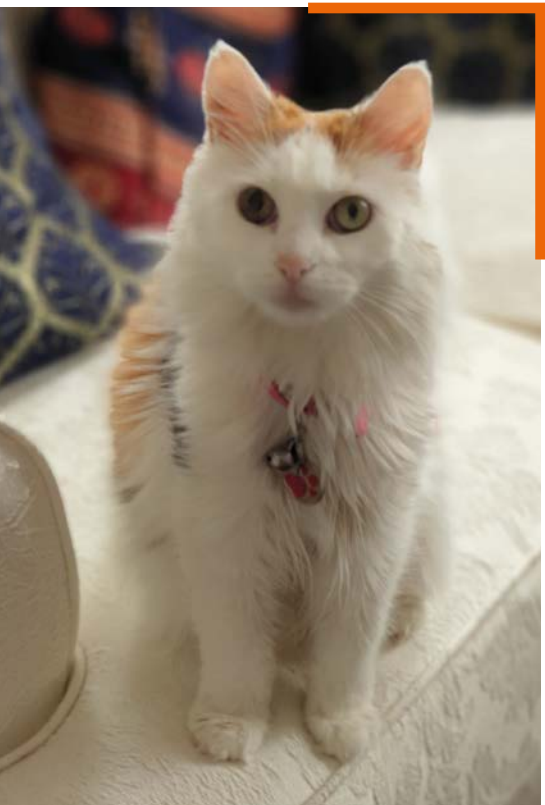
Our Special Friends

Promoting, preserving and providing the power of animal companionship

What is Our Special Friends?

Our Special Friends is a Suffolk based charity supporting people who are going through a difficult time in their lives and where animal companionship is crucial to enable them to cope. Our team of employees and volunteers provide support to hundreds of people and animals each week, often in collaboration with other resources in the local community.

Every day, we are approached by, or on behalf of, people facing all kinds of adversity. Some are desperate not to relinquish their beloved pet and vital source of comfort, stability and normality. Others have loved animals in their lives, but now find having their own animal companion is difficult.



Why people need our support

It is scientifically proven that a positive relationship between humans and animals can have a vast impact on a person's mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

Providing and maintaining opportunities for relationships between people and animals to flourish can be particularly beneficial, especially for those experiencing social isolation, loneliness or mental health issues. There may be times in all of our lives when help is needed to maintain a special bond with an animal companion.

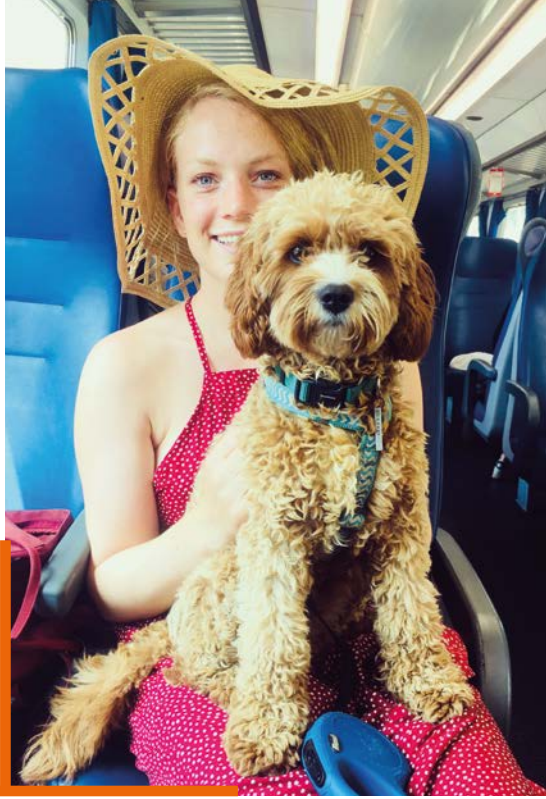
Our animal companionship support services can make all the difference. They can provide a sense of comfort and safety, reassurance, reduce anxiety and potentially decrease the need for reliance on other services.

What we do

People are referred to us in a variety of ways: self-referral, concerned friends and relatives, community, health and social care teams, associated charities and veterinary practices.

The team at **Our Special Friends** then work with each case to understand the need and consider the most appropriate course of action.

We provide practical and emotional support to enable vulnerable people to stay in their own homes, with the animal companionship they need. We are able to access hard-to-reach people, particularly when they are socially isolated. We are therefore able to identify unmet health and social care needs of both people and their animals and make appropriate referrals earlier than many other services.



How we do it

Our Special Friends assess and tailor support for around 500 cases a year. We give people and animals help at a time of crisis and provide them with the enhanced support they need for the long term:

- Assisting people to look after their own pets, enabling them to stay together, e.g., dog walking, transport or pet care
- Regular visits from a volunteer and their friendly animal companion (Animal-Assisted Activity) (AAA)
- Accompanied dog walking
- Enabling veterinary care
- Arranging temporary 'fostering to reunite'
- Support in bereavement and with difficult decisions
- Pet care planning
- Adoption support
- Empowering and identifying local support networks

Why volunteer for us?

We simply could not do our work without the help of our wonderful team of volunteers who support more than 150 people every week. Some give their time on a regular weekly basis while others help out as and when they can. Every hour given to us can make a difference, enhancing the lives of those they are helping. Our volunteers often tell us how much volunteering for **Our Special Friends** enriches their lives. If you would like to join our team of special volunteers we would love to hear from you.

'If you're debating whether to volunteer for Our Special Friends I can thoroughly recommend it. I have met some fabulous people and find it incredibly rewarding.'

Please donate

With the right funding and support, ***Our Special Friends*** has ambitious plans to bring the power of animal companionship to even more people facing personal difficulties. We are **entirely dependent on the funding we can raise** to deliver our services. ***Your gift will make a huge difference to someone's life.***

If you would like to donate to **Our Special Friends** you can make a payment by **BACS** or to set up a **standing order**, please use:

Our Special Friends Ltd
Barclays Bank Sort Code: 20-16-12 Account: 43077829

We can take card payments over the **telephone** on 01284 335 351 or you can send a **cheque** made payable to **Our Special Friends**, with your contact details to our address overleaf. You can donate directly by scanning the QR code or via our website.

Thank You

What people say about us

Family Member – pet welfare:
"When Mum became ill, there were also implications for her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a beloved companion. His welfare was in question as he needed daily medication for his eyes, regular meals and walks. Our Special Friends was a life saver – they provided us with daily support and recommendations to allow mum's dog to stay with her. I would highly recommend them."

Family member – visiting dog:
"It was so nice that when I went to see Dad he had 'news to tell me' for a change. His days used to be all the same and now he so enjoys his visits from 'the little dog' who sits on his lap to be stroked and has prompted him to reminisce about the dogs he had in the past."

Client - dog adoption:
"People have said I've got my sparkle back. Our Special Friends have been so helpful in finding these two little dogs for me. They give so much. They are absolutely gorgeous they really are."

Client - dog walking:
"A massive thank you from myself and Sy for all your help and support, the office for recruiting such special volunteers and the volunteers themselves, come rain or shine they turn up. Sy loves you all. So thank you again for caring for my boy."

Neighbourhood Nurse – accompanied walking:
"Our Special Friends' involvement with my patient has made a remarkable difference. She is more engaged and has found new joy in her life, she often talks about her weekly walks. The value of Our Special Friends in this lady's life is multiple: health benefits from the exercise, mental stimulation and socialisation in a way that suits her. Most of all, I attribute the twinkle in her eye to Our Special Friends. Thank you!"

Carer for a 92-year old gentleman with sight loss:
"Have heard nothing but great reports on how Our Special Friends helps so many people and animals and I have now seen it for myself. An amazing charity who love what they do. I am in awe."

Client - foster to reunite:

'Our Special Friends saved me from worrying and helped me immediately in looking after my dog and bird. They saved my life.''

Please contact us:

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www.ourspecialfriends.org

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

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Our Special Friends is a registered charity: 1156778
Registered address: West End House, Upper Green, Higham, Bury St Edmunds IP28 6PA