

Care Dogs for Staff Welfare

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Work-related stress in the Ambulance Service

- Ambulance staff are at high risk from work-related stress: more than 50% reported stress-related sickness in 2021¹
- 10% of Paramedics left active service in the first half of 2022, and the remaining 25% were planning to leave as soon as they could find another role²
- Repeated exposure to stress can lead to development of depression, anxiety and/or PTSD³
- Cumulative stress can lead to compassion fatigue, mental illness, and absence from work⁴

How can dogs help?

- Interactions promote general feeling of wellbeing
- Scientific evidence of lowered cortisol and blood pressure levels^{5,6}
- Creates more positive emotional state, improved sense of job satisfaction and generally better mental health in staff⁷
- Stress reduction can occur in as little as **FIVE MINUTES** with a dog!⁵



What did we do?

- Working with the charity *Canine Concern*, we invited all Ambulance staff to volunteer their own pet dogs to be assessed as Care Dogs.
- After health checks and assessments an initial twelve dogs were recruited to the team, with a further two joining later.
- Staff bring their dogs for visits in their own time, to support the welfare and wellbeing of their colleagues.

Outcomes

- Positive response from staff, who report feeling more relaxed after seeing the dogs.
- Managers report generally improved mood and morale after dog visit, especially in the control room
- Staff enjoyed bringing their dogs in for visits (and the dogs seemed very happy too!)
- Engagement with other Ambulance Services (SCAS, SECamb and London) who want to learn more about what we have created here.



References:

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