

Manchester Evening News

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Founded 1868

A friend dropping in

30p

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Hawn of plenty

BARKING MAD? **STAR**

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■ CAMPAIGNER Kath with her pet cat Sammy-Joe

Kath's pet project to help pensioners

By Paul McVeigh

KATH Pearson is spearheading a pioneering bid to end suffering for pet owners and their animals.

Cat lover Kath is launching a pioneering voucher initiative so hard-up animal owners, especially pensioners, do not have to have sick pets destroyed.

And if the "vet voucher" scheme launched in Oldham proves a winner it could be extended nationwide.

Kath hopes the scheme will help hard-up elderly people who cannot afford treatment for their pets. Animal lovers will also be able to buy vouchers

to hand over to charities or homeless people with pets.

Kath, a local organiser for National Pets Week, was inspired to devise the scheme when an elderly relative could not afford vets' fees.

"It's tragic that some elderly people face losing their loved companions," said Kath, from Ashton under Lyne.

"This way they can regularly buy vouchers to be redeemed for treatment."

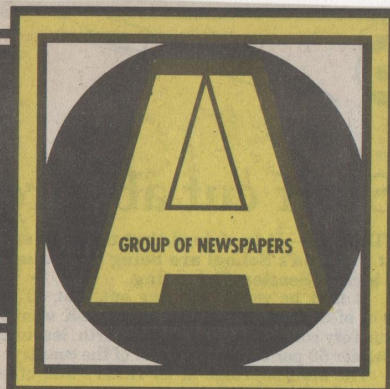
Many elderly people, unable

to afford vets' fees and reluctant to take a charity handout, would be happy to receive vouchers as gifts.

Profits from the scheme will go towards a trust fund to help pay boarding fees for elderly and sick people who have to go into hospital for lengthy stays.

Nine vets surgeries in Tameside and five in Oldham are backing the scheme.

Kath is hoping to persuade Coronation Street star Michael Le Vell to launch the scheme and they are sending the first voucher off the printing press to the Queen.



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Pioneering Kath to launch saving scheme for pets!

by Beckie Smith

A PIONEERING scheme aimed at helping animal lovers pay their vet's fees is being launched in Oldham.

Local National Pet Week organiser Kathleen Pearson is the woman behind the new voucher saving scheme.

She came up with the idea after hearing about a pensioner who had their pet put down because they couldn't afford to keep up with vet's bills.

Pride problem

Kathleen explained: "The problem is people are often too proud to receive help if they can't pay their vet's bills.

"What I'm trying to do is offer people saving cards where they can regularly collect stamps to help them with bills. Alternatively they could receive vouchers from relatives for birthdays or at Christmas."

Kathleen has formed the company Vet Vouchers Ltd with eight colleagues. The scheme will officially be launched in November.

It's hoped by then cards and

vouchers will be available for sale in time for Christmas. Vouchers will be available for £1, £2 and £5.

At the moment Kathleen is looking for local firms to help out by sponsoring the costs of printing.

Kathleen said: "We're aiming to cover our administration costs and staff involved are working on a voluntary basis so that any profits we make can go into animal charities.

"What we're trying to do is make sure that money goes 100 per cent towards animal welfare.

Instant access

"People will buy vouchers either as gifts or for their saver-cards and that money will remain in the bank so it's immediately available when it's called upon.

"I believe it's the first scheme of its kind in the country and we're hoping people will take it up.

"We carried out a survey across the country and many vets expressed support and interest in such a scheme."

Lifestyle

Scheme to ease pain of vets' bills

A SCHEME to help people who can't afford to treat their pets will soon be underway in Oldham.

Vet Vouchers is the brainchild of Kathleen Pearson, an animal lover from Hartshead.

Various veterinary practices and animal charities around the area will have vouchers available for people to purchase and give as presents.

The idea came to Kathleen when an

elderly relative could not afford to treat her pets.

She said: "She was reluctant to accept cash, labelling it as charity or a hand-out, yet was able to receive gift vouchers as there was no stigma attached to these."

This inspired Kathleen to develop the scheme which vets around the area are willing to participate in. Eventually, she hopes the voucher system will spread nationwide.

And she has also set up a trust

fund, from the sale of the vouchers, and vets can apply for help on behalf of needy clients.

But the fund will not consider any applications until there is a minimum of £25,000 in the account and Kathleen is determined not to let this account fall below £20,000.

She said: "More people may now consider treatment for their animals instead of euthanasia due to lack of funds."

Vets in the area taking part in the scheme include JN MacDonald, Sylvan House, Main Road, Oldham; Manchester Street veterinary surgery, Oldham; The Oaks veterinary surgery, Manchester Road, Shaw and Saddleworth House veterinary surgery, Uppermill.



Animal initiative: Vet Vouchers founder Kathleen Pearson, from Hartshead, with her pet cat.

