



**STEPNEY
BANK
STABLES**
Equestrian Activity & Education Centre



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

VALUES

Fun, Kindness, Excellence, Accountability, Collaboration

PURPOSE

to make the benefits of contact with horses accessible to young people in disadvantaged urban areas.

MISSION

To bring joy and enhance the wellbeing and lasting life chances of young people through caring for and riding horses. We provide young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to trust 363 days per year.



Adam checking all the plaits are to standard



Alexus when she found out she passed her BHS Stage 1



Always time for a Selfie



Ap Student Ella taking Larry for an afternoon snack



Brandon and his home made Bug Hotel



“ Thank you for all that you do for our granddaughter. She is learning so much and her love of horses is fantastic. She needed something to help her get through a tough start in life and she's found it with you's. ”

Grandparents of a Junior Volunteer



Beamish Mines

Chair's STATEMENT

So here we are, at the end of 2024, and my second time writing as Chair of the Board of Trustees. What a year it's been, and we have come such a long way in those 12 months.

I did want to re-iterate how proud & committed I am to be able to support this awesome charity, and our mission to bring joy and enhance the wellbeing and lasting life chances of young people through caring for and riding horses.

I can't thank enough Sara & the team of staff here at Stepney, and our volunteers, for their hard work, tenacity, empathy & belief over the last year too, and we are still extremely proud that our work with young people continues to thrive & grow, and that they feel tangible benefit.

I also wanted to thank my fellow trustees, for their on-going commitment & support throughout. We have bolstered our Board with a variety of skills & experience in IT, HR, Education, and just general passion & drive to help Stepney forward, so we welcomed Lewis Turnbull, Jayne Routledge, Zoe Bell & Joanne Murphy as Trustees. One of our previous Trustees, Roba Ashraf Abdelbadie, made the decision to stand down this year, and I'd like to thank her for their contribution throughout her time.

Throughout 2023/24 we have been executing on the strategy we set out last year and have made considerable progress in our shift to other forms of income, in addition to the riding school, which are aligned to our charitable objectives. We have focused on controlling costs appropriately, but also on making prudent investments that help drive the charity forward and we have continued to source new funding to strengthen our offer for young people.

However, we have still faced the same challenges around spiralling costs and the very difficult charitable sector funding as we did last year, so, mid-year, we made the decision to seek a boost of cash through a Crowdfunding campaign, to allow us to keep running while we made the transition to our new operating model. This was a massive success, and reminded us how much-loved Stepney is, whilst also giving us enough money to bridge the gap as we transitioned.

So we've made some big changes: Worn out stable mats have been replaced creating a healthier environment and reducing bedding wastage, we've reduced the number of horses on site so that we're able to house them all at the indoor arena, with the rest of the herd turned out in a fabulous field, and we're rotating them regularly. Having all the horses in one place makes the running of the yard safer and much more efficient. We've reduced the timetable of commercial lessons



**Graeme (Chair of Trustees)
raising funds at
Newcastle Racecourse**

a little, which means that we manage their workloads, and it also creates more space in the day to run activities with the young volunteers. We have also made a shift towards more Alternative Provision for those young people who struggle in mainstream education, which is being very well received & has a lot more potential going forward.

This summer, we've been able to offer more activities to more young people and also provide our hard-working horses with more breaks in the field and enrichment activities than we ever have before. Colleague morale has had a huge boost as we can finally think creatively with some freedom.

Anyway, I am as excited as ever for the future at Stepney, as we have even more great plans ahead, and hope you find our report informative & enjoyable.



2023-2024 scholars passing their silver challenge awards

Graeme

**Graeme Fletcher
Chair of the Board of Trustees**

Managers REPORT

The last 12 months have seen seismic changes at Stepney as we've fought for financial stability alongside a desire to create a better balance of commercial and charitable activities, a broader offer for young people, more support for neurodiverse individuals and improved horse welfare.

Some of the changes we've made reflect a shift more broadly in the equestrian world, with moves away from the use of dominance and escalating pressure in daily horse training to a science-based approach using learning theories, environmental enrichment and a greater emphasis on positive reinforcement methods. This shift has, at times, been challenging to navigate, both as individuals and as a team, as we reflect on our actions and attitudes both past and present and try to do the best we can for the horses who's care and welfare we're deeply committed to.

I first started riding at Stepney when I was 10 and immediately fell in love with everything equestrian. I was desperate to let the world know that I was a serious horse rider; an untapped potential ready to be the next Mary King. I begged for my own riding hat and acquired some second-hand long plastic riding boots which I polished lovingly and would have worn to bed if I could. The third item on my 'serious rider' list was a whip. This left my parents a little baffled as I'd been a vegetarian from the age of 4 and cried if a wasp was swatted. "You've got to show horses who's boss" I confidently asserted when questioned why a 10 year old required a whip. I'd absorbed very early on that, if you wanted to be taken seriously as an equestrian, it was vital to 'win' every 'argument' with a horse and to command their 'respect'. This was a mindset I held on to for much of the next 20 or so years and which permeated many of my relationships with humans too; from how I managed people to how I parented my step kids.

Taking a break from the equestrian world enabled me to re-examine my attitude to horses and leadership more broadly. It's been confronting, uncomfortable and exhausting at times. However, since returning, it's also been incredibly heartening to find so many wonderful, caring equine professionals both at Stepney, in the North East and around the UK who are committed to creating change.



Our young volunteers love our horses so much

"I just wanted to drop a note to say thank you very much indeed for hosting our riding event last week for Tyneside Deaf Children's Society. Everyone had a brilliant time and it was another great success."

Craig – Tyneside Deaf Children's Society

There's lots of parallels to be drawn between past attitudes towards young people and attitudes to horses. The days of teachers enforcing discipline through physical punishments are long gone and the same change is finally and slowly happening with horses. Both horses and young people need to be listened to.

They need consistency. They need calm. They need kindness. They need empathy. They need agency. The best news is that, by approaching our horse care, training and daily interactions differently, a whole world of new possibilities opens up for our work with young people. By creating conversations about topics such as consent to touch, learning styles or calming signals in horses we can begin to open up discussions about how those themes relate to young people's experiences too. Over recent months young people have opened up on subjects we never would have otherwise been able to broach. We've also been able to approach interactions more playfully which brings more joy to young people, horses and to the team.

This year we've introduced the Equischolars curriculum to our offer alongside the frameworks of the BHS and Pony Club. Equischolars fosters an understanding of equine behaviour through fun activities. We've also mapped the Happy Brain model that we use with young people across the five domains of welfare drawing together what horses and humans need to thrive. Our Monday night Pony Club stable management sessions are attracting 30+ participants per week. We have 15 young people enrolled on our scholarship programme training towards BHS exams. We're incorporating horse agility sessions into our school holiday programmes and Changing Lives Through Horses sessions.

It's exciting to get creative with our offer and to share our experiences of working differently with horses with others. I'm proud of what we've achieved so far, grateful for all the support we have received and looking forward to continuing to evolve our model ensuring horse and human welfare is central to every single thing we do.



Leanne collecting her BHSI Certificate

Young Volunteer's PROJECT

Our Young Volunteer project has had a fantastic year Highlights have included trips to Burgham horse trials, Beamish museum and High Borrans outdoor activity centre. 5 young people gained their BHS ride Safe Award, 6 young people gained their BHS Stage 1 riding award and 6 gained their care award. We've partnered with Northumberland Wildlife Trust along with Ouseburn Trust, Wild Roots Community Garden and Wild Intrigue to run an Eco Influencers project, engaging young people with the local flora and fauna. We've also been working on a film project - working title 'Stepney Western' - with local filmmaker Harry Lawson.

Many attendees from Summer 2023 Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) delivery moved into volunteer roles and we also saw transitions from our Changing Lives Through Horse programme and our work with Southland and Bridges schools. We have a waiting list of over 150 young people which is proving challenging and we're also seeing an increasing number of young people with very high support needs. Whilst this shows that we're reaching the young people we want to support, it also presents challenges in terms of providing sufficient support and supervision. We're looking at how we can restructure the volunteer programme so that young people can join a pre-volunteering programme and then transition into a volunteer role at a pace which suits their individual needs.



" I just wanted to say a massive thank you for yesterday, the team had a brilliant day, we all went away feeling so refreshed and full of energy! Even those who didn't want to get to close to the horses ended up getting really stuck in. I had the best day ever and would love to come back again soon. "

Corporate Volunteer

Changing Lives THROUGH HORSES



Our Alternative Provision programme has had an overhaul in the last 12 months. We made the change to the Changing Lives Through Horses curriculum developed by the BHS which is mapped across the National Curriculum. We've seen great engagement from young people; it's been beautiful to watch confidence and self-esteem grow alongside equestrian skills. Some Young Volunteers have transitioned into Alternative Provision and some Alternative Provision students have become Young Volunteers. Firm friendships have been formed, certification and accreditation gained, new experiences accessed, and horizons broadened.

" We just wanted a massive thanks for being so supportive. The use of a storage room and the toilets was really kind and super helpful - all the staff were really friendly, chilled and nothing was a bother. "

Carlo - Elements Street Art Festival



Future PLANS

We're looking at ways to utilise digital technology to keep young people who are waiting to start engaged, to provide complimentary learning opportunities to those already attending and to broaden our reach.

We've created a communal living space for ponies at the top yard and we're exploring options for it's use including Birthday parties, heritage tours and increased Alternative Provision capacity.

We want young people to lead the evolution as much as possible and the Youth Committee are already taking action. They've raised funds through a tack sale and have plans for more fundraising activities going forwards in order to purchase equipment and fund activities which they want to do.

We're eagerly anticipating the premier of 'Stepney Western' in the spring and the unveiling of the poster for the film at Byker metro station in December. Our Oscars outfits are ready!



Doing Daily Field Checks



Volunteers Desensitising Ponys To Unfamiliar Objects



Haf Making Smoothies with The Smoothie Bike

“ The children really enjoyed it and were so engaged, there's a few of them that came who I've never seen listen so intently before.

So thanks to Hollie and Katherine for running the sessions- they were both really engaging and knowledgeable. As staff we also really enjoyed it too, I think we all learnt a lot!

I think most of the young people found it quite therapeutic and we had one young person in our secondary group asking what qualifications she'd need to work with horses in the future which was fantastic for us to see. ”

Newcastle Young Carers Group



Volunteer Brandon Becoming Volunteer Of The Month



Volunteer Trip To High Borrans



Ollie Cuddles



Ponyclub Passing Tests



The Daily After Lesson Photo

“ My daughter is 13 and has been coming to Stepney regularly for about 5 years. She volunteers, rides, is on the youth committee, goes on trips and has even earned her BHS stage 1 qualification thanks to Stepney.

Not only has she found a passion which keeps her fit, but she has learned responsibility, discipline, and the importance of working as part of a team. When the crowdfunder was launched I realised that her not having the stables any more was unthinkable and it brought home what a huge and positive part of her life it is.

The staff show amazing commitment and dedication to inspiring the kids who come here and to caring for the horses and I'm proud that we're part of this lovely community. ”

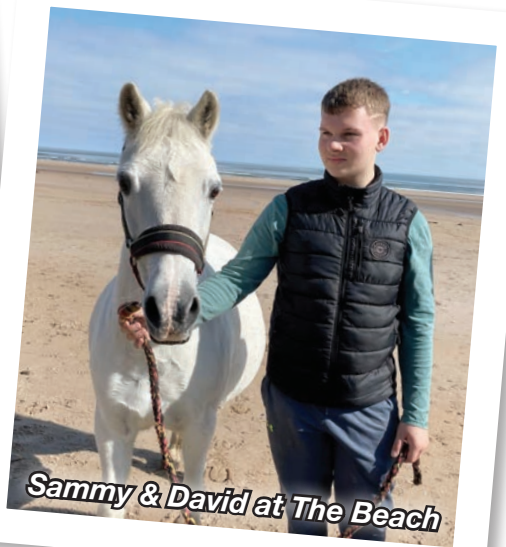
Parent of a Young Volunteer



Pony Club Tests



Working on Balance!



Sammy & David at The Beach



Trip to Kirkley Hall College



Pony Clubs Passing Tests with Flying Colours



Carmel Becoming Volunteer of The Month

“ I wanted to say a huge thank you to your staff and volunteers for our visit. They were exemplary. The visit was wonderful and Hannah has been talking about it ever since! We are away on holiday for a week but when we get back we will be setting up her account on your website and booking some lessons. ”

Thank you for her lovely gifts too, she was totally made up! Thomas in particular was just wonderful with her, and she loves the ponies. It was a great introduction for her. ”

Crowdfunder Donor after a VIP visit



Trip to Burgham Horse Trials



Stepney Mascot At The Olympics



Ouseburn Festival Dog Show



Ghyll Scrambling In The Lake District



Millie having a Physio Session



Tracey Teaching The Volunteers All About The Perfect Rein Contact

“ It was great to visit your stables recently, and wow! what a set up. I was blown away... to have such a facility in such a location, well it's just amazing 🙌🙌🙌 And what a wonderful opportunity to be able to provide for local young people – I had a fab couple of hours with them; do hope they enjoyed it too! ”

Carrie – Racing to School

Always Time To Have A Haynet Chat



Filming for Look North



Ap Meeting Stepney Celebrity Adam Shor!!



David Passing His GLTH Assesments



Eco Influencers Making Seed Balls



Eco Influencers



The Westgate Labs Team Working with The Pony Club To Carry Out Worm Counts



Sam on Arrival



Sam After Makeover



**Adam Short - former young volunteer
- grooming at the Olympics**



**Eco Influencers Bird
Watching With Wild Intrigue**



**Ginny Using
The Weigh Bridge**



**Ap Ella Taking Larry
For A Stroll**



Eco Influencers



Award Winners



**Teamwork To Get Jobs
Done To A Good Standard**



“ The stables is absolutely the best place for anyone to attend, I myself started at Stepney as a teenager and followed a career with horses.

Now my 6 year old daughter who is neurodivergent attends Stepney and absolutely loved the place and by having Stepney on our doorstep allows her to access horses and become confident. **”**

Parent

Kayleigh Filming For Stepney Western



The 2024-2025 Scholars



Meet The Board



IMPACT

111 young volunteers aged 8-18 are currently attending regularly (some multiple times per week)

147 are currently waiting to join

15,000 hours volunteered by young people

5 Young people gained their BHS Ride Safe award

6 Young People passed their BHS Stage 1 riding exam

6 Young People passed their BHS Stage 1 horse care exam

50 Pony Club tests have been successfully completed and squillions of badges gained!

17 Young People are currently attending Alternative Provision.

One young person who'd been out of education for 4 years transitioned to FE college.

One Young Volunteer has been employed at Stepney as an apprentice.

Our Current Apprentice (another former young volunteer) has transitioned into an employed role at Stepney.

39 Young People are Pony Club members.

“ An amazing place for kids to create confidence and friends! My daughter has come to volunteer and ride for the last 2 years and absolutely loves it! Thank you! ”

Parent

Survey RESULTS

Young people were asked to self-evaluate improvement

Communication – 12% good, 88% excellent

Confidence – 4% slight, 12% good, 83% excellent

Relationships – 4% slight, 12% good, 83% excellent

Teamwork – 17% good, 83 % excellent

Responsibility – 21% good, 79% excellent

Perseverance – 4% slight, 25% good, 71% excellent

Have you made new friends? 31% no, 69% yes

Has volunteering helped in other areas 27% no, 73% yes.



Using New Object for Enrichment

Thank You

We'd like to say a HUGE thank you to the army of fabulous humans who makes the Stepney magic happen.

This includes our staff team who continually go above and beyond, our dedicated volunteers, our clients, parents, supporters, donors, corporate volunteers and funders.

We are really so incredibly grateful for all the support that we receive.

Shout outs to:

The Emile Faurie Foundation	The Community Foundation Tyne and Wear	Bentley Advancing Life Chances
The Henry Smith Holiday Fund	The Beryl Evetts and Robert	Eva Reckitt Trust
Northumberland Estates Community Fund	Luff Animal Welfare Trust Ltd.	Million Hours Fund
St Nicholas Educational Trust	The Elsie Davies Trust	The Hargreaves Foundation
The Mailings Community Fund	The Loriners Community Trust	The Michael and Shirley Hunt Trust
Port of Tyne Authority	Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner	Greggs Foundation
F. Nicholson	The King's Trust	Hospital of God at Greatham R. Hayes
The Rothley Trust	Sport England	The Scholfield Trust
Temla Laser	Streetgames	The Ouseburn Trust
One Utility	The Sir James Knott Trust	The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation
The Morrisons Foundation	Ringtons Fund	The Waltons
The National Lottery Fund	The LGA Foundation	Fires in Stone
Apartment Group	Hadrian Trust	Ouseburn Farm
H. Lawson	The Daisy Marr Fund	

“ We had a great day!

The highlight for me was watching some of the young people riding in the afternoon – the smiles on their faces just shows how much of a difference you make to their lives. ”

Corporate Volunteer



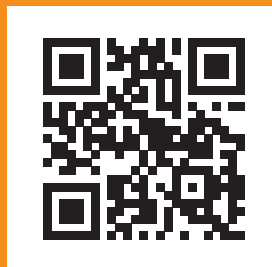
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