



Charity Reg. No. 1172317

*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year*



Well, what a year 2020 has been! Who would have imagined what was in store when we sent out our last Christmas newsletter?

We hope that you and your families are well and your feline friends have brought comfort during what has been, for many, an isolated and concerning time.

Here For Cats will always be available to help cats in need and we know that this is appreciated by the continued support you offer.

Here we would like to share with you what we have been doing and where your support and contributions have made a difference to the lives of cats and their care givers throughout 2020.

We've been busy – an update from Hayley, our Operations Manager

Here for Cats has continued to operate throughout the pandemic by adapting our approach and through this challenging year we have already helped more cats than in 2019.

Keeping everyone safe has been a top priority for us and we have followed the guidelines set for our industry by keeping up to date with the latest requirements.

Home visits have not been possible though that has not stopped us from ensuring our cats are given loving homes. Following a phone interview we have asked potential adopters to provide video tours of their homes and used Google maps to check locations or when permitted we have carried out garden and front door meetings. Checking the long term commitment of potential adopters has never been more important.

Some adoptions have had to take place on a trial basis as adopters have not been able to meet the cat first so doorstep handovers have taken place. Our direct re-homes have continued with video calls as a safe way for potential

adopters to meet the cat in the existing owner's home.

Adoptions have taken longer than usual due to the challenges of some vet practices closing, changing opening hours, providing limited services and consults. Booking cats in for standard procedures like neutering and vaccinations has been difficult as many vets had appointments booked up weeks in advance. However, our good relationships allowed us to limit the knock-on effect.

We are so grateful to the vet practices that have continued to be as flexible as possible in supporting our vital work. A special thanks goes to Bagshot Vets 4 Pets who have always gone the extra mile whenever we needed them.

Some calmer weeks gave us time to tackle items at the back of the queue. Our adoption forms went digital during the first lockdown resulting in less paperwork and a more efficient and professional service for our adopters.

We have been looking at developing and relaunching our volunteer recruitment and fostering scheme, updating and writing policies, creating important leaflets and taking part in educational webinars which will benefit the welfare of the cats in our care in the long term. More on this in the spring.

Cats in Focus

In spite of the difficulties we have faced we like to focus on the positive and share the good news which, of course, is only possible through the help we receive from our supporters.

We have dealt with a variety of situations, however, here are some numbers and highlights:

- **At the time of writing we have helped 244 cats.**
- **Within these, 188 were adoptions of which 33 were direct from their original homes.**
- **Working with other charities we have trapped 30 feral cats, 22 of which were neutered and return to their colonies/sites. Five were re-sited to more suitable/safer locations and 3 were adopted (friendly cats who were FIV positive). We neutered 79 altogether.**
- **Of the cats we have supported this year, 34 were over 10 years old, 56 were strays and 83 were 6 months or under.**
- **We reunited 3 lost cats with their grateful owners. A good reminder about the importance of microchipping!**
- **In addition, on a case by case basis, we were able to provide 22 cats and their families with financial support for urgent care.**

Sadly, during 2020, 12 cats that we were supporting needed to be put to sleep and two others sadly died. This aspect of our work is never easy and we always act with a cat's best interest at heart. We offer our condolences to any one of supporters/adopters who have lost a beloved companion during 2020.



Lola helps combat loneliness and supports mental health

Beautiful Lola has become a star during the Covid-19 pandemic by helping residents at Sunrise Senior Living, a residential and dementia home in Esher, deal with the loneliness and isolation of lockdown. Unable to see their families Lola has proved to be a loyal and loving friend. It was three years ago the home decided to look for a cat to join the community of 50 residents. We felt that friendly Lola who was looking for a new home would be well suited to the environment.

Sophie, who is the activity co-ordinator at Sunrise Senior Living, says that Lola has been 'perfect' and helped with the mental health of those living at the home which has been especially important during the Covid-19 crisis.

"A lot of residents have missed their families and Lola filled that gap with love and attention," she says.

"We recognise that cats are very good for mental health."

Lola loves attention. As well as roaming the home and loving a cuddle she is also a keen mouser and likes to bring presents back for her human friends.

"She really is the life and soul of the place. We couldn't have asked for a better cat. One lady, who turned 100, told us that she was not fond of cats but she loves Lola. She has stolen a lot of people's hearts," says Sophie.



3 Little Kittens

A trio of kitten siblings, born to a feral mother were featured in our last newsletter.

All the kittens have had some tummy issues and Milly had a missing front leg so it's been a longer than usual road to recovery for them. They were all frightened and on the thin side when they arrived and out of the three, Mandy has blossomed

into a much more outgoing girl and was re-homed to a loving family recently - see her above. She is now named Opal to go with the adopters' other young HFC rescue cat named Sapphire! The adopters' two older children are really pleased with Opal's progress since she joined the family.

I think you'll agree that she is looking fabulous and that her foster mum Lorraine did a wonderful job caring for her. Lorraine is still fostering the other two kittens as they continue their rehabilitation and we will be looking to find Millie and Mollie a very special home together once they are ready.



Meet 4 of The Magnificent 7

Also previously featured and supported by your contributions were a group of 7 poorly kittens, some of which required hand rearing. They were fostered by Annie and under her expert care they have all flourished. Just recently the last 2 handsome boys Colin and Filippo went to their new home - see them here with renamed Jasmine and Dexter - all living the good life now.

Fundraising and our thanks

As always, we know that our good work would not happen without the goodwill, support and donations from all of our supporters and volunteers.

In such uncertain times the Trustees have decided to postpone any plans for a permanent site for the charity. We wish to stay lean and flexible to ensure that monies and effort are concentrated on helping as many cats and owners as possible without the financial burden of a shelter/site and additional staffing.

We are extremely lucky to have the offer of space in a few catteries when they have room in addition to the facilities that our foster carers provide.

We have however, identified the need for short term cattery accommodation close to our Operations Manager, Hayley, and close to our most used vet, Pets at Home in Bagshot.



Our Appeal

Five Acres Cattery in Wood Street, Guildford are ideally placed and very supportive of the charity.

We are appealing now for sponsors to help fund our own pens at this cattery.

We calculate the cost of a pen will be approximately £140/month.

Any amount you can donate per month towards this figure would be very much appreciated. **To contribute, click on the DONATE button on our website or send a cheque made payable to 'Here for Cats' to PO Box 338, Hampton TW12 9DS.** Regular giving allows us to give continuity to projects such as this so if you are able, please set up a regular donation.

We are incredibly grateful for any donation amount as this income is vital for the day to day running of the charity.

At the beginning of the year we were honoured to have received a sum of money following the closure of Felix Cat Rescue. FCR operated as a very successful rescue in the Guildford area for a number of years and the legacy of their work, founder and supporters will live on through the work of Here For Cats.

These funds have been invaluable to help to make up the significant fall in our income caused by the lack of fundraising opportunities this year. They have enabled us to care for cats in these difficult months. However we must continue to focus on fundraising going forward as we deal with increasing numbers of requests for help as we expect the situation to worsen over the coming months.

A Welcome and a Farewell

Here For Cats are delighted to welcome Sally Wilson to our Board of Trustees. Sally brings with her a wealth of charity sector experience and will be taking a lead role in communications and fundraising. She has already made a major contribution to the team, with her "joie de vivre", team focus and expertise. A joy to have Sally on board. Sally has taken over from Lucy Green who set up our Facebook page and used her expertise to create the thriving community we have today, so a big thank you to Lucy for her hard work.

At this time we also bid farewell to Michelle Eden, Chair and Trustee since the establishment of the charity some six years ago. Michelle will be pursuing a new venture and no doubt will be supporting the work of Here For Cats going forward. The charity as a whole, the Board of Trustees, volunteers, supporters and of course many cats, thank Michelle for her hard work, dedication and tireless enthusiasm over these years. What an amazing journey! We all wish her well in the future.

And Finally...

Our thanks and gratitude are extended to you, our supporters and volunteers, for your support to us. Without you, our work would not be possible and we hope we can work together during 2021 continuing to "give every cat its best life".

May you have a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

