

ANIMAL GUARDIANS

Promoting positive
child and animal
relationships



03000 999 999
scottishspca.org

 **SCOTTISH SPCA**
Scotland's Animal Welfare Charity

A close-up, high-angle portrait of a young boy with dark hair, smiling warmly. The lighting is soft and focused on his face, with a dark background. The image is partially obscured by a dark overlay at the bottom containing text.

AS SCOTLAND'S ANIMAL WELFARE CHARITY WE ARE PROUD TO OFFER ANIMAL GUARDIANS AS AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE. THE PROGRAMME:

- works with children to nurture empathy and compassionate behaviour towards animals
- provides **FREE** bespoke one-to-one sessions
- covers animal emotions, needs and responsibilities
- is offered to primary school aged children
- is in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh
- offers a visit to one of our animal rescue and rehoming centres

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WHAT IS ANIMAL GUARDIANS?

Animal Guardians is a free education programme offered to primary school children by the Scottish SPCA. It is part of the Scottish SPCA's 'Prevention through Education' programme, which reaches around 245,000 children annually.

Animal Guardians is suitable for children who are showing negative behaviours towards animals, including being rough with pets or injuring animals. It is designed for children whose actions towards animals are a cause for concern to adults around them. These children can be referred to Animal Guardians to receive additional support to build empathy and compassion and develop positive behaviours towards animals.

Animal Guardians is an education programme where a child meets with a Scottish SPCA youth engagement officer during school time. The child will participate in games and activities to help them learn:

- about animal emotions
- what animals need to keep them healthy and happy
- how to be responsible when around animals



“ My daughter has a much greater understanding of how to better interact with her cat, to help her play and be more understanding of how to make it more enjoyable for the both of them. She now understands the feelings and nature of cats. ”

Parent of child who has participated in the programme

“ The work that the Scottish SPCA has done has been unbelievable. My child has decided to try and have some kind of career in working with animals after having the sessions. To turn round a young person's life is a great achievement to the centre and staff. ”

Parent of child who has participated in the programme

Professor Jo Williams and her research team from the University of Edinburgh will be evaluating the Animal Guardians programme. We need your help with this research. By helping us to evaluate Animal Guardians we can make sure it is helping children to develop more positive behaviours towards animals. It can also help us improve the programme so that it becomes even more beneficial in the future.



THE RS MACDONALD CHARITABLE TRUST

We would like to thank the RS Macdonald Charitable Trust for funding and supporting the development, implementation, and evaluation of Animal Guardians.

“

We recognise the importance of this programme in its ability to educate and establish positive child-animal interactions. Vulnerable children and young people are supported to promote animal welfare and reduce animal cruelty.

”

Rachel Campbell, Trust Director

Animal Guardians has a fantastic advisory group which includes: The City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh Woman's Aid, Police Scotland, Barnardo's, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Links Group, Paws for Progress, The University of Edinburgh Centre for Applied Developmental Psychology, CAAR and Seamab.



THE
RS MACDONALD
CHARITABLE TRUST





RESEARCH ON CHILD-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

Our research shows 70% of UK children live with their pets¹. Children form strong emotional attachments to their animals² and often think of pets as important members of their family.

However, children can also harm animals and we are working to prevent this. Research on cruelty towards animals suggests it can start as young as six years of age³ and includes both unintentional and deliberate cruelty. Sadly, Animal Guardians is already receiving referrals for children younger than six years-old.

The collaborative research between the Scottish SPCA and the University of Edinburgh shows children who think cruelty to animals is acceptable tend to:

- have lower levels of attachment to pets
- have lower levels of compassion to animals
- are less likely to believe animals have thoughts and feelings
- show less humane and caring behaviours towards animals

Nurturing positive child-animal relationships and teaching children about animals can be powerful tools in increasing empathy and positive behaviour towards animals in childhood⁴.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, neglect and bullying can play an important role in children's behaviour towards animals because children who have witnessed cruelty and violence are more likely to be cruel towards animals themselves. Research has shown links between intentional animal cruelty and human violence in which both are predicted by low levels of empathy and conduct disorder⁵. Education programmes for vulnerable children that teach them appropriate behaviour towards animals might change their behaviour and reduce the risk they will engage in animal cruelty in the future⁶.

Animal Guardians has been developed based on current child developmental theories and expertise in animal welfare education to promote empathy and compassion to children, and in turn encourage positive behaviour towards animals. Learning to handle animals appropriately and responding to their emotional and health needs can help a child to act safely around animals and avoid situations where a child or an animal could become frightened or injured.

1. Marsa-Sambola, F., Williams, J., Muldoon, J., Lawrence, A., Connor, M. Roberts, C. & Currie, C. (2016). Sociodemographics of pet ownership among adolescents in Great Britain: Findings from the HBSC Study in England, Scotland, and Wales. *Anthrozoös*, 29(4), 559-580.

2. Hawkins, R.D., Williams, J.M. & Scottish SPCA (2017). Childhood attachment to pets: Associations between pet attachment, attitudes to animals, compassion and humane behaviour. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2017, 14(5), 490; DOI:10.3390/ijerph14050490

3. Hawkins, R.D., Hawkins, E. & Williams, J.M. (2017). Psychological Risk Factors for Childhood Animal Cruelty: A Systematic Review, *Society and Animals*, DOI: 10.1163/15685306-12341448

4. Thompson K.L., & Gullone, E. (2003). Promotion of empathy and prosocial behaviour in children through humane education, *Australian Psychologist*, 38:3, 175-182, DOI: 10.1080/00050060310001707187

5. McPhe dran, S (2009). A review of the evidence for associations between empathy, violence and animal cruelty. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 14, 1 – 4.

6. Scottish SPCA First Strike Campaign (1997)



WHO IS ANIMAL GUARDIANS FOR?

Animal Guardians is an educational programme for children who require additional support to build empathy and compassion towards animals.

Children can be referred to Animal Guardians for a range of reasons including:

- repeatedly teasing or frightening an animal
- rough handling of an animal, including squeezing or picking up pets inappropriately, stroking too hard, pushing and shoving an animal
- cutting whiskers or hair off an animal
- neglecting an animal if this is meant to be the child's responsibility (e.g. forgetting to provide food or water or cleaning out a cage on numerous occasions)
- kicking, punching, or harming an animal (including wildlife)
- killing an animal either by accident or on purpose

Animal Guardians is currently suitable for primary aged children (5-12 years old). If the referred child is not within this age range, but you would like them to be part of the programme, please complete the referral form (page 15) and the Scottish SPCA will try to help.

If you are not sure whether your child would benefit from the programme or have any concerns about your child's behaviour towards animals, please phone **03000 999 999, option 5** for further assistance.



HOW DO I REFER A CHILD?

Who can refer?

A child can be referred by anyone who is in a position of care for that child. This includes:

- Parents or other relatives/carers
- Teachers
- Childcare and health professionals (e.g. Social Work, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS))
- Charitable organisations working with a child (e.g. Barnardo's, Paws for Progress)



How do you refer?

Complete and submit the referral form on page 15 and also ask both the child and the parent/carer to complete the consent forms which can be found in this booklet. One of the Scottish SPCA's youth engagement officers will then be in touch to discuss the referral in more detail.

Referral process

1. Complete and submit the referral form to the Scottish SPCA (see page 27 for contact details)
2. Initial conversation with the Scottish SPCA's youth engagement officer to confirm the Animal Guardians programme is suitable for the child.
3. If Animal Guardians is an appropriate programme for the child, the referring adult must ensure the parent/carer and child consent forms are completed and sent to the youth engagement officer prior to the child starting the programme
4. Research meeting with the University of Edinburgh research student (if applicable)
5. Child starts the Animal Guardians programme

Please note the following:

Any details received via the referral forms and subsequent information will be stored securely, and in strict compliance with GDPR. Information about our privacy policy can be viewed at [scottishspca.org](https://www.scottishspca.org).

All youth engagement officers are suitably trained in child protection and are active members of the PVG Scheme.

Any discussions during the child's participation in Animal Guardians will be kept private unless the youth engagement officer feels that the child's safety may be at risk. In this case, the information will be passed on to the person who made the initial referral or a relevant child protection professional.



WHAT WILL AN ANIMAL GUARDIANS CHILD DO?

1. Initial referral (from parent, teacher, child care and health professionals)
2. First research session (if parent/carer consent has been provided)
3. Animal Guardians workshops commence and will encompass the following:
 - recognising animal emotions and understanding animals have feelings
 - understanding animal welfare needs
 - developing compassionate and responsible behaviour towards animals
 - visit to one of the Scottish SPCA's animal rescue and rehoming centres (if appropriate for the child)
4. Second research session (if parent/carer consent has been provided)
5. Review of child's progress (completion certificate awarded and written feedback is given to the referring adult)

Animal Guardians is flexible and will be adapted to the individual needs of each child. The number and frequency of workshops a child attends will vary but in general most children will attend one workshop each week and usually participate in 6-10 workshops in total.



HOW DO I EXPLAIN ANIMAL GUARDIANS TO A CHILD?

Please find information below to help a child understand what Animal Guardians is about.

- You will work with the Scottish SPCA youth engagement officer each week
- There will be lots of games to play, which will help you learn about:
 - different types of animals
 - what animals need
 - how animals can feel different emotions just like us
 - how you can help animals by being a responsible citizen
- You will also get a chance to read about 'Lucky Max' and may meet some of the animals that are staying at one of the Scottish SPCA's animal rescue and rehoming centres
- Each time you attend an Animal Guardians session it will be just you, the youth engagement officer and a teacher/carer. It will most likely take place in your school or somewhere that you often visit and is familiar to you that is not your home
- The sessions will be short but if you do want to stay longer that is okay too
- Every time you meet with the youth engagement officer, you will talk about what you did last time and build on what you have already learnt
- You will get the chance to meet new people at Scottish SPCA Animal Guardians 'stay connected' events that run during school holidays



ANIMAL GUARDIANS REFERRAL FORM

Please read the points below and tick the box if you agree:

- I confirm that the child lives in:
(Please name local authority)
- I can confirm that both the parent/carer consent form and the child consent form have been completed and these will be passed to the youth engagement officer when referral is discussed

First name

Surname

Organisation

Job title

Telephone

Telephone (m)

Email

Information of referred child

First name

Surname

Age

Sex

Give as much detail as possible for the reason for referral

Please indicate if the child has any additional support needs

Other organisations involved (Social Work, CAMHS)

Signature

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

**Scottish SPCA reference number
(to be completed by Scottish SPCA on receipt of consent form)**

Kingsseat Road, Halbeath, Dunfermline KY11 8RY
Scottish Charity No. SC 006467

Scottish SPCA
Animal Guardians





ANIMAL GUARDIANS PARENT/ CARER CONSENT FORM

Please read the points below and tick the box if you agree:

- I am happy for my child to participate in the Animal Guardians programme
- I would like to bring my child to the Animal Guardians 'stay connected' events which will be held throughout the year during the school holidays

First name

Surname

Relationship to child

Information of referred child

First name

Surname

Age

Sex

Name of local authority child resides in

Give as much detail as possible for the reason for referral

Please indicate if your child has any additional support

Other organisations involved (Social Work, CAMHS)

Signature

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Scottish SPCA reference number
(to be completed by Scottish SPCA on receipt of consent form)

Kingseat Road, Halbeath, Dunfermline KY11 8RY
Scottish Charity No. SC 006467

Scottish SPCA
Animal Guardians





ANIMAL GUARDIANS CHILD CONSENT FORM

Please complete this form on your own or with the help of a parent or carer. Read the points below and tick if you agree:

- I am happy to take part in the Animal Guardians programme
- I understand what the Animal Guardians programme is about
- I understand that when I am doing Animal Guardians, what I say will be kept private unless my safety is at risk. If my safety is at risk, the Animal Guardians youth engagement officer has to tell someone else like my teacher or my support worker to make sure I stay safe

How happy are you to take part in Animal Guardians?



First name

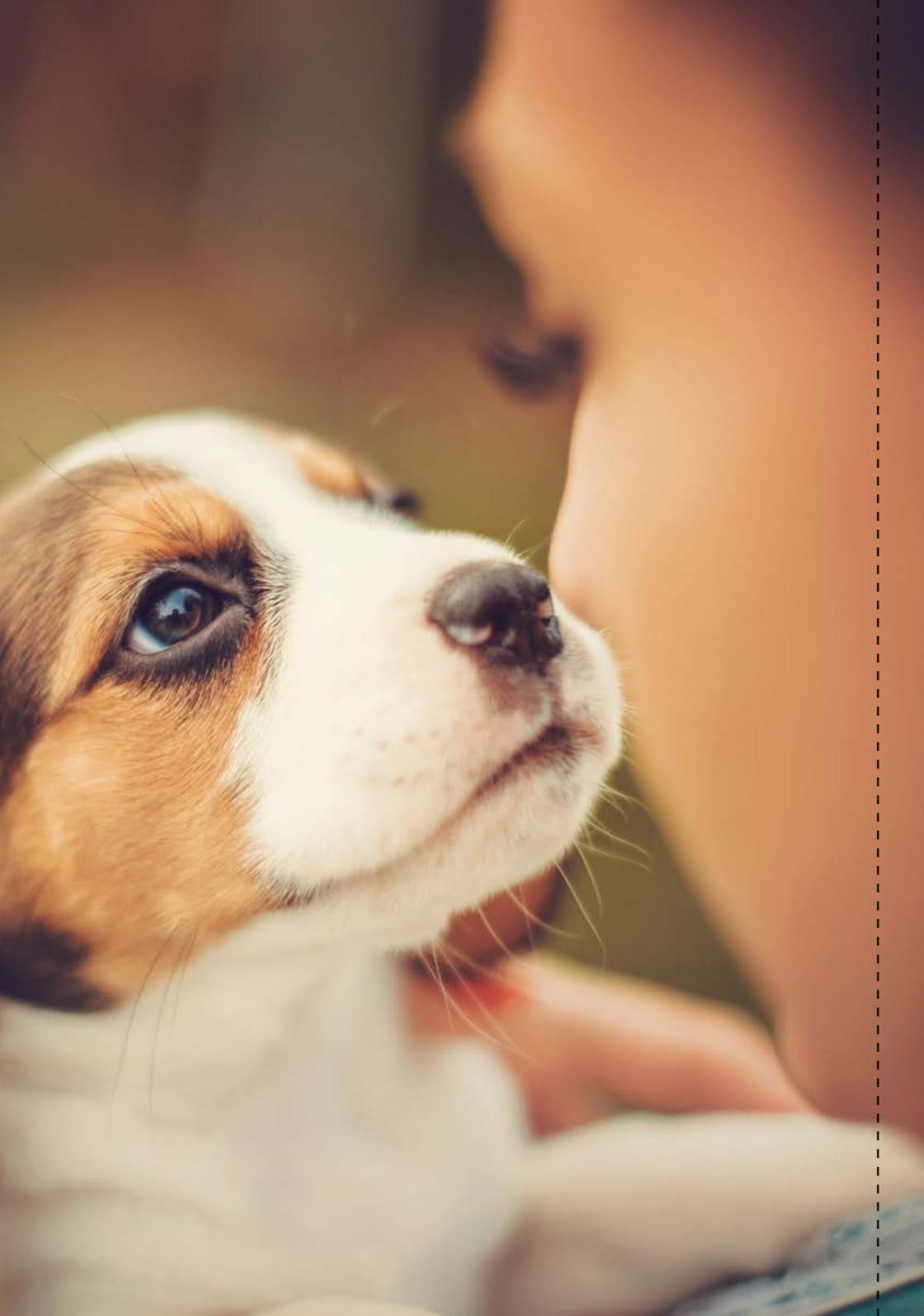
Surname

Age

Sex

Scottish SPCA reference number
(to be completed by Scottish SPCA on receipt of consent form)

Kingseat Road, Halbeath, Dunfermline KY11 8RY
Scottish Charity No. SC 006467



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The University of Edinburgh is researching the effectiveness of Animal Guardians to answer the following questions:

- Does Animal Guardians improve children's knowledge of animal emotions and welfare needs?
- Does Animal Guardians improve children's attitudes and intentions towards animal welfare and animal cruelty?
- Does Animal Guardians help improve factors associated with harmful behaviour towards animals (e.g. empathy)?

How can my child participate in the research?

When a child has been referred to Animal Guardians, parents/carers will be asked if they give permission for their child to participate in the research. A parent/carer will be asked to complete the form on page 25 indicating whether they are happy for their child to participate (please note this form MUST be completed, even if they do not wish their child to participate). If consent is given, the child will be asked to give their consent to being part of the research at the beginning of their research session. Please note that children can still be part of Animal Guardians without participating in the research.

What does the research entail?

If consent for research is given, the researcher will meet with the child one week before the start of Animal Guardians and one week after the end of the programme. Interviews with the child will be carried out in a quiet one-to-one setting at school.

The child will be asked to answer a series of standardised child-friendly questions relating to their relationships with animals and how they relate to other people. These questions will be read out by the researcher and the child will be asked to choose the answer that most corresponds to how they feel. Interviews will be recorded so that answers can be transcribed, and then recordings will be safely destroyed, and data will be anonymised. This procedure will be explained to the child before they begin the research session and they will be asked if they are happy to take part. The child will be free to withdraw from the research at any time they wish. A short questionnaire will also be given to the child's main teacher.

Will the information collected be confidential?

Yes. All information collected will be anonymous and kept in a safe location and treated confidentially.

Please note the following key points:

- the research project has been given ethical approval by the University of Edinburgh
- the researchers have received training to work with children and are active members of the PVG scheme
- all data will be anonymised, and data collected will be stored securely according to ethical and GDPR guidance



Contact Information

If you have any questions about the research, including the questions asked in the interview, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the research team. Details of the team can be found below:

Clinical and Health Psychology Department
Doorway 6, Teviot Place, Medical School, The University of Edinburgh

Main researcher
Ms Laura Wauthier
Email: s1575158@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 07867 213 460

Supervisor
Professor Jo Williams
Email: jo.williams@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 0131 650 996

If you have complaints at any point regarding this research, please fill out the form at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/imports/fileManager/WEB%20Complaint%20Form.pdf>

and send it to:

Head of School of Health in Social Science
Professor Matthias Schwannauer
Email: m.schwannauer@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 0131 651 3954



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



PARENT/CARER RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Please tick one:

- I **AM** happy for my child to take part in the research
- I am **NOT** happy for my child to take part in the research

If you are happy for your child to take part, please read the following statements and tick to show you agree. Then sign the form at the bottom of the page to give consent for your child to participate.

- I have read and understood the information provided in this booklet
- I understand that myself or my child can stop and withdraw from the study at any time without consequence
- I understand that all data will be anonymised
- I understand that my child will be recorded (audio and video) during the interview and that these recordings will be transcribed and then disposed of
- I understand that the data will be fully anonymised in any subsequent research reports

Parent/carer's full name

Child's full name

Parent/carer's signature

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)





WHO DO I SEND THE REFERRAL FORMS TO?

Please send the completed referral forms to animalguardians@scottishspca.org

or to

Animal Guardians
Youth Engagement Officer
Scottish SPCA HQ
Kingseat Road
Halbeath
Dunfermline
KY11 8RY

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once the Scottish SPCA has received your referral form, a youth engagement officer will contact you. It will be important to know if there are any other organisations working with the referred child, to make sure that there is no conflict for a child participating in the Animal Guardians programme.

If you have any queries, please contact the education team either through the above email or via **03000 999 999, option 5.**



03000 999 999



scottishspca.org



Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
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Scottish Charity No. SC 006467



SCOTTISH SPCA
Scotland's Animal Welfare Charity