



Cat Watch

Report to Stakeholders 2019





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Executive summary

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-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, Cats Protection will take the project into other wards of Nottingham and Liverpool, with the long-term aim of a citywide welfare approach to the community cats in our society.

Introduction

While there are many unowned cats in the UK, living in different urban and rural contexts, to date we understand very little about their numbers, densities and situations compared to our knowledge of the pet cat population. This is because research has been largely focussed on pet cats. This means there has been a void in our understanding and ability to be most effective in helping and improving the welfare standards of unowned cats. In order to understand the scale of the unowned cat population and learn how we can best help them, Cats Protection launched the first Cat Watch project in Bulwell, Nottingham. This was the first pilot site which provided baseline learnings to take forwards into the next five areas, these are Everton in Liverpool, BD5 in Bradford, Beeston in Nottingham and Houghton Regis and Dunstable in Bedfordshire.

Cat Watch focuses on urban unowned cats, in areas of disadvantage where government data shows high levels of deprivation. The exception to this was the Beeston Cat Watch, which is a more affluent ward of Nottingham. Our hypothesis was that we would not find as many cat welfare issues in Beeston due to its relative affluence. In areas where human welfare is compromised due to low socio-economic status, animals often suffer from poor levels of welfare. This can be linked to the lack of resources available for people. Where barriers such as financial constraints, lack of access to veterinary clinics and no access to private transport exist, people are also less likely to get their cats neutered before an accidental litter or two has been born.

Cats in urban areas that generally have some degree of reliance on humans for resources are described as community cats. Due to their need to live side by side with people for food and outdoor shelter in gardens, they are often approachable and will tolerate close proximity, especially at feeding time! They will often develop a closer relationship with their caretaker, sometimes allowing themselves to receive a little stroke on the head. However, these cats are not suitable to be rehomed as pets as they are not socialised appropriately and confining them in any way to the indoors as a pet would be contrary to their welfare.

The streets in urban areas are also home to stray cats that have been a pet at some point and have become lost or abandoned. Often, these cats have learnt to live alongside their community cat counterparts in order to benefit from sharing resources. Generally, stray cats do need to be taken into care for rehoming, as they are usually not coping well in the outdoors, having been used to indoor luxuries previously. That said, some do well living as part of the community, and in these cases it is better to return them to their communities rather than rehoming them.

Cat Watch focuses on urban unowned cats, in areas of disadvantage where government data shows high levels of deprivation.

Working with socio-economically disadvantaged communities and their cats – The key issues

Through the Cat Watch project, Cats Protection recognises the links that exist between human wellbeing factors and cat welfare across all cat populations.

Socio-economic disadvantage

Poverty and low income present barriers to people being able to afford and access veterinary care and can result in pets being abandoned thereby adding to the stray population, creating the community cats that rely so heavily on human kindness. This in itself is a further burden on communities who themselves rely on help from charities and NGOs such as food banks, and agencies providing access to free support and advice on a range of issues. It is no coincidence that unowned cats occur in higher numbers within areas of socio-economic disadvantage. The effects of multiple disadvantage and poor wellbeing extend to poor outcomes for animal welfare¹.

Low levels of wellbeing and lack of community cohesion

The New Economics Foundation defines wellbeing as ‘quality of life, good physical and mental health, and feeling part of communities’². For socio-economically disadvantaged communities, research shows that these elements of wellbeing are often not in place^{3,4,5}. Subjective wellbeing can be defined as a person’s evaluation of their life satisfaction⁶. In Seligman’s ‘flourish’ model⁷, wellbeing is conceptualised by PERMA – positive emotions, engagement (in activities or work), relationships, meaning (a sense of purpose) and accomplishment.

Where society may be fragmented, and disadvantage makes social connections difficult to build, it is clear that increasing social support and connectedness could make a large positive difference to people’s lives and their wellbeing⁸. Connecting communities through interventions aimed at improving individual and group self-efficacy to better care for pet cats and community cats can help to improve human wellbeing and animal welfare⁹. Cat Watch interventions address the different aspects of Seligman’s PERMA theory.

Access to affordable veterinary and cat care

All of the Cat Watch areas provide heavily subsidised or free neutering for all cats and help with other minor treatments as necessary. As deprived communities are often underserved by veterinary clinics and transport is an issue, the Cat Watch teams will also provide free transport to the vet and support people with transport problem solving for future visits.

Affording to feed pets and community cats is also a problem for people when finances are very tight. In some Cat Watch areas we have also provided access to cat food banks.

The Community Payback schemes in Nottingham and Bradford, where people serving community sentences helped and continue to help to build cat shelters to keep stray cats living as community cats warm and safe.

Allan Fitzsimmons, Placement Coordinator at West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), said the boxes were being produced by low risk offenders serving Community Payback sentences.

He said:

“It’s possibly the most unusual job we have done – building homes for stray cats. Cats Protection provided us with the design and materials, and we got cracking on producing the shelters. It’s good to know that such a simple design can make such a big difference, and we were very happy to have been able to help.

Collaboration

When resources are stretched, stakeholders will have key priorities which at times will be competing, making identification of overlapping issues and collaboration more difficult. However, cross-agency working is crucial to providing solutions which tackle the root cause of problems, and not just addressing their symptoms. The Cat Watch project has had contact with and collaborated with many organisations in communities including:

Housing associations and councils
The Probation Trust
The community police and fire service
Women’s Aid
Local business community services
PDSA
RSPCA

Source: companionlife.co.uk/cat-charity-launch-project-to-control-number-of-stray-cats-in-uk/

How Cat Watch helps community cats, pet cats and residents

Dagwood's story

The Cat Watch team were door knocking on an estate in Houghton Regis to find any stray cats and to promote the free neutering available in the immediate area.

Awareness, presence and trust of CP was built up by holding a free family fun day in a nearby community centre and flyer houses before door knocking began. There were signs of community cats due to feeding bowls in gardens. Reports of community cats soon began to increase.

We received multiple reports of a black-and-white cat that had been considered a stray for a couple of years and had a limp. Further door knocking gave us the information that he was actually an owned cat and a suggested address for the owner.

When we door knocked at the address the owner explained he had inherited five cats from his father who had now passed away. He had done his best but was overwhelmed and Limpy, as he was then called, had chosen to leave home some time ago, never returning for food.

The owner raised concerns about another of the cats who had a skin condition and was not getting on with other cats in the household. After a discussion, the owner asked if CP could help him to cope by rehoming both Limpy and the other cat. The cat with the skin condition had a flea allergy. He was treated for fleas and worms and was vaccinated. He had already been neutered.

We put Limpy's photo on social media, which created some discussion locally, and a few sightings were reported.

We quickly received phone calls and emails about him. Quite a few kind people were feeding Limpy and offering him some relief from the outdoors at times. The community outreach enabled all of his carers to communicate with us, and come together to help us bring Limpy into care. One



Limpy (now Dagwood) – his condition when taken into care and in his pen at the adoption centre

particular person was able to confirm that Limpy arrived at her house at the same time every day to be fed and sleep on the children's trampoline! This is how we were eventually able to track Limpy down and bring him in for veterinary treatment and rehoming. He was suffering from a number of abscesses on his ears caused by fighting with other cats, but he is a gentle boy and had no trouble finding a home once he recovered.

This story highlights how creating the stray cat reporting behaviour in communities enabled us to help a cat owner who was struggling to cope, help a cat that badly needed assistance and help the community to work together, while also relieving them of a stray that needed to be rehomed.

Ann's story

A multi-cat household situation was referred to us from another welfare agency. Ann's daughter had contacted the rescue as her mother was quite ill and the number of cats she had were not helping with her health.

On visiting the house, it was clear that the privately rented home was in poor condition. The kitchen ceiling was falling inwards and the downstairs bedroom, which was constructed onto the back of the kitchen, was completely open to the elements. The back door was unlockable, there was an open drain and the flush system in the downstairs toilet was broken. The property owner required the number of cats in the house to reduce before undertaking any repairs.

The situation started with one unneutered female (Sammy). Most of the other cats were neutered, but Sammy had been deemed too young. Sammy being left unneutered, led to a further 24 cats in the household.

The Cat Watch team decided with Ann that five cats was a reasonable number to keep and cope with; this would also be an acceptable number for the property owner, so that improvements would be made to the conditions in which Ann lived in. There were obvious welfare concerns for the cats as it was clear Ann was unable to take care of so many, even though she was trying her best. Food was placed directly onto the floor and there was only one litter tray available.

The levels of socialisation were very mixed, with some cats being very friendly and others very wary. There were many young cats and a litter of kittens in the house that displayed flu symptoms. None of the cats had been treated for fleas, and it was apparent that some had a heavy burden. The young and sick cats were prioritised initially to come into the adoption centre for treatment and rehoming. The team worked with Ann over a short period to take in the cats Ann had agreed to rehome, including two females with litters.

Unfortunately, Ann became more seriously ill and had to leave her property. The community really pulled together as neighbours were feeding Ann's cats.

The team worked with Ann's daughter and the neighbours to secure the cats in order to take the rest of them into care for rehoming. This involved working with one neighbour in particular, to encourage the cats to visit her house due to Ann's home having been quickly repossessed by the property owner. This neighbour was also feeding other stray cats, so the team were also able to advise and help with these individuals too.

This case demonstrates how the unowned and pet cat populations affect each other; without intervention, these kittens would have likely entered the stray population and continued breeding. It also highlights the human welfare conditions that are intertwined with animal welfare situations, and how the two must be acknowledged and addressed simultaneously, in order to achieve long-term positive outcomes.



Cat Watch Objectives

Cat Watch is fundamentally a citizen science project, with community engagement and participation at the heart of its mission. The aim is to leave a legacy of communities caring for their unowned cat populations by increasing individuals' self-efficacy to do so.

Objectives

- Increase awareness of the stray cat population in communities and increase knowledge of how to care for them
- Create stray cat reporting behaviour
- Working with all stakeholders in communities to involve them in the project
- Communities taking responsibility of community cats and managing them as such
- Increased neutering rates of community and stray cats; strategic TNR of community cats and rehoming of stray cats
- Create a methodology to estimate numbers of unowned cats in the UK

Overarching methodology – Primary research

Door-to-door surveys were conducted with residents in each area to understand current attitudes and knowledge about unowned cats; numbers collected were broadly representative of the area. The findings from this research informed the messaging used for the project and surveys were repeated as part of the evaluation, following 12 months' project activity (in three of the five areas). Messaging was adapted as further insight was gained from CP staff through interviews, meetings and conversations with residents as the project progressed.

The evaluation phase consisted of focus groups and interviews with engaged residents, CP staff and stakeholders.

Overarching interventions

A range of interventions was implemented to provide a multi-faceted approach to community engagement. In order to address the specific behaviours of reporting unowned cats, helping to get unowned cats neutered and providing care for unowned cats, the interventions were designed using the Behaviour Change Wheel method¹⁰. The Behaviour Change Wheel is underpinned by the COM-B model of behaviour change; in order to change human behaviour, it is necessary to identify how 'capabilities' and 'opportunities' can be changed or put in place to increase 'motivation' to perform the desired behaviour. Intervention strategies can then be selected according to the relevant elements of COM-B.

All of the interventions were designed with the aim of creating and increasing contact between residents in communities with Cats Protection, with each other in order to achieve raised levels of social support and self-efficacy, and in the longer-term, self-sufficiency in looking after community cats.

Empowering communities

A project like Cat Watch cannot be successful without the buy in and support of the community and the ability to empower individuals to ensure the legacy of the project. Empowerment is an enabling process and when this is really happening, it should be possible to see outcomes like:

- individuals taking control over aspects of their lives and their environments
- communities organising themselves around issues
- tangible increased problem solving ability

A key objective of the project is to engage and enthuse individuals who are already key cat advocates. Many people in communities are already providing care for cats or are very aware of the importance of good welfare but have never been given the opportunity to do more or simply have an avenue to spread good cat welfare messages. The community cat champion volunteer role enabled cat advocates to volunteer in different capacities giving small amounts of time. This involved tasks such as helping at events and help with door knocking and social media for example. Another key volunteering role is TNR. Our TNR volunteers enable cats to be neutered effectively, efficiently and timely.

Effective community engagement in the context of animal welfare provides an opportunity for targeted, long-term, sustainable change to really improve animal welfare rather than just dealing with the symptoms. The wonderful cat advocates help Cat Watch teams to increase their self-efficacy in different key areas, which provides the basis for wider outreach and eventual change in human attitudes and behaviours towards unowned cats.





The Cat Watch app

The app is free to download and enables people to take a picture of a cat they believe to be stray and answer a few simple questions. This data is captured for analysis. The app contains brief information about stray cats and instructions for reporting strays using the app. The aim of the app was to engage with people who could use a simple method of reporting cats and who may not want to become any more involved than that.

The app gave communities a digital way of interacting and provided one of the educational elements of the project.

The app proved most effective in the Beeston Cat Watch, where it seemed most popular with students who wanted a quick and easy way to report the stray cats. In Beeston the app accounted for almost a quarter of stray cat reports.



The community hub

The hub was created initially as a local community drop in point for people to talk to CP staff and volunteers face to face about the project. It ran in different types of locations across the pilot areas and achieved varying levels of success. The challenge of having to find a suitable location before the teams can know the communities really well is significant. However, in Everton the hub really out-performed itself, meeting the aim of being a social support function, increasing members' self-efficacy and encouraging pro-social behaviours.

The hub in focus

Hub attendees say:

“ It's great company, camaraderie. It's nice to know there are like-minded people.

We all have something in common when we come to the hub. It's nice to know you've got that back-up. ”

Furthermore, it has enabled the team to be more aware of the social challenges faced by residents in this community and therefore how we can best help them to help the cats:

“ The social issues are a much bigger part of this role than I ever imagined. It's so important, it's people's lives. (CP Staff)

Because of where we are, there are other barriers to contend with. Capability around reading and writing, for example, and we have come across a range of mental illness, alcohol and drugs issues. (CP Staff) ”

The hub is playing a key role in building the capacity of the members. Many of the hub's attendees have gone on to play a much bigger role in the project – either formally or informally – from recruiting other hub members and talking about Cat Watch to others in the community through to supporting their neighbours and signing up to become a CP volunteer:

“ I'd like to be a volunteer. Being here makes me feel confident and relaxed. (Hub member)

I've wanted to work with cats for years but I needed the confidence. Now just feeding them at home doesn't feel like enough, I'd like to turn it into a career. (Hub member) ”

Introducing Lyn

Lyn is a pensioner with two of her own cats and feeds two stray cats in her garden.

Since attending the hub Lyn had her kitten spayed with our assistance, she had not realised they could be done before six months and persuaded her son to get his kitten done at the earlier age of four months. Lyn helped us trap and neuter the stray cats in her garden and has recruited other feeders in and around her street. Lyn regularly drops in to see them and feeds back any changes with the cats to us.

Following a talk at the hub by a veterinary nurse from Liverpool University's small animal practice, Lyn enrolled her older cat on both a weight management programme and the ageing clinic at the university. Her cat has now lost a significant amount of weight and as a consequence of Lyn sharing his progress and photos at the hub, other members have signed up to the programme and clinic.



These groups were very popular across all areas and resulted in residents giving each other advice, often without the need for the Cat Watch teams to step in. The groups provided unexpected evidence of the project's success in increasing social connectedness within the community at times, with close neighbours who had never before spoken to each other forming bonds over their shared care of community cats.

Facebook has proven to be an excellent way of participants leading on content and conversations, meaning CP teams can respond with advice and direction if needed, while allowing autonomy for the group to flourish. In Everton, the Cat Watch group has also provided a platform to engage with other local cat focussed social media groups, with admins of all groups tagging each other about posts requiring attention.

The Facebook intervention, aimed specifically at stray cat reporting and encouraging neutering of cats, has empowered the members to model good practice, give information and advice to others and be a source of peer-to-peer support.



Lyn's daughter sent us the following message:

My mum loves the Wednesday meetings. They have really brought her out of her shell, as she hasn't had a group of friends since she retired 20-odd years ago. The only time she ever went out was shopping or hospital appointments so the group has been amazing for her especially to get her confidence back as she became very withdrawn and shy around people. Now she's doing amazing and looks forward to our Cat Watch group and being able to interact with friends again.

Media and Events

Holding events and attending existing ones

The teams held their own events in the community and ensured they were present at events organised by other community groups and stakeholders as much as possible. Events were always well received and provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness. However, they perform best when they exist alongside concurrent face-to-face activity and in areas where there is already an element of dynamic stakeholder activity.

Media interventions

Other types of media supported the core interventions. Printed flyers and posters were door dropped to all households and left in key locations throughout the areas. Updated printed media was also utilised to keep the community informed. Video Facebook advertising outperformed industry standard in terms of engagement figures. Outdoor advertising on billboards, bus stops and phone kiosks provided advertising at scale in key locations to raise awareness. Flyers, posters and outdoor advertising was printed in languages appropriate to the area. Residents made positive comments to members of staff about the outdoor media, so anecdotally we know they made some impact.

Finding the cats and door-to-door engagement

We were able to map the reports of cats across the area. This meant we could create 'hotspots', enabling the next phase of project activity – door knocking on hotspot streets to identify cat caretakers and checking 'cold spots' to ensure these really were 'cold' and not just unreported areas. Following this period of engagement, it was possible to implement strategic TNR, developing relationships with cat caretakers and residents, working towards a sustainable future for the community cats.

The door-to-door engagement is invaluable for developing rapport with individuals and the existing cat advocates in the community. As well as building on the cat population intelligence, this intervention created supporters for the Cat Watch, with people encouraged to attend events, volunteer or just stay in touch and continue to provide the teams with information. One resident who looked after a community cat called Bobby said: "When the girls knocked, a door opened for me and it opened for him (Bobby the cat) too."



Estimating the unowned cat population

Data collected from public reports and confirmed locations of unowned cats provide valuable intelligence to explore the numbers of unowned cats living in urban areas. The numbers of stray cat reports will also reflect duplicates and false positives. This explains the cat numbers helped compared to the numbers reported. Population modelling of these areas is ongoing with the objective to provide robust insight into the number of unowned cats in urban communities in the UK.

Wider reach

The Cat Watch project has been represented at seven conferences. Articles on the Cat Watch project have been published, including peer-reviewed scientific publications, news releases and communications on CP and other websites. This sharing of information has provided opportunities to disseminate the project to a wider audience, including academics, veterinarians, animal welfare specialists and the public.

Areas in focus

(results as at the end of the evaluation period)

Bulwell

Profile

(source: Nottingham insights 2014, 2011 census)

Total population
16,151

in the
10%
most
deprived areas
nationally

White British
residents
81.4%

Cat Watch Timeline

September 2016 – July 2019. Evaluation timeline: September 2016 – September 2018.

Impact

1,345
cats reported

122
stray cats neutered

118
owned cats neutered

70
stray cats rehomed

Bulwell continued

As the first pilot area, Bulwell was measured initially via process evaluation in order to assess impact; residents who had been involved with Cat Watch in different ways were asked how they felt about Cat Watch being good or bad for cats and the community overall. They said it was good because:

“ It is good to protect the stray cats in Bulwell.

Can help cats off the streets and lower the number of stray cats.

Watch out for cats that need help and keeps the population down.

Because it is making us aware to look out for and help stray cats. Didn't know there were so many strays.

Some people don't know what to do about stray cats or how to get them help or find information to help the stray cats.

It is social and brings neighbours together too.

I haven't heard of others doing it – necessary thing and unique. Encourages community spirit and brings people together.



The strongest agreement across different groups was that they felt more positive about the benefits of getting unowned cats neutered, which suggests this change in attitude was one of the main change impacts of the project.

In 2018, a series of surveys assessed how Cat Watch had changed human behaviour within communities. The results were as follows:

Cross sectional survey – was any change in behaviour towards unowned cats due to awareness of Cat Watch?

- 882 behaviours were reported as a way to help cats

- people aware of the project were more likely to report unowned cats as a way to help them and more likely to have started reporting cats in the last two years (since the project started)

- they were also more likely to have provided or helped arrange neutering for an unowned cat (30% aware of Cat Watch v 13% not aware of Cat Watch)

- more likely to report unowned cats now compared to previous years (68% v 56%)

Pre-post survey – resurveying community members in 2018 who were randomly selected in 2016 before Cat Watch began

- there was a marked increased behavioural intention to arrange neutering for unowned cats (76% in 2018 v 29% in 2016)

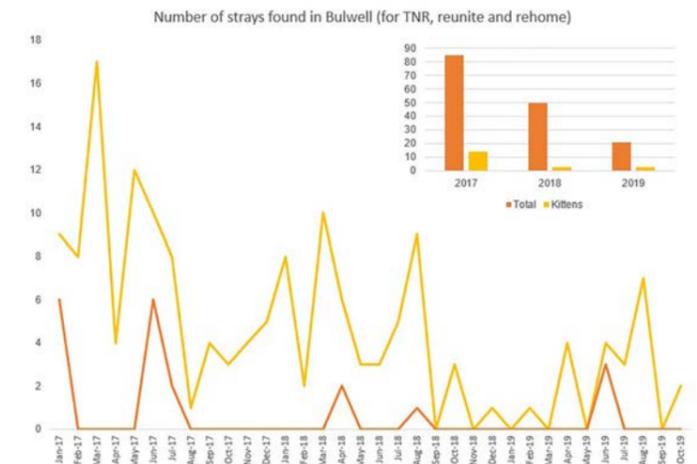
Targeted survey – A survey of residents who had actively engaged with or volunteered for Cat Watch

- 91% reported a sense of enjoyment and personal achievement due to being involved with the project

- 47% reported increased sense of community and 26% reported increased self-esteem

Following the amazing response from 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, comparing 2017 with 2019 we have seen a 75% decline in the total number of cats found on the streets, illustrated below.

These encouraging results resulted in the next phase of Cat Watch and a further four pilot areas.



Bulwell continued

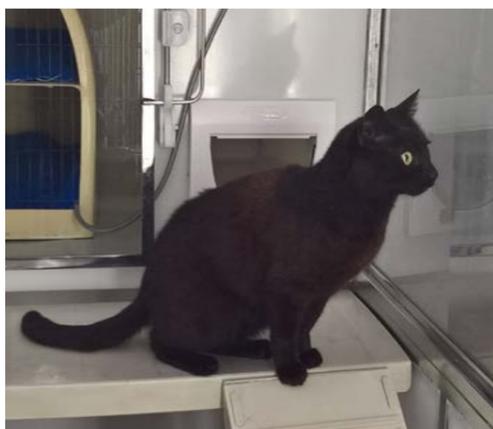
Building trust

the case of

Jeffery



A black, male cat with an old leg injury was reported to us at the Cat Watch community hub in Bulwell by a resident who lived on the street. The team door knocked on this street as part of their outreach plan and found three residents who were looking after the cat, who we named Jeffery. Jeffery's main feeder explained that he had been abandoned and wasn't coping with no longer being a pet and living a community cat lifestyle. Jeffery was taken into our Nottingham Adoption Centre for rehoming.



After seeing the help that the Cat Watch team gave to Jeffery, residents started to approach us for help with other situations. One of Jeffery's carers disclosed she had a female cat and kittens and needed help to get them neutered. Another resident was looking after eight stray cats. The team helped to get them veterinary care and the resident was able to continue to look after some of them. They were doing well and enjoyed being his community cats.

Altogether, a total of 29 cats (and their carers) were helped on this one street. This was possible due to the trust built with residents and therefore their willingness to work with us to improve the cats' welfare and help them to cope better.

Images: Top: Jeffery surviving as a community cat.
Bottom: In his pen at the adoption centre, waiting to be rehomed

Everton

Profile

(source: source: Liverpool City Council statistics)

Total population
16,137

2016

58%
of the area
falling within
most deprived
1% nationally

2015 Index of multiple deprivation

White British
residents
88.6%

Black and
minority ethnic
residents
11.4%

Average
household
income
£18,043

CACI Paycheck 2017

41.9%
children in
poverty

HM Revenue & Customs

Areas in focus

Everton continued

Cat Watch Timeline

September 2017 to present time. Evaluation time line: September 2017 – September 2018. Surveyed 754 residents.

Impact

979
cats reported

154
stray cats
neutered

78
stray cats
rehomed

Resident awareness and attitudes towards cats

2017

- 7% say there are no stray cats in their area

- 19% say the health of unowned cats is poor

- 25% think unowned cats are good for the community

- 51% know that charities can help with neutering

- 66% think neutering is important for unowned cats

- 70% think neutering is a good way to reduce numbers

- 17% think females should have a litter before neutering

2019

- 44% say there are no stray cats in their area

- 9% say the health of unowned cats is poor

- 31% think unowned cats are good for the community

- 63% know that charities can help with neutering

- 83% think neutering is important for unowned cats

- 90% think neutering is a good way to reduce numbers

- 21% think females should have a litter before neutering



General engagement and participation

- 10% of residents aware of Cat Watch (females twice as likely to be aware)
- Over half of the residents felt the project had achieved a positive impact for cats and the community
- 64% more confident about reporting, 58% feel increase in self-efficacy to help cats, 59% felt supported by the project

Overall, the Everton community really warmed to the project and demonstrated a strong desire to be involved and help the cats. Residents who attended the hub intervention reported feeling more

confident, more connected to their community, more able to help the cats, and because of these factors, felt an increased sense of wellbeing.

There were also areas for improvement. The negative change in attitude about females having a litter before neutering could perhaps be attributed to heightened emotional responses caused by a greater awareness of the stray cat problem and seeing street kittens frequently. A greater understanding of why this change in attitude has happened and how to address it is required going forwards. Although more residents started to provide cats with food and shelter, there has also been a fall in numbers of people who say they would be likely to take a cat to a vet to be neutered (from 26% to 17%). To some extent, this is not unexpected, when a service provider begins a project in an area, the public can feel like they no longer need to be involved or do as much. Clearly, there was also a huge drop in residents' perception of stray cats in the area and TNR results in fewer unneutered unowned cats. These factors, along with the public's increased inclination to report unowned cats could have resulted in fewer people taking action themselves. Nuanced interventions to raise self-efficacy, decrease reliance on service providers and continue to keep people engaged with their current levels of activity are of paramount importance.

Everton continued

The delectable **Mr Grey** (aka Six Dinners Sid) The consummate community cat

Mr Grey was well-known and loved throughout Liverpool; he became famous through the Facebook group 'Scouse Pets 2' and quickly acquired a loyal following, delighting people with his cheek and artfulness.

Following Jane's initial post asking if anyone knew him and attaching his paper collar, feeders and carers starting springing up all over the place and it swiftly transpired he had a number of 'mums' and 'dads' dotted around the local area diligently awaiting his arrival each day. Everyone had their own special name for him (Terry, Smokie, Bear BB, Romeo, Cheeky Monkey, Six Dinner Sid and Mr Grey) and it became possible to track his daily route where he consumed breakfast, second breakfast, elevenses, lunch and dinner punctuated by naps and cosy times in front of various fireplaces, on sofas, beds and cushions.

He was a huge cat with a large heart (and tummy!) and everyone followed his adventures with relish.

We will never know what circumstances led to Mr Grey being out on the streets at the age of 14. He had undoubtedly been owned at some stage, and perhaps the fact he wasn't neutered until later in life contributed to his straying, but we do know he made the most of his predicament and charmed everyone he met.

He was audacious, charismatic, greedy and fussy, demanding only the best fresh food, and could be grumpy if he didn't get his own way.

The Everton Cat Watch team helped Mr Grey's community of carers to connect and join together in his care.

When he became ill his family of carers came together to give him every possible chance they could. He was taken back and forth to the vets regularly, he had surgery, medication and prescription food but very sadly his kidney disease was too far advanced. During this time he moved into Jane's house permanently where she slept on the sofa with him and spent many hours trying to tempt him with different foods.

The time to say goodbye came too quickly but his community of carers gathered at the vets in a special room with him and he was put to sleep surrounded by all those who loved him so much.



Images: Top: Mr Grey wearing his paper collar to try to find any potential owner before being neutered. Bottom: Enjoying resting in one of his community carers' homes

Some thoughts from Mr Grey's carers:

“ Mr Grey, you stole and broke all of our hearts but we are blessed to have known you, a true gentleman and ambassador for every community cat making their way out there.

When I first set eyes on this boy, strutting through the garden, I knew he was special! As soon as I paper-collared him and put him on Scouse Pets, 'the antics of Mr Grey' became known. This big, cheeky, loveable bear knew how to play us, he became famous and made everyone laugh and fall in love with him. Through him, I have made friends for life. The last few months he spent here safe and warm will stay in my heart forever; we have laughed, loved, stressed and cried a river over this handsome boy. We are devastated and broken-hearted that he had to leave us.

We all loved him from day one. Who couldn't love that face and his pathetic little cry. Cats do come and go but this handsome boy will never be forgotten.

I used to enjoy his little visits. He had such a cute face, you just couldn't say no! It was love at first sight. Miss him not being around. However, I made a friend through him, he was a gentle giant. ”

Areas in focus

Bradford – BD5 postcode

Profile

(source: Government IMD data 2015)

In the bottom
1%
of deprived
areas nationally

28.8%
white British; BME
accounts for remaining
demographics with
48.5% Pakistani

Council ward data 2019

Cat Watch Timeline

January 2018 – August 2019. Evaluation timeline: January 2018 – January 2019. Surveyed 610 residents.

Impact

773
cats reported

23
stray cats
neutered

22
stray cats
rehomed

Resident awareness and attitudes towards cats

2017

3% say there are no stray cats in their area

32% say the health of unowned cats is poor

12% think unowned cats are good for the community

77% feel vet treatment is important when cats are sick

66% think neutering is important for unowned cats

22% think that looking after community cats is
everyone's responsibility

2019

Over a third say there are no stray cats in their area

12% say the health of unowned cats is poor

17% think unowned cats are good for the community

88% feel vet treatment is important when cats are sick

83% think neutering is important for unowned cats

34% think that looking after community cats in
everyone's responsibility

General engagement and participation

- 10% of residents aware of Cat Watch (females twice as
likely to be aware)

- 47% of residents felt the project had achieved a positive
impact for cats and the community

- 58% feel more confident about reporting, 53% feel an
increase in self-efficacy to help cats, 53% felt supported by
the project

Overall, BD5 was the most challenging Cat Watch area.
BD5 is extremely disadvantaged with multiple issues within
its social context. The lack of waste control and therefore
build-up of rubbish in the area allows the cats to scavenge. A
lack of knowledge about what neutering is meant that it was
not understood or necessarily regarded as important. Cats
are very much liked in this community. However, although

community cats were often perceived as being owned,
they were mostly not being provided with food, shelter or
veterinary treatment. Therefore, it was necessary for the
team to address what good welfare might look like with the
community and a change in tack on messaging to this regard
was implemented, alongside a new intervention in the form
of a newsletter.

In this area, there was a decline in the numbers of people
providing care for cats in 2019 and this extended to a decline
in pet cats being neutered too. As with Everton, the very
nature of the project being in place may have affected this.
However, those residents who have engaged with the project
through interacting with staff on the ground increased their
level of support for unowned cats and when interviewed,
they felt the numbers of cats had decreased. Obviously if
there are less cats, then there is also less for people to do.

Houghton Regis and Dunstable - LU5 5 and LU5 4 postcodes

Profile

(source: Government IMD data 2015 and Central Bedfordshire Council statistics from 2011 census)

This area is of mixed affluence and was chosen as such to compare against the other very deprived areas and the affluent 'control' area

89.7% white British;
2.8% white other;
1.2% white Irish;
1% Indian;
5.3% other

LU5 5 is more deprived than LU5 4 in the main.

LU5 5 ranks between 1-5 within IMD data and LU5 4 ranks between 6-10, where one is most deprived and 10 is least deprived

Cat Watch Timeline

February 2018 – present. Evaluation timeline: February 2018 – February 2019. Surveyed 770 residents.

Impact

279 cats reported

20 stray cats neutered

7 stray cats rehomed

Resident awareness and attitudes towards cats

2018

Residents believe there is an unowned cat population problem and that those cats are in poor health

Access to neutering and vaccinations is **quite** important – 82%

2019

Residents believe there are now fewer cats and those still in the community are significantly healthier

Access to neutering and vaccinations is **very** important – 92%

General engagement and participation

- 10% of residents aware of Cat Watch overall which rises to 14% in LU5 5 where the team conducted most of their work, due to the need in this area
- Pet cat neutering has increased in the area
- More than half of residents feel that the Cat Watch project has had a positive impact for cats
- People generally feel that Cat Watch has empowered residents to look after unowned cats

In this mixed affluence community, awareness of stray cat issues was already high, with many residents already providing food and shelter resources for cats. The strays were in the main entire males and FIV was of high incidence. However, only four of these were put to sleep due to being unsuitable for an indoor home, highlighting that the majority of these strays were very friendly and were in need of a home. Residents taking part in reporting cats was the main way in which they engaged with the project, 16% of

those who had been made aware of the project through the various communication channels followed this up by attending one of the Cat Watch events. The face-to-face contact with staff was very important to residents in this area and 90% of cats were reported through this medium.

As with the other areas, there is seemingly some decrease in the support residents are giving to cats. However, this goes in hand with the increased likelihood of reporting strays and that rehoming of the unowned cats will leave residents with fewer cats to look after. Very engaged residents are keen to stay involved and do more. With an already high baseline of cat care and positive neutering attitudes, the neutering and return or rehoming of the community cats will mean there are now fewer cats to give support to. Therefore, it is likely this is the reason for reports of decreased support rather than decreases in individuals' self-efficacy. Additionally, in this area the team carried out specific work with some residents in teaching them how to use a trap. In these cases, residents felt confident and able to trap a community cat for neutering.

Areas in focus

Beeston

Profile

(source: 2015 IMD data)

Beeston was chosen as the 'control' pilot area. This is because Beeston is a relatively well-off area of Nottingham and is comparatively less deprived than the other pilot areas.

NG9, which was the Beeston postcode of focus, ranked between 6-8, where 10 is least deprived.

The Beeston economy is generally good with unemployment low and low percentages of people in receipt of out-of-work benefits.

Cat Watch Timeline

xxxxxxxxxxxx

Impact

223
cats reported

33
stray cats neutered

3
stray cats rehomed

General engagement and participation

Although over 200 cat reports were made within the first 12 months, it transpired that many of these cats were owned cats. This was expected in Beeston.

Of all the Cat Watch pilots, attitudes of Beeston residents were less positive towards unowned cats with less awareness around their wellbeing and neutering. However, the number of reported cats was still high, the community hubs had good attendance and engaged residents supported the Cat Watch team.

The cost and time involved with caring for unowned cats were reported as the barriers for cat advocates and

caretakers in Beeston. In interviews with residents, the main impact for them was the difference the project had made to the unowned cats as they were happier and healthier:

“Where would I be without you? He'd still be roaming around fighting. It's all down to you.”

The opinions expressed about the project and the Cat Watch team were overwhelmingly positive:

It's remarkable. I just can't believe how wonderful the organisation is.”

The case of Sir Baslow

The Beeston Cat Watch team received a report about a black-and-white stray cat and quickly made contact with the resident who was looking after him, through our door-to-door engagement. They had already provided him with an outdoor shelter and were feeding him regularly.

The cat was in poor condition with fur missing and sore patches on his back. The team knew it would be crucial to trap him as soon as possible so he could receive care. We then continued to let the caretaker know all about what TNR was and how it would be carried out. The caretaker had been feeding him for around two years, was very fond of him, and was very happy for him to come back once he had treatment so she could continue his care. We spoke to the caretaker at this stage about the risks of him potentially having Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) and therefore the potential that he may not be able to be returned if it was best for his welfare to be put to sleep or rehomed. His caretaker found this hard at first but understood the importance of doing what was best for him.

His blood test was negative for FIV and FeLV, which was great news. However, his skin condition would need ongoing treatment for a while, which couldn't be provided to him while he was living out on the streets. Therefore, once he had been neutered and received initial treatment to make him more comfortable, he was taken into the adoption centre.

This little cat was named Sir Baslow. He was nervous and shy at first but was coping well with centre life. His skin condition was confirmed as flea allergic dermatitis, which had become sore and infected. He also had ear mites and needed a dental. As he started to feel better

with treatment, he decided that he loved everyone and everything!

It didn't take long for someone to come along and completely fall in love with Sir Baslow. Throughout the process, his caretaker was updated with his progress and they really wanted to go and see him before he went off to his new home, illustrating the bond between community cats and their caregivers. They arranged with the centre to go and see him and they had some last cuddles before his new owners collected him.

Sir Baslow, now Archie, is very happy in his new home, his owners are completely in love with him and regularly send the centre photos and updates on his progress.



Images: Top: Sir Baslow living as a community cat. Bottom: In his new home a few weeks later



Conclusions and next steps

The Cat Watch approach has been people-centred and multi-faceted to ensure communication channels were varied and accessible. Building social networks and having a continued presence have been key to the community outreach and engaging with cat caretakers and cat advocates in all of the pilot areas.

Importantly the project achieved the human behaviour change desired in creating stray cat reporting. This in turn raised awareness of the overpopulation in communities and enabled shifts in attitudes towards the care people believed unowned cats needed and the importance of neutering.

Awareness of a problem and changing attitudes and beliefs about it are important first steps to behaviour change. Behaviour change takes time and requires community participation in order to build on changes in attitude, to move intention to change to real behaviour change.

Going forwards the ultimate aim of Cat Watch is the community ownership of solutions for the unowned cats. The emphasis of interventions in future Cat Watch communities will always be on increasing self-confidence and feelings of perceived control and autonomy as this approach will enable individual self-determination and empowerment. The project will build on the success of stray cat reporting behaviour to increase further individual actions people can take to improve the welfare of community cats.

Wider recommendations would include making stronger links with socio-economically disadvantaged communities through collaborative working with animal welfare agencies and the human welfare agencies that support residents and community projects. Working in this way to create longer-term social change will enable tangible 'one welfare' outcomes – where people who need help are also assisted so that they can better help cats in their communities.

Behaviour change takes time and requires community participation in order to build on changes in attitude, to move intention to change to real behaviour change.

Appendix

- References
- Published papers
- Conference references

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Conference references - Cat Watch presentations

Human behaviour change for animals conference – October 2018

Association of Charity Vets conference – February 2019

Human behaviour change for animals workshop – April 2019

Association of Dogs and Cats Homes conference – May 2019

Cats Protection National Conference – June 2019

Animal Welfare Research Network annual meeting – September 2019

Society for Companion Animal Studies – September 2019



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