



Stable Life

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



Annual Report 2023

Since 2008, Stable life has been supporting disadvantaged young people aged 10 to 18 and their families in the Scottish Borders who are experiencing personal challenges in their lives.

Utilising Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) and Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT), working together using the horse and its environment, we have built a safe nurturing environment for vulnerable young people where we help them to discover a sense of self, build resilience, learn transferable life skills and help them move onto positive pathways.

Contents:

- Stable Life's Outcomes
- Service Overview
- Equine Centre Update
- Chairman's Report
- Management Report
- Financial Review
- Thank You

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.

Stable Life
c/o Dryden Farm
Ashkirk
Selkirk
TD7 4NT

Tel: 01750 32277
Email: info@stablelife.org.uk
Web: www.stablelife.org.uk

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.

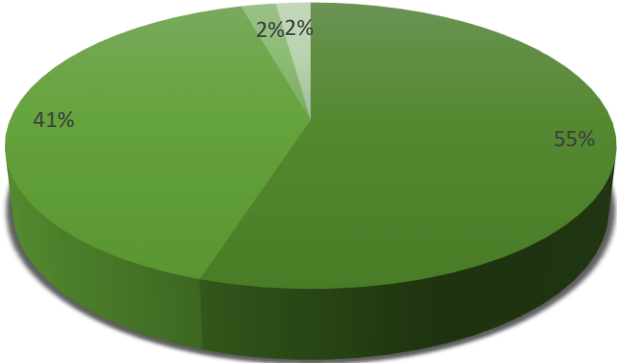


"What would make it better? Nothing! Everything is already better, the people are nice and the farm is nice and Smartie"

From April 2022, Stable Life has offered support to 95 vulnerable young people through our main service or Healing Hooves project who have been referred to the organisation from a variety of agencies including education, social work, NHS, other third sector agencies and families.

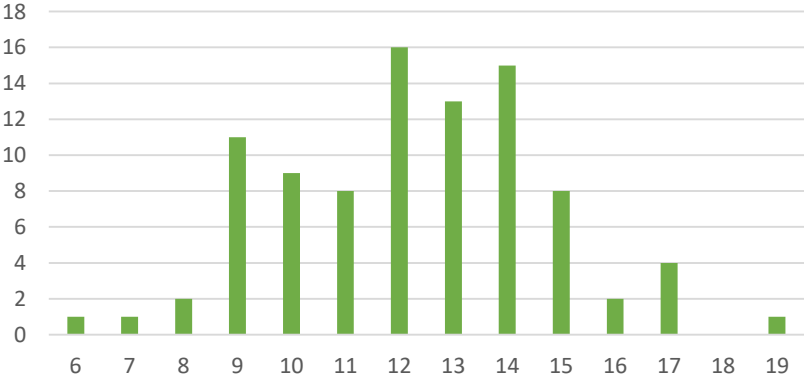
The breakdown of gender and ages of the young people are below:

Gender



■ Female ■ Male ■ Transgender ■ Nonbinary

Ages of Young People



Feedback from a Parent

“It’s always the same if they’ve done something or joined in they mask the whole way through then goes stony silent on their return to me then gets home and explodes!!

Interestingly yesterday they didn’t explode at any point! Once they’d cooled down and got changed wanted to leave so we did. I suggested park and ice cream, on the way there they suddenly started telling us all about it and showing us photos of their day.

It was so lovely.

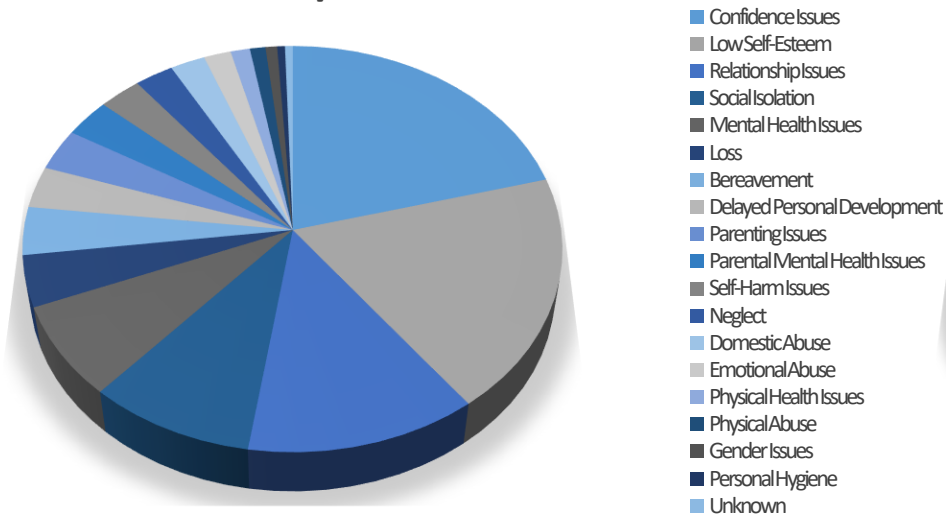
I was on edge all day thinking the meltdown was coming but it never materialised. It was so wonderful to think of what they’d achieved and enjoyed that day and whilst they were a little on edge there was no huge meltdown afterwards.

Amazing!”

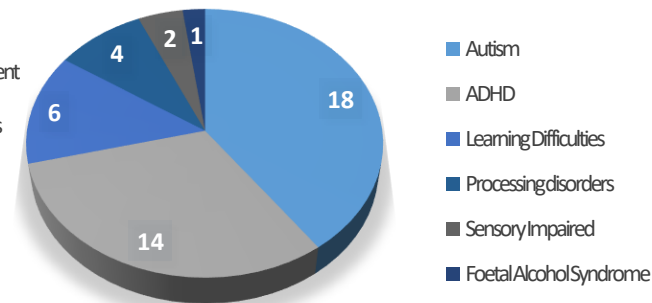
Reasons for Referral

We record the information about why the young people are referred and the table below shows the reasons:

Social/Emotional Issues



Additional Support Needs

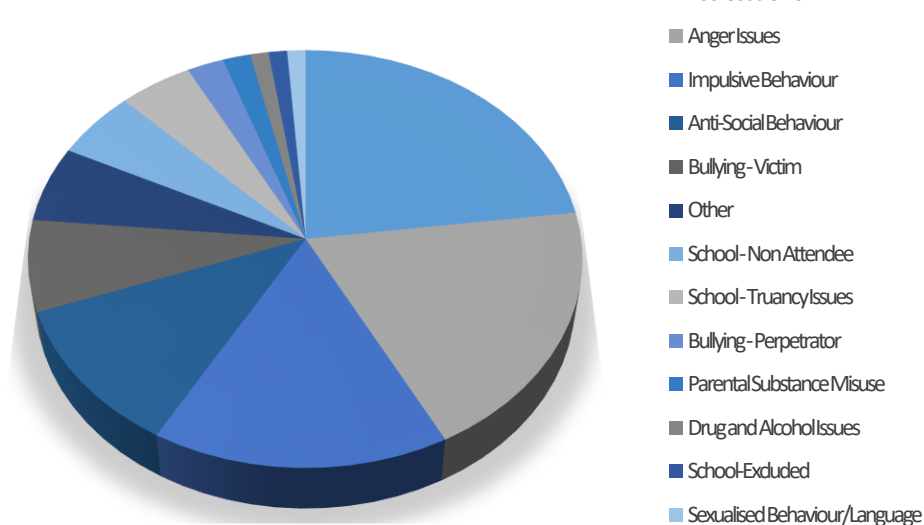


"I feel Stable Life is a necessary and very valuable resource that helps to support and develop the resilience and confidence in children overtime.

Stable life offers support to children and experiences that we can not provide in the class. It offers a safe environment free from academia, where the child can be themselves / find themselves."

Head Teacher Feedback

Behavioural Issues



Our Activities over the year:



Delivered 245 1:1 Main Service Sessions



Delivered 136 Group Main Service Sessions



Provided 4 volunteering opportunities for young people



Delivered 108 Healing Hooves EAL Sessions



Delivered 8 Healing Hooves Counsellor Sessions



Delivered 7 Healing Hooves Fitness Sessions



Offered 54 young people 10 different summer activities



Delivered 36 Horse Care sessions



Delivered 6 Rural Skills sessions



7 young people went on to start up equine lessons



98% showed increased self-confidence



95% are more resilient & have better life styles



95% have improved social skills



9 young people re-engaged with school



4 young people joined new groups



4 young people became volunteers



1 young person secured a college placement



9 young people completed work experience with 5 of these having being supported through Stable Life



8 young people out with Stable Life became volunteers

Our outcomes over the year:

Over the last year of the 56 young people we have supported through our main service, 42 young people completed their intervention with us, we are currently supporting 11 and 3 did not engage. Of these 42 all have become healthier and fitter, learnt new life skills and had fun. We have also evidenced:

"Riding Smartie she is the best, I love her so much!"

Case Study

Outcomes for a young person from a NHS referral were to:

- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Emotional regulation
- Group work
- Building relationships



The young person attended seventeen sessions at Stable Life. In session 1 they seemed quite nervous but grew in confidence as the weeks progressed. Using deep breathing and bareback work they began to regulate, slow down and engage more with others.

It has been lovely to see their enjoyment through this learning process. They have shown great determination and participated fully in every session. They have also shown an increase in teamwork skills, with an increased desire to work as a team, joining in on group activities and conversations. Their engagement with others in the group has really flourished and it has been lovely to see them make friends, have fun and laugh a lot.

They have shown a reduction in risk taking behaviour, behaving safely around the ponies and showing an increase in emotional regulation. They began to open up more to staff members and shared more difficult emotions and thoughts. They explored different ways to manage their emotions, through breathing and grounding techniques. They engaged well with these and now know they have tools they can use for keeping calm. They are beginning to recognise the benefits of regulating their emotions. Through working with the ponies they have learned to ask for their personal space, create boundaries and communicate clearly. Their confidence grew each week as they tried new things, overcame fears and learned to trust their pony. They showed increased determination, bravery and resilience when learning new things.

Feedback: Their carer stated that we did very well at *“being positive role models!”* And *“Were so happy with their positive attitude and how they have applied themselves. They can struggle with physical activities and has never tried to avoid Stable Life which is awesome, always been so happy and motivated to attend. They have had some really hard times at school lately and emotional ties at home due to the ongoing court case but believe Stable Life has helped them through this”*



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.

Over the year the Counsellor and Personal fitness trainer we were working with were unable to continue to offer us their services so we had to find replacements which we have done without any disruption to delivery of our programme. It has actually worked very well with the new partners and we are seeing more engagement from the young people in both the counselling and keep fit sessions.

During the year we supported 39 young people through our Healing Hooves project and delivered 108 EAL sessions, 7 fitness sessions and 8 counselling sessions. Twenty-six young people completed their programme and of those, 99% showed increased fitness levels, all showed an increase in confidence, 92% showed increased resilience and 83% showed increased well-being. We are currently supporting 7 young people, 5 disengaged and one moved away.

We had the opportunity to showcase Healing Hooves on Blue Peter for Red Nose Day. We gave Joel, the presenter an insight into the project and how it benefits our young people, he even got to have a sleep on the back of Lachie! It was a great experience for the young people and staff involved.

"X has enjoyed these sessions very much. I really feel that their time at Stable Life has contributed to an increase in confidence and equipped them to deal with negative situations more positively. This has especially been beneficial through their transition to high school" Feedback from a parent .

"They have learned how to cope with difficult emotions and have become much more accepting of themselves"

Pathway to Rural Skills

Six young people completed SQA's NPA Level 4 in Horse Care and Rural Skills by April 2022 through our Pathway to Rural Skills in partnership with Selkirk High School. Following this we had a review of the programme and due to feedback from staff and young people with regards to the tightness of time to deliver the two awards it was decided that for the next course we would concentrate on delivering the Horse Care NPA rather than the both awards.

In August 2022, ten young people from Selkirk High School began the Horse Care award and during this time we delivered 36 group sessions with four young people completing the units they required for a SQA NPA Level 4 in Horse Care by June 2023.

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



Equine Centre Update

It's been a busy time in the Equine Centre over the last year. Carra has settled in well and has been busy getting to know our staff, volunteers and ponies. We also tasked her with introducing a new online booking system which after a couple of teething issues is now working well with most clients finding there way around it.

There has also been a few changes to staff over the year with Steph, Marion, Jo and Hannah moving on, we wish them all the best on their new journeys. We have welcomed Emma, Rebecca, and Chloe to the team and they are looking after our clients and special ponies very 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, groups 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 pony care sessions, handy pony, dressage, clear round jumping, canter and a banter as well as all our regular activities which was very well attended and lots of fun was had by all.

Special thanks must 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!



"Being with and learning about relationships through horses has helped them to learn how to stay calm"

Chairman's Report

In 2023 we are celebrating 10 years of Stable Life in its current incumbency at Dryden near Selkirk, and we can proudly look back over that period and reflect on the challenges, achievements, and successes that we have encountered during that time. We now need to be focused on our planning and development for the next 10 years and beyond so that we can deliver the key services that are vitally important to support our young people.

Unfortunately, the after effects of Covid-19 are still with us and likely to remain for some time. Most noticeably mental health issues among young people are continuing to rise leading to a greater call on our resources, be it staffing or funding. Over the last year the fiscal crisis caused by the hefty increase in the cost of living has affected us all, and here at Stable Life we had to make some serious business decisions on how to save money as the funding streams we had been using were pared back due to the ever-increasing cost of the pandemic resulting in a predicted shortfall of working capital. By carrying out various costing exercises and a re-assessment of roles, salaries, and contracted hours throughout the workforce, without any job losses, we are now confident about the future of the organisation.

A successful Crowd Funding exercise helped to alleviate some of the funding shortfalls, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody, be it individuals or companies, for the tremendous support that you showed during this challenging time. In addition, further funding from Comic Relief has helped to ease the financial situation, which gives us all at Stable Life a belief in our future and the ability to forward plan.

Over this difficult and unsettling time, we saw a few staff changes and said goodbye to Cindy, Carol, and Helen from the Project Team as well as Marion, Steph, Jo and Hannah from the Yard. We wish them well for the future. Currently heading up the Project team because of these changes are Kat Walsh and Mary Anderson, both having been in post for a few months now and successfully picking up the reins. On the yard side Carra Baker continues to strengthen her team of workers with Emma and Rebecca joining in March and along with our volunteers is busy increasing the business aspects of the organisation.

The Board of Trustees at Stable Life have shown endeavour and courage in no insignificant amounts over the last year, I feel lucky to have an effective team with me and I thank you for your support. Over the last year we have said goodbye to Edith Scott, Zoe Kidd and Iain Ross but have welcomed Susan Turner and Sharon Guest who bring a vast amount of experience with them, welcome to you both.

At the beginning of my foreword, I mentioned the fact that we have been at Dryden for ten years and during that entire time (and beyond) our CEO Mags Powell has been with us sourcing funding streams as well as guiding, advising, planning, organising, supporting, coaching us all, and much more. From myself, the Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, and the young people who gain a wonderful experience at Stable Life, we thank you.

Graham Easton

"I've just had an appointment with one of my young people who visited the yard recently. They couldn't speak highly enough of you and said that you were absolutely brilliant during their visit"

Management Report

How quickly time flies when you're having fun! It certainly does not feel like ten years since we moved in to Dryden, very excited and nervous too at the undertaking we were about to take, unsure if it would work, how it would work and if we could make it work, but here we are ten years later, still here. It's not been quite a journey, lots of exciting times as we developed our services and the organisation. There's also been some challenging times particularly over the last few years with a pandemic and cost of living crisis to deal with, however with strong, focussed, determined people around (past and present) and the unfaltering support of our community (funders, stakeholders, local organisations/businesses and individuals) we are still doing what we love and feeling very privileged being able to do so.

Over these years we have been able to watch many young people struggling with various challenges look at their current situation, and with a little support, learn and develop positive coping strategies and often find the courage to change. Our greatest achievements are the changes these young people make, some major, some not, but everyone has a young person who has shown the commitment and determination to make a change and we couldn't be prouder.

Although the last year has been a challenging year with regards to our finances with the support once again from our community we have weathered the storm and we are looking forward from a more positive position. We have also seen a number of staff changes over the last year but with successful recruitment campaigns we have a new organisational structure and team as we move into the next stage. There are too many people to thank individually that have been our journey so far, however we are forever indebted to each and everyone of you.

I hope you can see from this report that this year, has again been a success with regards to the work that our Project team have delivered supporting the young people referred and the outcomes these young people are achieving. Our Yard Team have worked hard looking after our ponies and delivering a wide range of equine activities to our clients that helps support the sustainability of the charity, together we have a unique place full of exceptional people (staff, volunteers, visitors, friends and most of all the young people who work so hard to turn their lives around).

Mags Powell

"It was amazing to see my son smile effortlessly"

Financial Review

This report relates to the accounts of the organisation for the year ended 31st March 2023, 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 £152,039 (2022 - £155,056).

Overall, the income generated by the organisation increased from £308,605 in 2021/22 to £324,465.

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 £220,738 (2022 - £237,489) or 64% (2022 - 64%) of overall costs and the current operating model resulted in a total spend of £345,323 (2022 - £373,585). As the business goes forward in future years, it is vital that income streams continue to provide ongoing affordability to meet demand.

An operating deficit of £20,858 (2022 - £64,980) was therefore generated in 2022/23, which decreased the reserves bringing total funds to £235,691 (2022 - £256,549). Over the last 12 months because of a shortfall of working capital, we carried out a range of costing exercises, which included a re-assessment of salaries and contracted hours to enable us to secure the future of the organisation.

SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Incoming Resources	£	Total Expenditure	£
Voluntary Income	203,172	Raising funds	310,194
Activities for generating funds	115,463	Activities costs	35,129
Investment income	141		
Other Income	5,689		
Total Income	324,465	Total Expenditure	345,323
Net Expenditure	(20,858)		

A full set of accounts are available on request

Thank You

Our services have been made possible thanks to the generosity of a range of supporters including trusts, foundations, statutory bodies, organisations, companies and individuals.

We are incredibly grateful and very humbled by all the amazing support we receive and this year has been a big one! On top of our usual fundraising due to a shortfall we ran a Crowdfunding campaign and the generosity shown to us completely and utterly blew us all away – along with donations and fundraising activities of others we managed to raise the required funds. We are very, very thankful to you all there's just too many to name individually!

We are also incredibly grateful and blown away for all the amazing support we receive in the local community. Our volunteers provide a brilliant service and without this vital support, we would not be able to provide our service. 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.



The Hayward Trust
 Glendinning Primary School
 Family & Friends of Lynda Ballantyne
 The Mainhouse Charitable Trust
 Jo Arres
 Selkirk Distillery
 Mr & Mrs A Gordon
 Denholm Whist
 Fraser McGregor Fencing
 Niall Davie Farrier
 Justin Gilchrist
 Bisley at Braidwood
 Riverside Healthcare Centre

Selkirk Standard Bearers
 Family & Friends of Lesley Hope
 Kiltwalk Participator Allyson Weir
 Quins of Galashiels
 Mark Arres
 Smelly Rug Co
 Oxnam Water Ladies
 Horse Hair from Claire
 Morrisons of Hawick
 John Nisbet Farrier
 Burts Hotel (Melrose)
 Ashley Durie

