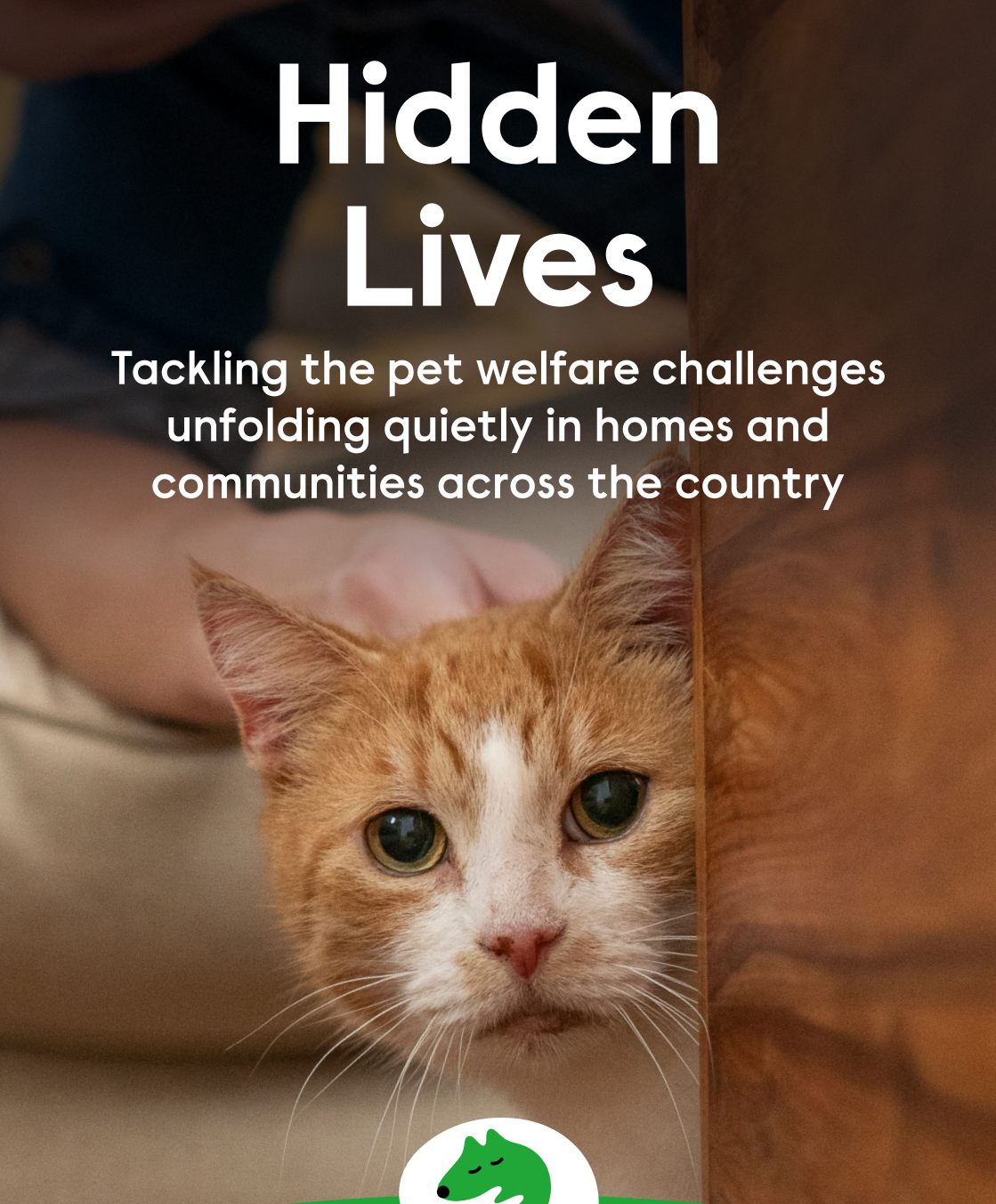
Hidden Lives

Tackling the pet welfare challenges unfolding quietly in homes and communities across the country



woodgreen

Helping pets and their people

Insights: The hidden reality of life for many pets and their people

Woodgreen's Hidden Lives research uncovers the pet welfare challenges unfolding quietly in homes and communities across the country.

Over the past year we've carried out a programme of research with pet owners and community professionals, including large mixed-methods studies.

We found that even when pets are living in homes where they are deeply loved, if life becomes challenging it can become much harder to ensure good pet welfare.

These situations often remain unseen by animal welfare charities. However, community support professionals - including **housing officers, healthcare workers, social workers and emergency services** - are often the first to notice the pressures families are facing and the barriers to improving pet welfare.





> "I think my dog deserves better than what I'm giving him, but I can't give my dog better than this because it's all I've got"

Woodgreen is leading the development of evidence, insights and solutions to tackle this problem, bringing together organisations and individuals ready to help shape what comes next.

What community professionals are seeing

Community professionals are encountering struggling pet owners every day as part of their work.

Our research reveals just how widespread these hidden challenges are.

This is happening across a wide range of services, including healthcare, housing, education and emergency services.

For many pet owners, emotional barriers play a significant role. Professionals told us that fear, guilt and shame often stop people from reaching out for help.

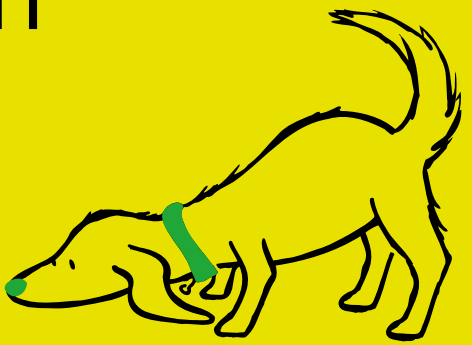


88%

have encountered pet owners who believe that giving up their pet is the only option.

7.4 million pets

seen each week whose welfare they are worried about – yet owners are not seeking support (for various reasons).



58%

believe pets' physical and mental health is impacted when their owners experience a challenge.





91%

have seen owners avoid speaking to services about their pet.

Core challenges

Professionals identified the five core challenges affecting pet welfare that they have encountered over the past 12 months:

Access to support

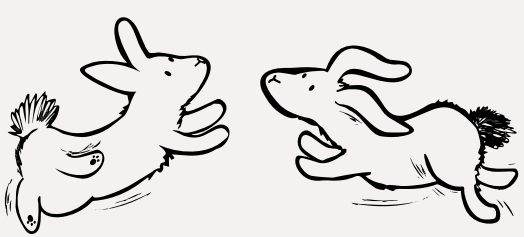
Cost of care

Environmental pressures including housing

Knowledge and understanding of pet needs

Pet behaviour challenges - impacting pet welfare and owner wellbeing

Together, these pressures often build silently until families and their pets reach crisis point.



Why early intervention matters

Many pet welfare issues start with everyday pressures. But when support is difficult to access or when pet owners feel unable to ask for help, pressures can escalate out of control.

Professionals tell us that owners delay seeking advice because they:

- fear losing their pet,
- feel embarrassment about their situation,
- simply don't know what support is out there.

For pet rehoming and welfare organisations the message is clear: rescue must go beyond waiting for crisis by strengthening preventative outreach, engaging partners and those on the front line already, and ensuring we help more pet owners earlier - keeping pets safe and where they belong.

What's next

At Woodgreen, we know rescue goes beyond shelter and rehoming, to supporting pets and their people to stay together where appropriate.

By thinking differently, sharing knowledge and building partnerships, we can end the hidden pet welfare crisis together.

To find out more about our research and next steps, get in touch with us at hiddenlives@woodgreen.org.uk

"Sometimes they're really **just not seeing it**, but other times I think they'll **play down the fact they're struggling** because they don't want their dog taken off them." **Social worker**, Midlands

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