



# Community Neutering Outreach Report

2021



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# Foreword

Cats Protection runs the largest cat neutering programme in the world and is at the forefront of promoting, encouraging and assisting neutering cats. By subsidising the cost for people on a low income, working closely with veterinarians and informing the public, our work has helped to prevent unwanted kittens being born.

Yet in a changing world we understand the need to adapt and improve how we tackle issues of growing populations of unwanted cats. In 2015, we began to develop a Community Neutering Outreach model, taking a fresh approach to how we help people and cats.

## People-focussed

For it to be a success, we recognised our schemes should be **people-centred**, prioritising the UK's most in-need cats and communities.

Our Community Neutering Outreach work is about removing the barriers which stop people from having their cats neutered. Money is not the only reason why owners don't have their cat neutered. Health issues, a lack of transport, not knowing where to go for help and, in the case of residents who feed stray cats, a lack of ultimate responsibility or ownership are all common reasons why cats go unneutered.

Our aim through this model is to dig below the surface in communities, to build up strong and effective bonds with other agencies and groups. Ultimately, by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust we can then work to overcome these barriers and ensure more cats are neutered.

We hope the examples of initiatives in the following pages will be models others can follow. We are also always pleased to talk to other charities and organisations and can be contacted at **branchneutering@cats.org.uk**

...continued...

## Cats Protection 2020

Despite the challenges we faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we helped **126,000** cats and kittens, including **15,000** feral cats, through our national network of around **210** volunteer-run branches and **37** centres (in 2019 we helped over 191,000 cats, including 27,000 feral cats). That's the equivalent of helping around **345** cats a day.



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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic Cats Protection had to place a number of our activities on hold, some of which are detailed within this report. This was to ensure that we were complying with government legislation and protecting our volunteers, employees and members of the public. To enable us to return safely to these activities and to ensure we are operating in line with government legislation we have made considerable changes to our ways of working. As the COVID-19 situation continues to change in terms of devolved government restrictions and localised lockdowns we continue to monitor the situation.

Our aim through this model is to dig below the surface in communities, to build up strong and effective bonds with other agencies and groups. By creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, we can then work to overcome these barriers and ensure more cats are neutered. Taking this approach helps us gain a real insight in to what the root causes of the cat welfare issues are. This allows us to then develop bespoke interventions using human behaviour change techniques which support the community in improving the welfare for both owned and community cats.

Understanding human behaviour is key to addressing the root causes of cat welfare issues. By utilising behaviour change techniques we are able to identify which behaviours need to change to have the most significant impact and design interventions that provide the opportunities, capabilities and motivation for change.

Our work focuses in areas of high deprivation because the effects of disadvantage extend to poor outcomes for animal welfare. Poverty and low income present barriers to people being able to care appropriately for their pets. Effective community engagement allows us to work with communities rather than just delivering services to them and enables us to provide targeted sustainable solutions to improve cat welfare.

The first Community Neutering Officer was appointed in 2014. The team has since expanded to a team of 20 Community Neutering Officers and Assistants to enable us to help more cats through our intense community work. From 2014-2020 the team have been able to help over 2,250 unowned cats through targeted TNR (trap, neuter and return) work and their work with adoption centres to rehome friendly strays. By working in the communities, they have also been able to provide support to cat owners to get over 1,900 cats neutered and over 540 rehomed.

Despite the challenges faced in 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team still managed to help over 480 unowned cats. They also helped with rehoming 126 owned cats and provided assistance to members of the public to help get 218 cats neutered.



**Jane Clements**  
Head of Neutering



**Carol Robinson**  
Neutering Advocacy  
Manager



**Sarah Reid**  
Neutering Manager



**Annalie Hart**  
Neutering Support  
Manager

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# Neutering

Every year we neuter around 150,000 cats, making us the single largest cat neutering group in the world.

Cats are prolific breeders and cat populations can rapidly get out of control. Just one female can produce up to 18 kittens a year, all of which will be able to start breeding themselves when they're around four months old.

Neutering is widely recognised as the only effective way to reduce the number of unwanted cats being born in the UK and the single most important way to improve feline welfare.

## Why do more cats need to be neutered?

Despite the efforts of charities such as Cats Protection, which run heavily subsidised neutering schemes, many owners still do not have their cats neutered.

Research published in the PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2017 found that of 2,076 cat owners, 13% of owners of a female cat say that their cat has had at least one litter. 70% of those owners said that their cat's pregnancy was unplanned<sup>1</sup>.

These kittens are often given away to families, friends or neighbours. Having spontaneously acquired a kitten, these new owners may not fully understand the costs of owning a cat and the actions they need to take for their new pet such as neutering.

All too often, these 'spur of the moment' kittens later become unwanted cats and are left to live on the streets, where the breeding cycle continues.

Whether they are owned cats in a household or strays living on the streets, cats left to breed uncontrollably can bring many problems – both for cats themselves and the wider community.

## Cat-Kind

A number of charities are working together under the umbrella of the Cat-Kind to maximise the effectiveness of cat neutering through collaboration on research, joint projects and co-ordination of activities. We know we cannot achieve this without the help of vets. For further information [www.cat-kind.org.uk](http://www.cat-kind.org.uk)

## Which cats should be neutered?

Cats can begin to breed when they're very young and should be neutered from four months of age.

Many cat owners are largely unaware of the reproductive capacity of cats, highlighting the need to educate the cat-owning public to prevent unplanned litters<sup>2</sup>.

In a survey by Cats Protection (CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 UK<sup>3</sup>) it was found that the majority of owned cats (88%) are neutered or spayed, although 16% of neutered females have a first litter before they are spayed. Cats Protection recommends that cats should be neutered from four months old as this is when they can become sexually mature. For many cats (60%), however, neutering occurred at five months of age or later.

Stray and feral cats, those which have been born outdoors and never been socialised, will also breed rapidly and neutering is the only way to control these cat populations.

In the case of these outdoor cats, Cats Protection has run successful trap, neuter, return (TNR) programmes for many years. By using our Community Neutering Outreach model across more communities, we aim to improve how we reach and help these colonies of feral or stray cats.

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<sup>1</sup> PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2017 <sup>2</sup> Welsh, C P, Gruffydd-Jones, T J, Murray, J K (2014) Poor owner knowledge of feline reproduction contributes to the high proportion of accidental litters born to UK pet cats <sup>3</sup> Cat Protection, CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 UK

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# What is Community Neutering Outreach?

Put simply, it is about taking the neutering message directly to where it is needed – to communities facing a number of barriers, which result in low neutering rates and growing cat populations.

While Cats Protection, as well as other animal welfare charities, has offered financial assistance for neutering for many years, this has largely relied on owners responding to our adverts or making a proactive effort to seek out help.

This approach recognises that there are many people facing huge barriers that mean they might not realise this help is available, or be unable to access it.

We know that financial difficulty is not the only reason why people do not have their cats neutered. Lack of access to appropriate information, health issues, a lack of understanding of a cat's welfare needs, limited social support and having no access to transport are all major reasons why cats go unneutered.

Our people-focussed model is about forming an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a particular community and offering the right support to help more cats be neutered. Each scheme we run is bespoke, recognising the individual needs of each community.

By holding community events, knocking on doors and giving solid, reliable and personalised assistance – whether it's helping with the cost, offering support, working with other agencies or providing transport – we have been able to get right to the heart of the neutering problem in many communities, and bring about a real change.

## Forming the model

Our Community Neutering Outreach model was first piloted in the East Midlands area in June 2014. Since then, we have been putting this into practice across the UK.

While the work in the East Midlands helped to form a blueprint for how we could operate in other areas of the country, it became clear to us that a flexible and individual approach would be vital to the success in each area.

What remains consistent wherever we operate our Community Neutering Outreach model are four core planning strategies – locating the need, building trust and awareness, identifying barriers and designing the appropriate interventions.

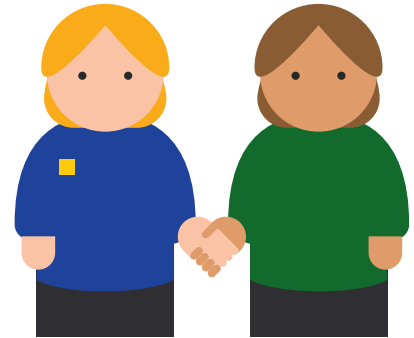


*Lorel – a community cat neutered in Nottingham*

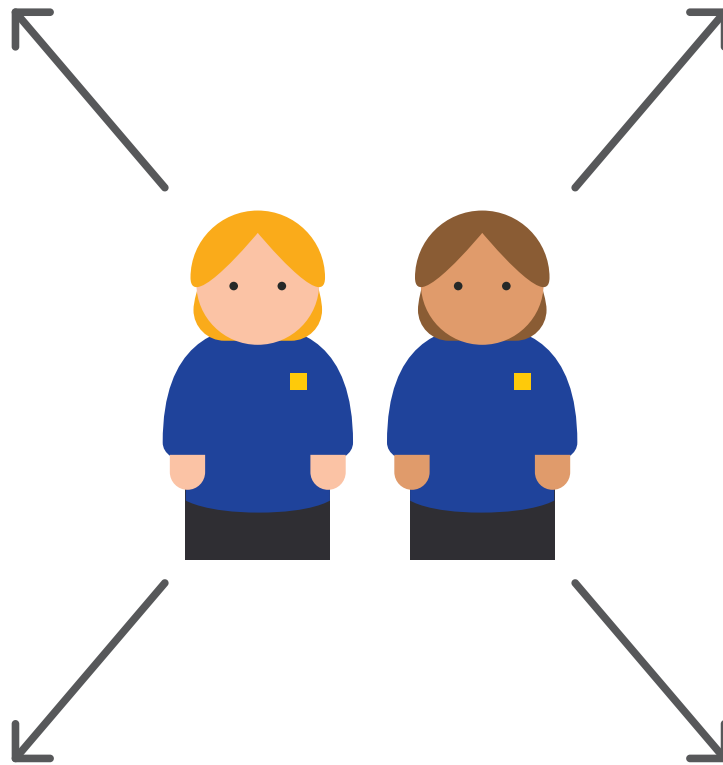
# Community Neutering Outreach model



Locating the need



Building trust and awareness



Identifying barriers



Designing interventions

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## Locating the need

We know from experience and research that areas with high levels of social deprivation tend to be those with a low uptake of neutering.

Government statistics<sup>4</sup> provide information on the most deprived areas in each region, helping us to draw up a list of potential target areas.

From here we pull together data from our own volunteer-run branches and adoption centres, as well as other animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA to narrow down the most in-need areas.

We then begin to tap into community groups, housing associations and other 'on the ground' organisations which help us pinpoint an area where there is a high need for neutering assistance.

Our Community Neutering Outreach work is labour-intensive – and time-intensive – so it is paramount that we target the areas most in need of help. Most of the communities we have worked in have been within the most deprived areas in the UK.

## Building the trust

The success of each campaign relies on forging strong, trusted links with the community in which we are working and that begins in the months before we hope to start the bulk of our neutering work.

It is essential to form close working relationships with other groups, organisations and charities operating in the area too, as they help to build a bridge and spread the word about the neutering help available.

Housing associations have proved to be vital in helping to identify particular pockets of need and helping to relay information to residents through flyers, newsletters or personal contact.

Community organisations, such as youth groups, social clubs and OAP centres, are particularly important. Our experience has shown that many of these groups are held in great esteem by the people who use them and have been established for many years. Gaining the trust and approval of these organisations can make all the difference when speaking with the community.

Food banks, schools, libraries and other charities working locally are also key partnerships when working within a community, helping to spread awareness of the help available.

Visibility and awareness are key to building trust, and holding free community events has proved to be an effective way to communicate with the public.

From arts and crafts sessions for children to family fun days and regular stalls in community shops or supermarkets, these events all help to build trust and encourage contact with the people we wish to help.

## Agencies, groups, organisations and charities we have forged links with

Housing associations

Community shops

Schools and colleges

Scout and Guide groups

Food banks

Libraries and social clubs

Residents' associations

Citizens Advice Bureaus and family support organisations

Local newspapers and radio stations

Other animal welfare organisations

Community police



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# Building trust – spreading the word

## Yvette Malone, Community Neutering Officer for Scotland explains...

It feels fantastic when one request for help leads to assisting many more cats but it is invaluable when you can inform and educate people within the community about the importance of neutering and good cat welfare. It truly makes a difference and is life changing for both the cats and the people we work with.

I get called out to various situations, each unique and requiring a certain level of research and perseverance. Early in September 2020, I received a call for assistance regarding an unneutered, unowned, friendly female cat who had a litter of six young kittens. This call about one cat and her kittens would result in me helping 17 cats in total; all stemming from this one request for help.

After talking more with the woman who had asked for help, it turned out that there were actually two unowned friendly cats that she had been feeding outdoors, one with the litter of kittens and the other

who we suspected may also have kittens herself, although there had been no sign of a second litter yet. Learning more about the situation led me to a community member who lived further up the street and who turned out to be the original owner of the two cats currently living outdoors, whose names were Cersei and Myrtle. An additional four cats also lived at that property.

The community member explained that the first cat owned had not been neutered and this had resulted in several unwanted litters. She went on to tell me that the situation had become overwhelming and she was unsure of where to start. In addition to the unwanted litters, there were other issues occurring due to the unneutered multi-cat household such as spraying, fighting and territory disputes leading to some of the cats deciding to live outdoors which is what happened to Cersei and Myrtle. >



*Cersei and her kittens*



*Myrtle*

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I informed the community member about the benefits of neutering and she wanted to help all of the cats as much as possible and was really grateful for the information, guidance and resources I could offer. She decided that from the four cats she had in the house, she would prefer to keep the two that she was the most attached to, Mabel and Serg, and rehome the other two. The two cats to be rehomed were placed in the adoption centre and were neutered and adopted shortly after. The community member was eligible for our £5 neutering campaign and so I helped her get her two remaining cats to the vets to be neutered and also microchipped.

She agreed that the best outcome for the two living outdoors would be to place them in a foster home with their kittens and get them adopted when they were ready. I collected Cersei and her kittens and got them into foster homes as soon as possible. The next part was collecting Myrtle, but I couldn't take her without locating the kittens. After some research, I found out she had been going in and out of an old shed in another garden and I got permission from the neighbour to look inside. Sure enough, after removing old bikes and toys, we found five tiny little kittens, only three-four weeks old, all snuggled in together at the back of the dark shed. I got the kittens and Myrtle and took them into Cats Protection care where they stayed together in a warm, safe pen.

When they were ready, and at the correct age; Cersei, Myrtle and all 11 kittens were neutered, microchipped and adopted. After a while I had messaged the community member to ask how she and her two remaining cats were getting on and she responded with this heart-warming message.

"All went well, our two cats are really settled and we have peace of mind now, can't thank you enough for all your support, life is so much better and we feel we can enjoy Mabel and Sergey Boy."

Overall 17 cats, made up of six adults and 11 kittens, ended up getting help all stemming from one request for help about a cat and her kittens.



*Cersei*



This role has given me the unique opportunity to make a huge impact in the lives of both cats and communities in Scotland; changing mindsets around neutering and providing an excellent service for many cats who desperately need our help.

Yvette Malone, Community Neutering Officer, Scotland



## Identifying barriers

Cost is undeniably an important factor and reason why people don't have their cat neutered<sup>5</sup>. With subsidised funding available from charities such as Cats Protection, this may seem an easy problem to solve.

Yet there are many barriers which prevent cats from being neutered: for example, lack of access to written materials or language differences may mean owners do not realise what help is available.

Other barriers may include health issues, a lack of transport or a poor understanding of a cat's welfare needs.

In many cases, well-intentioned residents feed and provide basic care for previously abandoned stray or 'community cats'. These people often do not feel they have the right, responsibility or means to arrange for cats to be neutered and may continue to struggle to care for a growing number of cats.

It is essential to establish what the barriers to neutering are, if they are to be overcome. By carrying out surveys, talking to people informally at community events or on the doorstep, and listening to feedback from local organisations, we can build a picture of the challenges we face in each area.

## Designing interventions

Once we fully understand the challenges faced by communities, we are able to formulate how we can respond to these barriers.

Carrying out neighbourhood door-knocking campaigns of targeted roads or estates is one of the primary methods we use to communicate with people about why neutering is important, and what we can do to help.

Taking the neutering message straight to people's doorsteps means we can reach those who may need our help most – the ones who may have found it difficult to engage with our community events or seek out assistance.

When helping people who may face multiple challenges and difficulties in their lives, it's essential that the help we offer is straightforward and we take a flexible approach.

Arranging transport or financial assistance, helping trap, neuter, return or rehome stray cats or helping owners understand why neutering matters are all common ways in which our teams can help – but keeping an open mind is essential too. >



I love the huge variety of our work and all the people and cats we meet along the way.

Amy Carlin, Community Neutering Officer, Nottingham

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic attending community events was an important part our outreach work and a strong social media presence helps to build another layer of awareness and trust.

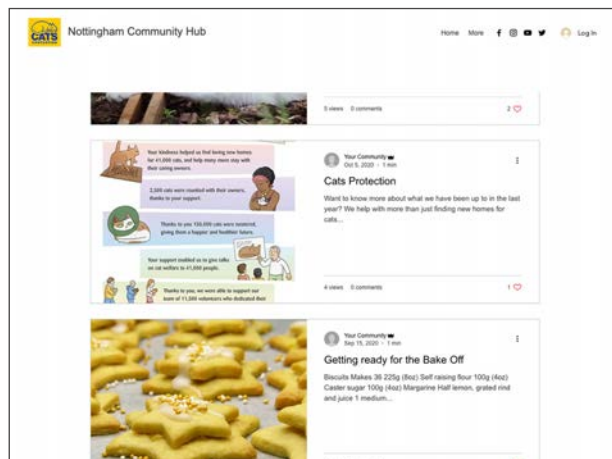
Both on door-to-door campaigns and during events, working with other animal welfare organisations is important, both to increase our resources to reach more people and to help more animals. We have worked closely with other animal welfare charities, such as Dogs Trust and the RSPCA, to enable more companion pets to be neutered and/or microchipped, vaccinated and health-checked.

Eve Moon, Cats Protection's Community Neutering Officer for Nottingham explains...

"In 2019 we began designing the intervention for an information and advice hub in Bulwell. The concept was to involve stakeholders from a wide range of other agencies and teams in Bulwell to provide advice and support for the local community. The central location of the hub was also expected to serve as a meeting place for new social groups. The hub was due to launch in March 2020 but unfortunately it had to be postponed.

"In response to the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to create a flexible alternative to a face-to-face hub. The team constructed an online hub. We made a website, servicing all of Nottingham, as a location for organisations to share their work and provide guidance, as well as somewhere for anyone and everyone to share what they had been up to during 2020. The website takes the form of a blog and by sending an email to our team absolutely anyone can add a blog post. There is also an online forum for members of the public to meet new people.

"So far we have seen engagement from local community organisations; from The Women's Centre to a local Bulwell dog walking group and regular posts on crafting and bakery. We hope to see this site flourish as restrictions lift and local teams get back to their previous groundwork. So far the statistics on engagement have been very promising and we are proud that we could adapt to the needs of our local community."



[www.nottinghamcommunityhub.com](http://www.nottinghamcommunityhub.com)



No two situations are the same and they can sometimes be very challenging, but the results can be hugely rewarding. We don't just help cats, we help people.

Eve Moon, Community Neutering Officer, Nottingham



I've been working for Cats Protection since November 2019 and I love it. I really enjoy meeting and helping members of the community, and their cats.

Jess Williams, Community Neutering Assistant, Nottingham

## Building trust – through community events

Prior to the pandemic the neutering team were able to attend a variety of community events. Attending local community events is a great way for the team to become recognised as part of the local community and form positive relationships with both residents and other community groups. The team will regularly collaborate with other organisations at events.

We held a free rock painting event in South London to help raise awareness of Cats Protection within the community. It gave the team an opportunity to speak with adults attending the event, to discuss cat neutering and welfare, and complete surveys. It also generated further awareness and enquiries as the hidden rocks directed people to the Facebook page and initiated conversation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated government restrictions, the team were faced with new challenges as many of our activities were restricted. The team had to adapt and develop new ways of working to engage and support the community at this time.

I love being out and about improving the lives of feral and community cats and helping people with their owned cats.

Susan Hammond, Community Neutering Assistant, Nottingham



Free rock painting event in South London to help raise awareness of Cats Protection within the community



Jess Williams and Susan Hammond, Community Neutering Assistants, Nottingham



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# On the doorstep

## Carly Bradbury, Cats Protection's Community Neutering Outreach Officer, Luton explains...

"The first and most important step when speaking to people on the doorstep is to gain trust. Hopefully, our groundwork in the community will mean people have heard of Cats Protection, but it's only natural that some householders are apprehensive or suspicious when we knock on their door.

"After introducing ourselves, we'll ask if there are any pet cats and whether they are neutered. It's really important to be totally people-focussed and make it clear we are not there to criticise or make judgements. There can be a deep distrust of strangers in some communities and the priority for us is to be caring, understanding and considerate.

"If a cat isn't neutered, we'll discuss why this would be beneficial for both the cat and the owner. We'll then move on to ways we can help and we're always very focussed on being as flexible and accommodating as possible. It may be a case of simply loaning a cat carrier for someone to transport their pet, issuing a voucher to help with the cost, or arranging an appointment with a vet. Some people have no means of transport, so we can help with that and other people may have anxiety issues, in which case we can take the cats to the vet for them. We meet many people who feed stray cats but are struggling to cope with the growing numbers – we can help by arranging to have them neutered and safely returned, if appropriate. We keep paperwork to a minimum and make everything as fuss-free as possible."



*Carly Bradbury, Community Neutering Officer, Luton*



*The Nottingham team preparing to carry out some door-to-door work*

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# Forming partnerships and community engagement

Forming partnerships is essential to the success of every outreach scheme. Every area is different and there will be potential for partnerships with all sorts of organisations, groups and charities. In our Liverpool campaign, we joined forces with local veterinary staff and Warrington Animal Welfare to provide a neuter clinic to support the additional need following the pandemic.

Community engagement can be anything from attending a community summer fair to having a small stand at a local supermarket. Being visible and approachable is the key factor. Organising family events which keep children amused – perhaps with free bouncy castles or face-painting – allows the opportunity to chat to adults and find out about any owned cats. Other ideas include arts and crafts sessions for children and young people, hiring out the community room in a supermarket, giving free talks at libraries or social groups and holding themed events for families – for example, Halloween or Christmas fun afternoons.

## Overcoming barriers

It is vital that we are able to provide a flexible, caring and reliable approach when identifying and tackling these barriers if our neutering work is to be a success.

Helping to overcome difficulties in a smooth and straightforward manner helps to generate positive word-of-mouth support within communities.



*The Liverpool team preparing to deliver items donated to the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal to community cat caretakers.*



I truly enjoy working in communities, building lasting relationships that can help to positively influence the views and practices of that community for generations to come.

Gillian McCurry, Community Neutering Officer, Northern Ireland

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## Barriers

### Lack of access to written materials

Owners may not have been able to access adverts, flyers or other information about subsidised neutering, or may feel unable to make arrangements to have their cat neutered.

## Possible solutions

Community events may enable other members of the family to relay information about neutering.

Messaging on Facebook may be easier and more straightforward to access than traditional media adverts or flyers.

Regular presence in community spaces (eg supermarkets, local shops, libraries, clubs) with teams from Cats Protection on hand may make it easier to find out about help available.

Doorknocking campaigns will enable help, advice and support to be given in the home.

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### Transport

Owners may not have a cat carrier and/or transport to take their pet to a vet.

Cat carriers can be loaned.

Free transport to and from a veterinary surgery can be arranged.

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### Funds

Low family income means cats go unneutered.

Heavily subsidised or free neutering available.

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### Health

Anxiety or other health issues may make it difficult for owners to make arrangements for their pet to be neutered. We also encounter cases where people have acquired a large number of cats and are unable to cope.

Teams who carry out doorknocking campaigns can signpost owners to other agencies who may be able to help.

Arrangements can be made for Cats Protection to accompany the cat (and owner if desired) to the vet.

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### Ownership

Well-intentioned residents may be feeding one or more neighbourhood strays or 'community cats'. They may be unsure if they have the right to arrange neutering or may not have the funds to pay for it. Despite struggling with growing numbers of cats, they may also not be aware that neutering can help, or are concerned that much-loved community cats may be taken away. They may also be unaware of trap, neuter, return programmes for neutering of feral cats.

Experienced teams from Cats Protection can assure residents that neutering will improve the welfare of community cats.

Free neutering available to cover the cost.

Humane traps can be used by experienced teams from Cats Protection to collect cats. Transport and veterinary assistance can be arranged and funded.

Cats Protection teams work with residents to return cats to their original environment.

## Adapting to overcome barriers

The teams were regularly finding that people not having access to a cat carrier and/or not having the knowledge of how to put their cat into a cat carrier was a barrier to people taking their cat to the vet. With this in mind the team designed a bespoke intervention.

Where there is a need we work with local vet practices and other organisations to collect up any second-hand carriers that can be cleaned, disinfected and re-used.

We designed an infographic leaflet to provide with the carriers to help people learn how to safely put their cat into a carrier. Helen Curry, Community Neutering Officer explains:

“While there are many videos and guides available online to help cat owners with the use of cat carriers sometimes it can still seem like a daunting task. This leaflet was designed with that in mind keeping the message simple and using infographics to explain the process. Two versions were created, one an A5 leaflet with more detailed information for each stage and one an A5 single-sided quick reference guide using the strength of the images and key words for each stage.”

This was particularly useful for the teams in 2020 as although they were still able to help with transporting cats, they were unable to enter properties to put cats into cat carriers due to COVID-19 restrictions. Eve from the Nottingham team explains:

“We now deliver carriers to owners at home a week before a pet cat is due to be neutered, along with the carrier information and owners then work with their cat in advance to get them used to it. By providing the carriers this gives the owners the opportunity to use them, and the handy infographic supported owners in developing their capabilities in being able to confidently get their cats into their carriers. This intervention has proved to be very successful as since we started this process, owners have been able to get their cat into a carrier before we arrive to transport them to the vets. We have not had any owners be unable to do this, which is hugely positive. Now owners can feel comfortable being able to do this again and again for any future vet treatment which should support lasting positive change in this behaviour.

“Our local campaign vets have previously experienced a few cases of cats missing appointments due to owners being unable to get them into a carrier, so we have also provided our carrier infographic to the surgery for customers to access.”



The teams work hard at community level to support residents with both owned and unowned cats. The teams could not reach and help the unowned cat population without the support of the community. Supporting the community, in turn, supports the cats.

Helen Curry, Community Neutering Officer (Project Support)

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# No quick fix

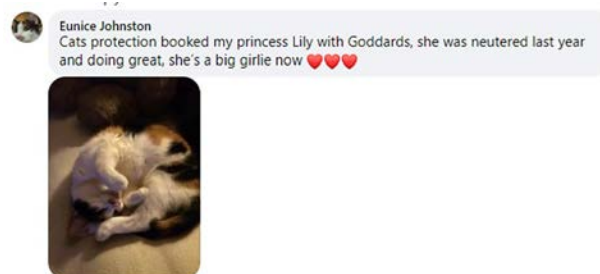
Caroline Wright, Cats Protection's Community Neutering Officer, South East London explains about her work with local resident Eunice Johnston and her cat Lily...

"Eunice got in touch via social media as Cats Protection was holding a 'New Addington Cat Day', a joint event held with the local PDSA vet nurse. Holding community events is a great way to develop trust with our community as it gives community members the opportunity to get to know us and for us to work with cat owners to support them with improving their cats' welfare. As well as being unneutered, Eunice's cat, Lily needed flea and worm treatment and although Eunice had the pipette of treatment Lily was only 11 months old and she wriggled every time Eunice tried to apply it.

"At the event the PDSA nurse applied the medication and gave Lily a health check before chipping her. While she was there the vet nurse from a local vet practice booked her in for neutering.

"On the day of the operation the vet noted Lily had a heart murmur, after talking through the risks Eunice decided to go ahead with the operation which was successful. Over the following weeks Eunice messaged to say she had noted a positive change in Lily's behaviour and she had got more loving since her operation. Lily went to her post-operation check and the vet was happy about how her wound had healed.

"Eunice now has become a wonderful advocate for social media and comments when she sees me post about any events or neutering. Her support is very valued and she sends a reassuring positive message to the New Addington community that neutering is the best option."



Working as a Community Neutering Officer is really rewarding, I have realised the importance of forming trust and relationships with the local communities, which is the key to making these projects successful.

Caroline Wright, Community Neutering Officer, South East London



# Case study

## Working with rural feral cats

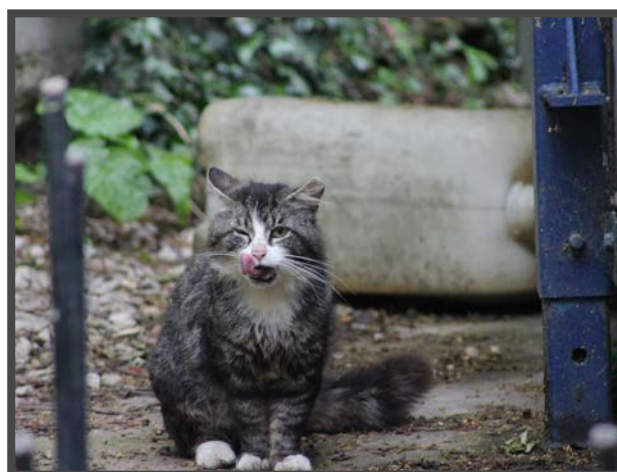
While taking some cats to be neutered at the vets, I was approached by a lady about a kitten in her garden, which was right next to a busy main road. She told me there were three but now only one was coming there, so she was worried that they were killed on the road. When I visited the kitten had disappeared. The lady took me down to where she thought he might have gone, and I was shocked to see about 30 cats laying in the sun on the road outside a dairy farm. The farmer had told her that they were a pain and getting out of hand.

My initial challenge was to get the farmer on board. He had no emotional tie to any of the cats but saw that they were a benefit to his vermin problem at the farm. He said they just turned up one day and started multiplying. I spoke to him about the health benefits of neutering them and how the cats who have continuous litters become unwell and pass on flu and other illnesses to the kittens which can have an effect on the entire colony. He agreed to let me trap, neuter and return the cats to him.

Over the next couple of months I was able to trap them all and have them neutered. In total there were approximately 26 neutered.

I have returned several time to check on the welfare of the cats and ensure no other cats have move into the area. They remain a healthy colony of neutered cats.

Jo Griffiths, Community Neutering Officer, South Wales & South West



Neutering is the best way to improve the health of the cat population while humanely controlling the numbers going in to rescue and living on the street.

Jo Griffiths, Community Neutering Officer, South Wales & South West

# Case study

## From street to sofa... Otis has now found his forever home

Otis came to us when a wonderful feeder from West Bowling got in touch about a cat called Blackie who had an injured paw. By working with the feeders we coordinated the times that he visited for a snack and a nap. Due to being unable to walk properly Blackie was spending more and more time with the feeder. We will always reach out to the community about a community cat to ensure they are not owned with paper collars, flyers and social media. Once this was completed Gildersome Homing Centre took him in. He settled in really well and enjoyed attention and food. The vet noticed a missing claw and he also needed some dental work which took a little while to settle due to infection. After a lot of care he went on to find his forever home and became Otis.

His lovely humans shared this about how well he has now settled in after his journey to find a home of his own: "Otis has settled in very well and very quickly. We feel we have always had him in our lives. He is very clear that this is his home.

"He has now learnt to use the cat flap and likes to survey our safe garden at the back. Although we live in a quiet cul-de-sac, he does not seem to venture to the front. He likes short bursts of time outside, but quickly comes back in.

"He loves his food and cuddles (we spend a lot more time sitting because he is on our laps). When he wants peace, he finds a quiet spot, a favourite being the top of the fridge! He is very vocal; we have lengthy conversations, he is definitely part of our family."

Sophie Appleton, Community Neutering Officer,  
Bradford



I love developing relationships and building trust with individuals within the community and in turn this of course helps the cats in the long term. I really believe education and knowledge is the key to change. I am very passionate about animal welfare and am committed to making a difference for Bradford's cats.

Sophie Appleton, Community  
Neutering Officer, Bradford

# Case study

Nationally all of the team work closely with our network of centres and branches to help find homes for friendly stray cats and assist members of the community who may need support in rehoming their pet cat.

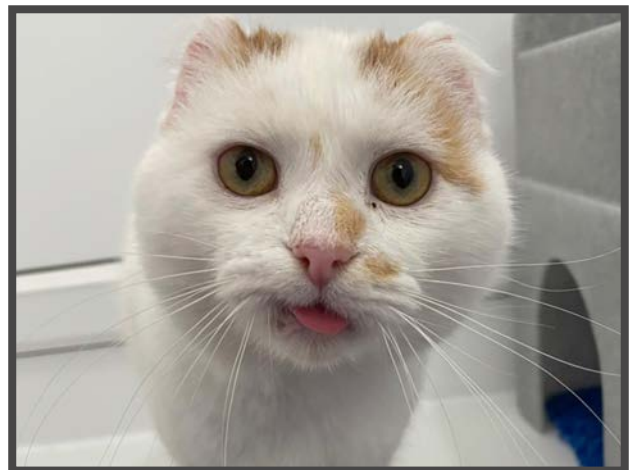
The Gildersome Homing Centre support the work in the Bradford area. Georgina Spaul, Cat Care Assistant, explains:

“I work with Sophie, the Community Neutering Officer for Bradford, by helping out with a variety of tasks including TNR work, visiting cats in the area and arranging admissions of any suitable cats to the centre for rehoming. Working together means that we can feed back to the area about any successful adoption stories and updates, which positively reflects on the work Cats Protection carries out. Also, by being present while carrying out work in the community it encourages people to reach out for help and advice. This is essential to opening conversations and gaining information about the area which allows us to help as many cats in need as possible.”

Here are just a few images of some of the cats that have been helped through the work of the Community Neutering work in Bradford and the Gildersome Homing Centre.



*The admission pens at the College of Animal Welfare where cats are cared for and receive any treatment needed before being moved to Gildersome for rehoming.*



*Squidge had been living on the streets for some time and was found to have sun-damaged ears. Squidge needed a procedure called a pinnectomy to remove the damaged parts of the ears. The treatment was successful and after spending some time recuperating the team were able to find him the long-term home he deserved.*





# Cat Watch

## The Cats Protection Cat Watch project started in September 2016.

The aim was to improve our understanding of the unowned cat population in urban areas and to work with and alongside communities to improve cat welfare. The project endeavoured to empower residents in communities to take control of their community cat overpopulation issues by providing them with the advice and tools to do so. Cat Watch teams helped communities by providing trap, neuter and return (TNR) services for community cats, returning them to their caretakers or rehoming friendly strays for whom the street life is not suitable. Involving communities rather than just delivering a service to them enables people to see the benefits of cats in their areas. There is the potential for community cohesion as people share responsibilities for caring for cats or realise the benefits of controlling the population through neutering and return or rehoming. Additionally, becoming involved with the project by becoming a volunteer or a community advocate has brought wellbeing benefits to many people. All of the Cat Watch interventions aim to provide an element of social support to communities, unifying them over a shared cause, which has proven to help cats and people.

Cat Watch has created the shift in behaviour it set out to do, with nearly 4,000 reports of stray cats across all Cat Watch areas. This highlights the awareness raising of the unowned cat population that the project has achieved. Shifts in attitudes have also happened with more people thinking that neutering, veterinary care and provision of food and water is important for unowned cats.

Going forwards, the Cat Watch project has provided the much-needed foundation for understanding the free-roaming cat population in our cities and responding to their needs and the needs of their caretakers. In 2020 it was taken into other wards of Nottingham, Luton and Liverpool.



Further information about the Cat Watch projects can be found at [www.cats.org.uk/media/4178/cp-cat-watch-report-2019.pdf](http://www.cats.org.uk/media/4178/cp-cat-watch-report-2019.pdf)

# Cat Watch in Nottingham

“We have been working in Bulwell since 2016 which has proved to be very successful.

“Due to the fantastic response of the Bulwell residents reporting strays to us and working with us to TNR and care for the strays, we have been able to help so many of the community cats. Furthermore, over two years we saw a 75% decline in the total number of cats found on the streets.

“As a result, we began plans to start our intensive work within a new area in a nearby town. Since then, we have been slowly lessening our presence in Bulwell to allow the community to continue caring for the cats.

“In 2020 we launched the new Cat Watch area of Broxtowe, Strelley and Bilborough. We have begun by trying to build links with the stakeholders and residents in the area by attending events and having a community hub. Building relationships and trust within a community is key to making the project a success. The Nottingham team have been working alongside residents to gather stray reports and raise awareness of neutering.

“This helps the team work strategically around the area which is a more effective way of helping the areas of most need. They have also been supporting residents to get their pet cats neutered under the East Midlands campaign by providing transport and carriers where needed.

“Due to the success of Bulwell and the high number of stray cats in Nottingham the team has expanded to allow us to reach more cats in need.”

Amy Carlin – Community Neutering Officer, Nottingham



Amy Carlin (Community Neutering Officer, Nottingham) and Paul Musson (Cats Protection volunteer)



I love working intensely within a community as it allows you to build trust and relationships in the community and have a big impact on the welfare of the cats living there.

Yvette Adams, Community Neutering Officer (Project Support), Nottingham





## Cat Watch in Liverpool

Following the success of Bulwell we launched Everton Cat Watch. Our team have built excellent links with both residents and local stakeholders creating a strong network of engaged cat advocates.

We run a vibrant, well attended weekly community hub and organise various targeted interventions throughout the year to raise the profile and welfare of both community and owned cats.

We do a huge amount of groundwork within the community and have focused on developing multiple feeders, safe feeding stations and shelters in all of our hotspot areas; this in conjunction with our neutering and vaccination programme is ensuring the long-term wellbeing of our community cats.

As part of the Liverpool neutering campaign we offer subsidised neutering and provide assistance with transport and cat carriers whenever needed.

We have taken in social strays and owned cats for rehoming focusing particularly on those that are most vulnerable.

Building on the positive engagement and trust within the community the Liverpool team has now doubled in size since its formation and has expanded into the neighbouring ward of Anfield with the launch of Breckside Cat Watch in 2020.

Rachele Follini, Community Neutering Officer, Liverpool



Working in communities like ours can be challenging but being able to help the cats and support residents at the same time, makes it all worthwhile.

Hannah Wong, Community Neutering Officer, Liverpool



Our team is very privileged to be able to work intensively within and alongside deprived communities helping the most vulnerable cats.

Rachele Follini, Community Neutering Officer, Liverpool



I joined Cats Protection in December 2020. I enjoy working to improve the lives of cats and look forward to helping the cats of Liverpool.

Dan Gorman, Community Neutering Assistant, Liverpool



Being on the ground, talking to residents about cats, I think that helps people feel more confident to take ownership of their neighbourhood. It means people are happier and the cats are healthier.

Yvonne Gordon, Community Neutering Assistant, Liverpool



I love my role with Cats Protection as I am able to work towards making a real positive change and improve the welfare for both cats and their owners.

Jennifer Webster, Community Neutering Assistant, Liverpool



I've worked in local rescues for over 30 years and still love trapping cats after all this time!

Rachel Foster, Community Neutering Assistant, Liverpool



## Cat Watch in Luton

“In 2018 the LU5 postcode area of Dunstable and Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire was selected as another pilot area for the Cat Watch project.

“Increasing Cats Protection’s presence in this area has been key to the success of Cat Watch. The team have attended many community events, Cats Protection-led events and hubs, walking around the residential area and door-to-door knocking. Evaluations of the project show the most popular way to report a cat was via a member of the team, with more than 90% of cat reports being received in this way. Relationships and communication with the team have been key to involvement.

“The team are now launching a new Cat Watch project in the area of Biscot and Dallow.”

Carly Bradbury, Community Neutering Officer, Luton



The best thing about my job is being part of a proactive project that makes a real difference to people and cats in the community.

Becky Byham, Community Neutering Assistant, Luton



# Testimonials

I have been a member of Cats Protection for many years but until the Cat Watch team started work in Everton I had no personal involvement.

The Everton Cat Watch under Rachele Follini brought a group of diverse individuals together with one common goal: the betterment of the feral and stray cats in this area. We met weekly and the team grew, gaining volunteers for the service but also giving support to us feeders. Meeting like-minded people who lived in my area and forming a network that could be accessed any time was of immense help, I didn't know there were so many pockets of feeders and cats.

The Cats Protection team became friends, I could contact Rachele or Hannah Wong anytime with concerns about my street cats.

The weekly hub meetings are very important for support and provide a way to access professional help.

I am proud to be part of this fantastic innovation and I know all my cats are too.

Lynn Murphy, Anfield resident

Cats Protection has done a fantastic job with owned and stray cats in the area and if it wasn't for them none of these poor animals would be sorted out at all.

Pat, a regular feeder in West Bowling, Bradford







Cats Protection and their Community Neutering team are amazing. Who would have known about the dedication and hard work they carry out daily, until you have first-hand experience of them like me? Awe inspiring work that deserves the highest praise.

Anne from Forth Valley



Working to tackle void properties for Liverpool City Council I often come across street cats making use of them for shelter. Cats Protection offers invaluable assistance in trapping, neutering and relocating these cats to ensure that they don't come to any harm and to limit the growth of street cat populations in the area. The team's knowledge and experience, as well as willingness to assist has made them a valued partner in the work that I do in the City. I also know that they are highly valued by the local residents who care for the cat colonies in the area, who would be lost without their support.

Ruth Clarke - Vacant Homes Team



We have been working collaboratively with Yvette from Cats Protection to deliver Zoom sessions for older adults – advising on understanding cat behaviour and more. The sessions have proved very popular and informative and we look forward to our continued partnership during lockdown and beyond.

Louise Russell, Founder, Give a Dog a Bone... and an animal a home

# Volunteer with us

Volunteers are always needed to join in our Community Neutering Outreach work throughout the UK. Full training and support is given and no previous experience is needed.

Volunteering is a great way to make new friends, improve your skillset and make a real difference to the welfare of cats.

To find out more, email  
**[branchneutering@cats.org.uk](mailto:branchneutering@cats.org.uk)**







**For further information  
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