Developing ethical frameworks in animal-assisted social service delivery in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ANZASW Webinar 25 September 2017
Definition of terms

- Animal-assisted work is generally defined as either;
  - Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) where the intervention intentionally includes an animal as part of the intervention process (e.g., medical assistant animals); or
  - Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) where the animal is deliberately included in a therapeutic treatment plan; or
  - Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) this includes visits to rest homes, cat cafes etc – less formal activities primarily social in focus.
THE FIVE FREEDOMS


  – “Freedom from hunger or thirst
  – Freedom from discomfort and inadequate shelter
  – Freedom from disease and injury
  – Freedom from distress and pain
  – Freedom to display normal behaviour”

contained within the Brambell report (Command Paper 2836, 1965)

These freedoms underpin the Animal Welfare Act (1999) and the The Animal Welfare Amendment Bil (2015)
CURRENT LEGAL PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

  - adopts the five freedoms outlined in the Brambell report as discussed earlier.
  - provides for codes of welfare to be developed. These codes were developed by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) to specify minimum standards. Breach of the minimum standards in a code is not an offence. Rather, any prosecutions will be for failure to meet the obligations in the Act relating to the care of an animal or for ill-treatment of an animal.

- Codes are wide ranging from circuses to zoos - including dogs, cats, and farmed animals.
- Code of welfare for dogs, as an example, cover things such as, ownership, food and water, containment, tethering and shelter, sanitation, breeding, health, behaviour, transportation and euthanasia.
- Some discussion relating to developing a code of welfare for use of animals in therapeutic and assistance settings.
- The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill(2015) S.3a, recognises that animals, like humans, are "sentient" beings.

- **Including Animals as Part of Social Work assessment**
- **Animal abuse as an indicator of violence towards humans**
- **Animals as therapeutic and assistance tools**

- **OUR research — (Tumilty and Walker 2015) Creating an ethical framework for people working with animals in the helping professions: Governance, documentation and practitioner narratives**
Table 1 - Sample Description (Tumilty and Walker 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY/NUMBER</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Type:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog (only)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse (only)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Residence:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With client</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With organisation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Funding:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee for service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Upkeep</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different levels of use of animals in assistance and therapy roles

- **Primary** - being compliant with specific code of animal welfare considerations. (lowest level)

- **Secondary**
  - being the use of animals by professionals as tools
  - or to offer assistance independent of the professional to the client. (higher level)

- **Tertiary** - animals being acknowledged as fellow professionals. (highest level)
Primary

Primary (no specific training required – more attitude and matching i.e. calm and tolerant animals to benefit humans (anti stress, companionship, distraction, touch, friendship )

- animal cafes (cat cafes etc.)
- companion animals (Personal in home or in institution companions)
- animals visiting in homes/institutions (cats, dogs, farm animals e.g. Llamas)
- animals living in institutions (the rest home cat, etc.)
- Anti stress animals (micro pigs, puppy rooms and miniature horses)
Animals being used as part of medical therapy, 1956
Secondary

Secondary - Tools – Assistance or service animal (extensive animal training required – usually by an established organisation before placing animal in the home of the client – ongoing support and monitoring by organisation)

- Guide dogs for the blind
- Epilepsy Dogs
- Dementia Dogs
- Autism Dogs
Autism dog
Secondary continued

Secondary - Tools - Therapy - (used in therapeutic situations with clients – some training of animals specifically included around therapy, but not always – may involve use of animals from SPCA)

– Dogs in prison rehabilitation
– Riding for Disabled
– Therapy animals - SPCA and CYFS (on an ad hoc basis) and like organisations both in NZ and overseas (appropriate touching etc)
– Horses - (It’s not about the horse) How you relate to the horse will tell us what you’ve learned over the course of your lifetime concerning how you relate to all living things. linked to
– Equine assisted Psychotherapy and CBT
Riding for the disabled
Tertiary

- Tertiary – Colleagues/ fellow professionals - extensive animal training required – usually by the organisation they are embedded within (not necessarily used with clients but always working alongside the professional to enhance their abilities)
  - Police dogs (latest story about Thames the police dog lost for seven days in the bush as an example)
  - DoC dogs
  - Custom dogs
  - Search and rescue dogs
  - Police horses
Rob the collie receiving Dickin medal
22 January 1945
Iraqi Soldier and his dog
Source: http://www.chelseadogs.com/blog/top-10-army-dogs/
Issues encountered in practice

- Anecdotal evidence from blogs

- Animals used in visiting in homes/institutions (primary) roles may become stressed with too much touching and could become aggressive.

- Riding for Disabled (secondary role) - horses may resist being caught when they see the van arriving carrying the children/adults with a disability, when normally they come to the yard voluntarily to be ridden.
Issues continued

- Research based evidence regarding the use of service (assistance) dogs with children with Autism (Burrows, K., Adams, C. and Millman, S. : 2008) note that:
  - Children with autism were significant sources of physical stress for the dogs.
  - Dogs were constantly woken at night by the children leaving them exhausted after following and minding the children in the night and performed badly the next day.
  - Children had “meltdowns” that were often directed at the dog – this included lashing out at the dog.
  - Some dogs started growling at the child after repeated hitting
  - Dogs were not let out to urinate or defecate and had “accidents” for which they were hit as punishment.
  - Health concerns included kennel cough, minor ear and eye infections, allergic reactions, overfeeding and insufficient recreational activities.
Issues continued

– In relation to therapeutic use of animals (in this case dogs in an SPCA shelter), (Taylor, N., Fraser, H. Signal, T. and Prentice, K. : 2015) note

– Animals were used to work with 20 children who had shown various tendencies towards being cruel to animals (CTA) (eight of the children had been reported as engaging in some level of CTA in the previous six month period).

– Over a ten week programme: the children had significantly reduced their CTA behaviours - but incidents of CTA still occurred.

– In addition six of the children were reported pre-programme to be touching animals in sexually inappropriate ways - only two showed improvement following the programme.

– They did not measure the experiences of the animals but note there is an urgent need to ascertain what impacts there are on animals in therapeutic interventions.

– This leads us to wonder re the ethical consideration given to the dogs in this research. Programme good for child population but impacted on the animals - unnecessary cruelty.
Need to protect animals in literature

- Why the need?
  - No guidance
  - No best practice

  
  “Animals who are considered members of the household can impact substantially on the dynamics of the family system, yet animals are usually absent from social work literature and codes of ethics.”

- “That social work practice, education, theory, ethics and values needs to move from being exclusively humanist to include animal rights and welfare.”
Need to protect animals in literature

- Evans, N. and Gray, C. (2012)

  “While there is a growing consensus in the literature that basic standards concerning animal welfare should be met, there is less certainty regarding the standards themselves; and, of course, adherence is often voluntary.” (pg 612)

- “Not only is it possible that animals used in AAT within social work practice may be harmed by clients, but the work itself may be stressful for animals (Hatch, 2007) and potentially lead to long term health problems.” (pg 602)
Need to protect animals in literature


- “The ethical legitimacy rests not just on the benefits derived to humans, but whether due consideration is given to the animals’ needs, not just in the short term while the programme occurs but in the longer term, for the full duration of the animals lives.” (pg 7)
Need to protect animals in literature

- If we consider the current system, animals who cannot advocate for themselves have no protections, safety-net or advocates on their behalf.


  “In contrast to free-living animals, most therapy animals are trapped in systems where they have little or no control over their social lives and where they cannot avoid or escape unwelcome or unpleasant social intrusions” (pg 456)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Code of ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>no specific training required – more attitude and matching i.e. calm and tolerant animals to benefit humans (anti stress, companionship, distraction, touch, friendship)</td>
<td>Recognises addressing the animal’s capabilities, essentially provides physiological needs, plus time for play/rest and a stable relationship outside of their service and protection from harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary – Assistance or service animal</td>
<td>Extensive animal training required – usually by an established organisation before placing animal in the home of the client – ongoing support and monitoring by organisation</td>
<td>Builds on the primary code to recognize the higher skills (created through the investment in training) and higher responsibilities. Code needs to take into consideration that any misguided or intentionally abusive behaviours not only harms the animal immediately, but limits its ability to work with others in the future. Trained service animals need loving/caring relationships, downtime and interventions to reduce stress. Upon reaching old age animals should be retired (to an appropriate loving and caring environment) from such activities to recognize their previous service and frailty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary – Therapy animal</td>
<td>Used in therapeutic situations with clients – some training of animals specifically included around therapy, but not always – may involve use of animals from SPCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary – Colleagues/fellow professionals</td>
<td>Extensive animal training required – usually by the organisation they are embedded within (not necessarily used with clients but always working alongside the professional to enhance their abilities)</td>
<td>Builds on the primary and secondary codes to recognize higher skills. Involves treating the animal with all the respect and rights given to fellow human colleagues. Rights regarding not being overworked, getting the same annual leave and retirement provisions as human colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tumilty and Walker (2015)
# Protection IN PRACTICE

## Protection Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision of the basic necessities of life: food, water, shelter, acknowledging animals preferences</th>
<th>EXAMPLE 1: Resthome visiting dog</th>
<th>EXAMPLE 2: Police Dog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-low skill</strong></td>
<td><strong>-small risk</strong></td>
<td><strong>-high skill</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of security from cruelty, harm and pain</td>
<td>Appropriate housing and diet</td>
<td>Appropriate housing and diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the service setting, need to protect dog from injury or harm, through oversight, etc.</td>
<td>In the service setting, need to protect dog from injury or harm, through appropriate training and health and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of freedom for natural behaviour and/or exercise and play (inter/intra-species)</td>
<td>Down time provided outside of “service”</td>
<td>Down time provided outside of “service”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of guardianship versus ownership</td>
<td>Recognition of dog’s feelings towards service on any given day</td>
<td>Appropriate training for tasks required, respect for animals “instincts” and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of authentic, stable, and reciprocal relationships either within or adjunct to the service setting</td>
<td>Need for relationship outside of the resthome setting</td>
<td>Relationship provided with “partner”/handler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward/recognition for labour and skill</td>
<td>Post visit rest/play, treats and affection as appropriate.</td>
<td>Recognition as colleague, provision of annual leave, downtime, incorporation into partner’s family, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

No welfare codes or the inclusion of working with animals in other codes of ethics (social work etc).

Emerging issues re

– The choosing of the animal – are they bred for the purpose, what criteria is used, a retirement plan or ad hoc
– Ownership of animals - Whether owned by an organisation or individually, and
– There are links with international organisations to monitor and set standards for practice in NZ based on an organisational rather than a whole of industry response.
– No ethical framework used – but welfare and best practice apparent at tertiary level – esp police and customs and SAR dogs. And at secondary level in some situations such as for dogs working with the blind.
Challenges moving forward

In the helping professions, but especially social work, we actively fight against oppression and the exploitation of clients, workers and the general public. Therefore, in AAA, AAI, AAT we need to give similar consideration to animals. In social work we have a code of ethics that protects clients against unethical behaviours and inspires professional behavior. Codes of ethics relating to AAA, AAI, AAT need to provide similar protection for animal assistants and colleagues.

– In the Social Work field we support Aimers, Walker and Perry (2015) call –

– “We urge the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) and the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) to initiate and support a collaborative project with animal welfare organisations and other professional groups with an interest in AAA/AAI/AAT to develop a cross-sectorial New Zealand Code of Ethics and Conduct, with the ultimate aim of including AAA, AAI and AAT within their competencies.”
Challenge to All professions:

This call needs to be extended to all organisations and professions in the general helping professions area who work with animals to enhance their practice to adopt appropriate protections that reflect working with animals in the primary, secondary and tertiary ways or to combine together as organisations/professions to develop a nationwide adherence to a common agreed upon code/s.

Need to develop a NAWAC led code of welfare for AAA, AAI, AAT under the Animal Welfare Act (1999)