

Animals and your mental health

How they can support your wellbeing and recovery

This factsheet explains different ways that animals can help your mental health and how you can get animal support. It also explains your rights and who might care for your pet in different situations. This information is for people who are 18 or over and affected by mental illness in England.

Key Points.

- Contact with animals can have a positive effect on your wellbeing.
- There are different ways to interact with animals such as pet ownership, in nature or animal therapy.
- Animal therapy is called different names. Such as pet therapy, animal-assisted intervention, or animal-assisted therapy.
- Animal therapy can mean different things. Such as, an animal visiting you in a care home or forming part of your talking treatment. Or a dog being trained to support you with daily needs.
- You might have the right to have an animal to assist you if you have a disability. These rights are under a law called the Equality Act 2010.
- The government likes landlords to accept tenants with pets. But landlords can refuse pets, unless you have a disability, and you need an animal to assist you.
- Some pet insurance will pay for your pet care if you have to go into hospital.
- Your local authority must look after your pet if you go into hospital and no one else can.
- You may be able to use your NHS personal health budget or social care direct payments for support from animals.
- There are lots of charities that offer pet therapy and pet support both nationally and locally.

This factsheet covers:

1. [How can animals and pets help my mental health?](#)
2. [What is animal therapy or support?](#)
3. [How do I get an animal to visit me?](#)
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1. How can animals and pets help my mental health?

Being with animals could improve both your mental and physical health.

Some of the benefits of having animals in our lives can be:

- Helping to reduce your stress, anxiety and blood pressure and boost your mood.¹
- Feeling calmer and more relaxed.
- Being more socially involved, like talking to animals, or talking to others with a shared interest. This could be out on walks, through nature or pet related groups. Groups may be available in person or online.
- More physical activity. Through walking, play or being out in nature.
- Having a purpose to your day, like being more responsible, having a routine and structure.
- Improved self-confidence through having a companion, affection, and support.² This may be more important to you if you live alone, are lonely or find social situations difficult.
- Improved mood through interest, laughter and smiling.

Could animals and pets have a negative impact on my wellbeing?

Being with animals can cause issues such as:

- **Emotional distress.** Like if your pet has issues with behaviour or health, dies, or goes missing. Or they do not get on with other people or pets.

- **Allergic reactions.** Like problems with saliva or fur.
- **Infections or injury.** Like if your pet bites or scratches you.
- **Financial issues.** Spending more money on pet care needs like food, insurance, vet care, grooming and training.
- **Responsibility.** Having an animal depend on you for care can affect areas of life. Like your social life, going to work or going on holiday.

Some of the above might apply to you. Or there might be other reasons why you think animals might have a negative impact on your wellbeing.

So, it is best to think carefully before getting a pet or being with animals.

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2. What is animal therapy or animal support?

Some people find that animals can support mental health recovery³ and mental wellbeing.

This type of support is often called animal therapy, pet therapy, animal-assisted intervention, or animal-assisted therapy.

The term animal therapy or animal support is not defined. It could mean different things to different people, like:

- **An animal visits you.** See Section 3, '[How do I get an animal to visit me?](#)' for more information.
- **You visit an animal.** See Section 4, '[How can I find animals to visit?](#)' for more information.
- **An animal becomes part of your talking therapy.** See Section 5, '[What is animal assisted therapy?](#)' for more information.
- **You have an assistance dog** to help with your day-to-day life. See Section 6, '[What is an assistance animal?](#)' for more information.
- **Owning a pet.** See Section 1, '[How can animals and pets help my mental health?](#)' for more information.
- **Animals help you to practice mindfulness.** Like watching fish swim in a tank or stroking an animal's fur.
- **A pet being at work with you.** Some employers allow a well-behaved pet to be present. This may be your own pet or a colleague's pet.

3. How do I get an animal to visit me?

Some charities have animals who may be available to visit you in places like a:

- Care home
- Hospital
- Prison
- University

But they are unlikely to visit you in your private home.

Often dogs are brought to visit you. But sometimes other animals are brought along, like cats, rabbits, or hamsters.

You can find a list of pet therapy charities at the in the **Useful contacts** section at the [end of this factsheet](#).

Charities generally offer support for free or low cost. But if you are unclear of cost contact the charity for more information.

Some places allow family pets to visit too. This will depend on local policy.

Speak to a member of staff if you want an animal to visit you. You could ask them to contact a charity for you.

4. How can I find animals to go and visit?

You could:

- Regularly visit friends or relatives with pets or animals. You could ask to help with activities like grooming, play time or exercise.
- You can search for local schemes involving animals. Like the charity **Riding for the Disabled Association**. You may get involved with activities like petting, riding, walking, or grooming the horse. Their details can be found in the Useful contacts section [at the end of this factsheet](#).
- Visit a local animal sanctuary, nature reserve, open farm or go on local nature walks.
- Join a local group for people who are interested in animals like a bird watching group.
- Use Apps to contact pet owners in your local area who need support to look after their pets.
- Volunteer at local animal charity such as a dog rescue centre.

If you have a support worker, you can ask them to help you get involved with animals in your local area.

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5. What is animal assisted talking therapy?

When we say 'animal-assisted therapy' we mean any animal being part of your talking therapy sessions.

You can find out more information about '**Talking therapy**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

What should I think about before starting animal-assisted talking therapy?

There is no standard regulation system for therapists such as counsellors or psychotherapists. This means someone can advertise themselves and work as a talking therapist without having appropriate training.

You might be thinking about using a private therapist for animal assisted therapy. It is important to think about if the therapist has the following:

- **Accreditation:** Therapists who are registered with an accredited body meet standards set by the body.^{4,5} This means that they have to have certain qualifications, certain experience and work to a code of ethics.
- **Qualifications:** Whilst there are no regulated qualifications for animal assisted therapy, there are courses that have a focus on animal therapy.⁶
- **Experience:** What experience do they have with animal assisted therapy?

These organisations provide information on accredited therapists in the UK.

- Health Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)
- British Psychological Society (BPS)

You can find their contact details in the **Useful contacts** section at the [end of this factsheet](#).

Also think about the cost of the sessions too. Therapy can be expensive.

You can contact a therapist directly if you have questions. Or you can ask someone to help you to make contact.

How do I find a therapist who can give animal-assisted therapy?

To find a therapist you could try the following options:

- Use the above organisations' websites to find a therapist who works with animals.
- Use a directory such as the **Counselling Directory**: www.counselling-directory.org.uk You can filter by different types of therapy such as 'animal assisted therapy' or 'equine therapy.' Equine therapy means therapy that includes horses.
- Contact a local charity or organisation that offers animal therapy. They may be aware of local therapists See the [useful contacts](#) section at the end of this factsheet for more information.

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6. What is an assistance animal?

Assistance animals are highly trained, and they can help you if you have specific needs.⁷ They are also called service animals.

The most common type of assistance animal is a dog.

You may need extra support from a dog if you have a mental illness. They are sometimes called psychiatric assistance dogs.

They can help you to manage your symptoms, such as:

- Help you keep your personal space in public
- Help you to leave a situation
- Help you to stay calm during a panic attack
- Help to interrupt your obsessive behaviours
- Take you home if you become confused
- Remind you to take our medication
- Wake you up in a morning
- Help you talk or mix with others

How do I get an assistance dog?

Some charities offer help by supporting you to train a dog to become an assistance animal.

You may be supported to:

- train your pet dog, or
- train a selected dog.

Training times will be different depending on different factors. Such as the dog and the number of tasks that you want the dog to help you with.

Charities usually offer free or low-cost support. But if you are unclear of cost, contact the charity for more information.

See the [useful contacts](#) section at the end of this factsheet for more information on assistance dog charities.

Can I pay for my pet dog to be trained as an assistance dog?

You can pay for an organisation or independent trainer to support your dog to become an assistance dog.

You may use this option if there is a long waiting list for support through charities.

Before getting your own trainer, it may be useful to think about the following:

- **Length of time.** You should be very involved in the training of your support dog. Training time will vary but it is likely to take at least 1 year. Talk to the trainer to understand the training time before the training starts.
- **Amount of money.** You will have to pay for the training. It can cost a lot of money. It may be a good idea to agree a cost with the trainer in writing before the training starts.
- **Harness and ID book.** You will not get a recognisable harness and ID book if you use an independent trainer. A harness and ID book can be useful to help show that your dog is trained as an assistance dog. If your dog is trained by a member organisation of Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) you will receive a charity harness and ID book.
- **Experience of the trainer.** Think about if the trainer can train your dog to give you the support that you need. You can ask if they have given this type of training before and talk about what the outcome was.
- **Good feeling.** Meet the trainer before you start training your dog. You will be spending a lot of time with this person, select a trainer that you feel comfortable with.

You could also contact assistance dog charities for advice or tips on choosing a trainer. You can find their details in the [Useful contacts](#) section at the end of this factsheet.

How are assistance dogs recognised?

In the UK there is no assistance dog register.⁸ This means that there is no legal proof that a dog is an assistance dog.

Assistance dogs are mostly recognised by the following:⁹

- **They are highly trained.** This means they are likely to stay close to their owner, be quiet, and do what their owner tells them to do. And are unlikely to foul in a public place.

- **Branded jacket or harness.** Such as Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK).
- **Some assistance dog owners will carry an ID book or app.** These give information about the assistance the dog gives, the training organisation and other useful information.

It is not a legal requirement for:¹⁰

- the dog to wear a jacket or harness, or
- the owner to carry an ID book.

Assistance dogs can be trained by an organisation or by their owner. This means they do not always have an ID book or branded harness. You should not be refused into buildings or venues if you do not have these things. But it is sensible to have something to say that your dog is an assistance dog, if possible.

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7. What are my rights if I have an assistance dog?

If you have an assistance dog you should usually be allowed to take them with you:

- into buildings, and
- on transport.

This is a common reasonable adjustment for people with a disability.

If you are not allowed to do this, it might be unlawful discrimination.

You can take action to try to sort the issue if you think that you have been discriminated against.

You can find more information about '**Discrimination and mental health – The Equality Act 2010**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment is a legal term in the law called the Equality Act 2010.

It means that if you have a disability, changes can be made to make something easier for you. Like a change being made to local policy.¹¹

The term disability in the Equality Act can include mental health symptoms and conditions.

Employers and service providers must make reasonable adjustments for you if:¹²

- they are aware of your disability, or
- it is reasonable for them to know about your disability.

Service providers include landlords and transport providers.

There is not a list of reasonable adjustments in the law. This is because what is reasonable for one person or situation, may not be reasonable for another.

You might need a change because of your disability. You can ask your employer or service provider for a reasonable adjustment to be made in line with law.

Below are 3 examples for when a reasonable adjustment can be made:

Example 1 - Travel.

- Abdul is told that he cannot travel in a private taxi with his dog.
- This is because they have a policy which does not allow travel with pets.
- Abdul explains that the dog is an assistance dog.
- They agree that they must allow the assistance dog to travel with Abdul at no extra cost.¹³
- An assistance dog is not treated as a pet in line with law.
- The local authority can issue a medical exemption certificate to the taxi driver. It must be displayed on their taxi. The taxi driver will not have to take Abdul and his assistance dog.¹⁴ But it may be a reasonable adjustment for the taxi company to send a different vehicle and driver to support Abdul.

Example 2 - Housing.

- Chris lives with schizophrenia.
- He has a tenancy agreement which prevents him from living with animals.
- Chris gets an assistance dog to help him with day-to-day living tasks.
- His landlord must make a reasonable adjustment to allow Chris to live with the assistance dog.

Example 3 - Work.

- Melonie lives with severe anxiety disorder.
- She needs an assistance dog to help her travel to work in rush hour.
- Her employer has a policy which does not allow dogs in the office.
- The employer must make reasonable adjustments to help Melonie work.

- A reasonable adjustment might be allowing her dog in the office. Or agreeing a later start time, so she can avoid the rush hour. It could be agreeing that Melonie can work from home.

You can find more information about how a disability is defined within law in our factsheet '**Discrimination and mental health – The Equality Act 2010**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

What if I have problems with reasonable adjustments?

A service provider or your employer might not agree a reasonable adjustment for you when you think they should.

You can take action to sort out the issue.

For example, you might be told someone might be allergic to your assistance dog so you cannot:

- enter a building, or
- use transport because.

This is likely to be unlawful discrimination through failure to make reasonable adjustments.¹⁵

You can find more information about '**Discrimination and mental health – The Equality Act 2010**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

Is an assistance dog the same as an emotional support animal?

There are differences between assistance dogs and emotional support animals.

- **An assistance dog** is trained to support a disabled person with specific needs.
- **An emotional support animal** is usually a pet who brings comfort and support to you. But they do not have any special training. They might help to significantly reduce mental health symptoms such as anxiety or depression just by being there.

Allowing your emotional support animal to be with you, could be a reasonable adjustment for you. Such as at work or when travelling. This would depend on your needs and the situation.

You might have a disability in line with the Equality Act, and your emotional support animal might help you to manage it. You can ask a service provider, or your employer, to consider allowing you access to your emotional support animal. You can ask for this as a reasonable adjustment.¹⁶

8. Do I have a right to have a pet in rented housing?

You might have right to have a pet in rented housing. But only if the landlord agrees to it under the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Landlords can include a 'no pets' clause in their tenancy agreements.¹⁷

But the government would like landlords to accept pets if:¹⁸

- the tenant asks the landlord to agree,
- the tenant is a good pet owner, and
- the property is suitable for the pet.

You might need an assistance dog. This is different to a pet. Your landlord should allow this. See section 7 – [What are my rights if I have an assistance dog?](#)

How can I try to get my landlord to accept my pet?

Landlords are more likely to agree to a pet if they think it will not cause:

- damage to the property, or
- issues for neighbours.

To help ease any worries your landlord might have, you could:

- **Provide as much information** about your pet as possible. Such as breed, personality, if they have had treatment to prevent worms and fleas, if they have been trained.
- **Get a pet reference** from a previous landlord.
- **Offer to meet your new landlord with your pet** to help them feel comfortable.

Your landlord might agree that you can keep a pet. It is best that what you have agreed is written down in your new tenancy agreement.

If you are an existing tenant, it is best you get advice on how to vary the terms of your tenancy agreement.

You can get advice from a solicitor. Or you might be able to get advice from an organisation like **Shelter** or **Citizens Advice**. You can find their contact details in the [Useful contacts](#) section at the end of this factsheet.

You can find more information about '**Legal advice – How to get help from a solicitor**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

Can a landlord charge more if I have a pet?

A landlord can charge you higher rent if you have a pet. They could charge you a higher deposit too.¹⁹ But they cannot charge more than the maximum deposit in line with law. Which is no more than 5 weeks' rent for most people.²⁰

A landlord should not charge you more if you need an assistance dog. An assistance dog should not be treated the same as a pet.

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9. Can I pay for animal therapy or support through social care or my NHS budget?

If you receive one of the following you may be able to use this for pet therapy or support:

- social care direct payments,
- direct payments through your NHS personal health budget, or
- an integrated budget.

You might be able to pay for things like:

- Support to travel to be with animals, such as a local charity, farm, stables, or an open space
- Support to volunteer with animals such as at a local animal shelter
- Training for your pet to be an assistance animal
- Animal assisted talking therapy
- App subscriptions, such as dog walking in your local area

You may be able to get animals visit you in a care home, hospital, or prison without the need for a budget. This is because charities often run these services and do not charge a fee.

See **section 3**, [How do I get an animal to visit me?](#) for more information.

What are social care direct payments?

You might have a physical or mental health issue and need help from social services. This might be if you need support in your daily life.

You might qualify for social care that will be either fully or partly paid for by the local authority. You can choose what are known as direct payments.²¹

This means you arrange and pay for your own care and support.

Direct payments give you more choice and control over your social care support.²²

You can spend direct payments on services, equipment, or activities that meet your social care needs. But the local authority must agree that your

direct payment is being used to meet your social care and support needs.²³

So, this might include something like paying to train your pet to be an assistance animal.

You can find more information about:

- Social care - Direct payments – Under the Care Act 2014
- Social care - Assessment under the Care Act 2014

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

What are direct payments through your NHS personal health budget?

NHS personal health budgets create a care and support plan that is personal to you.²⁴ It means that you have more choice and control over decisions about support to meet your health needs.²⁵

Only certain groups of people can get an NHS personal health budget.²⁶ The NHS integrated care board (ICB) in your local area will decide if you can get one.²⁷ But if you are receiving section 117 aftercare you are entitled to one.

You have a right to section 117 aftercare if you have been detained in hospital under certain sections of the Mental Health Act. Such as section 3.²⁸

If you do not have a right to section 117 aftercare, you might still be able to apply for a personal health budget. Talk to your GP or NHS health team for more information.

The below NHS webpage has frequently asked questions about personal health budgets.

www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/personal-health-budgets

You can find more information about '**Section 117 aftercare - Under the Mental Health Act**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

What is an integrated health budget?²⁹

If you have an integrated health budget, it means that both the NHS and local authority are funding your health and care needs.

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10. Who can care for my pet if I am unwell, or have to stay in hospital?

Sometimes you may need help with pet care. Like if you are unwell or you have to go into hospital. Some options for help are:

- **Family, friends, or neighbours.** You can stay in regular contact and get updates on your pet's wellbeing.
- **Pet sitter.** This may involve paying someone to go into your home to look after your pet. Tasks that they do will vary but often include feeding, walking, grooming, and playing with your pet.
- **Pet boarding.** You will take your pet somewhere to be cared for a paid professional, like a kennel, cattery, or home boarding. Your pet will usually need to be up to date with vaccinations, flea and worm treatment and microchipping.
- **Local council.** You might be going into hospital, or in hospital, and have no one to help you to look after your pet. In this situation your local council must help with pet care.³⁰ You can talk to someone involved in your care or staff at the hospital. Or you can contact your council. You can find details for your local council on this website: www.gov.uk/find-local-council The local council can recover reasonable pet care costs from you.³¹

You can check online for local charities who may be able to offer support. You will usually have to pay for a dog walker, pet sitter or pet boarder.

If you are over 65 the **Cinnamon Trust** may be able to help you. See the Useful contacts section at the [end of this factsheet](#) for more information.

You can find more information about:

- Going into hospital for mental health treatment
- Mental Health Act

At www.rethink.org . Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy.

Can insurance pay for pet care if I go into hospital?

Your pet insurance may cover pet care costs if you go into hospital. To check you can:

- read the terms and conditions of the policy, or
- ask the insurance company.

Take care before switching your policy to a new insurance company, if your pet has an existing medical condition. The new policy might not cover existing medical conditions.

You have 2 weeks to change your mind on any pet insurance policy that you take out. This is in line with your consumer rights.³²

You can find out more about pet insurance here:
www.which.co.uk/money/insurance/pet-insurance/pet-insurance-explained-a4zVJ2G7DN32

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11. Who can care for my pet if I need to escape domestic abuse?

Some charities can provide free and confidential foster care to your pet if you need to escape domestic abuse.

See the [Useful contacts](#) section at the end of this factsheet for contact details.

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12. I have money worries. What support is available for pet care?

Can I increase my income?

You can make sure that you are claiming all financial support that you have a right to, such as:

- Welfare benefits
- Council tax reduction
- Local grants
- Travel schemes
- NHS costs, such as dental or prescription

You can find more information about financial support on the **Mental Health and Money Advice** website.

[Advice for someone with mental health and money problems: Mental Health and Money Advice \(mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org\)](#)

Can I get help with vet bills?

You may be able to get help with your vet bills. Speak to your local vet to find out what local support there might be in your area.

Local charities may also be able to help with fees for treatments that help to keep your pet safe and free of illness. Like neutering, health checks, vaccinations and microchipping.

National charities may be able to help pay towards treatment costs for your pet.

See the [Useful contacts section](#) at the end of this factsheet for contact details for these charities.

What about food costs?

You may be able to access pet food banks for your pet. This will be free or low cost.

National and local charities may be able to offer support.

Search online or speak to your local vet to find local pet food banks.

What can I do to help with food costs?

- **Compare prices.** Often stores will sell the same product at a different price. This may be because of a promotion or change to stock. You can use petfood comparison websites to find the cheapest prices for your pet food.
- **Look for deals.** Sometimes stores offer extra savings for people who sign up to their loyalty programmes. Before buying a product online, search online to see if the seller you are buying from has an offer which could affect the price. Such as a voucher or coupon for free delivery or extra money off.
- **Bulk buy.** Buying food in bulk can often work out cheaper per item.
- **Weigh food.** When feeding your pet weigh their food or use a measure. This is to make sure that you are not giving them food that they do not need.
- **Think about switching pet food.** More generic brands, like a supermarket own brand, can be cheaper than buying a branded product. A lower price does not always mean lower quality. You can compare the packaging for quantity and quality of ingredients used.

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13. What support is available for my mental health if my pet becomes unwell or dies?

Pets are often a big part of people's lives and thought of as a member of the family. The death of a pet or a pet becoming unwell can cause grief and complex feelings.

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. And though grief is not a mental disorder it can cause short term intense mental and physical distress.

You may wish to get support if you are affected by grief. You can try the following places.

- **Pet bereavement support helplines.**
- **Community networks.** This is where you can have contact with others who are dealing with the loss of a pet. Some charities have pet bereavement social media support groups which you can join.

- **Friends and relatives**
- **Places of worship**
- **Mental Health Support Groups.** You can search for Rethink Mental Illness groups here: www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/support-groups and Local Minds groups here: www.mind.org.uk/about-us/local-minds
- **Talking therapy services**
- **Your GP**

You can find contact details for pet bereavement charities and community networks in the Useful contacts section at the [end of this factsheet](#).

You can find more information about '**Bereavement and grief**' on our **Mental Health UK** information pages: <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/grief>

You can find more information about:

- Talking therapy
- GPs and your mental health

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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Useful Contacts

Accredited bodies for therapists

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP is a professional association representing counselling and psychotherapy.

Phone: 01455 883300

Address: BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 4HB

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Website: www.bacp.co.uk

British Psychological Society

They represent and promote psychologists, psychology, and wider psychological professions in the UK.

Phone: 0116 254 95 68

Address: St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester, LE1 7DR

Email: enquiries@bps.org.uk

Website: www.bps.org.uk

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies
Lead organisation for cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in the UK. They promote, improve, and uphold standards of CBT practice.

Phone: 0330 320 0851
Address: Imperial House, Hornby Street, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 5BN
Email: babcp@babcp.com
Website: www.babcp.com

UK Council of Psychotherapy
A professional body representing psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors.

Phone: 0207 014 99 55
Address: America House, 2 America Square, London, EC3N 2LU
Email: via online form: www.psychotherapy.org.uk/contact-us
Website: www.psychotherapy.org.uk

Pet therapy charities

Pets as Therapy

A national charity that enhances the health and wellbeing of thousands of people in communities across the UK. They strive to ensure that everyone, no matter their circumstances, has access to the companionship of an animal. You can request a visit through their website. Though they cannot visit people in their own homes.

Website: www.petsastherapy.org

Therapy Dogs Nationwide

Through their network of volunteers, they help people in different establishments to access support from a dog. You can request a visit from their website. They cannot visit people in their own homes.

Phone: 07840 994 003
Email: enquiries@tdn.org.uk
Website: <https://tdn.org.uk>

Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA)

Charity supporting disabled children and adults, including those with mental illness. They provide the opportunity to engage with horses through activities like, riding, carriage driving, therapy, fitness and opportunities for achievement. They have support groups all over the UK.

Phone: 01926 492915
Email: info@rda.org.uk
Find a group: <https://rda.org.uk/rda-groups>
Website: <https://rda.org.uk>

Home Safari

They cover the Northwest and North Wales only. They offer a variety of animals as part of their service such as skunks, hedgehogs, bearded dragons, geckos, tegus, rabbits, and chinchillas. You can request a visit through their website. Though they can visit people in their own homes.

Phone: 01704 635245

Email: booking@homesafari.co.uk

Website: www.homesafari.co.uk

You can search online or speak to a local animal charity to find local pet therapy services.

Assistance dog charities

Assistance Dogs International

Assistance Dogs International (ADI) is a coalition of non-profit organisations that raise, train and place assistance dogs. ADI does not directly provide, train, certify or register individual assistance dogs or assistance dog teams. Their website has a search function to find organisations and trainers with ADI accreditation.

Website: <https://assistancedogsinternational.org/main/looking-for-an-assistance-dog>

Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK)

ADUK work with lots of assistance dogs' member organisations to ensure a high standard of training and animal welfare. Member organisations which train assistance dogs are listed on their website. All of their members are accredited by Assistance Dog International or The International Guide Dog Federation

Website: www.assistancedogs.org.uk/members

Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Foundation (PADs)

They support you to train your own dog to become an assistance dog. Your doctor and vet will need to support your application. They do not charge any fee to register for their training programme. Only successful candidates that complete the full training and testing will be asked to support PADs at £50 per year for membership renewal and testing. Access to their training support, online platform and trainers is free of charge. They are not accredited by Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) and Assistance Dogs International (ADI.)

Phone: 07852 212320

Email: info@pads.foundation

Website: <https://pads.foundation>

Darwin Dogs

They support you to train your dog to become an assistance dog. They are accredited by ADUK.

Phone: 07745 574332

Email: enquiries@darwins.org.uk

Website: www.darwins.org.uk

Service Dogs UK

They support people who live with PTSD who have served in the armed forces or emergency services. They match you with a rescue dog. They support the dog to become an assistance dog. They operate in the South-East and South-West of England.

Website: www.servicedogsuk.org

Veterans with Dogs

They provide assistance dogs to current and former members of the British Armed Forces who have severe mental illness. They will train a dog for 12 months. You will then be involved with training for a further 12 months.

Phone: 01626 798030

Email: info@veteranswithdogs.org.uk

Website: <https://veteranswithdogs.org.uk>

You can search online or speak to a local animal charity to find local assistance animal services.

Pet care support charities – For over 65's or if you are living with a terminal illness

The Cinnamon Trust

You and the members of your household must be over 65 to get support. Or be living with a terminal illness. Through their local volunteers they offer volunteer dog walkers, cat groomers, vet transporters and temporary fosterers.

Phone: 01736 757 900

Email: Via [website](#) contact form

Website: <https://cinnamon.org.uk>

Pet care support charities – If you are escaping domestic abuse

Cats Protection – Lifeline

Offering pet fostering to support people escaping domestic abuse.

Website: www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/cp-lifeline

Dogs Trust – Freedom Project

Offering pet fostering to support people escaping domestic abuse.

Website: www.dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/ownership/freedom-project#:~:text=Freedom%2C%20our%20dog%20fostering%20service,the%20dog%20if%20left%20behind

You can search online or speak to a local animal charity to find local support services.

Charities that help with vets bills

RSPCA

Through their local branches and hospitals they can sometimes help with vet bills.

Website: www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/care/financial

PDSA

Your pet might be able to get help from a PDSA care centre or hospital if:

- you are receiving benefits, and
- you live within the catchment area of a care centre or hospital.

Website: www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/our-services

Dogs Trust

Their emergency fund helps contribute towards urgent veterinary treatment. This is when dog owners cannot cover the full cost themselves. They can pay up to £350 if you are in financial difficulty.

Website: www.dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice/health-wellbeing/emergency-fund

You can search online or speak to a local animal charity to find local support services.

Pet illness and bereavement charities

Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support

They offer free and confidential support to anyone affected by losing a pet.

Phone: 0800 096 6606

Email: pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk

Website: www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-bereavement-and-pet-loss

Cats Protection. Paws to Listen

They provide free and confidential, end of life and grief support service for cat owners.

Phone: 0800 024 94 94

Website: www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/grief/paws-to-listen

Animal Samaritans Pet Bereavement helpline

They offer help and advice for anyone dealing with the grief of losing a pet

Phone: 0203 7459859

Email: Info@animalsamaritans.org.uk

Address: Animal Samaritans, PO box 154, Welling, Kent. DA16 2WS

Website: www.animalsamaritans.org.uk

British Horse Society's Friends at the End

They make sure that no horse owner faces losing their companion alone. They have a network of volunteers who can offer emotional and practical support. They also provide advice on euthanasia and aftercare.

Phone: 02476 840517

Email: friendsattheend@bhs.org.uk

Website: www.bhs.org.uk/horse-care-and-welfare/health-care-management/euthanasia/friends-at-the-end

You can search online or speak to a local animal charity to find local support services.

Support for your rights

Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)

This organisation gives practical advice and information about the Equality Act 2010 and discrimination.

Phone: 0808 800 0082

Text phone: 0808 800 0084

Address: FREEPOST EASS HELPLINE FPN6521

Email online form: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask

Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Equality and Human Rights Commission

This organisation provides information about discrimination and the Equality Act

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Shelter

The leading housing charity in the UK. They offer advice and help on all aspects of housing, including homelessness and poor housing through their online advice service and free phone telephone advice line. They can also direct you towards local housing organisations in your area.

Phone: 0808 800 4444

Website: www.shelter.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Give free advice to help you to sort housing, legal, money and other problems.

Phone 0800 144 8848

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

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This factsheet is available in large print.

Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service

Phone 0808 801 0525

**Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm
(excluding bank holidays)**

Email advice@rethink.org

Did this help?

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Drop us a line at: feedback@rethink.org

or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:

RAIS
PO Box 18252
Solihull
B91 9BA

or call us on 0808 801 0525

We're open 9:30am to 4pm

Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



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