

STABLE LIFE



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 2021



OUR MISSION

Is to provide a safe, nurturing and learning experience using the horse and its environment to help disadvantaged young people reach their full potential and achieve their aspirations and dreams.

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CHAIR'S FOREWARD

There will be many charities reflecting on the events of the last twelve months and how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected their structure, staffing, service delivery and funding. To that end Stable Life is no different, we have had to deal head on with the dynamics of the disease and the consequences of various stages of lockdown that have disrupted both our commercial business and our project work thus denying our client base, mainly our young people, the support which they sought and needed as the pandemic spread through our communities.

Attempting to work through this was difficult, having to deal with mixed messages around guidance at both local authority and national government level led to a great deal of frustration and anxiety amongst management, staff, and users. I am delighted to be able to report that due to the resilience and professionalism of the team here at Stable Life we have come through this crisis and, I believe, are stronger as a result.

Not content with to having to deal with the consequences of Covid-19 over the piece we also had the lengthy process of getting the new indoor riding school built and signed off to our requirements within a reasonable time frame. As you are aware there was considerable slippage on the afore mentioned time frame which increased our frustrations, but we got there in the end and have undoubtedly a fine building to behold. On a similar positive note, we have negotiated an extension on the current lease which gives us peace of mind for the next few years at least.

In addition, our Treasurers report which you will be presented with at this meeting shows that despite restrictions on income due to the Covid-19 pandemic, financially we appear to be in a good place, and I must thank Martin Buckley for steering us through a particularly difficult year.

Any organisation, especially a charitable one depends heavily on the people who run it and as Chair of Trustees I feel incredibly fortunate to have Mags Powell and Sam Anderson heading us up, they along with all the staff and volunteers within Stable Life have shown exceptional dedication to the tasks in hand enabling us to look forward with confidence. Can I also take this opportunity to thank my fellow trustees for their support over the last 12 months, they bring different perspectives and skills to the organisation which can be used effectively. Sadly, we say goodbye to Sal Strang-Steel after this AGM, Sal has served Stable Life well for many years and will be sadly missed. Likewise, Susan Turner has decided to step down as well, thank you Susan for all your work the time you have been with us. I would also like to take this opportunity to mention our great friend and companion Vanessa Henderson who passed earlier in the summer. She was a great friend of us all, a superb person and just a wonderful human being.

To summarise, it has been a difficult year for Stable Life, indeed for everybody but we have come through stronger and wiser. As we look ahead and set about planning our business strategy for the next few years, I feel confident for this organisation.

Thank you everyone, onwards and upwards!

Graham Easton
Chair

WHAT WE DO

For >35 years our charity (previously GYP Borders) has supported referred disadvantaged young people in the Scottish Borders who are experiencing personal challenges in their lives. Our overall aim is "making a difference".

Over the years we have ran a number of different innovative projects each one giving the young person the opportunity to discover that life can be lived in a different way.

One of these programmes which began in 2008 was Stable Life which uses the horse and its environment to improve the health and well-being of these young people through 1:1 or group sessions and offer safe and confidential environments to:

- enable the young people to discuss their current situation and develop positive coping strategies
- support young people with social, emotional or behavioural issues to continue in mainstream education
- learn life skills and bring multiple benefits to children, young people, their families and communities

Due to the success of this project, in August 2013 we took on a long-term lease of a local riding centre, renamed the organisation Stable Life and made it the core service.

Our sessions are designed to promote mental wellness. We use a variety of different resources to be able to promote positive change. When young people are referred to us they tend to work within a narrow Window of Tolerance, this can be caused by a variety of external factors, however the strategies we use promote self-care and self-regulation allowing the young person to experience positive feelings and reactions. This allows them to build a variety of resilience factors which they can use in a practical application in other areas of their life.

Our work over the years has brought real change to the lives of our young people as well as inspiring and exciting them about their life choices. We are most proud of our young people and the achievements they have made. Every young person has shown the commitment and determination to make a change and we couldn't be prouder.



"B has loved his time at Stable Life and is very attached to "Danny" it has given him something to look forward to. He loved learning with his pony"

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

As mentioned in our Chair's report, Covid 19 has presented a lot of challenges for us over the last year. However having the wonderful team that we do they rose to the challenges presented and worked hard to develop our services and look after our herd to ensure that we could continue to do what we do in the ever changing environment we found ourselves in along with everyone else.

During the first lockdown our Yard Staff worked hard looking after our ponies ensuring they were fit for when our Equine programmes and commercial activities were able to restart in July. Our Project staff were furloughed and used this time to complete further training giving them more knowledge/resources when supporting our young people. In July we initially offered some outreach sessions where our Project workers met with young people in their local parks to have walk and talk sessions. We started EAL sessions at the centre in August. It was great to have our young people back on site. Due to ongoing restrictions we had to adjust how we delivered the sessions which meant that we had smaller group sizes made up of school bubbles and increased 1:1's but also meant that we were able to keep everyone safe and meet Government guidelines. In addition to our main programme, in August we started our Healing Hooves 5-year pilot project funded by Comic Relief along with our Pathway to Rural Skills programme giving young people the opportunity to gain SQA National Progression Awards Level 4 in Horse Care and Rural Skills in partnership with Selkirk High School and Borders College.

The second lockdown in December once again resulted in the young people not being able to access the project and our commercial activities halted. This time our programmes were adapted to allow young people to engage online. These were facilitated within school sessions and allowed us closer working partnerships with local schools, with project staff being supported by teachers and ANA's. Videos of our horses were made and activities were posted out to complete in sessions. We discovered that young people were not as keen to engage online which has highlighted the benefit that the ponies bring to the sessions and the importance of our calm space at the centre.

We lost around 90% our commercial income during lockdown which was a huge concern, however were able to access Scottish Government Grants put in place during the pandemic which helped to cover some of the loss. Our current funders have also been very proactive and flexible with diverting our grant funding to where we required it which also helped with our financial situation. In amongst the lockdowns our Indoor Riding School rebuild got underway and after a bit of a delay was finally ready for use in April. It looks absolutely amazing and will make such a difference to us for many years to come.

Our project worker Lesley Hogg has moved on to pastures new, and we welcomed 2 new staff members, Mary Anderson and Kathryn Walsh who have joined our team offering Equine Assisted Sessions to young people. We also welcomed Marion Grant as a Yard Assistant along with Billie-Jo Tennant and Brogan McIntosh as Yard Workers. On a much sadder note and touched upon by our Chair, we were devastated at the passing of our beloved colleague Vanessa. She was a huge part of Stable Life from the beginning and helped develop Stable Life to be where it is today. She was inspiring, kind and had an irrepressible spirit and the most fantastic sense of humour, full of fun and very mischevious - she was a force of nature and will be missed dearly.

This year will be one that we will all remember for years to come and I must thank everyone for pulling together and supporting each other. The hard work, commitment and determination shown by the Board, Staff and volunteers over the last year has been incredible. A huge thanks to our funders too, who without their support none of the work would be possible. Finally a big thank you to all the young people who work so hard to turn their lives around.

Stable Life is a special place full of special people and I look forward to the year ahead as we strive to secure a sustainable future.

Mags Powell
Chief Executive

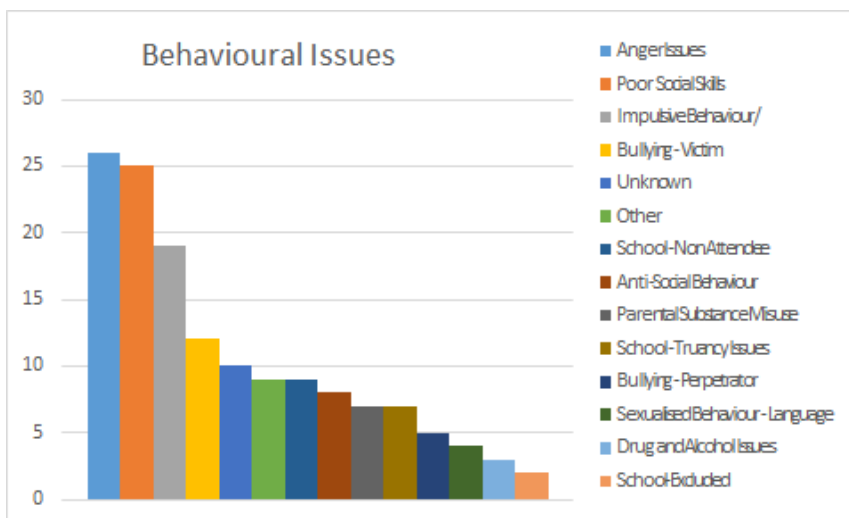
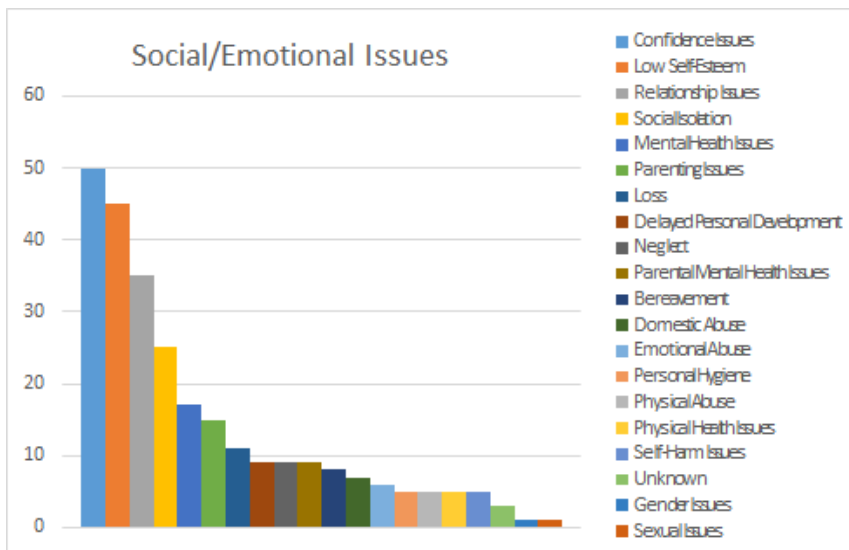
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Over the last year we received 53 referrals to our main programme in addition to the 9 young people we were already supporting. Due to COVID all groups had to be reduced to a maximum of 4 young people from an individual school bubble. This has impacted on the service we could provide, resulting in an increased amount of 1:1 sessions and reduced number of group sessions. Even with the two lockdowns we were however still able to deliver 46 equine assisted group sessions, 139 1:1 equine assisted sessions and 1 Environmental session through our main service over the year.

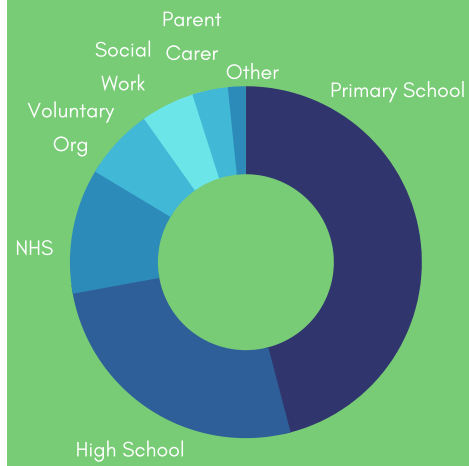
The second lockdown being put in place from Boxing Day once again resulted in the young people not being able to access the project. Project staff this time looked at how sessions could be adapted to be delivered online. The young people were up for trying this out and over this period of time we delivered 65 online sessions. We have found however, this has not had a high level of engagement from the young people with just over 57% participating and the ones who did attend often refusing to switch on cameras or contribute to the session.

Due to COVID we have been unable to offer supported work experience this year and very limited volunteering opportunities. Our summer programme was also rearranged to outreach support so that we could meet Government guidelines and continue to support some young people on a 1:1 basis enabling us to catch up with the individuals we knew had been struggling with lockdown.

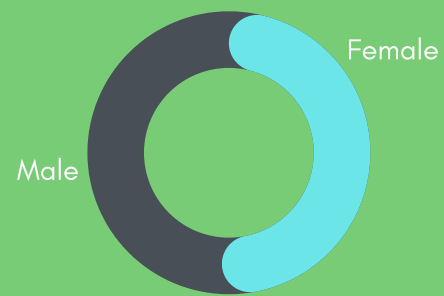
REASONS FOR REFERRALS



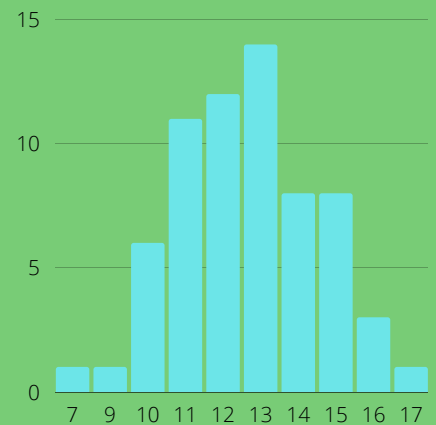
Referrers



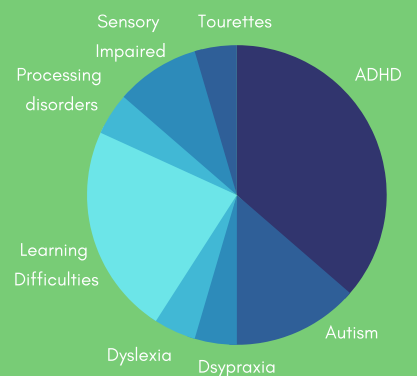
Gender



Ages



Additional Needs



"L thoroughly enjoyed this special time. Just what he needed to help move forward after horrible experiences in his past"

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. The project was supposed to start in April 2020 but due to Covid this was delayed to July 2020.

Looking at what we were able to deliver due to restrictions, changed the format of the Healing Hooves programme. It was decided that Freestyle Fitness Borders (FFB) trainer Mark Huggan would deliver the first block of sessions due to us being unable to socially distance whilst using horses. We were however able to utilise our outdoor area to train in the fields. This allowed our young people to work towards the completion of a 2.5k Outdoor Obstacle Racing Course at Bonchester Bridge. This was a great achievement for the young people who thoroughly enjoyed the challenges set. We were unsure how engaged they would be for going in to freezing water, or racing through mud and climbing walls, however they rose to the challenge and alongside our staff (who missed out the freezing water!) completed the course.

Once restrictions were eased we were able to start using Equine Assisted Activities with the groups and we adapted our sessions to allow the young people to explore the outdoor hacks around the farm encouraging young people to have a sense of grounding in a natural environment. Through the use of nature for mindfulness sessions, the team utilised the open spaces to allow escapism from the current restrictions which had proven detrimental to the mental health of our young people.

Being able to successfully adapt the material we had initially planned to deliver into a programme that the young people engaged with, we felt, went well. The team have shown great resilience in adapting material to ensure a young person continued to be supported through changing guidelines.

Entering another lockdown in January was a further setback which included our independent counsellor unable to deliver this part of the project again, however our team worked hard on moving our sessions online to incorporate fitness exercises, using videos of our ponies, sessions.

Over the last year we have received 18 referrals to Healing Hooves. We have delivered 43 face to face sessions and 10 online sessions. Of the 18 referrals 9 young people completed their intervention, 1 dis-engaged and we are currently supporting 8 young people. As we move into year 2 of the project we are looking forward to being able to deliver the project as originally planned as restrictions ease further.



I do believe Stable Life reduces the need for crisis intervention. This can only be a positive for children, their families and school.

PATHWAY TO RURAL SKILLS

This year we did our first NPA Rural skills course, in conjunction with Selkirk High School and Borders College.

This course was made up of four Horse Care modules which comprised of:

- Horse identification and Handling a Quiet Horse Safely
- Assist with Grooming a Quiet Horse
- Stable Routine
- Tack and Tacking Up

The course also included five modules on Rural skills comprising of:

- Employability for Land Based Industries
- Animal Handling an Introduction
- Land based Industries an Introduction
- Estate Maintenance an Introduction
- Animal Husbandry

The course started in August 2020 with seven participants. Over the last year we have delivered 37 face to face sessions and 6 online sessions. The group worked hard and experienced working outside even in inclement weather conditions.

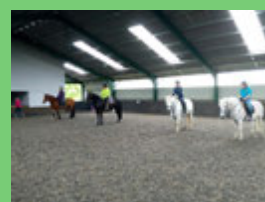
The course covers a variety of activities, and the young people have gained experience with sheep, horses, working dogs, Estate maintenance, Land based industries, employability skills and animal husbandry. They have been doing a wide variety of jobs from weighing sheep for market to planting bulbs for spring flowering, fencing both wooden and wire stock proof fencing and the importance of good field drain management. The group have also learned the importance of good stable/yard practice, knowing why we use certain types of bedding/feed for our animals in order to keep them healthy. All the group agreed they were learning things they never thought they would.

During lockdown we had online session with some of the group joining us but others could not for different reasons. Once we were allowed the young people back on the yard unfortunately three young people chose not to return to finish the course.

The remaining four worked very hard and pushed themselves out of their comfort zones learning skills they never dreamed they would and achieving the goals they had set for themselves. It proved a fun and learning environment for staff and young people alike.

We would like to say a huge thank you to our Landlords Mark and Jo Arres for supporting us with the delivery of this course and for the time and effort they afforded to the group.

Four young people made us very proud when they completed the course at the start of June 2021.



Selkirk High School



"A has gained so much confidence since Stable Life. I highly recommend it to other children and families"

OUTCOMES

Of the 87 young people we offered support to over the last year, 41 have completed their intervention, 2 did not engage and 7 dis-engaged from the services. We are currently supporting 37 and 12 young people are on our waiting list.

Each session is recorded on our Database with an individual write up for each young person, this allows us to be able to review from previous sessions and note progression, keyworker consistency allows us to be able to monitor and review continuously.

The young person feedbacks to us every week on how they are doing. Our Progress chart allows us to be able to identify where the changes have been made. Very often when we start with our initial chart the young person will give themselves the highest marks, only on reflection will they start to identify with the positive changes they have made, allowing them to understand that by giving the full facts and information they can get support to make positive changes within their own lives.

When the young person first attends Stable Life, for the majority they are very quiet, reserved, anxious and withdrawn. They can be non-engaging within the sessions but as they attend every week we start to visually see differences in them as their confidence starts to grow. These changes include feeling comfortable and safe enough to participate in the session, feeling assured in their own skills to lead the group and being able to control and manage their feelings.

Through the sessions the building of relationships with the horses can be linked to how we use communication in other situations, families, schools etc. As young people begin to build a "bank" of skills they are able to identify other areas they can use these techniques. They build resilience as they have increased opportunity to re-inforce the skills they develop, the young person begins to experience positive feelings and feedback through the interactions with others, and through getting the results they are working towards in sessions.

One of our Cabin based activities involves the young person working on identifying strengths in self, group and ponies. There are activities which are based around how we recognise strengths in ourselves and others, they practice giving and receiving compliments. If this is a task that a young person would have difficulties in, the use of the reflecting on the horse's strengths can allow insight in to qualities we may then attribute to themselves or another in the group. These activities allow positive reinforcement of qualities in the young person that they may not have previously recognised, where they have never been encouraged to share positive statements the use of the horse can reduce the spotlight effect that may be experienced.

Over the weeks they develop a good self-awareness and develop good emotional management and realise that they can use these skills in everyday life and their current situations. They see Stable Life as a calm and safe space where they can get a break from the chaos. They become open and honest about their challenges and look at ways to deal with these. By the time they are finished at Stable Life these young people have techniques to cope with their behaviours, are confident to seek out help and know where to get that help. They know the choices they should be making to improve their situation and are confident to do so.

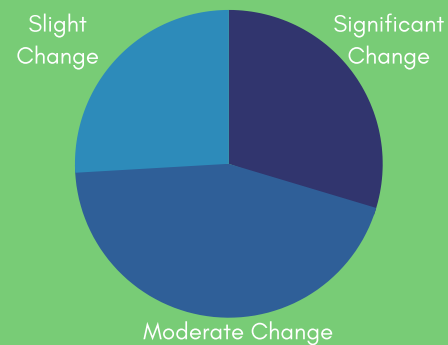
In addition to the outcomes shown in the graphs:

- All young people have increased their level of fitness
- 12 young people have re-engaged with school
- 7 young people have become confident enough to start up commercial lessons
- 4 young people have gained SQA NPA's Level 4 in Horse Care & Rural Skills
- 3 young people have secured college placements
- 1 young person has gone on to volunteer in the Equine Centre

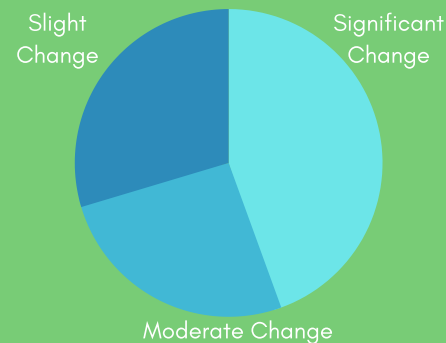
"It has been great, full of fun for S. He has learned so much about himself I can't thank you enough"

Outcomes

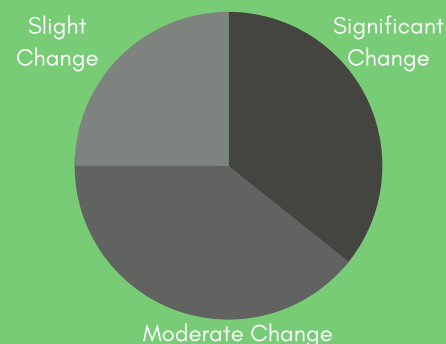
Increased Confidence



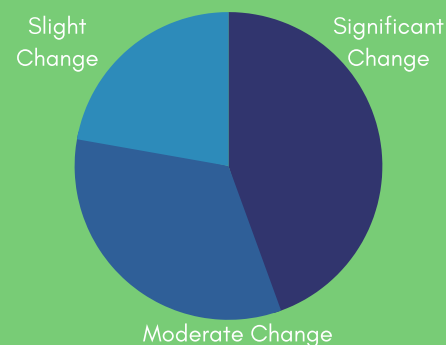
Increased Resilience



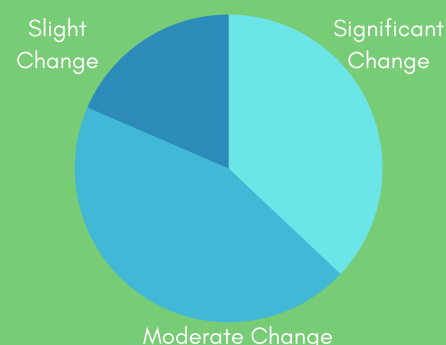
Increased Social Skills



Improved Well-Being



Increased Life Skills



CASE STUDY

Child A was referred to Stable Life for anger, relationship and bullying issues. It was stated that they had been involved in several physical altercations, where they had behaved aggressively and impulsively and also that they refused to talk about their behaviour.

During Child A's third session at Stable Life they said that they "find it hard to say how they feel and thought this is why they get angry and into trouble." That Child A felt safe enough at Stable Life to begin to process and talk about their emotions and behaviours was huge progress. Using the ponies, we continued to work on naming and regulating emotions, encouraging Child A to recognise their and other's emotions and how their behaviour affects others.

During Child A's first few sessions they would tear others down in the group, speak over the top of them and laugh at them. They displayed anger when they were frustrated, talking back to staff and arguing with them. However, on session five Child A worked with a pony who asked for her own personal space and respect from Child A.

Child A quickly learned to respect this pony, regulate their anger and frustration around the pony and confidently put their own boundaries in place. They quickly formed a connection with the pony and began to pay attention to how their behaviour was affecting the pony; they stopped thinking about how others were getting on and tearing them down and instead focused on their relationship with their own pony. For the first time they demonstrated respect, kindness and teamwork. They no longer spoke over the top of others in the group but would politely raise their hand when they wanted to say something and went out of their way to help others in the group.

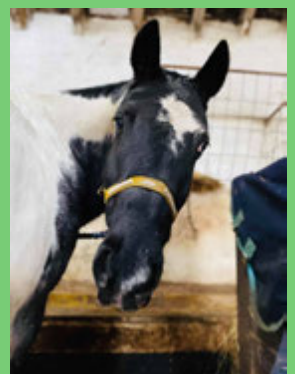
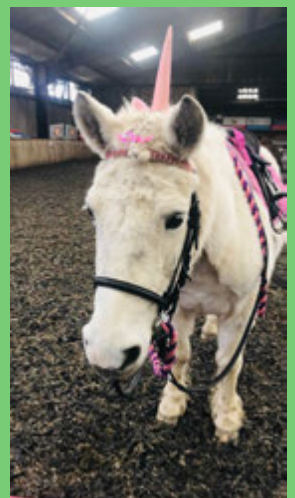
As the weeks progressed Child A encouraged those they had previously torn down, instead building them up with words of affirmation and kindness. They showed care and concern for their teammates and pony. Once under-confident and easily frustrated, Child A now repeatedly says "I am so clever!" and gives huge smiles while riding.

LOOKING FORWARD

As time goes on there will be ongoing changes that we envisage will impact on the charity, our staff, clients and partner agencies and we are looking at this as a time of opportunity and how we can adapt our services, build new partnerships, and implement new processes to best meet these changes for everyone whilst ensuring the sustainability of Stable Life. This includes currently working with Company Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS) Consultant to develop a Business Plan for the next 3 years.

We continue to monitor our financial situation and err on the cautious side with budget forecasting, we look to save money where we can, continue to be prudent, and to supplement reserves as much as we can. We are looking to build our commercial income back up and identify how we can further maximize on our capacity to offer equine activities and help with sustainability. We will also continue to secure funding as opportunities arise.

Our long-term vision is to continue to utilise the proven benefits of Equine Assisted Learning to help all young, vulnerable people in the Scottish Borders that could benefit from the service to overcome their difficulties and move into positive life pathways.



"It has been great, full of fun for S. He has learned so much about himself I can't thank you enough"

EQUINE CENTRE OVERVIEW

The past year has probably been the most challenging yet for the Equine Centre! We have all been dealing with the dreaded impact of Covid and like everyone we have had to adjust and embrace all that this has thrown at us in the best and safest way possible.

Through the first lockdown we had to close the business. All staff had a to come in and take care of the ponies daily needs and exercise them. While it was extremely odd being here without all our lovely clients we felt extremely blessed to be able to come to the yard and look after our precious gang! The staff worked very hard through this time not only on the yard but also keeping our ponies exercised for their own health and well-being. By the time the schools went back after the summer break we were able to offer more activities with all our Covid procedures in place which in itself added to the work load but it was lovely to be up and running again.

Our Yard Supervisor Kat went on maternity leave and in March had a beautiful baby girl who I have no doubt will be getting a sit on Pandora very soon! In September we took on another Yard Assistant and two Yard Workers who have been a real asset to the team. Also in this month the work on the new indoor school finally started. All our clients were extremely loyal and hardy and continued to support us by coming for their lessons in the outdoor school and out on hacks in the daylight hours. Our new indoor school is beautiful and was worth all the stress and upheaval. It is a huge asset to Stable Life and the wider community and from a personal point of view will certainly be a lot more pleasant spending time in it over the winter months than it used to be!

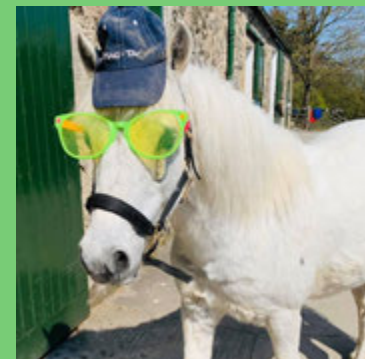
Our pony herd has depleted slightly to 15 wonderful furry friends but I am on the look-out for more suitable treasures to join the happy gang. We pride ourselves on having happy, well-schooled, kind, well-mannered, friendly horses and feel very privileged to have them in our lives.

Our clients have been incredible and we continue to be as busy as we can be under the circumstances. We have been able to provide on a smaller scale volunteer and work placement opportunities in this time which has been of huge benefit to the young people, adult volunteers and ourselves.

This past year especially, huge thanks must go to our fantastic staff who have been incredible and our amazing volunteers who have all gone above and beyond to support us. Our wonderful liveries too have been such a help in this time and fit in very well with the ethos of Stable Life. Finally, particular mention must go to Mark and Jo Arres who are fantastic landlords and always go that extra mile for us.

Stable Life at Dryden is a unique and special place and is enjoyed by many throughout the Scottish Borders and long may this continue.

Sam Anderson
Equine Director



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

This report relates to the accounts of the organisation for the year ended 31st March 2021, prepared and examined by Gall Robertson, 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 beginning of the year, cash at bank and in hand amounted to £146,100. At 31st March 2021, the bank and cash balance was a net of £190,592 (Bank £242,308, overdraft £51,716). The bank overdraft figure reflects the overdrawn fund balances rather than an actual bank overdraft. The charity had no overdrawn bank accounts in the year.

Overall, our income generated reduced from £460,963 to £397,069. Although livery income held up well there were significant reductions in income from lessons and contractual arrangements, a reflection of restrictions imposed at various points in the year.

Commercial activity remains a key business plan objective for Stable Life and is fundamentally important as the organisation develops.

Staffing costs amount to £205,216 or 67% of overall costs and our current arrangements resulted in a total spend of £305,649 (2020 - £371,323). An operating surplus of £89,640 was therefore generated during 2020/21, which increased reserves, bringing total funds to £321,529.

Following last year's welcome surplus, a similar result in 2020/21, amounting to £91,420 (2019/20 £89,640) was an outstanding result in a very difficult year and thanks are due to all of our staff, volunteers, supporters and Board members for this. Although the surplus on unrestricted activities is welcome, a significant part of our reserves will be directed at specific, restricted expenditure in line with funding agreements.

As in recent years' budgetary control going forward will continue to play a vital part in the organisation's operations, especially against the continuing uncertainty relating to our activities and Covid-19.

Martyn Buckley

Treasurer

SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES 2020/21

Incoming Resources:	£	Total Expenditure:	£
Voluntary income:	331,248	Costs of Charitable Activities:	135,655
Activities for generating funds:	65,055	Trading Activities:	169,994
Investment income:	766		
Total incoming resources:	397,069	Total expenditure:	305,649
Net income/(expenditure):	91,420		

A full set of accounts are available on request

"The concept gave A an exceptional opportunity from which his love for animals has flourished. Thank you"

THANK YOU

As always we are incredibly grateful and very humbled by all the amazing support we receive and in the last year especially. It has been a very difficult year for everyone but once again we are very humbled by everyone's support. We would like to thank everyone who has helped us, whether that help came via a financial donation, materials or a generous gifting of time and skills. We are very, very thankful to:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Edith Scott | Mark & Jo Arres |
| Margaret Fletcher | Malvinn Fenty |
| Selkirk Colonial Society | Derek Hume |
| The Mainhouse Charitable Trust | Peter Wright of William Waugh |
| Phil Morris of Pocket Rocket | Selkirk Rugby Club |
| Elliot Fraser | The Incorporation of Hammerman |
| Steve & Anne Walker | The Smelly Rug Company |
| Allied Surveyors | Hugh Chalmers |
| Greener Melrose | |





Stable Life

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

