

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 2024

(1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024)

Chairperson

Mrs Kate McGowan

Hon. Treasurer

Miss Sandra Johnstone

Hon. Secretary

Mrs Heather Cammock

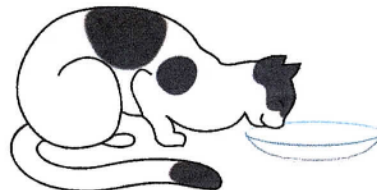
Committee Members

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 2024

Dear Members

At this point in the year in thinking about updating you on all our Cat Support Group activities made possible by your donations the Committee has to remind itself that it is the narrative of the 2024 Reporting year that needs to be recounted in this Report rather than the present moment in time. Therefore it is a good point in time to reflect the 2024 highs😊(wonderful cat rescues and success stories) and lows😞 (continually watching the bank balance in respect of spiking vet costs) and be ever amazed and thankful for the fact that our Group continues to exist and operate thanks to our wonderful membership.

The story of 2024 began bleakly with our finances on a downward spiral and the Committee actively pursuing the question of how we could get better value for every pound spent on veterinary care. It is definitely the case as small local independent veterinary practices get swallowed up by the conglomerates treatment costs escalate. January was spent by

putting our house in order by working to secure the best discounts and deals on veterinary treatment packages for our rescues and treatment of ferals as we could with the practices we interact with the most. One bonus highlight was the emergence of a new practice 'Forestside Veterinary Clinic' who have been most accommodating in assisting with arrangements around neutering/spaying of ferals caught at any point of the day which is so welcome given the Group does not have any type of shelter to operate as a 'holding point' whilst awaiting specific appointment times.

Given the financial situation an extraordinary Committee meeting was held in January 2024. That meant the Committee actually formally met five times during 2024 rather than the usual four (outside of that regular communication continues throughout the year via e-mail and phone). It was great to see so many members support the regular four seasonal sales during the year which were followed by our annual Christmas lunch/fundraiser at the Lansdowne Hotel.

I know everyone likes to hear about the cat welfare and rescue work being undertaken so here are just a few 2024 snippets for you:

- A successful outcome was achieved in respect of a request for assistance for an eye operation for a 'Mallusk' cat. Vets for Pets had carried out the treatment and the vet actually ended up adopting the cat.
- An elderly lady who had been feeding 3 outdoor cats had sadly died and no one was interested in taking on looking after the cats. Our intrepid cat warrior Carol set traps and secured two of the cats which were neutered and spayed at Cornerstone. The Barn despite current demands agreed to take them in after the appropriate flea, worm and blood testing had been done. The third cat was finally trapped and after similar veterinary treatment was taken in by Belfast Kitten Rescue
- One of the most major rescue efforts during 2024 was the successful trapping and spaying/neutering of 75 cats by Carol with the majority of those coming from three farms (Randalstown, Lower Braniel Road and Portadown). Each farm giving a donation to funds for assisting. Carol continues to keep in touch with the farms as there is still the odd straggler cat to be caught.

Our cat rescue update can't end without a shout out to the intrepid Jackie Petrie for her wonderful efforts to deploy all possible tactics to find that lost family cat or to trap those elusive ferals - even if that should take place in the middle of the night when the rest of us are cosy and comfortable in our beds!

As we sign off this brief 2024 Committee update the Committee would like to record regrets on the passing of two of our long-term members Florence McGaffin and Joan Gillespie. Their generosity in remembering the Cat Support Group in their wills means that the gloom of a financial downturn in our finances has temporarily been abated and we start the new chapter of 2025 with renewed positivity of being able to continue to help all those furry adorable bundles of cuteness and equally all those one-eyed battle scared cats with attitude that cross our paths and need our help which we will continue to give to the best of our ability.

Thank you all for your support.

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

Report from the Honorary Treasurer

This has been my eighth year as Treasurer of the Cat Support Group, doesn't time fly! 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 2024 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 £18,020. During 2024 we held 4 fundraising sales, contributing £3,998, we are also grateful to have the support of Heather Long who raises funds for the group at other events. A further £5,208 came from Membership Fees and Donations, with an additional £4,403 through Gift Aid.

Our expenditure in 2023 had been exceptionally high, but happily this has stabilised, and with outgoings of £23,862, it means our deficit of £5,842 is the second lowest of the last 6 years. Over 81% of the total, £18,531, was for payments to Vets (8 practices all across Northern Ireland).

Twelve people, many of whom are members of the Group, received financial help with feeding feral colonies or cats being fostered, a total of £3,004.

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

At the AGM last year we discussed the financial position, and the fact that over a 10 year period the group had accumulated deficits exceeding £100,000. The committee has been trying to take steps to mitigate that. This report shows our resources to be £50,864, including 2 legacies of £1,647. However, in the current financial year, (ie not included here) the group has received 2 further significant bequests, which has greatly eased financial pressure moving forward.

Sandra Johnstone

(Honorary Treasurer)

Cat Support Group (NI) - Charity Registration number NIC100721