

Manchester & Salford Branch  
Charity number 232255



# Caring for your RSPCA foster cat



## The Basics

- ☑ **We will provide you with equipment** such as litter trays, food bowls, cat scratching posts and beds. We can also supply food, wood-based cat litter and toys but we do appreciate any support you can offer with this too.
- ☑ **We will take your foster cat for any veterinary treatment** they may need, which is why it is important you are available during the day time. (N.B Staff are available at the weekend for emergencies only).
- ☑ **Most of our foster cats require supportive care** and so you must be prepared to give whatever medication/treatment is necessary.
- ☑ **Please be prepared for mess** and bad odours, as it is not uncommon for foster cats to have upset tummies.



## Feeding

### Adults cats

- ☑ It may take some time to learn what your foster cat's food preferences are, but we ideally want you to **aim for feeding an adult cat 0.5 to 1 pouch of wet in the morning and 0.5 to 1 pouch of wet food in the evening with dry food available all day.**
- ☑ **Dry food is the best diet for a cat** to eat because it helps maintain their dental health. Please feed dry food in a separate bowl to the wet food.
- ☑ Please make any food changes gradually unless otherwise instructed by us.  
***Tip: Wet food must be fed at room temperature.***



## Kittens and nursing queens

☑ **Both need to be fed food labelled as 'kitten' food.** They should be fed as much as they can eat of the wet food, with dry food available as a supplement. Again, keep the dry food in a separate bowl. **Tip: Some nursing queens will eat up to 6 pouches a day!**

☒ **Please do not feed human food, cows milk or cat milk.** If you want to feed treats please stick to fresh meat, fish or products like Dreamies.



## Water

It sounds like we have made this up but many foster families have found that some cats will not drink out of a bowl. By chance they find their foster cats prefer to drink from tall glasses or fresh from a tap! **Tip: Make sure you keep glasses of water away from their food in case of spillage.**

### *Why can't my foster cat eat human treats?*

1 extra kg in a 4kg cat equates to 17 extra kgs in an adult human!  
In a 5kg cat, 25gs of cheese is the equivalent to 3.5 hamburgers for a human.  
1 glass of milk is the equivalent of 6.5 large cake muffins  
1 crisp is the equivalent of half a chocolate bar.



## Litter trays

- ☑ Ideally **you need to offer two litter trays** per adult cat and locate them several metres apart from one another and away from their food.
- ☑ With nursing queens and kittens this is **not always feasible so aim for a minimum of 3 litter trays** once the kittens are mobile and be prepared to 'poop scoop' several times a day. Prior to mobility the queen will clear up any eliminating their kitten does.
- ☑ **Some cats will not toilet on certain types of litter.** Often cats that have been stray for a long time will only tolerate grit type litter.



- ☑ **Be prepared for accidents** and to experiment with different types of litter.  
*Tip: A hooded litter tray is a great investment, as it helps to reduce the odours and keeps litter contained.*

## The Early Days

- ☑ **Be prepared for your foster cat to be wary** and confused and take several days, if not weeks to settle.
- ☑ **It is important that you give them their own space**, like a spare bedroom, which is not used by any humans or other animals. Place a bed, some toys, food and a litter tray (or two) in it.
- ☑ **If you have other pets make sure you keep your foster cat separate from them for at least a week.** This may need to be longer depending on your foster cat's individual needs. See: [Introducing cats & kittens guide](#)



☑ With **orphaned, younger kittens we recommend the use of a crate to create a 'nest'**. We can supply you with a crate and show you how to set it up.

☑ **At bedtime it is your choice as to whether you let your foster cat/kitten(s) sleep with you**, but just remember that their future owner may not want this. You need to make sure you set boundaries from day one and stick to them. Cats/kittens very quickly learn to settle and accept a 'no bedroom' rule but undoing the behaviour once you start it is a lot more difficult.

☑ Above all **you must be patient** and sensitive toward your foster animal.

☒ **Don't play loud music or have lots of people round** giving them plenty of time to orientate themselves and get used to their new surroundings. Your home could be their 2nd or 3rd environment since coming into the RSPCA's care.

## Getting to know your foster cat

☑ **Once they are settled you need to spend plenty of time socialising your foster cat/kittens**. You can do this by playing with them, fussing them and brushing them. Long-haired cats and kittens especially need to get used to being brushed.

☑ **With nervous cats try initially just sitting in their room** doing something non-intrusive, like reading a book, for at least half an hour a day so they get used to the presence of humans. Gradually build up the time you spend in their presence and increase your activity whilst in their room.

☑ **Be prepared for some animals damaging your things** by knocking them over or scratching your furniture. It is unfortunately part and parcel of cat fostering and one of the reasons why we insist, where applicable, that you have written permission from your landlord for you to have animals in your home.



## When your job is done

- ☑ **The hardest bit about this role is 'letting go'**. Even experienced staff find it upsetting at times and so we know exactly what you are going through when it's time to say goodbye.
- ☑ **With adult cats we always aim to place them in the cattery** when they are ready. This has proven the most successful & quickest way of finding them a forever home.
- ☑ **You can come with us to help settle them into the cattery** and we most definitely appreciate your help with creating their 'write up' for our website.
- ☑ **With kittens we never place them in the cattery** so, if you do not want potential adopters to visit to your home then at 8 weeks we will place them in another foster home.



## Safety first

- ☑ **Close windows and doors** - please always keep windows on a latch only
- ☑ **Close washing machine/tumble dryer doors**
- ☑ **Close toilet lids**
- ☑ **Remove chemical products from cat's reach** - please keep lids on and tidied away, this includes beauty and household products
- ☑ **Tidy away cotton or string** lying around as they are a serious potential choking/swallowing hazards
- ☑ **Hide electric wires** - they may get chewed!
- ☑ **Be careful of blinds and cords** – they are lethal to kittens, never leave them unsupervised around them

☒ **No lily plants** - the pollen is poisonous to cats

☒ **Don't leave cats unsupervised with toys with elastic**

☒ **Never use products intended for humans** on your foster cat unless instructed to do so by staff.



## What our cat and kitten foster carers say!

"They will not act like your own pets and will need more time, more attention and may not even like you!"

"Be aware that it's not always going to be plain sailing. Foster animals sometimes develop different, additional health problems that require you to medicate them each day and can even mean they stay longer with you."

"Do not be too precious over your carpets and furniture! Accidents do happen, even with older animals."

"Be prepared to take action yourself, such as an emergency vet trip in the middle of the night, rather than just leaving it until you can get hold of staff."

"A lot of foster animals have not experienced scratching posts before, let alone know what to do with them. This often results in sofas and beds being used instead. But it is easily sorted out by redirecting them and/or spraying catnip on the posts."

"If anyone is considering hand-rearing be prepared for feeding around the clock and not having much of a social life because before you know it you need to feed the kittens again!"

"Be prepared to pull all nighters with confused newbies & poorly cats!"

"Not every foster cat will be a bundle of joy and happiness when they first come to you, expect the possibility of being hissed at, spat at, scratched and bitten!"