

## The Out of Bounds Project – Gorgie City Farm

### **Gorgie City Farm**

The Farm was set up as a community project in 1982 to improve the local environment and to provide education in agriculture, horticulture and rural crafts for people living in the area. The farm offers the opportunity for people to experience a little bit of the countryside in the city. The resource is open to all, seven days a week and entry is free. The Farm is also the location for a number of social projects, including the Out of Bounds Project.

### **Background**

#### **- Out of Bounds Project**

The Out of Bounds Project was initially set up in 2002 and entered its eighth project year in April 2010. The Project caters for 'marginalised' and 'at risk' young people age 13 to 16 living in the city of Edinburgh. It is our goal to educate these young people in animal welfare and husbandry by providing one-to-one support in the Pet Lodge area of Gorgie City Farm. The positive impact of working with animals on young people's self-esteem and self-worth has been documented in several studies. No other youth project in Edinburgh can facilitate this form of therapy on such a large scale. The Pet Lodge –where the Project is based- has both outdoor and indoor enclosures, and houses 21 different animal sub-species, allowing for an extremely varied and stimulating learning environment.

Additionally, as Gorgie Farm is open to the public, the volunteers contribute to the community, via handling sessions, gala attendances, and information leaflets. The Project aims to help the participants re-engage with their communities and enhance their education opportunities. Over the course of the Project's eight years, a total of eighty-four young people living in Edinburgh have participated and benefited from the project.

### **Volunteers**

The maximum capacity of the OOB project is 26 individuals volunteering over the course of one week, this figure is based upon two volunteers participating every half day (except Monday afternoons as the Mobile Pet Service is in operation). Due to the differing stages of the volunteers and the unique support needs of each individual, the OOB Project team normally caters for between fifteen and twenty volunteers at any one time.

Volunteer referrals come from various sources:

- 'looked after' children category
- Youth Justice Services  
, Social Work Services
- Mental Health Services
- Young people with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities
- Young people experiencing social isolation  
, difficulties in a formal educational setting  
, high anxiety and low self esteem

Through esteem boosting interactions we educate the young people in animal care, and help them to develop sympathy towards creatures more vulnerable than themselves,

encouraging them to re-engage with society. We also improve employment prospects through accredited courses, and certification from outside agencies.

## **Project Work**

Every volunteer on the Project is supported in completing an induction which educates each individual in correct animal care for every species resident at the Pet Lodge. The young people then complete animal projects during which they create animal care information posters and leaflets, these are made available to the general public. There are also summer group work projects, and regular group meetings and outings allowing the volunteers to meet and interact with their peers.

## **Primary Outcomes**

1. To boost self-esteem and self-confidence
2. To improve relationships with peers and adults
3. To increase future employment and educational prospects