

College lesson plan on rehoming

Main welfare aims:

To highlight various rehoming methods used by our rehoming teams at Blue Cross. This lesson is for young people who want to pursue a career in animal welfare. It aims to improve knowledge and understanding of the considerations and implications involved in the process of caring for, rehoming and rehabilitating homeless animals.

Resources needed:

[Video of Burford Rehoming Centre](#)

[Video of Sheffield Rehoming, Advice and Behaviour Unit](#)

[Advantages/Disadvantages sheet](#)

[Case study on Home Direct + questions](#)

Introduction

- Have the students form groups, then brainstorm as many words as they can that relate to the work of animal charities. They should write each word on a post-it note.
- Ask the students to put the post-it notes on a whiteboard.
- On the whiteboard write the words 'Rehoming', 'Medical care', 'Education', 'Raising public awareness' These are your categories.
- Discuss each word and which category it belongs to, moving the post-it to the right position. If any words don't fit, ask the students to suggest a new category.

Main

- Explain that although the work of animal charities is really varied, most people think of rehoming pets when they think of animal charities. However, Blue Cross is trying to move away from keeping many animals in shelters while they wait for their new homes. Animals have a much better welfare experience if they can be fostered.
- Watch the 'Tour of Burford' video and then the 'Tour of Sheffield RABU' video
- These are both Blue Cross sites, but run very differently. There will always be a place for the traditional centres like Burford, but there are many advantages to the less traditional rehoming, advice and behaviour units (RABUs) as well.
- Ask the students to complete the 'Advantages/Disadvantages' sheet, either individually or in groups

Plenary

- Ask for feedback on some of the good and bad things about each of the centres
- Take votes on: a) which one they think is best for the animals (RABU), b) which one they think is the most expensive to run (traditional centre) and c) which they think relies on volunteers the most (volunteers are needed desperately at both - especially fosterers for the RABU)

Extension activity

- It would be even better if animals never had to come into centres at all. It's not always possible, but if someone needs to give up a pet but is able to continue caring for them for a short period of time, Blue Cross has a solution.
- Read through 'case study' on Home Direct
- Answer accompanying question sheet either as a class, in groups or individually

Advantages and disadvantages of ways of caring for homeless animals

Consider this from all angles: the animals, the charity, the people giving up the pet, the people hoping to adopt.

Traditional rehoming centres

Advantages	Disadvantages

Rehoming, behaviour and advice units

Advantages	Disadvantages



Case study – Petra and Margaret

"I just cannot believe I am so lucky. And I'm forever being told by friends and neighbours how lucky I am to have such a perfect little pet," says Margaret Cox, of her beloved dog Petra.

If the little Yorkshire terrier could speak, she would surely say the same about her wonderful new owner, who came into her life when she needed it the most.

At the age of nine, Petra found herself in need of a new home last year.

Meanwhile, Margaret was struggling to find happiness after the death of her previous dog Molly, who was a gift from her late husband, John, 14 years earlier.

As well as feeling lost and lonely without a pet, the 84-year-old wasn't getting out as much as she used to and had begun to realise what an integral part of her social life a dog had been.

With the help of her daughter Jackie, Margaret started her search for a new four-legged friend and soon came across Petra on the Blue Cross website. Petra was on our Home Direct scheme, which meant she stayed with her old owner until she was rehomed, and had no need to come into Blue Cross kennels.

Soon, Petra went home with Margaret to Somerset, and they developed an immediate bond.

They are often found cuddled up together on the sofa, and Margaret is rarely out of Petra's sight. The little yorkie will even perch on the arm of the sofa when Margaret is in the, so they can see each other through the hatch in the wall.

Margaret says: "She has given me company. She is my ninth dog, and by far the best I have ever had. She is just a happy little dog.

She is gorgeous, she really is."

Together they enjoy daily walks and games of fetch in the field opposite their home. Petra has also given a sense of social belonging back to former dental nurse Margaret, who formed a local dog-walking group six years ago and was soon going to lunch with up to 25 new friends.

"I continued walking after I lost Molly but it's so much nicer when you have your own pet, and you walk together," she says."

The incredible impact Petra has had on Margaret's life is also clear for all friends and family to see.

Jackie says: "Having Petra has made such a difference to mum. She had been quite miserable and down in the dumps and needed something to lift her spirits – and Petra has done that beyond all reason.

"She is a great companion; she keeps mum fit – now mum's always on the go and has a reason to get up in the morning and somebody to talk to during the day. She takes Petra everywhere with her.

"So, they really have bonded, and it happened very quickly. Within two days, mum took her first ever selfie of Petra cuddled up on her chest sleeping. They really are good friends. It is nice to see mum smiling all the time."

Lara Alford, Centre Manager of Blue Cross Southampton, which arranged Petra's rehoming, adds: "We are so pleased that Margaret could give Petra a second shot at happiness.

"Their story is exactly the reason why we have no age restrictions on rehoming at Blue Cross. Margaret offered everything Petra needed in a home and so much more. They are a perfect match and have an incredible bond."

Worksheet - student

What benefits did being rehomed through the Home Direct scheme bring to Petra?

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What are the benefits of rehoming Petra through the Home Direct scheme for the Blue Cross?

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If Petra had gone to live in kennels, what effects could this have had on her and her quality of life?

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Worksheet - student (cont)

At Blue Cross we celebrate the amazing relationships pets and people can have, when we get things right. What benefits has Petra brought to her new family? What benefits is this new life likely to bring Petra?

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Why do you think it's so important to match a pet into the right home? What made Petra such a good match for Margaret?

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Worksheet - teacher's notes

What benefits did being rehomed through the Home Direct scheme bring to Petra?

Answers could include: less stress for Petra than if she'd been living in kennels; it isn't always in an animal's best interest to be cared for at a centre, as it is very different from what they are used to.

What are the benefits of rehoming Petra through the Home Direct scheme for Blue Cross?

Answers could include: reduced costs (staffing/electric etc), frees up a space for another pet in need (welfare).

If Petra had gone to live in kennels, what effects could this have had on her and her quality of life?

Answers could include: stress levels raised in a kennel environment; more prone to illness due to increased stress levels and exposure to other animals she could take longer to rehome as a kennel environment can heighten anxiety, which in turn can multiply any problems a dog may already have, and training and rehab can therefore take longer.

At Blue Cross we celebrate the amazing relationships pets and people can have, when we get things right. What benefits has Petra brought to her new family? What benefits is this new life likely to bring Petra?

Answers could include: Margaret is less lonely thanks to the companionship from Petra; increased well-being; easier to stay fit; better sense of social belonging; peace of mind for Jackie. Petra is able to enjoy: a secure, loving, safe environment, companionship and cuddles and appropriate exercise.

Why do you think it's so important to match a pet into the right home? What made Petra such a good match for Margaret?

At Blue Cross we make sure match every pet into the right home for its individual needs. Everyone's situation will differ, such as varying space, time, money and commitment, and every pet's needs are different too. For example, a young energetic dog will need space, time and someone who can take them for longer walks.

In this situation, Petra was the right match for Margaret. Margaret had lots of free time and needed a dog she could walk but who wasn't an energetic breed – a manageable and trusted companion, who enjoys going on shorter walks, but is equally happy to cuddle up on the sofa.