

# Pets As Therapy

## Speakers Notes

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## Notes for the Pets As Therapy talk

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be a speaker for Pets As Therapy. We are often asked to give talks to a variety of groups and this is an excellent way to publicise and promote the work of Pets As Therapy. It is also an important fundraising source for us, as groups requesting the talks often make a donation to the Charity.

These notes are not intended as the definitive script of your talk, more as guidance when you are delivering a talk. The content of any talk you deliver may need to be varied according to your audience. Whilst some of you may be used to making presentations, others may never have done anything like this before. Either way, if there is anything in these notes which you do not feel comfortable with, then simply don't use it!

The first thing many people think when asked to give a talk is that they may embarrass themselves or those they represent, in this case Pets As Therapy, by saying something wrong or inaccurate. Please don't worry as this is simply not the case.

You are there because you have been asked to be there – this means that they want to hear what you have to say, and, for that very reason, they are as keen as you are that it all goes well.

### Preparation For The Talk

Any talk, whatever the subject, sounds better the more often you do it. So practise saying it aloud around the house or anywhere else you get the chance - but not while driving to the talk itself! The chances are, that, after you have spoken it aloud a few times, your own style will start to show through and you will begin to feel more comfortable with what you want to say and how you want to say it.

### Structure Of The Talk

- Don't forget to introduce yourself and your PAT Dog or PAT Cat, explaining what role you play in the work of the charity [e.g. volunteer/Voluntary Area Co-ordinator/Supporter etc.]. It can be a good idea to ask people to keep questions until the end rather than interrupt you mid flow and cause digressions as it can be difficult to keep the flow of the talk otherwise.
- Try not to rush - take your time. A dramatic pause can be more effective than many words!
- Talk to the whole group and make eye contact throughout your delivery.
- End with an anecdote [preferably from your own experience, but one is included].
- Relax and enjoy yourself!
- Volunteers should only take **ONE** PAT Dog or PAT Cat each to the talk and the dog must be on a held lead at all times, (*NOT loose working the room*).

Finally, YOU are your own harshest critic, so if you were only half pleased with your talk, then it sounded great to your audience!

## Prompt Cards

You may find it useful to have 'prompt' cards with the major headings and sub-headings. You may also find it useful to have a spare slip of paper or card with which to cover the headings once you have dealt with them.

## Background And Introductory Information About The Charity

- The Charity's registered name is *Pets As Therapy*, see how many times you can mention the Charity's name.
- Pets As Therapy – if you take the 1st initial of each word you get PAT this is why we call the dogs **PAT Dogs** and Cats **PAT Cats**.
- Pets As Therapy is a national charity and is unique in that it provides temperament assessed/vaccinated PAT Dogs and PAT Cats with registered volunteers to visit in hospitals, hospices, residential care homes, day centres, special needs schools and many other establishments, providing comfort, companionship and therapy.

### **Explain how and when the Charity began**

The Charity was founded by Lesley Scott-Ordish in 1983, because she had seen how depressed and lonely many people in institutions became when separated from their pets. Pets As Therapy began as a pilot scheme in Derbyshire using two Collies, a German Shepherd and an Old English Sheepdog.

- Despite some resistance at first from the medical profession, the benefits of the charity, not only to those being visited but also to their carers, soon became obvious.
- The pilot was so successful that it was extended nationally just six months later!
- It was a great loss to the Charity when Lesley died in March 1997.

### **Contrast with the situation today**

Since its beginning, Pets As Therapy has registered over 25,000 dogs and 140 cats.

- Approximately 5,000 PAT Dogs and 100 PAT Cats are currently active. Obviously many of the originals have now passed on and been replaced by new animals.
- Today 150,000 Patients benefit every single week from the work of Pets As Therapy.
- Pets As Therapy operates across the length and breadth of the UK and is the largest voluntary service in Europe where domestic animals are used for the benefit of people.
- In many areas across the UK where PAT Dogs are operating, Voluntary Area Co-ordinators liaise with and help support a network of volunteers.
- Voluntary Area Co-ordinators are themselves Pets As Therapy volunteers and are usually the new volunteer's first point of contact with the Charity.
- If desired, Voluntary Area Co-ordinators will accompany new volunteers to introduce them to their placements. They also maintain contact with all of the placements being visited by PAT Dogs or PAT Cats in their area, as well as becoming involved in lots of activities, for example fundraising events.
- The Charity operates with a very small complement of staff. The staff also actively promote the service to local health authorities and the private sector with the aim of introducing even more people to the beneficial services of Pets As Therapy.

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## **Explain why the service that Pets As Therapy provides is so valuable**

Research has demonstrated that animal companionship can help speed up the rate of recovery and also assist in rehabilitating Patients.

### **Benefits To Patients And Residents Receiving Pets As Therapy Visits**

The majority of our volunteers visit people in residential care homes or in hospitals.

- People of all ages and with any type of physical or mental impairment can benefit.
- Other centres where Pets As Therapy teams visit include: hospitals, hospices, residential and nursing homes, day care centres, special needs schools etc.
- There are currently over 9,000 establishments benefiting from our service, with several hundred more on the waiting list!

#### **General benefits**

- Animals are unique in that they demonstrate **instinctive** and **non-judgmental understanding**. In this way, they are excellent “ice-breakers,” with people who, for one reason or another, do not (or perhaps cannot) communicate with either their carers or their peers but are inspired to talk to an animal.
- **Promoting reminiscence** by stimulating the memory and mental activity and encouraging people to talk about pets they themselves have kept in the past.
- **Providing an opportunity to ‘nurture’**. The need for tactile contact is one of the most basic human needs. Many people especially the elderly in nursing homes can feel that their life has no purpose - they may have boring routines, lack social contact and often many of their basic daily activities are done for them by the staff. Petting or feeding a treat to a visiting PAT Dog or PAT Cat restores a feeling of being able to contribute and care for another living being.
- **Providing simple undemanding company and companionship.**

#### **Specific benefits**

- **Reducing stress.** It has been proved that the act of stroking an animal can lower blood pressure and reduce stress levels. Some Pets As Therapy visits are even carried out during the evenings, at the request of nursing staff, as the patients find the company of animals so soothing that they do not need to take sleeping pills or other drugs in order to relax.
- **Helping people who are clinically depressed.** Often patients suffering from depression withdraw into their own little world. It has been found that the presence of a Pets As Therapy dog in this situation can break through barriers where humans have failed.
- Pets As Therapy are becoming increasingly involved in structured Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) interventions.
- **Assisting in the rehabilitation of stroke Patients.** The interaction with a PAT Dog can be particularly valued by stroke sufferers and offer both physical and emotional benefits. For example, people suffering from a stroke have often lost the power of speech. Coherent speech is not necessary in order to bond with an animal. PAT Dogs neither know nor care whether the sounds being made make sense. The tone is all-important and body language does the rest! Pets As Therapy volunteers and their PAT Dogs work with Occupational Therapists in the rehabilitation of stroke victims.
- **Through referral by Clinical Psychologists working with dog phobic children.** Pets As Therapy Dogs are used to help children overcome debilitating phobias, allowing

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the child to once again go out of the house, visit the park or play with friends without the fear of seeing a dog.

### **The staff and families benefit too!**

- If patients are relaxed and contented, this makes their carer's work easier and more enjoyable and also helps to reduce stress in the family. So they too have learnt to welcome Pets As Therapy visits.
- Pets As Therapy READ 2 DOGS Programme. In 2010 a pilot programme ran in a Junior school in Hampshire. It proved so beneficial to the children that the programme is now running throughout the U.K. and gives children the opportunity to read to a non-judgemental Pets As Therapy Dog. Many children now find the reading experience a happy experience and one they look forward to.

### **Explain How Pets As Therapy Works**

#### **Introduction**

All PAT Dogs and PAT Cats must be well mannered, with a friendly and reliable nature and above all, *they must enjoy meeting people*. To ensure that all PAT Dogs and PAT Cats have these simple but necessary qualities, they must pass a rigorous Pets As Therapy **temperament test**. Temperament tests are carried out by voluntary Pets As Therapy Temperament Assessors who have undergone a training course and understand exactly what is required of a visiting PAT Dog or PAT Cat.

During the assessment the examiner will be trying to ensure that the dog or cat is:

- **Sociable and friendly** when introduced to people, but **not over excitable** and **never jumping up**.
- **Calm and gentle when being stroked** without mouthing the person stroking it. Elderly people and children can be very fragile so any dog visiting them obviously needs to be very careful whilst around them.
- **Responsive and interested in its surroundings, but unflappable** - it is quite normal for sudden noises or events to happen during a Pets As Therapy visit, for example, a walking stick or other noisy object being dropped. The PAT Dog must be confident enough not to turn tail and run. The dog must **recover quickly and not be fearful of people** or unwilling to approach them.

#### **Additional Criteria**

- To avoid posing a health risk to the people they are visiting, all PAT Dogs and PAT Cats must **be free from parasites, wormed and vaccinated against all the major canine and feline diseases**.
- There is no maximum age limit, but all dogs must have **lived with their owners for at least six months, and be at least nine months of age**, which the charity feels is the time needed to create the bond necessary between dog and owner for successful Pets As Therapy visiting.
- PAT Dogs and PAT Cats can be **any breed, or crossbreed**. PAT Dogs range in size from Chihuahuas to Irish Wolfhounds with almost everything in between not forgetting crossbreeds!
- **Owners too come from all walks of life**. The minimum age for visiting alone is eighteen years of age, although members of the Pets As Therapy Junior Club can accompany a registered volunteer on a buddied visit. We have a lady of ninety who still 'works'. We have guide dog owners, disabled volunteers, Priests, Doctors, nurses, teachers, vets and office workers etc.

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- Because [PAT Dogs and PAT Cats](#) 'give' a lot during their visits, they are usually so tired that they will go to sleep as soon as they return to their own beds. For this reason, elderly dogs or those with health problems may not be suitable for registration.

### [How To Get Involved With Pets As Therapy](#)

- Perhaps you have a friendly, sociable dog or cat and can spare a few hours on a regular basis (weekly, fortnightly or monthly). You could certainly help by registering your dog/cat. To do this, please contact the Registrations Office ([see page 9](#)) - 'New volunteer flyer'.
- Even if you do not have a suitable pet, you can still become involved with Pets As Therapy's activities as a non-visiting supporter – 'Becoming a Supporter leaflet'.
- For the younger supporters we now have a Pets As Therapy Family membership
- Training to become a Pets As Therapy Temperament Assessor
- Become one of our team of Pets As Therapy Speakers, please contact the Placement Officer for further details ([see page 9](#)).
- Perhaps you can think of an establishment that would welcome Pets As Therapy visits from a PAT Dog or PAT Cat. Ask the establishment to contact our Head Office ([see page 9](#)).

[Leaflets](#) are available explaining how to join the scheme and answering some of the most commonly asked questions.

#### **New volunteers**

New volunteers are given the contact details of their local Voluntary Area Co-ordinator who supports them in the following ways:

- Helping them to find a suitable place to visit and accompany them on initial visits.
- Maintaining contact with both the volunteers and the placements being visited in their area.
- Organising local fundraising and publicity events.

If there is no Voluntary Area Co-ordinator, the volunteer will be given the details of the Pets As Therapy Placement Officer, who will assist.

### [What Benefits Do The PAT Dog Or Cat Get Out Of Pets As Therapy Visiting?](#)

We believe that PAT Dogs and PAT Cats should not merely tolerate Pets As Therapy visits, but should actively look forward to and enjoy them. Many PAT Dogs become excited at the sight of their Pets As Therapy ID jackets – this shows that they are looking forward to their visiting role. Pets As Therapy recognises how important it is to safeguard the welfare of its PAT Dogs and PAT Cats and has a staff member dedicated to animal welfare issues and concerns.

- PAT Dogs in particular are sociable creatures and love all the fuss and attention they receive and some thrive on the obvious admiration. It has been said that walking into a room with a PAT Dog or PAT Cat is like waving a magic wand.
- PAT Cats love the tactile contact and stroking received by patients and clients.

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- Utilising dogs and cats in this very public way, demonstrates the valuable role they play in society and also offers an opportunity to teach people about their abilities and also how to look after them properly.

### How Is The Charity Financed?

Pets As Therapy provides this service to the establishments free of charge, but as demand for our service grows so does our expenditure on recruitment and support for our volunteers.

- All volunteers pay a yearly **subscription fee** which subsidises the cost of registering the dog or cat and provides both owner and pet with identification badges, registration certificates, volunteer handbook and on-going support etc.
- **Sponsorship from major national companies and grants from grant making trusts** play an important role in helping finance the work of Pets As Therapy
- **Legacies** from supporters. When a person decides to make a will they can designate individual charities to benefit from that will. What a wonderful way to be remembered, by leaving a legacy to help continue the work of Pets As Therapy.
- Volunteers and their friends raise funds by organising a variety of **fundraising events** throughout the year.
- Other assistance comes from **donations** made by individuals, institutions, and the commercial sector.

It is estimated that the recruitment, assessment and support of a suitable PAT Dog or PAT Cat costs around £75 per annum per volunteer.

### Case Studies And Special Stories

You will undoubtedly have your own special stories to tell about Pets As Therapy visiting, but we have also included here some other stories and facts about the Charity, which you are welcome to use if you wish to do so.

#### *Border Collie Midge presented with top award at the House of Lords (Oct 2007)*

*12-year-old Border Collie called Midge, from Leicestershire, has received a top award at the House of Lords from IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) for her work with Pets As Therapy. PAT Dog Midge, who carries out her role with the help of her owner Pets As Therapy volunteer Joan won the 'Animal of the Year Award' in IFAW's 'Animal Action Awards 2007'. Midge was chosen as the ambassador to receive the award on behalf of all the animals and owners who volunteer with Pets As Therapy.*

*UK Director of IFAW, Robbie Marsland said: "Midge is a real symbol of what animals can do to help people. This charity does a remarkable job and Midge is really here to represent all that good work."*

#### *Another important aspect of the Pets As Therapy visit is the 'interest' factor.*

*When patients are visited, the vast majority of the information is one way - the visitors telling the patient about what is going on outside. Your visit, however, is something that patients can tell their visitors about.*

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*An example of this is a volunteer who was on a visit one week and found one of his 'regulars' had visitors of her own, so said he would come back later only to be told by the visitors "No, come in, we've heard all about this dog of yours." So in he went and suddenly it was the patient who had something to tell to her visitors.*

### How the phobia work started with Pets As Therapy

*Pets As Therapy's Chief Executive Maureen Hennis was involved in the very first case of treating phobic Patients with her PAT Dog in the North East. In the early 1990's, the NHS were closing down some "mental hospitals" as they were then called and were attempting to get people back into the community. One patient X had lived his whole life in the hospital and had never even seen a dog. Once in the community, he was terrified of dogs and would run out into the road to avoid them. Pets As Therapy was contacted by the clinical psychologist treating X and a treatment plan devised to help him overcome his phobia. It was so successful that the psychologist spread the word to others in the UK.*

**Phew, you've reached the end of the talk!**



### Try to end on a light-hearted note!

One of the prime functions of Pets As Therapy is to bring cheer to people in situations where they may not have much to laugh about. Try and end with a funny story or anecdote about your Pets As Therapy visiting.

Wherever possible, please stress that we need as much help as possible in recruiting new supporters and raising more funds. Any help in introducing volunteers or organising fund raising events for the Charity would be very much appreciated as there are many, many establishments waiting throughout the UK who are desperate for a Pets As Therapy visitor.

### Charity Contact Details:

**Pets As Therapy Head Office:**

59 Monument Business Park

Warpsgrove Lane

Chalgrove

Oxfordshire, OX44 7RW

**Tel:** 01865 671400

**E-mail:** [reception@petsastherapy.org](mailto:reception@petsastherapy.org)

**Website:** [www.petsastherapy.org](http://www.petsastherapy.org)

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## Charity Staff Contacts and Responsibilities

Name	Responsible for...	Contact details
<b>Denise Harman</b> <b>Helen Brooker</b> <i>Administration</i>	New volunteer registrations, update of the volunteer and establishment details on the database. Sending volunteer update reports to the Voluntary Area Co-ordinators.	<a href="mailto:reception@petsastherapy.org">reception@petsastherapy.org</a> 01865 671440
<b>Jennifer Dubois</b> <i>Volunteer Support Officer</i>	Main contact for Voluntary Area Co-ordinators. Support with local fundraising events. Support with all local fundraising enquiries distribution of leaflets, posters, collecting boxes and permission letters	<a href="mailto:jdubois@petsastherapy.org">jdubois@petsastherapy.org</a> 01865 671440
<b>Dinah Baynton-Dibley</b> <i>Placement Officer</i>	Establishment waiting list, Temperament Assessor list, Phobia Work, READ 2 Dogs and Speakers requests. To request a <b>loan DVD</b> for talks	<a href="mailto:ddibley@petsastherapy.org">ddibley@petsastherapy.org</a> 0208 589 9258

### Note to Speakers from Pets As Therapy's Chief Executive

If any groups contact the Charity directly to arrange a talk, we will ask for a donation to be made to the Charity, plus any reasonable expenses to the volunteer giving the talk. If the club or group which you are giving the talk to ask you directly about a fee, please suggest that they pay your travel expenses plus a donation to the Charity.

The donation should be sent from the speaker to the Pets As Therapy Head Office, along with the name and address of the Secretary/Main contact of the club/group in order that a 'Thank You' letter can be sent.

### Pets As Therapy DVD

A copy of the Pets As Therapy film is available on loan to all speakers. Please contact our Placement Officer for further details (*see page 9*).

### **A BIG THANK YOU!**

Thank you for spreading the word about the work of  
Pets As Therapy by being a speaker for the Charity.  
Your help is much appreciated!

## Research And Useful References

If you are interested in further research or reading to supplement your talk, the following resources may be useful:

### **Reading material**

The Placement Officer, Dinah Bayton-Dibley has a number of articles that may be of use to you in your talk; for further details ([see page 9](#)).

### **Books**

Wilson C C and Turner D C (Eds) (1998)

*Companion Animals and Human Health*. London. Sage Publications

Fine A (Ed) (2006)

*Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London. Academic Press

### **Research papers**

Friedmann E, Katcher AH, Lynch JJ, Thomas S (1990)

*Animal companions and one year survival of Patients after discharge from a coronary care unit*. Public Health Rep 95: 307-12

McNicholas J and Murray A (2005)

*The benefits of pets for older people: a review*. In: Dono J, Ormerod E, (Eds) *Older people and pets: a comprehensive guide*. Oxford: Society for Companion Animal Studies Publications

### **Websites**

The Delta Society of the USA [www.deltasociety.org](http://www.deltasociety.org)

The Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) [www.scas.org.uk](http://www.scas.org.uk)  
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