

Winter appeal a great success

Our winter appeal raised an incredible £ 51,831. Thank you! Your continued support allows us to be here for the animals when they need us most, and we look forward to giving more animals a brighter future thanks to you.

Your money transforms the lives of cats like Kuro. Last June he was found in a gutter at only a few hours old, his umbilical cord still attached! He was premature and very small, just 73gms! Hand-reared by one of our staff, he couldn't suckle properly, and we had to drip-feed him. Being so tiny, he could only feed small amounts every 2 hours, day and night. As he progressed, he had a number of setbacks along the way requiring numerous courses of antibiotics, additional fluids and other medications. At 8 weeks old, he was hospitalised for 24 hours! This didn't stop our little fighter.



Tiny kitten

After such a rough start, he spent longer than expected in foster. However, to our delight, he found his forever home in time for

Christmas. His new family said, "Kuro, now Orpheus, also known as feral child, gremlin or goblin, has been settling in well. When he first arrived home, he wasn't at all scared and immediately explored the entire flat. He's super energetic and will play fight and chase anything, and loves running full laps around the flat when he gets his zoomies. - he even tried chomping on my plants, so now they are all out of the way!



Kuro in cat tree

He is growing up quicker than we can believe. His little face has all filled out and he's starting to look like a serious, well-behaved cat now.

He is absolutely full of beans, with energy and curiosity. There's nothing he won't attempt to climb, and he even has a floor-to-ceiling cat tree, which he sprints up full speed so that he can lie on top of the wardrobe. We've found him in

every hidden nook of the flat, and he loves jumping at us as we walk past

In short, every day has been a beautiful adventure with Orphy.

Thank you for looking after him. We are very lucky to have him."



Kuro Grown up

This beautiful boy would have never made it without all the help; the person who found him, the rescue staff, vets, you, our supporters and importantly his new family.

Thank You - We Couldn't Do It Without You

Volunteers - our growing strength

Our wonderful volunteers work so hard and support us in so many ways, making a huge difference to the animals in our care. They come with enthusiasm, in the good times and the hard times too.

The dog walkers, the cattery helpers, the farm and small animal assistants, maintenance, shops, reception, laundry and admin, everyone making their valued contribution. Always there, not always seen, but a tower of strength! They donate their time, love and compassion to the animals. We really couldn't do all our vital work without them.

Some have been with us for many years, others more recently, but all with a shared commitment to the animals.

Over the last 12 months we have recruited 14 new Community Ambassadors. They play a vital role in raising awareness of our great work within the community to inspire others to support us in any way they can.

Here, Janette and Cynthia tell us about their volunteer experience.

Janette Community Ambassador - "I approached Freshfields after losing my dog and I am currently not able to have another one. I looked to give something back for all the pleasure my dogs have given me whilst still having my doggy fix. At the moment I can't commit to regular days to help hands on but am able to give something to help the rescue by becoming a



Cynthia

Community Ambassador. In all interactions, the staff and other volunteers have been super friendly and helpful. They are grateful for the small amount of time I have contributed so far. Doing something worthwhile is a great feeling".

Cynthia Cattery Volunteer - "I have been a volunteer at Freshfields Cattery for over 15 years and enjoyed every visit. I love being around adorable cats and kittens, they are all such different characters. They make you smile and laugh and I'm delighted when a loving home is found for them. The staff are wonderful, they support and care for the volunteers as well as the animals they look after.

It is lovely to be part of "the team" at Freshfields!"



Sandra & Sue Community Ambassadors

Freshfields in the Community

We, like all animal rescues across the UK, are struggling and unable to meet the ever-increasing levels of demand for spaces. We need to adapt to help more animals well, and with less money too.

This spring, we'll be launching an important new and innovative outreach service with the aim of

doing all we can to 'Keep Pets with their People'. We'll be supporting owners with many of the issues that we know often lead to them surrendering their furry friend to a rescue, in the hope of preventing that from happening in the future. This will include sound advice and practical help relating to pet health

and behaviour, as well as free microchipping, help with neutering and much more. We'll do anything we can to help pets stay, where they belong, with the people they love.

We look forward to telling you more about it very soon!



Great progress for our Hedgehogs

In 2025 our Wildlife team focused on improving hedgehog treatments and welfare. They reviewed previous case studies and hedgehog numbers in rescue, gained additional knowledge and understanding, and shared experiences with other rescues. They made changes to the process on admittance, medication, fluid intake, more consistent heat sources, including incubators, and even the location of the hedgehogs



on-site. All contributed to us being able to help more hogs and doubled our release figures from 2024!

We were also able to significantly reduce the number of hedgehogs needing to stay with us overwinter just 17 this year, compared to 86 last year. This means many more were able to hibernate in their natural environment, where they belong.

Socialisation - a critical step in your dogs' development

All rescues are under increasing pressure across the country, and however hard we try, rescue space is always limited. More and more people are asking us to help rehome dogs who have behavioural issues, often as a result of not being socialised with other dogs or people.

Socialisation means the gentle introduction to the world for your dog. That includes different people, other dogs or animals, sounds, objects, places and experiences - in a positive, calm, and controlled way.

The critical socialisation period is a puppy 3 and 16 weeks old. During this time, what they experience, or in some cases don't experience, shapes their confidence and behaviour. Whilst socialisation is key at this critical puppy age, older dogs can still be helped.

You need to build positive associations, so they connect new things with good things that happen. Teach your dog to be curious, not fearful, and help them develop the skills to handle everyday situations calmly. It's not about how many new things they see, it's about how positive those experiences feel.



Barney at the beach

- *at a time is plenty.*
- *Watch body language - Look for signs of stress: tucked tail, lip licking, yawning, and pause to let them calm down.*
- *Balance exposure - Focus on calm, neutral encounters, and not over excitement. One friendly dog at a time, not a crowded park.*

It's important to remember that this isn't something you just do over a few days or a week; it's a calm, gradual process taking time and patience.

If your dog is socialised and you find yourself needing a rescue space, then you are more likely to be able to secure that space for them.

Barney saw very little of the world he hadn't been exposed to any of these things in his life. Socialisation was the issue preventing him from finding a permanent home. When we overcame that, he found his forever place, and now enjoys beach walks with his loving family.



Barney at home

- *Go at their pace - Let them choose to approach, don't force interactions.*
- *Pair new things with rewards - Use treats, toys, or praise when they explore something new, but treat and praise in a calm manner so you don't overexcite them.*
- *Keep it short and positive - stop before they get tired or overwhelmed, 5 to 10 minutes of something new*

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