

The role of animal companions in the lives of homeless people

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A homeless man with dogs. Credit: Fran Urbano on a Creative Commons Licence

Published as 'Caring at the Borders of the Human: Companion animals and the homeless' in the book *ReValuing Care: Cycles and Connections* (Routledge), Professor Carr's research also reveals that homeless people

often show a collective responsibility for the pets and, because of the close relationship between the pet and the homeless person, a collective responsibility for homelessness itself.

The story of [homeless people](#) and their animal companions is recognisable from many towns and cities worldwide. It was also recently brought to light in James Bowen's bestselling book, and its cinema adaptation, A Street Cat named Bob. Professor Carr refers to the book within her chapter, noting the similarities between the story and face-to-face research among homeless people, many of whom described their animals as life changers and life savers, with some formerly homeless people claiming that it is their pet that keeps them alive.

Professor Carr also argues that there is more to be said about the power of animals in relation to homeless people. For instance, she suggests that the donations of food provided by domiciled people to homeless people can be understood as political because it demonstrates sympathy with another species and because it suggests that we all share responsibility for the situation that homeless people find themselves in.

Professor Carr's chapter, 'Caring at the Borders of the Human: Companion [animals](#) and the homeless' can be found in ReValuing Care: Cycles and Connections, edited by Harding, Fletcher & Beasley, published by Routledge.

Provided by University of Kent

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