

## Introduction

The RSPCA's PawPrints awards has been the only awards scheme to recognise the vital work that public sector organisations do to protect and improve animal welfare in the past decade.

The ideas that the awards have recognised and celebrated are now accepted as best practice and adopted by organisations across England and Wales, especially those celebrated by the prestigious Innovator in Animal Welfare award. Ten of the most impactful Innovator-winning ideas are set out over the coming pages.

The work that local authorities, housing providers, contingency planners, the police and other public sector organisations do to protect and improve animal welfare is absolutely vital. However, this work is also increasingly under threat. Budget cuts across the public sector – especially in local authorities – are forcing many to make difficult decisions about the future of their animal welfare services.

At the same time, there is no sign that demand for these services is reducing, or will reduce at any time in the foreseeable future, something that should come as no surprise given the continued demonstrable importance of animal welfare to the British public.

If animal welfare is not to suffer, the provision of vital services and staff must be supported. Everyone involved, at all levels of

government, must start to recognise and value the work of the hardworking staff involved in protecting animal welfare.

There needs to be political will from elected representatives to stop animal welfare services from being sacrificed when budgets are tight or tightened further.

Crucially, there needs to be more money, more guidance and more support from national governments to help protect animal welfare services and dedicated animal welfare staff.

Previous awards include Animal Welfare Principles.

In the past 10 years, over 900 awards have been given out with stray dog services being the most popular category, providing over 500 winners.

This year is PawPrints' 10th birthday. We are celebrating with a series of special events and one-off awards, including the Innovator of the Decade and Special Recognition awards for the public sector staff members who have had the biggest impact on animal welfare in their area.

2018