enticing than just a walk! 📩

Being around the dogs can help build children’s confidence and self-esteem. Alex describes the emotional connection some children can build with the dogs; “They are not in competition and for children who sometimes struggle with communicating it can be easier to build up a relationship with an animal than a person. There is warmth and affection and trust”. 📩

Some of the staff and pupils at Camphill live there, while others live outside and spend part of the time there. Aidan boards at the school on a weekly basis and lives in St Hilda’s when he is there. He told us about Abby the cat that lives there. She had four kittens, last year and one of them, Stella, went to live with his granny. Aidan is very happy that he has this connection and can see animals at school and at home; “It makes my world feel joined up”. 📩



The team at Camphill have recently decided to build on the benefits of being around animals for the children and young people by extending the care farm. This is still at quite an early stage but for children and young people it means there is a range of opportunities to engage with lots of different animals.

Aidan enjoys spending time on the farm and goes riding regularly. He is building up his skills and knowledge not just in riding but also in caring for the horses and understanding their needs. Aidan describes this as “being real” and different from previous experiences where he has for example, been able to look at a horse but not ride it or build up a relationship. 📦 He has a strong connection with one of the horses, Star. Aidan reflected on the positive difference this has had on him, he feels much less angry and anxious that he used to “not cope so much” and that now “I am able to be myself”. 📦

Alex told us how proud he was of Aidan and the progress he has made and that he very much hopes the care farm will allow other children and young people to benefit and have similar meaningful experiences.

Alex describes taking a risk-benefit approach; there are safety issues that need to be carefully thought through and planned for but these can be managed. These should not be a barrier and the benefits for everyone of being around animals are huge. 📦

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Compassion

#### 📦 Standards:

- 5.6 If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment.
- 1.6 I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### 📦 Standards:

- 1.25 I am supported to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.
- 1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma and neglect.
- 2.24 I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily lives and am encouraged to take positive risks that enhance the quality of my life.
- 4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

 **Principle: Included****Standard:**

3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes.

**Things to think about:**

- How can animals provide a welcoming, homely environment?
- What difference could animals make to a child's initial impression when they arrive?
- How can animals be introduced to support individual packages of support for children and encourage them to try out new experiences, address anxieties and build up their confidence?
- In what ways can animals offer children a different type of communication experience?
- For children and young people who experience different environments and have to interact with lots of different people, animals can be a comforting and constant presence.
- How can natural opportunities be used to explain to children about infection control and the need to be safe?
- How can developing their knowledge and skills around animals help children prepare for living independently and for working life?

**Find out more:**

Research report: A Diamond in the Rough: Assessing the Value of Equine Assisted Therapy at Camphill, McArdle, 2016, University of Aberdeen

[http://www.camphillschools.org.uk/uploads/misc/Equine\\_Report.pdf](http://www.camphillschools.org.uk/uploads/misc/Equine_Report.pdf)

Web article: How Horses Became a Form of Therapy for Me Before My Autism Diagnosis, Lesko, 2017.

<https://themighty.com/2016/10/how-horses-were-a-form-of-therapy-before-my-autism-diagnosis/>

Journal article: Effects of Classroom Animal-Assisted Activities on Social Functioning in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, O'Haire, McKenzie, McCune, Slaughter, 2014, Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3948601/>



## Creating resilience through animals: Land Street, Action for Children

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Land Street, Action for Children is located in Buckie, Moray. The service is registered to care for up to four young people between the ages of 10 and 18. We inspected it in June 2017 and evaluated the environment as excellent and care and support as very good. Our inspection report notes that the introduction of chickens to the garden had been a great success and that young people had benefited from this greatly. For example, they took responsibility for feeding and cleaning the chickens. Our inspection report also notes that one young person had taken her rabbit with her when she came to Land Street and that this had meant a great deal to her and the rabbit was also loved by other young people and the staff team.

### Millie's story

Millie is the proud owner of two rabbits, Toffee and Daisy. She describes them as being a joy to have and that they have brought a lot of love and happiness into her life. She can talk to them without being interrupted and feels listened to. Millie thinks that she is more confident and better able to speak to other people because she can talk through how she is feeling with Toffee and Daisy. 📩 Millie reflects that before she had her pet rabbits she struggled sometimes and felt angry. Sometimes she took out her anger on herself. She gets comfort from spending time with Toffee and Daisy, holding and stroking them. Millie feels that she is less stressed and calmer because she has her pet rabbits. Millie attributes the warmth, consistency and affection she gets from her pets to the fact she is now so much happier and doing well in college. 📩

Millie also describes feeling loved and cherished by the staff team at Land Street as making a huge difference to her. 📩 Millie appreciates how supportive the staff team at Land Street have been in enabling her to have Daisy and Toffee. She describes being listened to. She thinks that other children's residential units should take a similar approach and if young people want to have a pet, they should discuss it with them. She realises that there are lots of things to consider but the benefits are so great. Her message is "Don't say no; say we can think about it, we can work towards it".

### Amber's animal experiences

Amber also thinks that having the animals at Land Street has had huge benefits for her and the other young people there. She describes them as "therapeutic" and being able to talk to the chickens and her guinea pigs. Like Millie, she likes the fact they don't answer back and interrupt her! She can talk through how she is feeling with them. She reflects that "some of us would not be able to cope without them". She likes the affection and physical comfort she can give and receive from the chickens and her two guinea pigs, Midnight and Storm. 📩

Amber takes full responsibility for her pets and is very committed to looking after them and giving them a good quality of life. There is something special and magical about having your own pets. She thinks having the chickens in the garden is brilliant and they bring lots of fun and banter to life at Land Street.

Amber is aware that having animals brings with it responsibilities to care for them properly, she has increased her knowledge and is very aware of what the animals and people around them need to keep everyone safe. With the support and belief of the staff team at Land Street, Amber and the other young people have been happy to take on these responsibilities and enjoy the benefits.

The manager, Brenda Deacon, is delighted with the positives having the animals has had for the young people at Land Street and would thoroughly recommend this approach to other residential services. She says "Do some research, look at your environment, and go for it - it is worth it to see young people really blossom".

Having animals is part of Land Street's overall approach of building positive relationships with young people as it provides the young people with an opportunity for safe, shared experiences and staff can really listen. Animals help create a warm, homely, welcoming atmosphere that helps young people feel valued, loved and secure and where they can develop their potential. 

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:



5.25 If I live in a care home and want to keep a pet, the service will try and support this to happen.

1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma and neglect.



### Principle: Compassion

#### Standards:

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.



- 3.9 I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.
- 3.10 As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure.
- 1.6 I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.
- 5.6 I experience a homely environment.

### Things to think about:

- Consider how you can make best use of the environment and meet the needs of the animals.
- Discuss the benefits and risks with the young people and staff; think how could we make this work?
- How you can make best use of the skills and expertise of the staff team?
- Think about the overall ethos and messages that the service wants to give young people.
- Think about the potential for pets to help children settle in and be part of their support team when they are ready to move on.

### Find out more



Promoting Resilience, Gilligan R., 2009, British Association for Adoption and Fostering

Journal article: Friends with benefits: On the positive consequences of pet ownership, McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, Martin, Colleen, December 2011, Volume 101(6) Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

<http://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fa0024506>

Academic paper: Chapter 3 of Working with Traumatized Youth in Child Welfare, Perry, 2006, The Guildford Press.

[https://childtrauma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Perry-Bruce-neurosequentialmodel\\_06.pdf](https://childtrauma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Perry-Bruce-neurosequentialmodel_06.pdf)

Journal article: Friends with benefits: On the positive consequences of pet ownership, McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, Martin, Colleen, December 2011, Volume 101(6) Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

<http://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fa0024506>

Academic article: Animals and attachment theory, Rockett, Carr, 2014, University of Bath.

<http://opus.bath.ac.uk/34813/>



## Supporting health physical and emotional development: Bachlaw intensive support unit

GIRFEC wellbeing indicators:



Bachlaw intensive support unit is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of four young people in a bungalow in the rural area of Cornhill, Banffshire, and five young people from a large, detached house near the centre of the town of Banff, Aberdeenshire.

The service has been created in response to the identified needs of young people who do not fit into standard mainstream provision. The aim of the service is to provide the young people placed there with a positive experience of being nurtured and supported to deal with their difficulties and properly prepare them for when they move on from a placement.

We inspected in August 2017 and evaluated care and support as excellent, and staffing as very good. Our inspection report notes young people had shaped the future of the service through their needs and interests. This included employing a young adult who is in a continuing care arrangement to be on the staff team and the planned addition of horses to the animals that were already part of the service.

Over the last few years, the team at Bachlaw have developed their service to include a range of animals. They now have several rare breeds of sheep on the smallholding, including Scottish Blackface, Soay and Suffolk. They also have Belted Galloway cattle and four horses. There has been a lot of thinking and planning to develop the service in this way, with a strong focus on the needs and aspirations of the children looked after at Bachlaw. The young people were very keen to have horses there. 

Sarah, one of the directors, thinks there are many benefits for the children and young people in having close contact with these animals. She outlines that the children and young people are involved in caring for the animals. They form connections and understand the needs of the animals and tasks that have to be done for them. In terms of helping the children develop their resilience, the team at Bachlaw have found this is very powerful. It means there is a very caring, therapeutic culture that nurtures children's self-esteem and confidence. 

Aimee, one of the young people at Bachlaw, describes Sally, one of the horses there; "Sally had a very bad background; she had a hard life driving carts for funerals in Ireland. She is nervous around people and has trust issues. We are helping her though, to develop trust and she is now much happier and confident. I am her main rider and she looks at me differently. She knows I won't put her in danger. I can see a happy look in her eyes".

Aimee is a keen rider and loves all aspects of caring for the horses, especially Sally. She likes the feeling of being confident on her horse. She is keen to increase her skills and knowledge. Aimee feels that the staff team listened to her and believed she had the potential to be good at riding horses. They talk through risks and make sure she is safe but don't stop her. 📧

There is a range of health benefits for the children and young people at Bachlaw; they are involved in a lot of physical exercise that contributes to them being fit and active and enjoying time outside.

Steven, one of the young people, thinks that working with the horses has helped improve his fitness levels and that he sleeps better when he has been with them. 📧 He likes grooming the horses and describes it as comforting. Aimee also comments on the benefits of grooming and the "feel" between the horse and the person grooming the horse; "If the horse is calm and you are stressed, the horses communicate its feelings of calmness to you".

One of the young people at Bachlaw has been there now for seven years and has been a big part of clearing the land and the hard work that has made having the animals there a reality. Kyle's interest and involvement with the animals has led him to pursuing this as a career. He is now 18 and works caring for the animals. He is also undertaking relevant qualifications and recently got a 100% for an assignment about feeding cattle. Kyle's experience and knowledge has been encouraged by the staff team at Bachlaw, who see this as part of their approach of "having high expectations for our children". 📧

Another benefit for everyone involved with the animals at Bachlaw has been the links they have formed with the local community. Some of the children and young people are involved in showing the animals at various agricultural shows. Kyle is now very confident in taking charge of sheep or cattle and showing them in these settings. They have achieved recognition, over the last year, winning many rosettes.



Kayleigh, another young person, has also been involved in showing the sheep at agricultural shows. She describes learning the right way to hold them. The team at Bachlaw are now known on this circuit and have developed relationships with other smallholders and local farmers. Local farmers have brought hay to the cattle at Bachlaw. The team also has a very good working relationship with the local vet. 🏠

Working with and caring for the animals brings a lot of joy and excitement, for example when lambs are born. Kayleigh describes how special it was when one of the lambs was born on Christmas Eve, and how she named the lamb Eve. Kayleigh has built up her knowledge of caring for the sheep and being sensitive to their needs. She is aware that too much handling of newborns is not good and can make the mother anxious. There are times though, if the ewes have had a particularly difficult birth, when the newborn lambs have to be bottle fed and kept warm until their mothers can look after them. Kayleigh told us what a magical experience this can be.

Leah, another of the young people, loves the experience of being around the lambs and sheep. She enjoys helping to care for them and understands that there is a long-term commitment to looking after animals and that whatever else is going on, the animals have to be fed and kept clean. Leah described this as "grounding". She loves feeding the sheep and seeing how happy they are to see her with a full bucket of food.

Along with the joy, there are sometimes sad and difficult moments when looking after animals. The staff team realise that this gives opportunities to discuss these things sensitively with the young people. Again, this approach can mean discussions are real and meaningful and can help the children and young people develop. The staff team at Bachlaw see this as part of life, loss and change, and that this can help children who have experienced trauma and difficulties to become emotionally resilient and develop their potential. 🏠



## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Compassion

#### Standards:

- 1.6 I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.
- 1.7 I am supported to discuss significant changes in my life, including death or dying, and this is handled sensitively.

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

- 1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma and neglect.
- 2.24 I make informed choices about the choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks that enhance the quality of my life.
- 1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.
- 1.27 I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment, if that is right for me.

### Principle: Included

#### Standard:

- 1.10 I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.

### Things to think about:

- Caring for farm animals involves a lot of work and resources; take your time, do your research and do it gradually.
- How can you work your way through some of the health and safety legislation and expectations and link in with people and organisations that can help to ensure the best outcomes for children and adults and the quality of experience is not constrained?
- How can being involved with animals help children and young people establish links with the local community?
- How does staff recruitment help support and respond to children's needs and wishes? What additional skills and passions can staff bring to the work?
- How can you make prospective children and young people aware of the service and the reality of being in a rural setting around animals?
- Think about infection control, allergies and animal welfare, and how children and young people can learn about these things.
- How can you explore and make best use of the potential therapeutic and healing benefits of animals for children who have experienced trauma?

### Find out more:



Safety Around Horses, 2012, [bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)

Web article: advice on riding helmets

<http://www.bhs.org.uk/safety-and-accidents/safety-advice-and-information/what-to-wear/headwear>

Preventing Accidents to Children on Farms, 2013, Health and Safety Executive

[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg472.pdf](http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg472.pdf)

Academic article: Animals and attachment theory, Rockett, Carr, 2014, University of Bath. <http://opus.bath.ac.uk/34813/>

Journal article: Evidence for Using Farm Care Practices to Improve Attachment Outcomes in Foster Children: A Systematic Review, Downes, Lakhani, Maujean, Macfarlane, Kendall, 2016, British Journal of Social Work.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4985735/>

Online information about Pet Allergies and Pet Hygiene:

<https://www.nhs.uk/HealthA-Z/Allergies>.

Promoting Resilience, Gilligan R., 2009, British Association for Adoption and Fostering.



Photo © Justin Kernohan 2018

## Reducing stress in difficult times: NSPCC – Young Witness Service, Northern Ireland

The Young Witness Service is an NSPCC support service for children and their families who have to attend courts across Northern Ireland to give evidence in criminal trials. The service supports children across all levels of courts: crown; magistrates; and youth. The service was launched in 1999 and last year supported 700 children and their families. The purpose of the service is to reduce stress and anxiety for the young person when giving evidence and reduce the potential risk of secondary trauma that studies have shown giving evidence can present. A team of social workers work in tandem with 80 trained volunteers to assess risk and identify additional support for children and their families if required.

Volunteers provide practical and emotional support to children and their families who have to give evidence in court either because they are a victim or witness to a crime. They perform the challenging role of accompanying children in the video link room while they recount their experiences to the court, for example having been sexually abused by a near relative.

NSPCC's Young Witness Service in Northern Ireland is leading the way in an innovative initiative to help the most vulnerable of witnesses when they give evidence in court. This is with the help of Connie, an experienced therapy dog who gives her time to children who are on the Autistic Spectrum, are very young or have additional support needs. Connie's presence and companionship aims to reduce stress and to diffuse highly charged situations.

Connie, is a gentle, friendly black Labrador and her handler is a trained Young Witness Service volunteer who stays with Connie and the child throughout their court experience. Connie meets and bonds with the child witness before they are due to give their evidence, and accompanies the child for their pre-court visit, so that everyone is familiar with each other and the building. On the actual day of the hearing, Connie stays with the child while they wait, to help them relax.

In 2015, the Young Witness Service in Northern Ireland was approached by Assistance Dogs Northern Ireland (ADNI), which had learned of a service in Washington DC that involved court dogs helping to relax vulnerable witnesses in the court setting. A pilot was launched in partnership with ADNI. As part of this pilot, an ADNI volunteer completed the Young Witness Service volunteer recruitment, training and induction process and is now a fully-fledged NSPCC volunteer. The first case involved Connie supporting a young 10-year-old witness, who was highly distressed due to the trauma of sexual abuse, through a crown court trial. With Connie's support, the young witness was able to complete her cross-examination. The young witness's parents were very positive in their feedback and mum said, "my child would not have been able to come to court without the support of Connie".

In the period since this initial case, Connie has supported children in cases in courts across Northern Ireland, and feedback from the children, their parents, social workers and criminal justice professionals has been wholly positive.

“For this pilot scheme to have become such an integral part of the system so quickly is incredibly unusual. The wheels of change can grind very slowly at times in the judicial system but we’ve actually had instances where judges have suggested using Connie after they have read the details of a case they are to preside over.

“Connie is especially helpful for very young children or children on the autistic spectrum as she takes the focus away from the child and allows them to relax. Connie does not go into the video room with the children but the children know she is there waiting for them when they come out.

“If it’s challenging for our volunteers to hear some of the details in an alleged abuse case, you can only guess at the child or young person’s experience. It is vital that they are able to put their side of the story to the best of their ability; to find their voice in court and give their best evidence.”  
Billy Eagleson of the NSPCC Young Witness Service

### Find out more



Find out more about the Young Witness Service at [nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteering-nspcc-childline/volunteer-childline-helpline/](https://nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteering-nspcc-childline/volunteer-childline-helpline/)

To volunteer or find out more about Assistance Dogs Northern Ireland, visit [adni.org.uk/](https://adni.org.uk/)

## Companionship and homelessness: Dunedin Harbour hostel

Dunedin Harbour hostel in Edinburgh provides housing support to people who are homeless. They provide support in temporary accommodation and have developed a range of positive pathways to support people to move on, including self-contained flats within the service and transition flats dispersed from the service. The service aims to work in supporting homeless people with a range of needs relating to their resettlement, including housing, health and addiction. The service provides accommodation for up to 35 people in the hostel. We inspected the service in May 2017 and evaluated both care and support, and management and leadership as excellent.

When Dunedin Harbour hostel was established, it set out to have an inclusive ethos and take on board what homeless people were saying. One of the key messages is that there are barriers to homeless people getting the help and support they need. One of the identified barriers is the lack of accommodation that allows homeless people to have their pets live with them. Dunedin Harbour hostel was the first hostel in Scotland to take a different approach and allow people to bring their pets with them. 📧

Kevin, now the manager of the service, was part of the original staff team. Since then, many people have benefited from this approach. While it has mainly been people with dogs, over the years the hostel has had ferrets, cats and even snakes. Kevin explains there are huge benefits for people in having animals in their lives.

“Companionship is a big deal; for people who have experienced damaging relationships and may, understandably, have trust issues, the unconditional affection and love they get from their pets is brilliant. Their pet won’t let them down.” 📧

Kevin also told us that having animals gives many people structure and purpose and that it can be hard to quantify the difference in terms of promoting emotional wellbeing that having a pet can make. Walking a dog can help break down barriers and allow people to be accepted within their local community. 📧



*"For homeless people who are often marginalised and excluded having their pet can give them a sense of importance and value to their life in a world where they often don't feel valued."*

The hostel has a pet policy, which has a focus on the welfare of the animals. In the 17 years that the hostel has been operating, they have only had one situation where they have had to intervene. Kevin tells us "The majority of people look after their animals very, very well; they probably look after their animals better than they look after themselves".

Links are in place with vets and there is now a dedicated homeless vet practice that provides free care for the animals of homeless people in Edinburgh. Some of the impetus for this service came from the approach taken at Dunedin Harbour and the need for responsive services. 

Another benefit for everyone living in and working in Dunedin Harbour is the pleasure and happiness having animals around brings. Kevin tells us that having pets makes the atmosphere more homely.  There is a culture of support with the people in the hostel helping each other out for example, by taking a dog for a walk if someone has an appointment.

The hostel has a staged, positive-pathway process that supports people to move on to their own tenancies. For people with animals, part of this work is about rehousing them in animal-friendly accommodation.

Ian, a young man being supported in his own flat attached to the hostel, feels that his dog Taz makes a big difference to his life. Taz is a very energetic and friendly, four-year-old collie. For eight months before moving in to Dunedin Harbour, Ian was separated from Taz. Ian really appreciates that he was able to move in and get Taz back. For many homeless people the reality is that in some areas, there is still no accommodation that allows them to take their pets with them, which means accessing help and support is almost impossible. Ian explains "Taz gives me something to do and get out and about for. He's off to every dog and people chat to us when we're out. I take him for a walk in the morning for half an hour, then back to get ready, and we go for a walk up to Leith Links or the beach.

"Having Taz, I need to get up in the morning and get things done. I was down emotionally when I didn't have him but it makes me happy to have him with me now. Being allowed to have my pet is perfect, as it gives me independence and I know I have to budget my money to make sure we have food.

"Taz gets a check-up once a month at the PDSA or Pets for Paws; a drop in service for homeless people's dogs. The staff team at Dunedin help in any way they can and it makes a difference to get that support. 

“Taz is off his head and a big softie! I don’t let other people take him for walks as he can be a bit lively. I talk to Taz all the time and he helps me a lot. I’d be lonely if I didn’t have a dog and he’s good company. I know of friends who’ve had to get rid of their dogs to get into a flat or hostel.”

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Dignity and respect

#### Standards:

4.2 The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma and neglect.

2.26 I know how different organisations can support my health and wellbeing and I am helped to contact them if I wish.

4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

### Principle: Included

#### Standard:

1.10 I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.

### Principle: Compassion

#### Standard:

5.6 If I experience care or support in a group, I experience a homely environment.

### Things to think about:

- How can you establish ground rules for animals and pets that outline expectations? How do you ensure these develop and change over time?
- Which other organisations can your service link in with? How can gaps in provision be explored?
- Think about how being involved with animals can help people establish links with the local community.
- How do you ensure animal welfare is a priority and how can you let people know where to get help or support to care for their pets?
- How can your service embrace the benefits for marginalised people in having animals in their life? How can this approach support people on their journey back from being homeless?
- Think about the barriers that people using the service experience and how your organisation can tackle health and social inequalities.

### Find out more



Online news article:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/homeless-hostel-opens-pet-clinic-1-1775843>

My Dog Always Eats First: Homeless People and Their Animals, Leslie Irvine, 2015, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Online news article:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Therapy+importance+support+homeless+people+their+pets/11813886/story.html>

## From pet to therapy animal: Deaf Action outreach visiting support service

Deaf Action Outreach visiting support service provides housing support and care at home to people who are deaf or hearing impaired. The service supports people living in a cluster of flats in Slateford Green, Edinburgh and in their own homes in Edinburgh, Mid, East and West Lothian. Most people use British Sign Language (BSL). Support with communication is integral to everyone's support. We inspected the service in November 2017 and evaluated both care and support, and staffing as very good.

Christina is supported by Deaf Action to live as independently as possible in her own flat in Edinburgh. She is deaf and uses BSL to communicate. Christina's dog Mindy is not a fully trained assistance dog, but she's more than a pet. She could best be described as a therapy dog. While Mindy doesn't act as an assistant hearing dog, she does help Christina to be independent, letting her know when people are at the door, or helping her to visit the shops and go out for coffee or hot chocolate locally, as well as travelling further afield to places like Aberdeen to visit family. 📧

Christina says that Mindy helps her to be calm, as well as making her smile. At the times when she has been without a dog, she found that she didn't go out in the afternoons or at night. 📧 Her confidence improved when she had dogs before, and now with Mindy. She meets people while out with Mindy, who is very sociable and gentle, and is able to go out into her local community independently.

The manager at Deaf Action, Donald, told us that as a service they encourage people to have pets and have found that they can be a great boost to a person's confidence, as well as providing a conversation starter for staff. With a pet, staff have found that people are more relaxed. While having what may be difficult but necessary conversations, having a pet present can help the person focus while they consider what they want to say. 📧

Donald echoed Christina, agreeing that people will stop to chat when you're out walking a dog, and it can make a difference to even have the same faces to say hello to on a regular basis while out and about. 📧 Donald explained to us that managing a fully-trained assistance dog would have been difficult for Christina. Other people have assistance dogs and they have to follow very strict



instructions when they are working. With Mindy, Christina has a pet, a companion and a therapy dog all in one. 

Christina receives regular visits and support from the organisation Hearing Dogs. They highlighted to Christina that, because Mindy is not deaf, her needs and welfare are supported by the company of voices or noise. Christina now leaves the TV on for Mindy. 

The only challenge the service has had to deal with is ensuring that staff are not allergic to existing or potential pets. Deaf Action has seen so many benefits to having animals around that they are even considering getting an office dog. Donald commented that their service will always encourage people to get a dog if they wish, as long as the person is physically fit enough to walk it. Whether their dog is a pet, or a therapy or assistance dog, people will have company and a sense of purpose and responsibility. 

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### **Principle: Dignity and respect** **Standard:**

2.2 I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be.

### **Principle: Wellbeing** **Standards:**

1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

3.25 I am helped to feel safe and secure in my local community.

4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

### **Principle: Compassion** **Standard:**

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

### **Principle: Included** **Standards:**

3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes.

2.10 I can access translation services and communication tools where necessary and I am supported to use these.

## Things to think about

- It may not suit people with disabilities to have a fully trained assistance dog and the waiting lists or criteria can be difficult to overcome, so consider if a therapy pet may be just as useful.
- How can your service respect a person's choice while sometimes giving alternative suggestions?
- Consider the individual circumstances of a person experiencing care: do they have mobility issues and need a dog walker; are there other risks that need to be taken into consideration; and do their support staff have any allergies?
- Look at ways you can overcome any challenges, rather than a reason for the person not being able to have a pet.

## Find out more



Leaflet: The Health Benefits of Companion Animals, 2007, Pets are Wonderful Support (PAWS).

[https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/management/upload/Comment-4704-attachment\\_.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/management/upload/Comment-4704-attachment_.pdf)

Paws for life, 2012.

[animalsdeservebetter.org](http://animalsdeservebetter.org)

Online help and advice:

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/>



## Compassion in dementia care: Robertson House

Bright Care provides housing support and care at home to older people and older people with dementia who live in their own homes across Glasgow. The service delivery ranges from a minimum of two hours to a maximum of 24-hour live-in support packages.

We inspected the service in November 2017 and evaluated both care and support, and staffing as excellent. We evaluated management and leadership as very good. Bright Care has enabled Cathy to continue having her dog Holly, who she has had since she was a puppy, by supporting this as part of her care plan. The emotional and physical health benefits of having a pet are vital to Cathy, who has dementia and receives care at home. Taking a positive, risk-benefit approach has allowed Cathy to continue to enjoy having her pet in her life.

According to Cathy "They do everything but talk to you. They're great company". She is supported to look after Holly, walk her and take her to the shops, and enjoys the company as she talks to her dog or Holly sits beside her. Cathy feels that she gets a lot of loving from her dog and if she's not well, Holly will come and sit with her until she's feeling better. She says it's as if Holly is saying "I'm here, you'll be alright". 

Bright Care manager Lindsay McClive agrees that having a pet can help with emotional wellbeing in terms of feeling a sense of responsibility and caring for the pet. During periods of change and uncertainty, the constant of having your pet can be hugely comforting when adjusting to having different people come into your home or adapting to change. 

As Keira, Cathy's companion carer observes, Holly is Cathy's whole life and keeps Cathy going, gives her a sense of purpose. "Quite a lot of the time, Cathy feels very isolated and we work very hard to help Cathy to not be isolated. Due to having dementia, Cathy can forget that she's been out yesterday but she can see Holly sitting there, and she knows she's got a wee friend and some company."

The service put a dog walking service in place when Cathy and Holly moved in. Having Holly around gives Cathy the confidence to become familiar with her surroundings. Understanding the issues Cathy would face in a new home and having dementia, Bright Care capitalised on Cathy having a pet, to help her get familiar with her surroundings. They started her off going out with a carer, walking for a certain distance, and progressed to walking herself, giving Cathy goals and aims to get her familiar with her surroundings, and that wouldn't have been possible without Holly the dog. 

To counteract any issues in relation to Cathy's dementia, Bright Care has made sure to work with the staff in Robertson House to put in place a method to avoid overfeeding Holly through locking away the dog food and only supplying controlled portions. By ensuring that there are measures in place to maintain the health of Holly, Cathy gets the most out of her pet.

The care and work that must go into owning a dog like Holly are seen as benefits by Lindsay, as she feels that Cathy benefits from having to take Holly outside for walks and socialise when they're out. "Without having a dog, then I think the potential to stay in the house and stay in these surroundings; that's absolutely what would happen. Having the dog has encouraged her to go out, socialise and just interact with other people."

Keira would advise anyone supporting people or working in care to not discount people having pets. "A pet can make such a positive impact on a person's life. That if there are any ways possible to enable that, even if it takes thinking outside the box, and thinking about how it might even take multi-agency, you have to work together with other people, but it makes such a big difference to older adults. I can see the results. Try if you can to support it." 

Keira points out that there are benefits for staff as well; due to her work she wouldn't be able to have a pet but she does get to experience a small part of the joy they can bring to people's lives. Bright Care encourages innovative ideas, where no suggestion is a bad suggestion. This means staff have tried to develop different ideas and ways of seeing the bigger picture. Including a pet in someone's care is important, but it's also important to use that situation to benefit the person in a larger sense.

*"I'd advise anybody, if they're on their own or anything like that, the best thing they can get... is a pal."*

Cathy

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### **Principle: Compassion** **Standard:**

3.9 I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.

### **Principle: Included** **Standard:**

3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes, and anyone making a decision about my future care and support knows me.

### **Principle: Dignity and respect** **Standards:**

2.2 I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be.

1.2 My human rights are protected and promoted and I experience no discrimination.

## Things to think about

- How do you meaningfully consider the individual circumstances of the person and what is important to them?
- Think positively and creatively about the challenges experienced by someone with dementia and how these can be worked through.
- How does your service explore how pets can enhance someone's emotional wellbeing, bring companionship and reduce social isolation?
- How do you plan proactively and get a range of people involved, family and other agencies can provide support.

## Find out more



Journal article: Animal-Assisted Intervention in Dementia: Effects on Neuropsychiatric Symptoms and on Caregivers' Distress Perceptions, Tournier, Vives, Virginie, March 2017, Swiss Journal of Psychology.

<https://econtent.hogrefe.com/doi/abs/10.1024/1421-0185/a000191>

NICE guideline [NG97]: Dementia: assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers, June 2018.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng97>

Online article: Paws for Thought! An Overview of a Scottish Pet Visiting Service

<https://www.canineconcernscotland.org.uk/paws-for-thought>





## Residents and pets together: Barlochan House care home

Barlochan House is a care home registered to accommodate 50 older people, eight of whom may be accommodated in a designated wing for people living with dementia. This includes provision for two younger adults with either physical or sensory impairment.

We inspected the service in November 2017 and evaluated both care and support, and the environment as good. Our inspection report notes that some people were particularly fond of looking for the peacock in the grounds of the care home and being involved in looking after the care home's pet cat.

The idea that animals and pets can create a sense of community is one that resonates with Barlochan House as they not only encourage residents to have their own pets, but they have a cat named Harvey who belongs to the care home itself and a peacock named Peter who roams the grounds.

The location of the care home means that animals are never very far away. As the handyman Alan Renwick points out, the care home has always had a variety of animals that the residents love to see. They can see and enjoy deer, foxes and wild birds, as well as Peter the peacock and Harvey the cat. These animals give residents something interesting to look at and talk about, as well as a sense of responsibility. 

Animals play a big part in the residents' lives, providing a topic of conversation and comfort through looking after and stroking or interacting with them. Residents keep Peter's (the peacock) favourite snack, mealworm, and he knows to station himself by the front door to be fed. Peter provides hours of entertainment as residents know to look out for him and chat about what he's doing. The care home's cat Harvey is looked after by residents as well as staff, and many residents' guests bring in dogs which are petted and enjoyed by everyone. 

Manager Emmelence Higgins explains that when you see an animal coming towards the residents, even those who are not as aware due to issues such as dementia, "you can see how they try to touch the animal and talk to them; their eyes brighten". Staff get to know which animals can help calm any distress in residents through touch and engagement. Pets and animals also help create a homely atmosphere for residents, as well as reducing stress.

A more unusual animal has recently been brought into the care home by a resident – a bearded dragon. The resident was initially quite anxious and upset about the idea of having to leave his pet behind, but the manager engaged in a dialogue and an agreement was made to allow the resident to keep his bearded dragon in his room.  This has helped with the transition period, as not only has it ensured the continuity and companionship of his pet, but it has encouraged socialisation as other residents come to visit and see the bearded dragon. 

By encouraging an awareness of the nature and animals surrounding their care home, having a communal pets such as Harvey the cat and overcoming any obstacles to residents keeping their

own pets, Barlochan Care Home is creating and fostering their community and providing a focus for residents' conversations and relaxation.

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Wellbeing Standards:

1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

5.24 If I live in a care home and want to keep a pet, the service will try to support this to happen.

2.22 I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like.

### Principle: Included Standard:

3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes.

## Things to think about

- How do you encourage staff to think about the stress reducing qualities a pet or animal can provide?
- Consider how even if you can't have permanent pets or animals, you can encourage animals such as wild birds through feeding tables or encourage guests to bring their own pets.
- Think about the kind of pet you would want to keep, do you want to be able to stroke it or should it be smaller and easier to look after?

## Find out more



Research article: Animal-Assisted Interventions in Dutch Nursing Homes: A Survey, Schuurmans, Enders-Slegers, Theo Verheggen, Jos Schols, July 1, 2016, Journal of Post-acute and Long-term Medicine (JAMDA) Volume 17, Issue 7.

[https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610\(16\)30055-X/fulltext](https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610(16)30055-X/fulltext)

Research article: Effect of animal-assisted interventions on depression, agitation and quality of life in nursing home residents suffering from cognitive impairment or dementia: a cluster randomized controlled trial, Olsen, Pedersen, Bergland, Enders-Slegers, Patil, Ihlebæk, December 2016, International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, Volume 31, issue 12.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/gps.4436>

## Creating a homely environment: Campbell Snowden House

Campbell Snowden House is located in the small semi-rural Quarriers Village in Bridge of Weir, Inverclyde. The care home provides residential care for a maximum of 27 older people. The garden is home to a variety of pets and animals. The home aims to “provide a homely atmosphere in which a dependent older person can feel secure and in which he/she will be helped and supported to lead as full a life as possible”. 

We inspected the home in November 2017 and evaluated both care and support, and staffing as excellent. The manager of the service, Jim Melville, told us it is a priority for him and the team that people in the service are comfortable, secure and they feel at home. One way the team achieves this is by getting to know residents and their lives before they came into the home.  Jim quickly realised that people are less anxious when they found out they can bring their pets to live with them.  Families are relieved to know they don't have to separate their loved ones from their animal companions. This welcoming and inclusive approach to animals is the norm. The enabling environment and attitudes of the staff at Campbell Snowden House have created a place where residents benefit greatly from interactions with animals. Jim told us how even speaking about animals makes a difference “It brings back that reminiscence of when they may have had dogs or animals in their own home and we talk about what their names were and where did they go for walks”. Meeting individual interests and wishes creates a home where everyone is included and contributes.

One resident, Alec, told the staff at Campbell Snowden House that he would like his own farm. Jim told us “Alec was a farmhand for 40 to 50 years and when he came here, the previous manager sat and talked to Alec about what he would like within the care home and (he said) that was his own farm, which was set up. As well as 25 other residents who live here, we have nine chickens, three ducks, two guinea pigs, two budgies and we have just adopted a family of hedgehogs. Also, we have ‘therapets’ that come in to the care home; we’ve had two dogs and therapy ponies that come in as well, so it’s busy at Campbell Snowden”. Alec has full caring responsibilities for the animals from getting up at 5am every day to feed them, to getting the bus to the local shops to buy their food. Alec laughed “I’m up every morning at 5am because that’s when the cockerel starts - he’s the alarm clock”.  Jim explains, “It gives him a sense of occupation and a sense of belonging so he really enjoys it. I see a lot of difference in the residents with different types of animals. Even with Alec, with just his budgies in his room, he will sit and talk to his budgies and it gives him a lot of enjoyment. Alec is very independent and benefits greatly from caring for the animals, he is very proud of his animals and comes to show the residents any eggs the chickens lay. This is when Alec interacts most with others in the home, which strengthens his relationships with his peers”.

Samantha, the activity co-ordinator tells us “It gives him purpose, Alec gets up every day so he can go and feed his animals and look after them. He would probably just be sitting in his bedroom by himself, not getting the social interaction and not getting out in the fresh air as much if he didn't have the

animals". Giving Alec responsibility and freedom to care for his animals respects his rights, keeps him active and contributes to his self-esteem. 📦 Alec will go on a bus to buy the chicken feed, it's almost his responsibility to look after them. And, as I say again, it's an occupation for him, it's his job and that keeps him going. To be honest with you, I don't know what would have happened to Alec if he didn't have that sense of responsibility and sense of freedom to sit with his animals". 📦

An unexpected outcome for one woman, Heather, who visits her mum in the home, was when the other residents took an interest in her neighbour's dog, which she brought in to visit. Bailey, the greyhound cross, is cheerful, well-natured and a very welcome visitor. Heather said that it was nice to speak to the residents and get to know the people her mum was living with. "They all come and say hello to Bailey and we have a chat, it is nice to hear how they are doing." One resident smiled as she told us "Bailey loves a treat and to lean on your legs as you pet him, it's like he is giving you a cuddle in his own way". 📦 Another resident, Mary, said "It brings back memories from childhood of the great times I had when it was just me, my mum and the dog". It is easy to see how pleased the residents are to see Bailey as they smile and put out their hands to welcome him warmly. One resident, Douglas, finds it motivates him to be active. "I like taking him a walk around the garden or up the street, or should I say, he takes me a walk!" 📦

Jim told us of the effect some of the animals can have on the residents who have dementia or who may be feeling down. "There was one time when the Theraponies came in, (Therapony Scotland); they came in and there was a lady who had a very low mood. She wasn't interacting with anyone. This pony came right up to her and the way that she interacted with the pony! For that day, her mood was more uplifted, she communicated a lot more."

Daisy, a young person who is doing her Duke of Edinburgh award here, used to visit her grandparent in the home and continues to spend time with the residents regularly. Daisy likes the guinea pigs and helps residents to hold and pet them. We asked Daisy how the animals help her to interact with people with dementia and the difference animals make to the residents in general. She said "Instead of me just saying Hi I'm Daisy, I can bring the dog or the guinea pigs round and they can stroke them and then it's natural conversation from there. So, it's just easier for them to start a conversation if we're already next to each other with the dogs or animals. When the animals come in, the residents



start to smile and they are happier and they get more excited and lively. The animals lighten the mood a bit, for example Dorothy, she has it on her lap and just strokes it for 25 minutes, just sitting there talking to them so it makes them feel calm”.

Samantha described the calming effects animals can have. “For other people, especially living with dementia, it helps them remember, they see the dog and they say “Oh I remember the time that we took it a walk; I remember it was her and my daughter seen it” - that kind of thing. It seems to lighten everybody up, even people that don't necessarily like animals or want to touch them. They quite like to watch them and see other people interacting with them. One lady doesn't like animals at all, she doesn't like dogs, but her bedroom looks onto the ducks and chickens. I had a conversation with her yesterday and she was telling me about how much she loves the ducks and she loves watching them go for a bath in the pond and they're so funny.” Jim added his observations of the calming effects animals can have. “We use the guinea pigs as well; we use that for giving someone comfort and reassurance. That does bring communication between the staff member and the resident, so it brings a lot of reassurance.”

Jim explained that the animals are a great talking point and interest for the young family members of residents. Grandchildren enjoy spending time in the garden looking at the animals or being pushed on the rope swing attached to the tree. Noticing how this enabled longer visits from children, Jim started to plan activities during school holidays for example, a visit from a local bird of prey centre. The residents and their families enjoyed holding the owls and learning about them. Animals have encouraged more communication between residents, as Samantha told us. “It brings back memories, things that they might have forgotten, they can remember their pet's names. It gives them something to talk about with people, families, volunteers and staff.” Jim added “The positive effects of engaging with family members or visitors are when the grandkids come in. The grandchildren can then ask for one of the guinea pigs to come out and I have seen the person and their grandchild with the guinea pig. It's all about that moment; it's all about that connection between the resident and family members. Also, it has a real therapeutic benefit for both the family and the resident. It can enable the family member to have a real visit and go back with something to talk about.” 📺



Jim encourages other services to think about keeping pets. “We’re lucky to have big grounds but you can start small. We had a budgie in the lounge at one point and the residents really enjoyed that. A couple of guinea pigs, there’s not very much maintenance to that, if you have a really good handy man or a really good member of staff that would offer to help out that would be great. The therapeutic benefits of having animals within a care home are really, really magical. You really do see a difference in the resident and in the families as well so, I would say go for it, it doesn’t matter what size of land or garden you’ve got, it can be anything at all.” 

## Relevant principles and standards from the Health and Social Care Standards

### Principle: Dignity and respect

#### Standard:

4.1 My human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me.

### Principle: Included

#### Standards:

3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes, and anyone making a decision about my future care and support knows me.

1.9 I am recognised as an expert in my own experiences, needs and wishes.

### Principle: Wellbeing

#### Standards:

5.24 If I live in a care home and want to keep a pet, the service will try to support this to happen.

2.22 I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like.

1.25 I am supported to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

4.25 I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

### Principle: Responsive care and support

#### Standards:

1.23 My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected.

2.18 I am supported to manage my relationships with my family, friends or partner in a way that suits my wellbeing.

 **Principle: Compassion****Standard:**

3.9 I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.

**Things to think about**

- How can you make sure that you get to know people who might use the service and find out about their lives and interests? Have animals played a part in this?
- How can you support people who are not keen on animals or who may be frightened of them?
- How can you think about the benefits of having animals around for engagement? How can you make sure your service is welcoming?
- How can animals help give people living in the service some magical, in-the-moment experiences as described by Jim?
- Think about how people living in the service can look after animals and have meaningful tasks to do. Look at how staff can support them and ensure the animals are well looked after.
- If a person is not able to bring their pet into the home or is unable to care for their pet, think about other ways they might connect to their pet or to other animals.
- Consider what barriers there might be for people using the service and how these can be addressed. What ways can you bring people together?

**Find out more**

Research document: Pets and older people in residential care: A project funded by the Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) and the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) McNicholas, 2013.

[http://176.32.230.19/scas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/3.Pets\\_and\\_older\\_people\\_report.pdf](http://176.32.230.19/scas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/3.Pets_and_older_people_report.pdf)

Online blog: 6 benefits of pet therapy for dementia patients

<http://samvednacare.com/blog/2017/09/11/6-benefits-of-pet-therapy-for-dementia-patients/>

NICE guideline [NG97]: Dementia: assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers, June 2018.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng97>

[facebook.com/therapyponiesscotland/](https://facebook.com/therapyponiesscotland/)

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Aberdeenshire Council, Jarvis Court Very Sheltered Housing

Aberlour Childcare Trust, Aberlour Fostering Service

Action for Children, Land Street

Bachlaw Limited, Bachlaw Intensive Support Unit

Bachlochan House Ltd, Bachlochan Care Home

Bright Care at Home Ltd, Robertson House

Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools Ltd, Camphill School and Care Home Services

Dunedin Canmore Housing Ltd, Dunedin Harbour Hostel

Deaf Action, Outreach Visiting Support Service

Fife Council, Balmullo Primary School Nursery

NSPCC, Young Witness Service, Northern Ireland

Playbarn Nursery Limited, Playbarn Too Nursery

Therapy Ponies Scotland

Carol Westby, Little Tots Farm

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**Your views are helping us improve.**

## The Care Inspectorate Animal Magic team



Archie – Maureen Mathieson,  
Inspector



Dali – Lindsey Muir,  
Graphic Design



Flora – Carol Gillan,  
Inspector



Squirrel – Rachel Hinds,  
Policy Analyst



Juma – Anne McBroom,  
Inspector



Bob – Arlene Young,  
Administration Officer



Lou – Heather Edwards,  
Dementia Consultant



Molly – Mark Keiller,  
Filming



Ollie – Alison Tyson,  
Senior Inspector



Paddy and Peggy – Frances  
Clark, Inspector



Dougal – Mary Morris,  
Team Manager



Quinn – Susan Barrie,  
Inspector



Hugo – Ally Stuart Ross,  
Photography



Scruffy – Mary Moncur,  
Inspector



Toby – Mala Thomson,  
Inspector



Vin – Sarah Connell,  
Senior Inspector

## Headquarters

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY  
Tel: 01382 207100  
Fax: 01382 207289

Website: [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)  
Email: [enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)  
Care Inspectorate Enquiries: 0345 600 9527



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