

Interim Community Fund Evaluation Form

Our Scottish Borders
Your community

Group name:	Stable Life
CF Reference No.	CF1920/EIL/12
Amount Awarded	£20,000

Following your successful application to the Interim Communities Fund we would like to hear what impact your funded project / activity has had in your area. Remember that failure to report will impact on your eligibility to secure future funding. Community Fund funded projects will also be invited to share their story with the wider community at local Area Partnership meetings.

Your project had the identified outcomes of:

- Communities have more access to better quality local services or activities*
- Communities have more access to a better quality environment*
- Communities have more pride in their community*
- Communities have more access to better quality advice and information*
- More local groups or services are better supported to recover from financial difficulty*

Section 1: Tell us about your project / activity and what difference it has made

To tell us what you did and what difference your project / activity made to your community. You can submit photographs, short films or audio as well as feedback from people who were involved. Alternatively you can write about your experiences here. Remember to refer back to the description of your idea / project in your application and include information on the number of people who were involved, how they benefited and what the impact of the project / activity was. If your project has achieved a different outcome or additional outcomes, please select the different / additional outcomes above and explain why.

We have had a productive year at Stable Life despite the current crisis and as an organisation we feel we have grown and developed and enhanced the services we offer to the young people we support. This includes:

- We have become fully affiliated to provide the SQA National Progression Award Level 4 Horse Care
- In partnership with Borders College able to deliver the SQA National Progression Award Level 4 in Rural Skills
- Project staff have been trained to deliver Hi5's, Dynamic and Youth Achievement Awards

Over the year we received 74 new referrals and were already supporting 28 young people. The majority of these referrals have come in over the last few months which we anticipated following the Covid lockdown. Over the year 66 young people have completed

their intervention with us. 2 young people disengaged during their time, 5 were unable to continue, 2 did not engage with Stable life and one referral was unsuitable. We are currently supporting 29 young people and have a waiting list of 26.

Activities:

Over the year 69 young people participated in our main EAL programme. This consisted of 39 young people participating in 1:1 sessions of which 19 young people progressed on to join group sessions. In addition 30 young people went straight into group sessions. The 1:1 sessions ran for 10 weeks and the group session followed a 17-week programme both once a week. All group sessions usually last around 2 hours and 1:1's run for one hour. We deliver our sessions during term time within school hours. We ran 171 1:1 sessions and 124 group sessions over the year.

In addition to the main EAL programme in August we started our Healing Hooves project which links the benefit of sport as well as mental health support through our EAL programme, a personal fitness instructor and a qualified Mental Health Professional. We have delivered 41 sessions to 11 young people working with the personal trainer to develop a fitness plan for the young people as well as EAL sessions. This integrates the skills young people need to build confidence, and watching our first groups go through has shown how their confidence has grown exponentially. Supporting their team through fitness, has also shown the benefits as they are working around the horses.

From December 2019 to April 2020 3 young people participated in our 11 Environmental Group sessions once a week for 2 hours where they made bird feed, grew vegetables, landscaped round the yard and planted flowers.

Working in partnership with Selkirk High School and Borders College, from August 2020, 7 young people have participated in our Pathway to Rural Skills programme which is giving young people an opportunity to work towards gaining their NPA Level 4 in Horse Care and NPA Level 4 in Rural Skills. We are working with the farmer to offer a more diverse programme including working with sheepdogs, land maintenance, and fencing as well as environmental conservation. This programme runs twice a week on a Monday and Wednesday afternoon and is aimed at young people who are struggling in main stream education. We have ran 33 sessions to date and the programme will run over the academic year finishing in June 2021.

4 young people have completed work experience on the yard over the year. Due to COVID and looking at how to keep our young people, staff and volunteers safe we had to limit the number of people on the yard as a result of this we have not been able to offer as many transitional work placements as we would have liked.

We have provided peer mentoring opportunities for 4 young people through a tailored training package. Each Peer Mentor attended once a week to help deliver a group session. 18 young people are also volunteering on the yard completing over 3,700 volunteering hours between them, helping out at weekends, after school and during school holidays, again all have completed a tailored training package. 4 of these came through our EAL programme this year and 17 have obtained Saltire Awards for the hours of volunteering

they have completed, 10 have completed a NPA level 4 in Horse Care. Again due to COVID we have had to reduce the number of volunteers helping out on the yard.

Due to COVID this year we were unable to run a summer programme however from the 1st July, as restrictions continued to lift, our project staff started to resume our services and developed a programme that we were able to offer whilst fully complying with guidelines as laid down by Scottish Government. This consisted of meeting up with our young people on a 1:1 basis. As transport was an issue we decided that the staff could go to the young people's town/village and meet up with them there to do a social distancing walk and chat or activity in a local park. This worked well for a few weeks over the summer holidays and allowed us to catch up with the young people we had major concerns about.

Main Outcomes:

Outcome 1 - Young people have improved confidence.

Of the 66 young people who completed their intervention with us, we have seen a significant increase in self-confidence for 16 of them. 49 of these young people showed a moderate to slight increase and 1 young person showed no change - this was because lack of self-confidence was not an issue for them. Although some young people did not complete the programme we still saw various improvements in them and feedback from the young people also showed that they had felt some benefit of attending Stable Life.



Of the 28 young people we are currently working with we are seeing 17 young people experiencing progress every week they attend. We have 11 young people who have yet to experience progress, as they have just started.

Examples of this progress includes young people taking the lead in sessions, young people volunteering for Stable Life to 6 young people having the confidence to go on and complete a SQA Level 4 in Horse Care. Visually the difference in the young people is very noticeable, they begin as non-engaging within the group, not knowing each other, to being happy and laughing while completing tasks and activities, the groups start to bond, often keeping in touch after their intervention has been completed.

An example of this is one young boy who being part of a very nurturing group, using psychosocial intervention, developed new skills in a new environment and developed valuable transferable skills. He is now showing the confidence to use them & developing new friendships in school, he is a voice and advocate for others, being part of the school media group, LGBT Group & Pupil Council. He is more able to regulate emotions, deal with social situations and peer problems that may arise, whilst accepting who he is and being proud of himself.

Feedback from referring agencies will give us an indication that the skills they have developed have been transferred to other areas of their lives, including engaging in school, joining in with extracurricular activities and increased attendance and attainment.

Attendance at multi-agency meetings allows feedback to be provided from a different setting. *"X is much more confident in interacting with others and also less anxious about trying new things"* Feedback from a teacher.



Feedback from young people also evidences the progress they have made:

"I didn't think it was possible to achieve everything that I have"

"This is the first time I have felt proud of myself"

"It made me feel love"

Outcome 2 - Young people develop increased resilience.

We have seen a significant increase in resilience for 13 of them. 51 of these young people showed a moderate to slight increase and 2 young people showed no change.

An example of this progress is a young person who was diagnosed with ASD and found the diagnosis difficult. He was an extremely bright & articulate boy, but was experiencing overwhelming emotions, and required time out of classes as he struggled to self-regulate, and very much experienced fight, flight or freeze in a number of situations, and due to sensory issues, heightened anxiety. He had very set interests and could find it difficult when others don't have the same interest or understanding. Participating at Stable Life, from the challenges and experiences here, he began to show his true self and enjoyed sharing experiences with the group and increased in confidence as the weeks passed. If we threw something different into the mix or change ponies unexpectedly, he coped with this and saw it through, even if he found this difficult, clearly showing self-regulation. He is more aware of social cues, and can readily take turns as well as being able to offer opinions and advice to others, showing great kindness and empathy. He fully recognised the changes in himself and the impact this had on his life out with Stable Life. In his own words he has become more resilient, and able to cope. He is more flexible in his thinking and more accepting of others.

Other feedback we have received also evidences the difference in the young people:

"A has had a very positive experience at Stable Life which has had a positive impact on how he manages his behaviour. It has given him much needed time to talk and be himself away from what can be a very chaotic family life" Feedback from a teacher

"X can often appear unmotivated and it has been noted that she is motivated to participate and feedback during Stable Life sessions. It is great to learn that she has been challenging herself: we are currently building on X resilience within school so it is hoped that she can transfer the skills built at Stable Life" Feedback from a teacher

Feedback from young people:

"Stable Life helps me behave"

"Joining my group at Stable life has been amazing, it has brought me out of myself and I think others are more accepting of me now"

Outcome 3 - Young people have improved social skills.

We have seen a significant improvement in relationships with 13 young people. 53 of these young people showed a moderate to slight increase.

An example of this progress is A 12 year old boy, transitioning to High School in a different town after experiencing bullying was referred with issues of low self-confidence, social isolation, low self-esteem, relationships, mental health and a victim of bullying. He presented as very awkward & anxious and clung to Mum & communication was limited. We completed some 1:1 sessions over the Summer, with a view to commencing group



work, when transition to local High School would happen. By communicating in a different way using Equine Assisted Learning techniques, with one of our ponies he was able to become more assertive in order to join up and communicate in a way where he & the pony understood each other. This enabled him to start talking more about feelings and emotions, and further develop some techniques and strategies when fear & anxiety started to rise. After a few sessions, he began to cling less and less to his Mum and had less trouble 'letting – go' when he was dropped off, and was able to give positive feedback and share his experiences when he was picked up.

Over the weeks that followed, using various exercises on and off the ponies, focused around resilience, communication, friendships, trust & problem solving, he was able to become more vocal and was more willing to voice his opinion and talk in front of others. He was also able to show his enjoyments and sense of humour, seeing much more open body language and smiles and laughs, readily joining in, without the need to prompt and encourage as much. He developed strong friendships within the group, with a greater sense of self. As a result things became much more settled at school, with less issues around attendance & peer relationships, with greater independence, and less reliance on Mum.

Other feedback we have received includes:

"X has gained much more confidence with horses and this will extend into other parts of her activities. The insights provided by focusing on how the horse communicates have really given her a valuable tool in all forms of communication" Feedback from a parent

"I'm not a Hermit anymore and I feel less trapped" Feedback from a young person

Other outcomes include:

- All of the young people we have supported over the last year have increased their level of physical fitness through participation in the sessions
- 14 young people re-engaged with school
- 1 gained a place at college
- 1 found employment
- 6 young people have gone on to start commercial riding lessons
- 7 young people have gone on to join other new groups i.e. Scouts, youth club

- 8 adult volunteers have helped out on the yard or in EAL sessions and between them have completed over 1,700 volunteer hours. 3 have been awarded Saltire Awards and one has completed a NPA Level 4 in Horse Care

Challenges:

When Covid hit the country and lockdown began we had to cease all activities on both our main services and commercial activities. We had to furlough our Project Staff, Volunteer Co-Ordinator and an Instructor. Our yard staff continued to look after the ponies during this period and the Team Leader and myself continued to work from home on reduced hours. Initially our project staff contacted parents and offered the opportunity for them to get in touch if they needed to at any time. We were putting posts up on our social media highlighting how our ponies are doing, some self-care tips and any other support that we could offer.

During the crisis we have learnt that we have been able to cope well with the situation as an organisation, and adapt to change quickly however delivery of our services very heavily rely on our ponies and it has been very frustrating not being able to support our young people in our normal way.



Our main services recommenced in August and where our group session historically had children from different localities, due to restrictions we are not able to offer this and all groups had to be from an individual school bubble. Transport has also been a major issue with the restrictions in place and these factors have impacted the service we can provide, resulting in an increased amount of potential groups we would be expected to offer and 1:1 sessions. The result of Covid19 has also amounted to an increase in referrals in which we have had to implement a waiting list. Session intakes were split in to 4 per year. This was to ensure no young person had a significant period on a waiting list. Due to Lockdown we were not able to start our Easter intake, however the referrals were moved forward to the August intake.

Our use of volunteers has been limited due to restrictions and reduced capacity which has impacted on our ability to offer supported work experience, work placements and volunteering opportunities to some of our young people which has included the establishment of the young people's steering committee.

In the first quarter of 2019/20 our commercial income was £25,631 and commissioned income was £4,316 in total circa £30k. During lockdown our commercial income was £4,568 and commissioned income was nil for the first quarter of 2020/21 – this was a huge reduction and a major concern, however were able to access the Scottish Government's Third Sector Resilience Grant and Business Support Grant which helped to cover some of the loss. Our funders have also been very proactive and flexible with diverting our grant funding to where we require it which has also helped with our financial situation.

Since the lifting of restrictions our commercial activities were able to offer a reduced number of riding lessons, riding school hire and smaller sized Pony Club activities, however in total the numbers have reduced dramatically and are over half of what they are normally.

In amongst the Covid epidemic our Indoor School project has eventually started – timing could have been better but it's underway and we are working around it and focusing on the end product which is starting to get there and will be fantastic when finished (hopefully in December) This too has impacted on our service delivery and commercial income. Our lease extension will come into effect from when the work on the Indoor Riding School is complete and as such we await a copy of it from the landlords.

Between September and October two of our Project Workers have recently resigned and in light of losing 2/3 thirds of our Project Team we completed a recruitment drive and have just started 2 new Project Workers. As we are limited at the moment with what we can deliver we have offered them both 20-hour posts with the possibility of increasing these hours as restrictions are lifted and our capacity increases. Prior to the October holiday we had a few young people finish their intervention with us and we were due to start new groups up after the break – we delayed starting these groups so that we can continue to cover our current sessions with the staff we had in place, however these new groups have just started this week.

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 to best meet these changes for everyone whilst ensuring the sustainability of Stable Life.

Section 2: How you spent the money

Please give details below of the items funded by the award. Please note that **original receipts must be submitted** with this evaluation form. All receipts submitted will be returned to you. This table can be copied if more space is required.

Item/activity	Reference Number (please number your receipts)	Cost (corresponding evidence of spending attached)
Contribution to rent costs	Invoice 6	9,000
Contribution to electricity costs	Invoice 4	2,000
Contribution towards water bills from Dec 19 to Nov 20	Invoice 3	1,000
Contribution to Mobiles from Dec 19 to Nov 20	Invoice 1	1,000

Interim Community Fund Evaluation Form

Contribution towards landlines & broadband	Invoice 2	1,000
Contribution towards Insurance costs	Invoice 5	6,000
Total amount spent by your group		£20,000

If the items detailed above are **different in any way** from the expenditure listed in your original application form, use the space below to explain the change(s).

Section 3: Future work

If your project is continuing, let us know what you have planned for the next stage or, if your project has inspired you to start a new community project, please tell us about it.

Due to Covid the progress made on our Business Plan has not progressed as we had planned, for many months it was a case of focussing on short-term survival and not long-term planning, however the crisis has allowed us time to look at where we are going as an organisation and we actively working on our recovery plan and longer term goals. Some of the changes that will help with our recovery plan include reviewing our commercial prices as well as our commissioned costings as neither has been increased for a number of years and the implementation of an equine management software system so we work more efficiently, safer and smarter, keeping tighter control on budgets, costings and financial management.

We have our ongoing funding from Children In Need, Big Lottery and Comic Relief. In addition we have secured one-year grant of £20,000 from KP4 and one-year grant of £12,000 from the Bank of Scotland Foundation. In addition we have received funding

Interim Community Fund Evaluation Form

from the Scottish Government's Third Sector Resilience Grant of £11,300 and Business Support Grant of £25,000 to support us during Covid. We will also continue to apply for identified funding streams as required as well as continue to try to develop a clear commissioning framework between Stable Life and referring partners which includes SBC which again has not progressed very far over the year.

Section 4: Signed declaration

I confirm that the details contained in this form are correct and that we will keep all financial records and accounts, including receipts for items purchased with the award, for at least two years from payment of the grant. We understand that this does not release us from our statutory obligations to keep records for longer periods. We are aware that we may be visited to inspect our records.

Name: Mags Powell	Date: 11/12/2020
Position: Chief Executive	Tel: No: 07450845216

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- Expenditure satisfactory* *Receipts seen & satisfactory*
Benefits consistent *Attending Area Partnership*
Further monitoring requirements: *Reason for monitoring?*

Evaluation measures: