

THE CAT SUPPORT GROUP

(Founded in 2001)

**Accepted as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
Charity Registration number NIC 100721**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

(1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023)

Chairperson

Mrs Kate McGowan

Hon. Treasurer

Miss Sandra Johnstone

Hon. Secretary

Mrs Heather Cammock

Membership Secretary

Mr Richard Brown (Resigned from Committee November 2023)

Committee Members

Mrs Valerie Skelton

Mrs Carol Dougan

Mrs Jean Dykes

***We call them dumb animals, and so they are, for they cannot tell us how they feel,
but they do not suffer less because they have no words. Anna Sewell (1820 - 1878)***



HISTORY OF THE CAT SUPPORT GROUP

The Cat Support Group was formed in 2001. We were accepted as a charity by HMRC in 2004 but now have been registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland with Reg. No. NIC100721.

At present we have a membership sitting in and around 85, with a membership fee of £20.00 per annum.

We do not have a shelter, but our volunteers work from their own homes to look after kittens and cats which come into our care; with the aim of re-homing as many of these animals as possible. Our "no-kill" policy ensures that no healthy animal is ever put to sleep.

We have a Management Committee to oversee and approve the running of our affairs, consisting of a Chairperson, Hon. Secretary, Membership Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and up to three other non-office bearing Committee members.

To generate income, we have various fund-raising events throughout the year.

OBJECTIVES OF OUR CHARITY PLAN

1. To rescue stray and unwanted cats and kittens and to rehabilitate and re-home.
2. To promote the neutering and spaying of all cats and kittens not required for breeding.
3. To help and advise the people on the care of cats and kittens, especially in a rescue situation.

We endeavour to meet these objectives by ensuring: -

All sick cats/kittens are given appropriate veterinary care and brought to a clean bill of health before being put forward for re-homing.

All rescue animals are neutered or spayed when rescued or, if too young then this will be carried out as soon as they are old enough.

Feral cats are trapped where possible and are neutered /spayed as appropriate. At this point they are also de-fleaed/wormed before being returned to their colonies. Ferals are provided with food as regularly as possible, and a watch is kept for any cat which appears to be ill. If the animal can be caught it will be taken to a vet for examination.

We help and advise people who get in contact with us and people tend to find this useful, if not indeed comforting, if they are in a difficult or worrying situation.

THE CHARITY TEST

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland requires the Cat Support Group
To show how our charity is of benefit to the public: -

1. We are the only cat charity that is 'open all hours', indeed our volunteers often receive phone calls late at night or at weekends when other help lines are closed. Previous Cliftonpark Avenue Shelter volunteers earned a lot of respect for long years of service in an area where others feared to tread particularly when "The Troubles" were at their height. This has resulted in people who would not otherwise consider asking for assistance from 'outsiders' feeling comfortable enough to pick up the phone or indeed call with one of us for help.
2. Vets ring us for help as they know we will respond promptly if at all possible - we do not make empty promises.
3. Not having the financial, physical, and mental stress associated with having a shelter frees our volunteers up to give the most valuable resource of all - time. We get calls from people wanting 'rid' of cats but if we take the time to talk to them, we find that actually we can help them to keep their cats.
4. Sometimes they cannot afford to feed them, so we help with funding. Maybe they need to go into hospital or have been forced to seek alternative accommodation and have nowhere for the cats to go in the interim - we can, either try to find a volunteer to board them, or go into the house and feed them.
5. A colony of feral cats that grows month on month due to kittens being born is very stressful and can cause conflict in a neighbourhood. If we get the cats neutered not only does the breeding stop but the objectionable odour of tom cat spray disappears too.
6. Many friendships are forged through neighbours jointly feeding cats - older people make contact with people who not only get involved with feeding the cats but end up helping the pensioners themselves when the need arises. By helping the cats and occasionally a small dog, we have helped not only the person directly involved with the animals but the wider community.

COMMITTEE'S REPORT 2023

Dear Members

Here we are again, it is hard to believe another year has passed in the life of our Cat Support Group and it was lovely to end 2023 with a Christmas celebration returning to the Lansdowne Court Hotel to catch up and socialise instead of grabbing quick conversations when our fundraising sales are in full swing throughout the year.

We held three sales during 2023 in May, September, and November and a big shout out to everyone including attendees, stallholders, and the donators of items, as these are essential to bolstering the Groups Funds in order to continue to operate. We are trying hard to come up with new ideas on how improve and keep the sales fresh and it was lovely to welcome Heather Long on board with her creative crochet items and to see our book stall morph into a side line of greeting cards and homemade jams.

The welfare work has of course continued throughout the year with cats and kittens being trapped, neutered, and spayed, with many hours being dedicated to rescues. Given we do not operate a shelter it would be a remiss not to mention our fellow partner charities who assist us when necessary in taking in vulnerable animals and offering them love, shelter and food, so focusing on 2023 a big thank you to Lila's Legacy, Belfast Kitten Rescue, The Barn Rescue Centre, and of course our own little band of rescue warriors who are out there on the ground helping all animals in distress.

We received many calls for help through the year, here is just a small snippet of activity during this reporting year:

- Assisting with trapping strays, checking for microchips, and if unclaimed neutering, spaying and re-homing. During 2023 we also got involved with supporting and feeding two groups of ferals in Saintfield and Ballygowan.
- Helping with a situation that had developed needing cats trapped at New Barnsley where our member Jeanette managed to trap and spay/neuter 21 out of 22 cats with 12 of those cats being female. The cats were desperately hungry, and food was donated from various individuals and ourselves, with Seventh Heaven supplying snugs and straw. Carol Dougan trapped and had 36 cats spayed and neutered during 2023 and as you can see other rescuers are also intervening to do the same. This results in the most challenging element of cat rescue, as foster places need to be secured for all lost/stray or abandoned cats until they are re-homed. It's becoming an increasingly difficult task given that rescue and foster homes are extremely scarce especially during kitten season.
- Saving a ginger kitten where our member Jackie travelled to a recycling depot in Mallusk and rescued the wee mite. Being badly injured he was taken straight to the vet where it was touch and go whether he would survive the weekend. But he defied all the odds and pulled through and has been adopted by member Lynne (kitten now known as Alfie Moon) and dominates all the dog residents in the house.
- Assisting a Care Home in Banger when we were notified of a cat with a shoulder wound. Although the Home had been looking after the cat, we found on attending the vet it was chipped and the owner was duly contacted confirming she had not seen her cat in 3 years. The vet found necrosis was present in the wound and a procedure was undertaken to remove the infection. The owner agreed to cover part of the cost with our Group stepping in and paying the extra. The owner agreed to relinquish ownership given that she had taken in a replacement cat during the 3-year period and the Care Home decided to adopt the cat and cater for all his future needs by opening an account for him and taking out insurance. So, with a little help from CSG the cat (Scooter) found his forever home with the residents of the Care Home where he has an unending supply of laps to sit on, and hugs and pets for the rest of his days.

We will continue to be vocal in highlighting the problem of not spaying and neutering cats which perpetuates animal welfare problems evolving and getting out of control causing unnecessary expenditure for small animal charities such as ours in having to intervene. We would just like to end this report with thanking you all for your continued support and donations over the year. We hope despite the challenging environment and ever-increasing vet bills we will continue to be able to operate and see that no animal suffers unnecessarily when thanks to your generosity the CSG can help.

Yours sincerely, Kate, Sandra, Heather, Val, Jean, and Carol

Report from the Honorary Treasurer

This has been my seventh year as Treasurer of the Cat Support Group, and I am pleased to report that we have continued to provide help to animals and their carers in need or distress.

A Statement of Accounts for the Year Ending 31st December 2023 which has been subject to independent examination by the CSG Auditor is attached, and I would encourage you to study it.

Receipts for the year came to £13,385. During 2023 we held 3 fundraising sales, contributing £3,035, a further £7,791 being from Membership Fees or Donations.

However expenditure increased greatly, from £27,120 to £35,528 that is by 31%. Over 77% of the total, £27,639, was for payments to Vets (all across Northern Ireland). The corresponding figures for the previous 2 years were £10,987 and £18,915

Seventeen people, many of whom are members of the Group, received financial help with feeding feral colonies or cats being fostered, a total of £5,420.

You can see from the Statement of Accounts the range of other receipts and payments.

You will realise that the annual expenditure for 2023 significantly exceeded income, by £22,142. Although we usually report an annual deficit, this has been steadily growing, and in fact over the last 10 years our deficit has totalled over £100,000 ! The Group has only been able to sustain this position because of generous legacies received in the past. At 31st December 2023 the balance of Investments totalled £56,706, but at current levels of income and expenditure the CSG may be limited to only one or two more years.

At the AGM last year we discussed that position, and unfortunately it has only become more acute . . .

Sandra Johnstone

(Honorary Treasurer)

Cat Support Group (NI) - Charity Registration number NIC100721

