

# Somerset Youth and Community Service

## Be good to your dog or cat session plan

**Aim:** To identify how to treat pets well

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the session the participants will:

- ➔ Have agreed what is good and bad practice with pets
- ➔ Know what goes into looking after dogs and cats

**Group size:**

**Time:**

**Venue:**

**Materials:**

- Scenario sheet
- Quiz sheet
- 'Responsible Pet Ownership' handout
- Flipchart paper and marker pens
- Bells / buzzers

TIME	WHAT	WITH
5 mins	Introduce the session and ask the group what makes a good dog or cat owner. Then ask them which is best, dogs or cats?	
20 mins	Read out the two scenarios given below. After each, ask the group to identify what may be the issues for each and what could be done to improve it.	Scenario sheet
10 mins	Ask the group to shout out what they would put on a 'Pet charter'	Flipchart paper and pens
15 mins	Split the group into three and give each a bell or noise making thing. Do the Pet Quiz (included), read out each question. Teams have to be first to ring their bells before answering. Have a prize for the winning team.	Quiz sheet
5 mins	Give out the 'Responsible Pet Ownership' handout and talk about anything interesting.	'Responsible Pet Ownership' handout



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## Pet scenarios (1)

### Getting a puppy

Paul decides to buy a puppy as a surprise for his mum's birthday. She's wanted one for ages, but hasn't bought one because she's not sure she can look after it. Paul thinks he can probably help a bit, as long as his sister helps too – which he knows she'll agree to when she sees how cute it is. He knows a man who has a staffie bitch who's about to have a litter and who says he can have a puppy cheap. He knows the puppy will be fine because the mum-to-be has had loads of litters in the last couple years. The pup doesn't come with pedigree papers, but the man says is a true staffie, so that's OK. Paul also thinks he might be able to breed from it himself and make a bit of money in the future.

*What might be the issues with this scenario?*

- Paul is buying a puppy as a present for someone who has already decided not to get one. Maybe there are other reasons for her decision too.
- Paul hasn't got a commitment from the whole family about looking after the puppy, he thinks he can 'probably' help and his sister is even vaguer. It's really important to be sure you have the time and recourse to look after any pet.
- Why is the puppy cheap? It's recommended that dogs have no more than one litter a year, for the good of their health and a bitch that's had more than that regularly isn't being treated well. Buying from a breeder like this just encourages ill-treatment of dogs.
- Why doesn't it have papers? Is it really a staffie?
- Good dog breeders only breed from good examples of the breed, otherwise flaws and health problems can be exacerbated. You shouldn't just breed from any dog for money.



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## Pet scenarios (2)

### Looking after your cat

Susie's cat is behaving really badly. The last four times she's come home from school, she's found that the cat has messed in the hall. She has had enough! She's tried smacking the cat and rubbing its nose in the poo, but it's not working. She's also noticed that the cat has become grumpy, hisses and tries to scratch - not his usual loving self. She's going away for the weekend and has decided to shut the outside and leave some biscuits in the shed. If he does it again when she gets back, she's going not going to let him back in at all.

*What might be the issues with this scenario?*

- Cats are naturally clean animals – if a cat starts to mess in the house, its either ill or stressed – it's not doing it to be annoying. You should try to find out what might be stressing the cat and try to remedy it, or take it to the vet.
- Smacking a cat (or rubbing it's nose in its poo) will not teach the cat anything. It will not know what it has done and will just think you are attacking it.
- If a cat changes behaviour in this way, he is likely to be ill. You need to take him to a vet.
- Leaving a cat that may be ill outside for the weekend is cruel. No-one can help him if he gets worse and he won't have his familiar home or people for comfort. Whenever you go away, you should arrange for someone to look after a pet, not just leave it outside. Also, leaving biscuits out may mean he doesn't get enough to eat – and they may get stolen by other animals
- Pets are for life and if you can't (or don't want to) look after it anymore, you should make sure it is properly rehomed, rather than just shutting it out.



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## Dog and Cat Quiz

<b>1</b>	How did the boxer dog get its name? <i>The boxer dog gets its name from its habit of standing on its hind legs and battling at its opponent or playmate with its front legs – in other words, boxing!</i>
<b>2</b>	When were cats first domesticated? <i>The first domestic cat is recorded 7,000 years ago. It is most likely a relative of the African wild cat.</i>
<b>3</b>	Who has more teeth, dogs or cats? <i>Dogs – they have 42, cats have only 30</i>
<b>4</b>	How many complaints of animal cruelty and neglect against dogs and cats did the RSPCA investigate in 2014-15 (to the nearest 10,000) <i>115,000</i>
<b>5</b>	How many cats and dogs are there in the UK (to the nearest million)? <i>15.8 million (7.4 million cats and 8.4 million dogs)</i>
<b>6</b>	Which is the dog's most acute sense? <i>Smell – a dog has 220 million olfactory receptors, compared to humans, who have between 5 and 10 million.</i>
<b>7</b>	When does a cat purr? <i>They purr when they are scared, in pain and content. The purr has been shown to improve bone density and promote healing</i>
<b>8</b>	What percentage of American dog owners have a birthday party for their pet? <i>9%!</i>
<b>9</b>	How much of its time does a cat spend grooming itself? <i>A cat spends about 30% of its waking hours grooming</i>
<b>10</b>	What is the tallest dog breed? <i>The Irish Wolfhound, males stand between 30 – 34 inches (76 – 86 cm) at the shoulders. Standing on its hind legs, a wolfhound can stretch to seven feet tall (2.1 metres).</i>
<b>11</b>	What does it mean if a cat's tail is swishing from side to side? <i>The cat is angry and about to pounce! If the tail is raised, it means the cat is relaxed or friendly.</i>
<b>12</b>	Who has the most different vocal sounds, dogs or cats? <i>Cats – who have over 100 vocal sounds, whilst dogs only have about 10</i>
<b>13</b>	How many hours per day do cats sleep, on average? <i>Around 16 hours – in the wild, big cats will sleep even more. Only sloths spend more time sleep</i>
<b>14</b>	How big is the world's smallest living dog? <i>The worlds smallest living dog is called 'Heaven Sent Brandy' a female Chihuahua who measures 6 inches (15 cm) from nose to tail.</i>



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## Responsible pet ownership

Owning a pet is a privilege and, as a pet owner, you must make sure your pet is properly looked after. This includes:

- Committing to the relationship for the life of the pet.
- Be careful when choosing your pet – making sure it's right for your home and lifestyle.
- Being able to invest the time and money that the pet needs.
- Only have the number of pets you can properly care for – making sure each pet gets the food, water, shelter, health care and companionship it needs.
- Tagging or microchipping pets that need it
- Spaying or neutering your pet, or only breeding from it in a responsible way.
- Making sure your pet is registered with (and visits) a vet.
- Getting your pet vaccinated, flea-treated and wormed when needed.
- Taking your pet to the vet when it's ill and following her / his advice.
- Train your pet to do the things it has to do (walking to heel, going to the toilet in the proper place etc).
- Not allowing your pet to become a stray, be a noise nuisance or bother other people.
- Exercise your pet and give it things to do so it doesn't get bored or lonely.
- Make sure your pet is properly restrained when travelling in a car.
- Make proper arrangements to look after your pet if you are going away.
- Knowing how to evacuate your pet in case of fire.
- If you can't care for the pet any longer, make sure it's properly rehomed.
- When your pet gets older and starts to become ill, be prepared to make hard decisions in consultation with your vet about end-of-life care.

