



Pets change lives
We change theirs



Our focus 2024 - 2026



Introduction



This document sets out our charity's focus for the next three years and the steps we're taking to make our goals a reality.

Everyone at Blue Cross has a part to play in our future. You are all a crucial part of helping pets and people thrive together. Whether you're finding a loving home for a

pet, comforting a grieving pet owner, or crunching numbers – every action, big or small, contributes to achieving our purpose.

We've faced some difficult challenges in recent times. However, I know we'll support each other and achieve great things in the years ahead through the amazing dedication I see every day - you really do make a difference.

Your enthusiasm, commitment, and love for animals are the driving force behind our goals. In the current climate, pet owners are experiencing various challenges. Our goals are centred on ensuring we have the greatest impact for both pets and people. Together, we're creating a future where all pets enjoy a healthy and happy life with people who love them.

Thank you for everything you do for Blue Cross.

Chris Burghes, Chief Executive



I am very proud of what you have achieved for Blue Cross and the pets we care for and the people who love them - it is utterly inspirational. So, thank you for all your hard work, energy and enthusiasm, it is wonderful to see whenever I visit a Blue Cross hospital, centre or shop.

We face many challenges today but we have done so throughout our incredible 125-year history. And we'll face the future with confidence as we have strong foundations in place. Change is always with us but it will be a gradual evolution. This document sets out our plans for the next three years and it is important we all remain focused on our key goals so we maximise our impact.

Although I am stepping down as your chair this summer, I will always be immensely proud of what you have achieved for pets and their people over the last 12 years. I will follow your achievements with great interest and I am very confident that Blue Cross will go from strength to strength.

Tim Porter, Chairman

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Helping pets and people since 1897

At Blue Cross, we want a world where all pets enjoy a healthy, happy life, and where more people can experience the joy of pets. We're proud to say that we've been working to make that vision a reality since 1897.

We are a charity that provides specialist care, services and support for pets and people throughout their life together. The help we offer includes veterinary care, finding loving new homes for pets, behavioural advice, support with pet loss and education for future generations. And we're not afraid to speak up for pets and their people to create a better world.

We love the way that pets can make such an amazing difference to the people they live with, and we are passionate about the very special relationship between a pet and a person. So, we do all we can to help that relationship thrive.



Vision, Purpose and Values



Vision

A world where all pets enjoy a healthy and happy life with people who love them



Purpose

To help pets and people thrive together



Values

We are:

- Compassionate
- Courageous
- Inclusive



Key challenges for pets and the people who care for them

Increased cost of living

We expect to see a continued increase in the demand for our services as people struggle to make ends meet in a financially challenging environment. Pet owners face increasing costs of living and caring for their pets, driving more need for charitable services.

The XL bully crisis

With the government's ban on XL bullies now in force, we anticipate that large numbers of dogs and their owners will need our help. This will include neutering dogs, providing advice, and supporting owners who have to endure the heart breaking loss of their family pet.

Finding trustworthy pet information and advice

People who care for pets can encounter a lot of conflicting guidance which makes it difficult to know where to turn when they need help. Being able to find trustworthy information and advice about areas such as pet health care, animal behaviour or finding a pet most suited to their lifestyle, is crucial to helping pets and people thrive together.

Veterinary industry challenges

The veterinary profession has faced significant challenges post-Brexit due to a shortage of vets and vet nurses. Additionally, the increase in pet ownership, 3.2 million households in the UK since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, has increased the strain on veterinary practices and the health and wellbeing of their teams. Veterinary bills have risen to an all time high, making it increasingly difficult for pet owners.



Key challenges for our charity

Recruitment of necessary roles in a competitive market

One of our biggest challenges remains recruiting and retaining key people, particularly in certain areas such as veterinary and IT. Salary costs are increasing due to competition in the market and the rise in living costs. We are responding to these challenges by making sure we have a competitive offering for existing and potential employees, providing flexibility and the opportunity to undertake rewarding work. There is a similar trend for volunteering, with people gifting less time and for shorter periods. This presents a real challenge particularly in our shops and services, where we have a reliance on volunteering.

Ensuring our financial sustainability

We know that long-term financial sustainability is vital for us to continue our important work, but the current economic situation and the inflationary pressure on costs is making this increasingly difficult. We know the slowdown in the economy and the resulting impact this has on many of our donors could impact our income. Therefore, it has never been more important to make sure we are doing all we can to maintain a strong financial position and we'll be heavily focused on this over the next couple of years.

Continuing to raise awareness and fundraise in a competitive market

We're in a highly competitive fundraising environment with many other charities and causes, all looking to raise funds. With household budgets continuing to be squeezed by rising prices, we are aware that there might be challenging times ahead for all charities. We need to ensure we are explaining to potential donors why they should consider supporting Blue Cross and demonstrating the impact their donations make to pets and the people who care for them.

Improving our technology and data

In recent years, the technology landscape has evolved rapidly, and use of digital solutions to deliver services has become the standard. To enable the growth of our services and provide the experience that customers expect, we need to also evolve in our use of technology and data whilst being mindful of both cost and time pressures.



How we will help pets and people thrive together 2024 - 2026

	<p>Vision</p> <p>A world where all pets enjoy a healthy and happy life with people who love them</p>		<p>Purpose</p> <p>To help pets and people thrive together</p>	 <p>Values</p> <p>We are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate • Courageous • Inclusive
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Our goals for 2026

	<p>Sustainably expand our Veterinary Services to help 28k pets each year</p>
	<p>Increase the impact of our Rehoming and Fostering teams to help over 10k pets a year</p>
	<p>Grow our Pet Loss Support service to respond to 30k calls for support each year</p>
	<p>Develop a shared approach to tackle the issue of Responsible Dog Ownership</p>
	<p>Balance the budget on our day-to-day operations</p>

To make our goals a reality we must also

	<p>Develop our teams and increase our number of volunteers</p>
	<p>Increase awareness of our brand and engagement with our charity</p>
	<p>Evolve our technology and use of data</p>



Goal Sustainably expand our Veterinary Services

Our goal for the next three years is to grow the impact of our veterinary services. In 2023, we helped just over 25,000 pets, by 2026 we aim to help 28,000 pets a year.

To increase our impact and to support people with the increasing cost of pet care in these financially challenging times, we will focus on several key projects. This includes the continued development of our Veterinary Care Fund to give our charity an affordable way to support people and pets in need on a national scale. We aim to improve access to our services through technology and expand our virtual care service to help us reach more pets in the communities we serve.

In our animal hospitals, we'll have a continuous focus on making things as efficient and sustainable as possible. This involves an ongoing cycle of improvement and planning to strengthen and secure our workforce for the future.

We will work to raise our veterinary voice to boost our visibility in the sector, establishing us as the leaders in charity veterinary medicine. We also plan to share our knowledge and expertise by exploring how we can offer veterinary services to other charities, increasing our impact for the pets and people who need us.





Goal Increase the impact of our Rehoming & Fostering teams

In 2023 we helped just under 6,000 pets through Rehoming and Fostering Services. Our goal is to help more than 10,000 pets a year by 2026.

The rescue sector has changed beyond recognition in recent years. This means we have to adapt to meet the changing needs of the pets and people we're here to support.

We will achieve this by increasing the number of pets we help through our home-based services, such as Home Direct and fostering. Enabling pets to stay in a home environment whilst we find them a loving new family. To improve our efficiency and productivity, we will focus on introducing and embedding improved ways of working within our small animal and horse teams.

As part of our investment into Rehoming & Fostering Services we will look at the best way to expand our physical presence to reach the pets and people who need us throughout the UK.

We plan to develop our behaviour service to support this growth and to respond to the need for behaviour expertise.

Finally, we will start to explore how we use digital technology and partnerships to bridge the gap between the thousands of pets that need help and the people looking to provide a loving home. This will revolutionise our service offering, making our services truly accessible across all four nations.





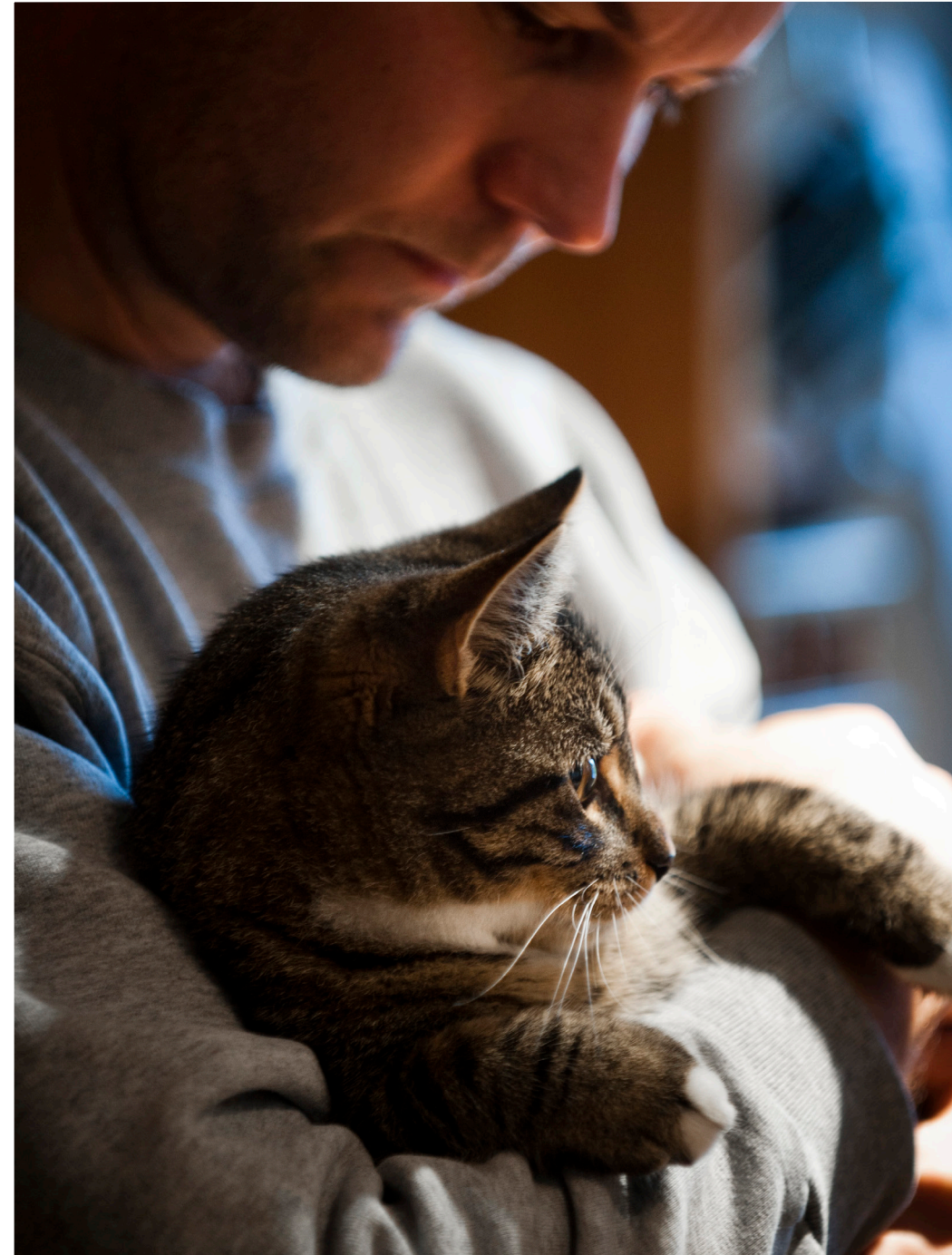
Goal Grow our Pet Loss Support service

Our goal is for our Pet Loss Support service to respond to 30,000 calls for support each year by the end of 2026.

In 2023 we responded to 20,000 requests for support. Over the next three years we want to continue to ensure that no one goes through the heartbreak of losing a pet alone, be it through death, rehoming or theft. This sets us apart from other animal charities, recognising the special bond that exists between people and their pets. It is a truly unique offering, supporting all kinds of loss across all species and we want to be recognised as the UK's number one provider of pet loss support.

We're committed to making the service more inclusive, so everyone can connect with us. We also want to explore income opportunities which will allow us to extend our support to more people who've lost a beloved pet.

As the Pet Loss Support service celebrates its 30th anniversary, we'll be increasing awareness of our charity and the service. We'll have an exciting media campaign which will also raise income and help recruit more volunteers.





Goal Develop a shared approach to tackle the issue of Responsible Dog Ownership

Our goal is to develop our Blue Cross approach to tackle the issue of Responsible Dog Ownership, and commit to a long-term plan to achieve it.

We want to make a meaningful change to the welfare of dogs and to improve public safety, through our advocacy, education and frontline service work. With the challenges surrounding recent changes to the Dangerous Dogs Act, repealing breed specific legislation and improving responsible dog ownership is more vital than ever before.

We will develop a deeper understanding around the barriers and challenges of responsible dog ownership and breed specific legislation, so we can focus our efforts to have the greatest impact.

We plan to identify people who are in most need of support, and will use communication, education and practical support to positively influence lasting change.

Working together with existing partners, such as the Dog Control Coalition, and through new alliances with influential organisations, we will ensure we have the greatest influence when calling for legislative reform.

Through national expansion of our unique Responsible Dog Ownership course, we will demonstrate the positive impact early intervention can make in achieving lasting change.

These are the first, vital steps in a long-term plan that will extend beyond the end of 2026.





Goal Balance the budget on our day-to-day operations

Our goal for the next three years is to make sure our income covers our running costs.

We have identified that over the next three-years we could see our day-to-day costs rise to become greater than our income, and we don't want to become overly reliant on our financial reserves to cover the running costs of our charity. In the challenging financial climate we also expect the demand for our services to continue to increase.

Our focus is to grow our income and manage our costs, whilst making sure we reward our people fairly and treat our suppliers ethically. We will develop a plan to increase our income through our services and by maximising fundraising opportunities. We will focus on efficiently managing our costs and ways of working to make best use of donated funds to have the greatest possible impact, which we know is really important to our teams and our supporters.

We know that being focused on our finances, having strong processes in place, and by working together we can achieve our goal to balance our day-to-day budget by the end of 2026.



To make our goals a reality we must also

Develop our teams and increase our number of volunteers

By the end of 2026, we will have created a clear and captivating People Value Proposition and significantly boosted our volunteer numbers.

Our people play a crucial role in making our charity's goals a reality. Without the right people and culture, we wouldn't be where we are today. Over the past few years, we've worked hard to develop an inclusive and collaborative culture, where we think and act as One Blue Cross.

We will now develop our People Value Proposition that defines how our charity is unique and what we stand for. It highlights the reason people are proud and motivated to be a part of our charity. It's a crucial tool for attracting and keeping talented individuals, and helping us to share the benefits of being part of the Blue Cross team.

As a charity we also need to increase our volunteer applications by 20%. This is to ensure we can recruit the number of volunteers needed to expand our services and meet our three-year goals.





Increase awareness of our brand and engagement with our charity

We need to raise positive awareness of and engagement with Blue Cross, leading to increased financial and non-financial support.

People can support our charity in lots of ways, including volunteering, donating money, using their voice through campaigns, or by taking action such as donating goods to our shops or sharing our content on their social media pages.

Increasing levels of engagement is crucial to achieving our goals: the more engaged someone is, the more likely they are to act and support our charity, as well as recommend us to friends, family or on social media. Our new TV advert and digital campaign is a great example of how we'll achieve this - showing how we'll be there for pets and owners throughout their life together.

Our focus for the next three years is to create and share the next phase of our Digital Marketing Strategy, to enhance how we connect with a wider range of audiences on our external digital platforms. We will build on previous supporter and client work to encourage people to become more engaged with our charity.

We will also continue to centralise our incoming call and email contact handling. To provide a more consistent Blue Cross experience which is cost effective and, with improved data capture, enables us to better measure the demand for our services.





Evolve our technology and use of data

We will create the Central Platform, a new technology platform for fundraising, communications and engagement activities, as well as for managing pets in Rehoming & Fostering Services.

Our focus is establishing the ways we will engage with our supporters through our new technology platform, and understanding the new digital requirements for our Rehoming and Fostering Services.

Data is essential for an evidence-based approach, it helps us to understand the needs of the pets and people we're here to support, as well as demonstrating the impact of our work.

We will be working to improve the way we manage and use our data, including how we capture and report on client satisfaction, position and promote our pets helped numbers while ensuring we meet our legal responsibilities and protect our reputation for handling data.

We'll also be enhancing the way we use our everyday technology and will explore how Artificial Intelligence can benefit Blue Cross in the future.



Our environmental commitment

Our purpose is to help pets and people thrive together. In working towards this, we recognise our charity has an impact on the environment, that we have a responsibility to manage.



We are committed to:

- protecting the environment by minimising the impact of our activities
- complying with or exceeding all applicable compliance obligations
- continually improving our environmental performance by developing new strategies

Visit our website to learn more about our environmental commitment. bluecross.org.uk/publications

Our key environmental aims



Reduce our emissions from energy consumption and business travel per full time equivalent (FTE) employee by at least **50%** by 2030 (using our 2022 emissions as a baseline). This is consistent with the science-based target aligned to limited global temperature rises to 1.5°C.



An overall waste reduction of **30%** per FTE by 2030 (benchmarked against our 2022 figures).



Ensure our energy and water use is environmentally sustainable and increasingly from renewable sources. We aim for all our energy to be renewably sourced by 2030.







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Find out more about our work, how you can support us and how we can support you by calling our Customer Care team on 0300 790 9903.

If you'd prefer to write, our head office is located at Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxford, OX18 4PF

[bluecross.org.uk](https://www.bluecross.org.uk)

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