

## **Guidelines for the “Paws Against Stress” Events (PAWS)**

### **Aim**

The aim of these events is to help counter the stress experienced by students before and during exam time. These events also happen at certain times during the academic year when deemed suitable, for instance “mental health awareness” and “well being awareness” weeks.

This initiative started in Edinburgh in early 2013 following an approach from Edinburgh University in mid 2012 and the talks that followed laid down the guidance which we now use for “Paws Against Stress” events that take place throughout Scotland. CCST has developed and refined the guidance for managing this type of event and our aim is to give all students the same helpful experience no matter where they are studying. At the same time we need to ensure the comfort, safety and wellbeing of our Therapets and volunteers.

If you are interested in arranging a "Paws against Stress" event at your local university, college or place of further education please take note of the criteria and suggestions below.

Please make contact with your local CCST Area Representative or with the CCST office in Edinburgh as soon as you begin to consider hosting a session for students in your locality.

You should try to arrange an early meeting at the site proposed for the session and consider some of the following issues.

### **Target Group**

Universities, Colleges and other places of further education

### **Persons Present**

- Normally up to six CCST volunteers and Therapets.
- A separate CCST volunteer, usually Area Representative, over seeing the event.
- Staff or Student body representatives to organise students.
- If possible a person from the student counselling services to provide support to students should this be needed, or the organiser should provide appropriate literature for students seeking help

### **Before The Event**

- Meet with University or College to check site and suitability of room size and access.
- Site should have convenient parking at the venue which is free, if possible and close to the venue should there be inclement weather.
- If CCST volunteers have to pay for parking explain that this will be charged to the organiser running the event, and invoiced by CCST office.
- If possible, agreement should be reached at the meeting regarding when (date and time) and where the event will happen so that volunteers and their Therapets can be organised to attend.

## **Environment**

- A large room or area which is easily accessible for volunteers and Therapets.. A large space is necessary to avoid too close proximity and to allow students to move about the room with ease and minimal disturbance.
- The area should have adequate ventilation to allow students, CCST volunteers and Therapet to be comfortable
- Students often arrive early and a separate room or space is required where they can be checked in and wait quietly for their time slot with the dogs.
- Access to fresh water bowls.
- Organiser to set up circles of five chairs, one for the CCST volunteer and remaining to accommodate up to four students at any one time around the Therapet. Room to be laid out in a way that allows easy flowing access between Therapets and accommodates the needs of wheel chairs.

## **Choice of Therapets**

- All Therapets attending are very sociable and relaxed in novel and busy situations
- We try to offer the students attending any session a choice of dog breeds to meet, and a variety of sizes.

## **Number of Therapets for each session**

This will be dependent on the size of the venue and the possible number of students attending. The maximum number is usually 6 Therapets

## **Timing**

- We normally run events for a maximum of two hours. Experience has shown that the dogs are tired and lose concentration and interest at longer sessions.
- Students to be in small groups of one to four persons and each group would have a 20 minute session.
- This gives a possible attendance of 144 students if there are 6 groups of 4 students for 20 minutes each with the 6 dogs.

At the half way point of the event consideration should be given to allowing the dogs to be exercised outside, if required.

## **Risk Assessment**

CCST can assist with advice for venues which will be expected to have an appropriate risk assessment completed prior the sessions being arranged. A copy of the CCST Public Liability Insurance can be provided as necessary.

## **Further Information**

For further information please contact the CCST Office on 0131 553 0034, or email to [info@canineconcernscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@canineconcernscotland.org.uk) or contact your local CCST Area Representative using the link to Area Representatives on the CCST website [www.canineconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.canineconcernscotland.org.uk).