



Relationships – Pets

Oxfordshire Ambassador for Animals January 2021

Oxfordshire have created the role 'Ambassador for Animals' to promote children and young people spending time with animals.

Why?

Oxfordshire ran the 'Your Life, Your Care' survey in 2017-18 and found that 30% of 8-11 year olds and 40% of 11-18 year olds did not have a pet.

What did they do?

Oxfordshire created the new post 'Ambassador for Animals', now held by Paris, a young person who sits on the children in care council. Paris promotes children and young people's access to animals, and has taken her dog Missey to visit a children's home so that the young people there could spend time with her.

IROs have been asked to actively keep in mind the importance for children of pets and spending time with animals and discuss at each looked after review meeting.

"IROs note that, unsurprisingly, animals are often talked about with young people when they meet them. Where appropriate ... IROs have taken their own pet dogs on visits to children."

IRO Manager

A question about whether carers have pets is now included when matching children and foster carers.

What difference is it making?

- A young person living in residential care was given two guinea pigs to care for on her own. The people who supported her reported that thinking about her guinea pigs' needs has also helped her reflect on her own needs and wants, and that she loves caring for them.
- A young person who lived in foster care far away from his birth home was helped to spend time with his dog. His IRO collected the dog from his dad and transported it to him for a weekend stay.
- Another young person living in residential care got permission to have a visit from her pet dog, which was an important link to home and a settling influence.

