



Stable Life

A hand to hold, a heart to heal, a horse to hug



ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024

About Us

Since way back in 2008, Stable Life has been on a mission to support youngsters aged 5 to 18, along with their families in the Scottish Borders, as they tackle life's hurdles head-on.

By teaming up with our trusty steeds through Equine Facilitated Wellness, we've created a cozy haven for these young souls to explore themselves, cultivate resilience, pick up handy life skills, and set off on a positive journey.

Nestled in a picturesque farm surrounded by majestic hills, our gang of friendly ponies lend a hoof in our adventures. Plus, we offer thrilling rides and escapades through the rolling hills. Let the pony party begin!

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Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing and learning experience using the horse and its environment, to help young people reach their full potential, and become healthier and happier with aspirations and dreams.

Our overall aim is that young people are inspired and empowered to achieve their aspirations, be happy, healthy and make positive contributions within their communities.

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Stable Life is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No. 335170

Scottish Charity No. SCO11786

Chair's Report

Over the last twelve months Stable Life has continued to improve its sustainability and the service we offer after the countless long-term affects of Covid19 which has changed the world we live in. This, in conjunction with the ever-increasing costs incurred in running an equine based charity has been a challenge, and will continue to be, for the near future.

I am happy to report that through due diligence, detailed planning, and robust management practices we continue to be on track to meet the challenges of the last year, and future years ahead. This has meant that we have had to adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of our client base, the young people who live in the Scottish Borders, by extending the skills criteria of our staff and looking at ensuring our organisational structure helps to meet any adaptations. This is particularly vital to any planning we adopt as we are aware of the lengthy waiting list of referrals of young people who would undoubtedly benefit from the service we offer at Stable Life.

It has been very encouraging to make personal links with some of our funders this year, local companies Oregon Timber and Utility Warehouse have been regular visitors to Dryden Farm and have been fantastic supporters of our in-house maintenance days. In addition, personnel from the Royal Bank of Scotland also paid a visit over the summer, it is always heartwarming to see and speak to a selection of our funders, and in return they appear to take a real pleasure in seeing what use their funding streams are being put to.

Our staff and volunteers are the mainstay of Stable Life, they continue to provide a particularly important service and do so with enthusiasm, commitment, and energy, whether it is working on the yard or providing the support service for our client base. Under the direction of our fantastic CEO, Mags Powell, this team continues to meet the demands and requisites of the organisation.

On behalf of myself and fellow Trustees may I thank everyone for all their efforts of the last year, I feel confident we can continue to meet any challenges that come our way.

Graham Easton
Chair

"Thank you for your input, we have a more confident, independent girl in class!"

Feedback from a referrer

Working with horses

Our programmes are based on a model of Equine Facilitated Wellness which we have developed into a person-centred package using the horse and its environment to engage with each young person who attends.

We run a team of dedicated staff who work to support young people and their families in either a group setting or on an individual basis. We also have a number of trained personnel from adult volunteers to peer mentors who support our project workers.

We also support young people in their transition looking towards college placements and employment by offering practical work experience opportunities.

Equine Facilitated Wellness

Equine Facilitated Wellness refers to all experiential learning activities involving horses.

This is not learning to ride, but a mix of games, pony care and reflective exercises to increase confidence, self-esteem, mental well-being and resilience. Our horses provide a safe space for young people to unpack feelings, consider challenges in their lives and develop effective strategies for change. We offer 1-1 and small group work, ran primarily during term-time school hours.

Our Equine Facilitated Wellness service can help young people with vulnerabilities, aged 5-18, living in the Scottish Borders, who struggle with:

- low self-esteem or confidence
- low resilience
- relationships
- emotional regulation
- experience of trauma
- family breakdown
- bereavement or loss
- communication



Stable Life Outcomes

- Improve confidence/self-esteem through inclusive programmes which set challenging goals, acting as a stimulus for personal achievement.
- Improve behaviour/attitude through well planned experiences which provide opportunities for self-reflection and also through support for changes and choices.
- Develop social and life skills through support designed to develop a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing leading to independent living.



Service Overview

Over the last year the project has been going well and we feel that we have been able to deliver on the majority of our plans which you can read about over the next few pages.

There has been a few changes in the staff team with Rebecca, Kirsty and Mary moving on, we wish them all the best on their new journeys. We have welcomed Megan and Sarah to the team and they are both settling in well and we are in the process of recruiting a Service Manager to lead the team going forward.

Project staff will shortly be attending Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) Level One training to strengthen our project delivery and future opportunities.

We are also just about to start some new projects:

Get Active Club (funded by the Big Lottery) – an after school group for those who have successfully completed our Healing Hooves programme. Led by a fitness instructor it involves active games, fun and teamwork skills. It is hoped that once they have completed this intervention they will have the confidence to participate in activities in their local communities.

Taking the Reins – This pilot project funded by Scottish Borders Council, is a partnership programme with Parental Employability Support (PES). It is a family-work programme where parents are invited to attend with their young people. It's focus is to help build confidence with both parent and child and strengthen the relationships with the parent and PES worker.

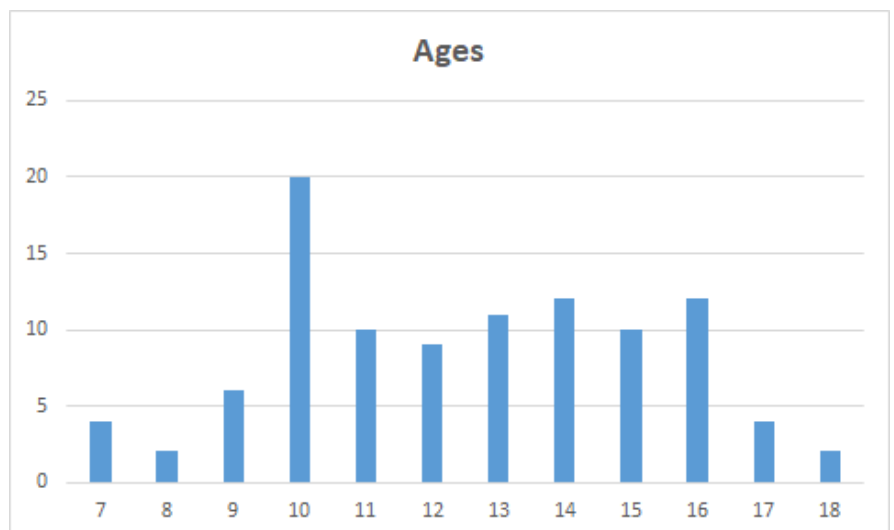
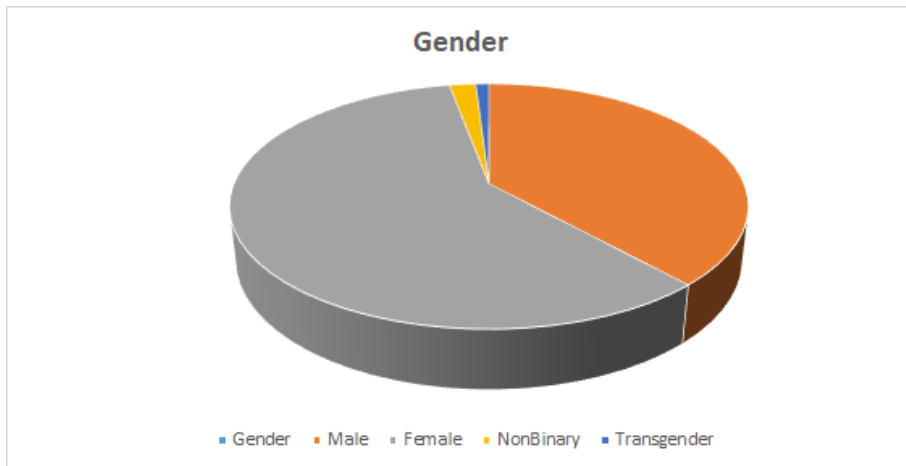


Feedback from a Carer “ *They have grown in confidence within the class, she is beginning to communicate more within class and group situations. Making her more able to work alongside with others whilst remaining confident in what she is doing*”

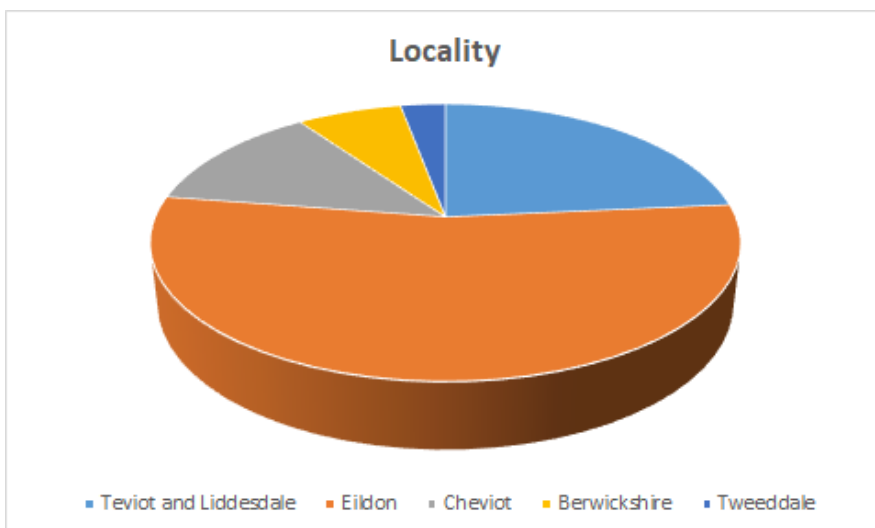
Young People Information

From April 2023, Stable Life has offered support to 95 vulnerable young people through one of our services.

The breakdown of gender and ages of the young people are below:

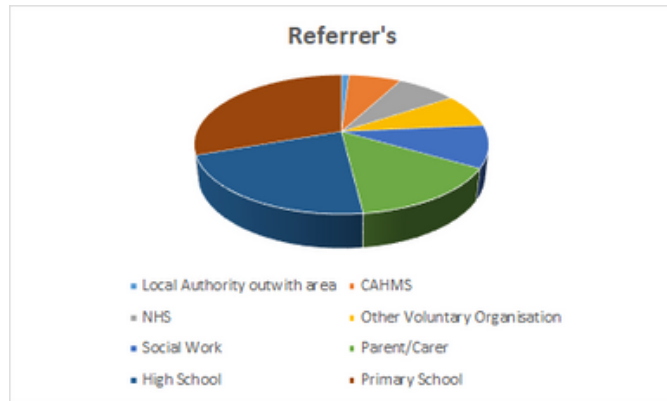


The breakdown of the locality of where these young people live are:

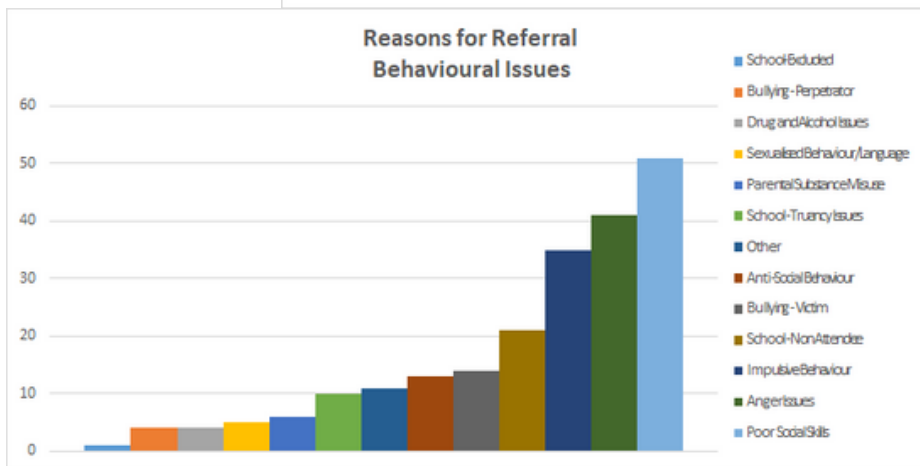
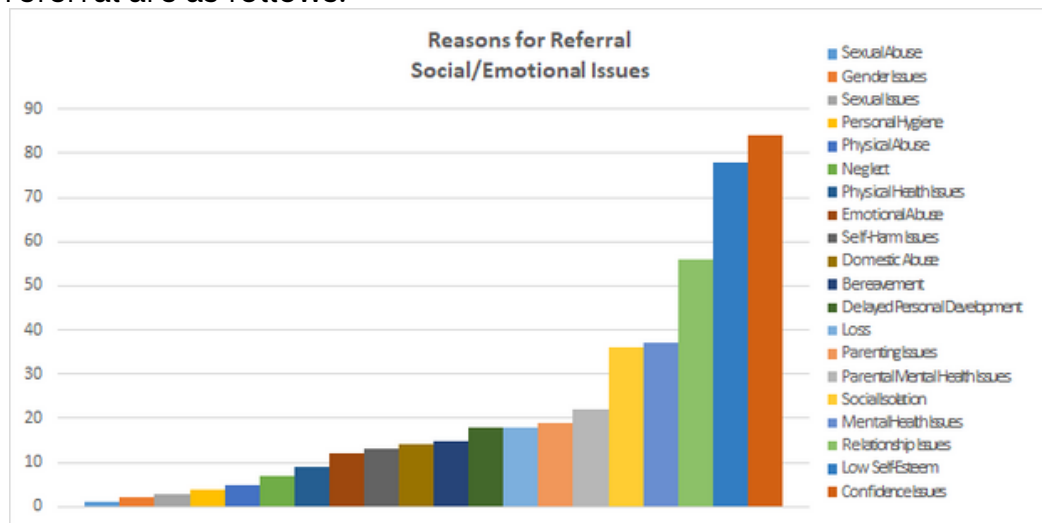


Referrals

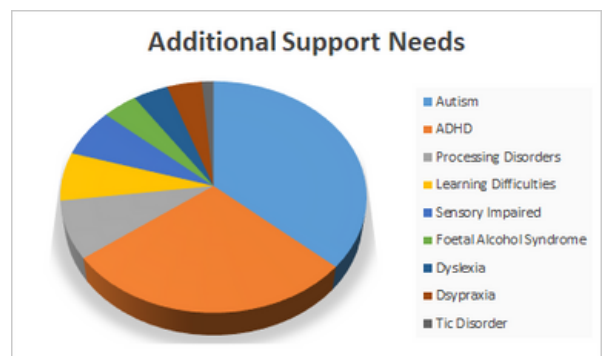
The young people have been referred to the organisation from a variety of agencies including education, social work, NHS, other third sector agencies and families. The breakdown of where the referrals have come from over the last year is as follows:



The reasons for referral are as follows:



The young people referred to us may have significant life challenges, many of them are referred because of non-engagement/non-participation with statutory services, some have experienced complicated conflicting situations involving domestic abuse, addictions/substance abuse, parents with personality disorders, chaotic lifestyles and low motivation.



We promote inclusion, embrace uniqueness and endeavour to ensure our services are accessible to all.

Our activities over the year

Supported 95 young people through our main service and Healing Hooves project

Held 59 main service yard visits

Delivered 475 1:1 Equine Facilitated Wellness main service sessions

Delivered 115 Equine Facilitated Wellness main service group sessions

Provided 3 Peer Volunteering opportunities

Provided 6 young people Work Experience opportunities

Delivered 6 holiday activities for 43 young people



Held 13 Healing Hooves yard visits

Delivered 67 Healing Hooves group sessions

Delivered 6 Healing Hooves Counsellor sessions

Delivered 12 Healing Hooves Fitness sessions

Provided 16 Yard Volunteering opportunities for young people

Provided 10 Adults Volunteering opportunities

Provided 3 Student Placements

4 young people participated in the Selkirk Junior ride

The difference we made

Of the 69 young people who completed their intervention with us through our main service:

Confidence:

74% showed a slight increase

23% showed a medium increase

1% showed a significant increase

Resilience:

68% showed a slight increase

29% showed a medium increase

1% showed a significant increase

Social Skills:

70% showed a slight increase

20% showed a medium increase

1% showed a significant increase

Well-Being:

67% showed a slight increase

23% showed a medium increase

Life Skills:

78% showed a slight increase

13% showed a medium increase

Other Outcomes:

13 re-engaged with school

8 started equine lessons

5 joined new youth group

6 became volunteers

1 gained a place at college



Healing Hooves



Healing Hooves is a 5 year pilot project funded by Comic Relief. Working with a registered Counsellor (BCAP) and a fitness trainer, this project will deliver a programme of support for young people in the Scottish borders with mental health issues. It will combine equestrian sport, equine assisted learning, psychotherapy and fitness to build resilience, core strength, social skills and confidence thus increasing mental well-being and self-belief amongst the young people and strengthen the local support offered to young people.

During the year we supported 24 young people through our Healing Hooves project and delivered 67 EAL sessions, 12 fitness sessions and 6 counselling sessions. 15 young people completed their programme and of those, 82% showed increased fitness levels, all showed an increase in confidence, 93% showed increased resilience and 89% showed increased well-being. In addition: 4 re-engaged with school, 2 joined new youth groups and 2 started up riding lessons. We are currently supporting 8 young people, 2 did not engage and 1 moved away.

The partnership with G10 continues to go well though we have had to change our Counsellor again, however the new set up seems to be working well.



Feedback from a parent: *“My young person has never wanted to go to after-school clubs for various reasons, all related to ASD and anxiety. Having Get Active held where she already feels emotionally safe and secure, and run by someone she has come to know through her Stable Life group, gave her enough incentive to attend and break through some of the previous barriers. The small group size works really well for her and she’s become more and more confident there every week. Craig is really observant and intuitive with the kids, picking up on what they might be struggling with and adapting things to suit each individual. She is becoming less self-conscious about some of her preferences, which she can find hard to manage in active groups and her confidence in general us building. After a really difficult year for her, it’s lovely to see her becoming her happy self again”*

Pathway to Rural Skills

Four young people completed SQA's NPA Level 4 in Horse Care by June 2023 through our Pathway to Rural Skills in partnership with Selkirk High School and Borders College.

In August 2023, ten young people from Selkirk High School began the Horse Care award and during this time we delivered 32 group sessions with nine young people completing the units they required for a SQA NPA Level 4 in Horse Care by June 2024.

The course covers a variety of activities, and the young people have gained experience of caring for horses and good stable/yard practice and knowing why we use certain types of bedding/feed for our animals to keep them healthy.



Selkirk High School



Case Study

12-year old young person referred in May of 2023 by their Primary School, and was picked up in January 2024 for some 1:1 sessions with us. They are Care Experienced, and live under Kinship Care with their maternal Grandparents.

They were referred to work on the following outcomes; Confidence & Self-Esteem Delayed Personal Development (Trauma) Relationships and Poor Social Skills. Experience of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Parenting Issues and Anger Issues, the referrer had hoped that the young person would be picked up for group work. However it was assessed that 1:1 intervention would suit them best due to their selective mutism and life experiences.

They presented very reserved during the first few sessions, unfortunately, they had a negative experience around horses previously at an old riding school. We worked on repetitive grooming tasks every session to build their confidence around our pony and in themselves, allowing them to complete the task independently alongside our Equine Facilitated Wellness activities. They soon began to relax, laugh, make choices through an alternative communication method and arrived brave with the request to ride!

By the end of our 1:1 intervention, they were riding again and even tried a trot, they could complete tasks independently but ask for assistance when needed and it was noted from Grandad and School that their confidence and self-belief was showing more at home and school.

Although they did not achieve the outcome of group work as school/Grandparents had hoped, they achieved such a significant growth in themselves that they are able to participate in group work more than prior, and are attempting to socialise with peers in their own unique way.



Yard Update

It's been another busy in the Yard over the last year. There has been a few more changes in the staff team with Billie-Jo, Rebecca and Arran moving on, we wish them all the best on their new journeys. We have welcomed Niamh and Kirsty to the team and they are both settling in well.

The equine activities have been busy and it's great to see our regular customers as well as new customers. Our riding sessions now include teeny walkers, tiny trotters, group sessions and hacks, school groups and individual sessions. In addition each Friday we run our own unique Hoof Beats Club which is a tailored programme of riding, stable management and general horse care.

During the holidays we had Own a Pony sessions, Handy Pony, Pony Pamper sessions and Pony Picnics as well as all our regular activities which was very well attended and lots of fun was had by all.

This year, we said a bittersweet farewell to two of our beloved ponies, Rose and Harry, as they entered their well-deserved retirement. Both ponies have been an integral part of our charity for many years, providing not only companionship but also invaluable learning experiences for the young people we serve.

As we bid farewell to these two wonderful ponies, we are filled with gratitude for the years of service they have given to our charity. They have not only helped our young people learn the practical skills of horsemanship but have also played a crucial role in nurturing their emotional well-being.

A particular mention must go to Mark and Jo Arres who are fantastic landlords and go that extra mile on a daily basis to assist us keeping the yard and fields in good order. Special thanks must also go to our many volunteers who give up their time to help on the yard, always going that extra mile on a daily basis to assist us keeping the yard and fields in good order - we couldn't do it without you!



Harry



Rose

Celebrating Our Staff

The Heart of Our Charity

As we reflect on the past year, one of our greatest strengths has been the incredible dedication of our staff. Their unwavering commitment to our mission and to the young people we serve has been nothing short of extraordinary.

In what has been another challenging year, our staff rose to every occasion with passion, resilience, and creativity. They continued to go above and beyond, ensuring that our programmes ran smoothly and that each young person who walked through our doors received the support, care, and encouragement they needed.

From our Project workers who provided hands-on care and guidance to our referred young people, to our Yard team working tirelessly looking after our ponies and customers, each and every member of our team played a vital role in our success. Their willingness to adapt, find new ways to engage, and maintain a positive and inclusive environment has been key to making a real difference in the lives of those we support.

The bonds our staff have built with the young people (both referred and customers) in our care have been truly inspiring. Whether through mentoring, teaching, or simply providing a listening ear, they have created safe spaces where growth and healing can flourish. Their dedication is evident in the stories of progress we see every day.

Myself and the Board are deeply grateful for their commitment, compassion, and the positive energy they bring to our charity. Without their tireless efforts, we would not be able to achieve the impact we have had this year. To each of our staff members, thank you for your hard work, your heart, and for making a lasting difference in the lives of the young people we serve. We are incredibly proud to have such a dedicated team.

Mags Powell
Chief Executive



Financial Review

This report relates to the accounts of the organisation for the year ended 31st March 2024, prepared and examined by Deans Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors. The accounts have been compiled based on all income, expenditure and accounting transactions recorded during the accounting year.

At the end of the year, cash at bank and in hand amounted to £179,531 (2023 - £152,039).

Overall, the income generated by the organisation increased from £324,465 in 2022/23 to £389,790

The other equine activities remain a key business plan objective for Stable Life and is fundamentally important as the organisation grows, demonstrated by the increased cost of providing our services within the new organisational structure. Staffing costs amount to £231,722 (2023 - £220,738) or 66% (2023 - 64%) of overall costs and the current operating model resulted in a total spend of £352,446 (2023 - £345,323). As the business goes forward in future years, it is vital that income streams continue to provide ongoing affordability to meet demand.

An operating surplus of £37,344 (2023 - £20,858 deficit) was therefore generated in 2023/24, which increased the reserves bringing total funds to £273,035 (2023 - £235,691).

SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Incoming Resources £

Voluntary Income -	229,197
Activities for generating funds	73,801
Investment income -	791
Other Income -	86,001
Total Income -	389,790

Total Expenditure £

Raising funds -	85,299
Activities costs -	267,147

Total Expenditure - 352,446

Net Expenditure - 37,344

A full set of accounts are available on request



Feedback from a young person
"Since coming here I have found my voice again"

A Heartfelt Thank You

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with immense gratitude for the incredible support that has enabled our charity to continue making a difference. Our journey this year would not have been possible without the generosity and dedication of so many individuals, businesses, and organisations.

To our donors and grant providers, your financial contributions have fueled our mission, allowing us to expand our programmes and reach even more people in need. Every donation, big or small, has been a building block in creating positive change.

To our volunteers, thank you for giving your time, energy, and passion. Your commitment to our cause has been nothing short of inspiring, and your hands-on efforts have had a tangible impact on those we serve.

Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones, and we could not have done it without each of you standing alongside us. Whether through grants, donations, or volunteering your time, your support has been the foundation of our success.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us to continue our work in creating a brighter future for our young people. We look forward to another year of partnership and progress.



Jo & Mark Arres
F Dumba
Selkirk Distillers
Reece McNaughton
Sir J Sumners Trust
Utilities Warehouse

Mainhouse Charitable Trust
Glendinning Primary School
Midlem Wednesday Dancers
Philiphaugh Gardens & Nursery
Selkirk Colonial Society
Selkirk Standard Bearers

Quins of Galashiels
Krafts4Charity
G McIntyre
Borders School Nurses
Amazon Smile
Plexus

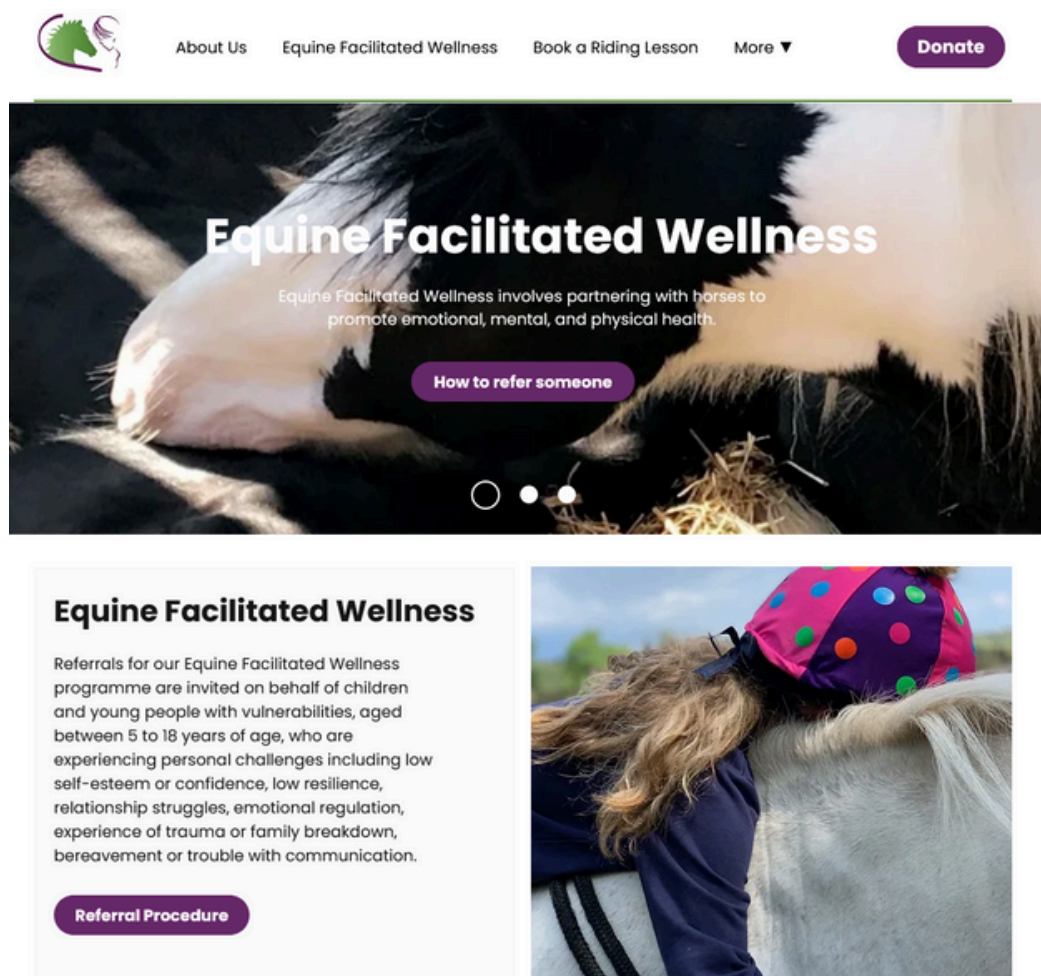
We are incredibly appreciative of all the help we've received and do our best to include everyone. We do apologise if we have missed anyone.

Stable Life website re-launch

In the second half of 2023 Stable Life were able to work with Edinburgh-based consultancy Scotlogic who put together a team of talented developers and designers who were able to redesign, and relaunch the new Stable Life Website which went live at the end of April.

The goals we set their team were ease of use for all users, to include more organic search traffic and therefore customers for the commercial side of Stable Life, more donations and sponsor a pony opportunities both from individuals and organisations locally, a more active blog for communications and better overall recognition of the brand for potential grant-giving organisations.

The team worked tirelessly and completely pro-bono to design, test and then launch the new site for us and we are thrilled to be able to use this tool to further our goals going forward. We estimate they completed around £150,000 worth of work out of the goodness of their hearts and we look forward to hosting some of them in person to be able to say thank you.



The screenshot displays the website's navigation bar with links for 'About Us', 'Equine Facilitated Wellness', 'Book a Riding Lesson', and 'More', along with a purple 'Donate' button. The main banner features a close-up of a horse's face with the text 'Equine Facilitated Wellness' and a sub-headline: 'Equine Facilitated Wellness involves partnering with horses to promote emotional, mental, and physical health.' A purple button labeled 'How to refer someone' is positioned below the text. Below the banner, a section titled 'Equine Facilitated Wellness' provides details about the referral process, including eligibility criteria for children and young people. A purple button labeled 'Referral Procedure' is located at the bottom of this section. To the right, there is a photograph of a horse wearing a colorful, polka-dotted hat.

[About Us](#) [Equine Facilitated Wellness](#) [Book a Riding Lesson](#) [More ▼](#) [Donate](#)

Equine Facilitated Wellness

Equine Facilitated Wellness involves partnering with horses to promote emotional, mental, and physical health.

[How to refer someone](#)

Equine Facilitated Wellness

Referrals for our Equine Facilitated Wellness programme are invited on behalf of children and young people with vulnerabilities, aged between 5 to 18 years of age, who are experiencing personal challenges including low self-esteem or confidence, low resilience, relationship struggles, emotional regulation, experience of trauma or family breakdown, bereavement or trouble with communication.

[Referral Procedure](#)

<https://www.stablelife.org.uk/>

