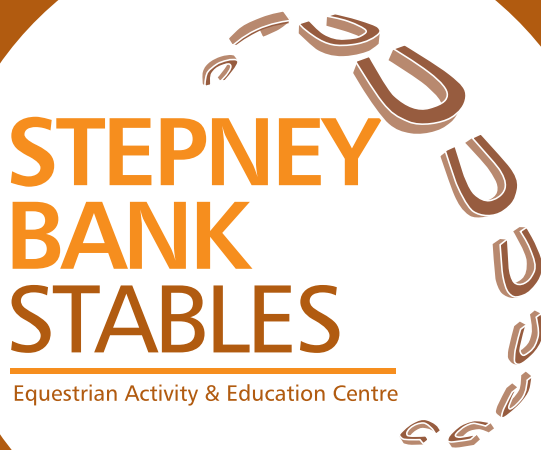




ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Stepney STATISTICS

Over 1500 hours were volunteered by young people this year (1499 quite possibly by Phoebe!).

We've been open to the public 85 hours per week, 52 weeks per year!

We have 9.6K following our Facebook page

6 young people passed BHS Stage 1 ride + care and 2 young people passed BHS Stage 1 ride

4 young people passed Pony Club C test ride + care and 1 young person passed ride

41 adult volunteers are currently engaged with a further 9 waiting to join the team.

57 8-11 year old volunteers are currently engaged with a further 4 waiting to join the team.

83 12-18 year old volunteers are currently engaged with further 62 waiting to join the team.



Words from OUR CHAIR

I cannot believe how fast this year has flown, and that it is 12 months since I last did this statement. But 12 months it is, and again we have come such a long way in that time.

The past year at Stepney Bank Stables has been one of remarkable progress, perseverance and purpose. In a climate where demand for youth support services continues to grow and funding pressures persist, Stepney has not only sustained but strengthened its impact - reaching more young people, deepening relationships, and broadening the ways we help them thrive.

The resilience of our community remains our greatest strength. Every day, we see the transformative power of horses helping young people rebuild confidence, rediscover joy, and form meaningful connections. Whether through our 8-18s volunteering programme, the flourishing Changing Lives Through Horses provision, or apprenticeship and scholarship pathways, Stepney continues to prove that young people can flourish when given somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to trust.

This year's highlights include:

- Expansion of our Alternative Provision, giving young people in crisis structure, purpose and confidence to re-engage with learning.
- The launch of Stepney Western, which beautifully captured our ethos and reached new audiences through storytelling that put young people centre stage.
- Recognition at the 2025 North East Charity Awards, where Stepney was a finalist in the Uniquely North East Award - a proud moment alongside some of the region's most inspiring organisations.
- Our own Stepney Awards, held on 28 September 2025, which brought together volunteers, young people and staff for an evening of food, laughter and heartfelt recognition - a true reflection of Stepney's community spirit.
- Continued success through our Scholarship and Volunteering programmes, creating pathways from participation to professional opportunity.

Much of this builds on the foundations of our 2023 Strategy - the clear framework that set out how we would grow, and that clarity has guided every decision, ensuring we stay true to our values of fun, kindness, excellence, accountability and collaboration.

Underpinning this progress is our new five-year plan, Stable Lives 2025-2030 - a confident roadmap for the next stage of our journey. It outlines our ambition to double engagement in Alternative Provision, strengthen our volunteer base, modernise our facilities, and secure long-term sustainability, while keeping young people and horses firmly at the heart of what we do.



As Chair, I feel immense pride and privilege to witness the difference Stepney makes - the laughter in the yard, the quiet trust between a young person and a horse, and the confidence that so many carry forward into life beyond our gates. What we do here matters deeply, and it's made possible by Sara and her extraordinary team of staff, along with amazing volunteers, supporters, fellow trustees and, of course, our horses.

As we look ahead, I do so with gratitude for what has been achieved and optimism for what lies ahead. Together, we will continue to adapt, evolve and champion the belief that every young person deserves the chance to discover their potential - and that, with the right support, they can build a future as strong, resilient, and full of life as the horses they care for.

Graeme

Graeme Fletcher
Chair of the Board of Trustees

“
I just wanted to thank you for all you do, my daughter has grown from strength to strength with her confidence and communication skills with other people
”

Parent feedback after residential trip

Our Managers REPORT

The past 12 months have been among the most intense, fast-paced, challenging -and rewarding - I've ever experienced at Stepney. I know I say that every year, but this time, I truly mean it.

The external landscape remains challenging. The need for our services continues to grow, with increasing numbers of young people presenting in significant distress, often driven by anxiety, low self-esteem, and difficulties in relationships. Securing grant funding has become more competitive than ever, and rising costs - particularly staffing, which remains our largest expenditure - continue to stretch our resources.

We've also faced complex decisions around horse welfare. While we've made meaningful changes to improve the lived experience of the horses in our care, these improvements often come with added workload and financial implications which stretch resources even further.

Yet, what continues to inspire me is the resilience and commitment of our community. The fact that our doors remain open, that we're supporting more young people and offering more opportunities than ever, is a testament to the grit, determination, and generosity of so many. I'm deeply grateful to everyone who helps keep the Stepney ship afloat, and incredibly proud to be part of such a passionate, kind, and joyful team.

One of the most significant developments this year has been the growth of our Alternative Provision programme, particularly through the Changing Lives Through Horses (CLTH) initiative. This programme allows us to reach the young people who need us most, while also providing a reliable income stream that supports our broader services. A standout moment was celebrating April's graduation in July and her progression to a Level 2 Horse Care course at Northumberland College in September.

The launch of Stepney Western in the spring was another proud milestone. Harry Lawson's film beautifully captured the essence of Stepney, powerfully illustrating the transformative impact horses have on young people - something that's often difficult to convey in words. The breadth of opportunities it offered to participants was both meaningful and memorable. I hope they'll look back proudly in the years to come.

Other highlights from the year include:

- CLTH student Lucy winning her class at the **BHS National Riding School Championships** and receiving media recognition.
- Our **Pony Prom**, which gave young people who felt uncomfortable attending traditional prom a chance to celebrate in a way that felt authentic and joyful.
- The growing popularity of **horse agility and TREC**, demonstrating the value of ground-based interaction with horses.
- **Our Pony Club teams** competing in an area competition for the first time - and doing us proud.
- Taking part in a **British Dressage** initiative which provided 7 young people with 6 training sessions from dressage rider, coach and breeder Sam Brown.
- Being selected for the **ABRS+ Riding Schools Futures pilot programme**, including an inspiring visit to World Horse Welfare.
- Being **shortlisted for a North East Charity Award** for the first time.
- Hosting our own **Stepney Awards**, celebrating the incredible horses and humans who make up our team.
- Watching our Patron and former beneficiary **Adam Short** support Tom McEwan and JL Dublin to win bronze at the European Championships - and thanks to Adam, giving our young volunteers the unforgettable experience of meeting Olympic gold medalist JL Dublin at Burgham Horse Trials.
- Taking **16 young people on a three-day residential**, which was an absolute joy.

We continue to evolve rapidly. For the first time in many years, we've developed a detailed five-year plan (more on that later). When the day to day running of Stepney feels all consuming, taking the time to plan was challenging but essential. With so many stakeholders - service users, clients, funders, volunteers, staff, and trustees - clear communication is vital. This plan gives us a shared direction, a common language, and measurable goals. I'm excited to share it with you and to work together to bring it to life.

Sara Newson
Centre Manager



Alternative PROVISION

We've seen a 35% rise in demand for our Alternative Provision offer - and honestly, we're not surprised. The positive impact we witness in so many young people is profound.

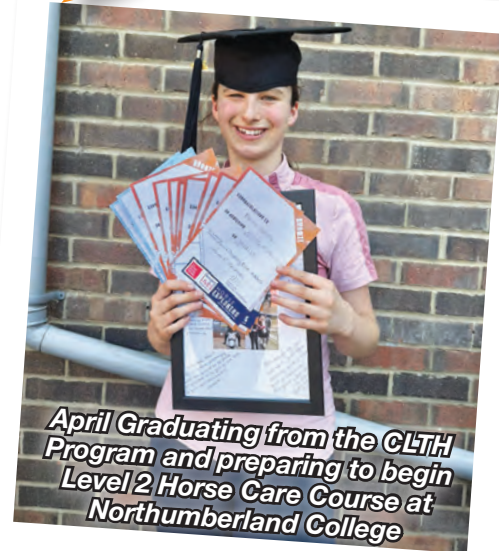
This year, with the generous support of local businesses, we were able to offer an apprenticeship to a young person who had previously been enrolled in the CLTH programme. Since then, they've passed their BHS Stage 1 exam and successfully completed their first maths exam - a huge achievement after years of negative experiences within the education system.

Another previous participant has gone on to study at Northumberland College. We've seen young people make friends for the first time, open up to staff about their experiences in the care system, laugh out loud, try new things, and even turn up a week early because they were so excited for sessions to restart after summer!

The nurturing, inclusive atmosphere created by Katherine, Morgan, Phillipa, and Thomas - with invaluable support from the yard and coaching team - empowers young people to truly flourish.

“My daughter started CLTH during year 10 of school. Since I had problems with my daughter's schooling which has led to home schooling, (she's diagnosed with ADHD and awaiting an autism assessment), the stables have been very supportive, very helpful to us and an excellent form of contact and learning with other children. She's never been happier since attending here.”

Parent feedback from Customer Survey



April Graduating from the CLTH Program and preparing to begin Level 2 Horse Care Course at Northumberland College

“My daughter started CLTH during year 10 of school and continued it into year 11. It was the best move we ever made for her. It grew her confidence and self-esteem and, as she is not academic, it gave her a sense of achievement through gaining certificates and achieving goals. The program changed her life; I literally can't thank Stepney enough.”



Young Volunteers at the Stepney Awards



Young Volunteers on a Trip to Beamish



Aimee About To Take The Leap Of Faith

8-18's VOLUNTEERING

Our 8-18s offer continues to be popular, with waiting lists in the 12-18s group remaining a challenge to manage. As part of our five-year plan, we're developing a digital offer for those on the waiting list. This will allow them to get to know the horses, staff, and volunteers before they start, helping to make the induction process smoother and more engaging for everyone.

Our young volunteer program remains open access, and there are no immediate plans to change that. However, we've noticed a drop in young volunteers from the immediate local area and are actively working on plans to address this.

Thomas has recently taken on the role of Volunteer Project Coordinator and has made a tremendous impact - organising trips, activities, and awards. Having someone with lived experience of the project leading it means the program is truly tailored to meet the needs of young people. The positive, trusting relationships Thomas has built allow him to be a source of support when young people are struggling. His ability to show up as his authentic self gives others permission to do the same - creating a space where everyone feels safe to be themselves.

“Thank you for all you do, special shout out to Thomas he is a local hero to our daughter.”

Coaching FOR ALL

Coaching 4 All is a new qualification from the BHS to help coaches effectively coach a wide variety of riders in an inclusive and supportive way.

Morgan participated in the training last year and this year, as part of the BHS Everyone's Welcome strategy, Morgan was able to complete further training so that she can now deliver the Coaching 4 All training to other coaches. Morgan has already trained her first cohort which included our own Katie and we look forward to training more coaches (internal and external) as part of our inclusivity strategy.



Stepney Riders Sarah, Alexis And Lucy With Coach Leanne And Paddy The Horse At The BHS National Riding School Championship

Pony CLUB

Our Pony Club continues to grow in popularity with milestones achieved this year. We sent three teams to compete at the area Horse and Pony Care competition at Murton Equestrian Centre, held our first C Test (as well E, D and D+ tests) and grew in numbers so that we've now got the second highest membership in our area. Pony Club members went on trips to Belsay and Burgham horse trials to watch international level competition and were lucky enough to take part in guided course walks to get tons of top tips!



Pony Club Take Part In The Area Horse And Pony Care Competition



Junior Pony Care Team



Pony Club On A Course Walk At Belsay Horse Trials



All The Pony Club Horse And Pony Care Competitors From Local Branches And Centres



Pony Club with their C test certificates

Stepney WESTERN

Stepney Western was unveiled this year after two years of filming by Harry Lawson. The first step was incredible artwork for the film going up at Byker metro station.

This was followed by a preview of the film for those involved to check that all of the young stars were happy before the premier at Newcastle Contemporary Arts (NCA) where the film was shown as part of a 6 week exhibition which also included archive photography. Then on to Berwick film festival where the young people took part in a nerve-wracking live Q and A session.

This was followed by the opportunity to curate their own radio show on Slacks Radio, to read in front of an audience at NCA, take part in printmaking workshops and press interviews.

This was a fantastic experience for the young people involved and helped spread the Stepney story far and wide. Next year the film will be shown at international film festivals and travel the UK with opportunities for exchanges and collaborations with similar centers around the UK.



Stepney Western stars take part in a Q and A session at the Berwick Film Festival



Harry Lawson with the Stepney Western gang



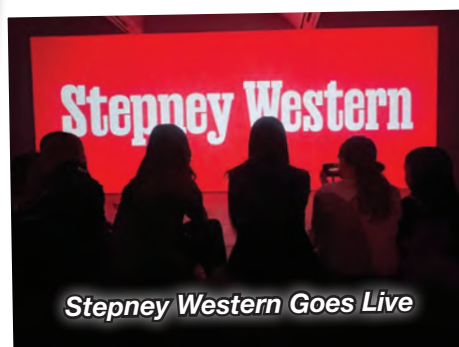
Creator Of Stepney Western Harry Lawson Accepting Flowers At The Premier



April hosting a radio show on Slacks Radio with Harry Lawson



Some Of The Stepney Western Stars



Stepney Western Goes Live



“

It [Stepney Western] gave me more confidence to speak to new people about things I don't understand fully. Asking questions isn't something to be scared of.

”

YEE-HAW!

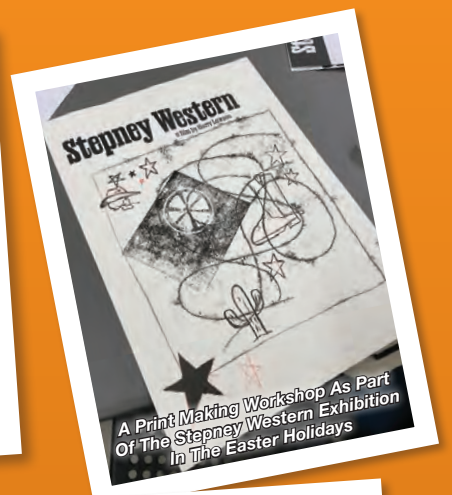




Pony Barn. Communal Living Is Much More Natural For Horses



A Team From Ward Hadaway Touch Up The Paintwork In Pony Barn Under Sam's Supervision



A Print Making Workshop As Part Of The Stepney Western Exhibition In The Easter Holidays



Amelie And Amelie After Taking Part In A Stepney Dressage Competition



Aimee Winning A Yeti Cup For Being An Incredible Help On A Hot Day.



Cece And Ade With Dream At Pony Prom



Pond Dipping

“ I would like to say a massive thank you to all those involved in the organisation of these sessions. She has absolutely loved it! For someone who normally shies away from taking part in activities she has thrived in this environment.... her confidence has grown beyond belief... it's the happiest she's ever been

Parent of HAF attendee

”



Ava, Queen Of The Grate Stack On Residential



The Stepney Gang Meeting Event Rider Sam Ecroyd At Bramham Horse Trials



A Pony Pause session in the Pony Barn with Sam



Daisy And Havannah On Their Hand Build Raft. What Could Go Wrong!



Changing Lives Through Horses Students at the Stepney Awards



Pony Prom



Dream Looks On During Yoga In The Pony Barn



Next Level Pony Prom Poses



Finalists In The 'Uniquely North East' Category At The North East Charity Awards



Story Time In The Pony Barn With Neigh-Bours Seven Stories



Olivia Taking Part In Barista Training Ahead Of The Ouseburn Festival



Olivia Kayaking



Paddy And Theo Enjoying Time Out In The Field



Phoebe Winning A Yeti Cup For Being An Incredible Help On A Hot Day. Yeti Have Provided Lots Of Support This Year



C1th Students Taking Part In An Intro To Dressage Course With Local Rider Sam Brown



Yoga In The Pony Barn



The Stepney Awards



Max the Mechanical Horse Arrives



Taking Part In An Undersounding Workshop At Wild Roots Community Garden

Scholars

Stepney has a proud history of running a Scholarship Programme with support from The Emile Faurie Foundation. Led by Morgan - herself a former scholar - the programme has grown and evolved significantly over the past two years.

Each summer, young people submit an application letter explaining why they should be selected. Successful applicants commit to volunteering a set number of hours and take on additional mentoring responsibilities. In return, they receive enhanced training towards accredited, professional qualifications through the Pony Club or British Horse Society.

This year, scholars achieved Ride Safe, Stage 1, and Pony Club C tests - accomplishments that not only boost their confidence but also serve as meaningful steps toward further training or employment. One former scholar is now studying horse care at Northumberland College, while another has secured a university place to study veterinary medicine. Three recent former participants have accessed part time work at Stepney whilst they continue their studies making a total of 8 current employees who are former participants in our youth programmes.



Looking FORWARD

Stables Lives – our plan for 2025-2030 includes a continued focus on improving the environment for both horses and humans. This means things like capital investment in a warmer and more welcoming reception area, insulating classrooms and offices so they can be heated efficiently, creating more communal housing for horses which allows them more freedom to move and friends to interact with, improving the lighting and ventilation in the stables and continuing to replace worn rubber matting.

“Another example of how Stepney always prioritise the horse. I’m all the more proud to have learnt from you guys... thank you for championing horse welfare.”

We will be creating a more diverse range of adult volunteer roles to include customer service, driving and DIY roles. We will be continuing to develop the Top Yard, focusing on the 200 year history of the site and making it a safe and welcoming space for the public to meet and fall in love with horses! We’re excited to continue to evolve our youth offer, ensuring that young people’s voices are at the heart of decision making. We will continue to expand our AP offer and provide opportunities for young people to rediscover hope, joy and self-confidence.

Thank You

As always we need to say a **HUGE** thank you to so many people but especially our loyal staff, volunteers, clients, donors and supporters.

It really does take a huge team effort to make the Stepney magic happen and we're so grateful to everyone who contributes.

We also want to say a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful horses and ponies who do so much for so many. This year we wished Iona and Braveheart happy retirement, waved Rio off to a fabulous new home and said a heartbreaking final farewell to Ollie.

We're so grateful to these kind and patient souls who enable our work.



Thanks Also To:

Apartment Group

Linden Family Trust

Chaser Communications

The National Lottery Community Fund
– Awards for All

National Flues and Fireplaces

Streetgames

Bart Endean

Morrisons Foundation

Wellmind Solutions

The Mailings Community Fund

Succeed

The Boshier-Hinton Foundation

Ringtons Fund

The Barbour Foundation

The National Lottery Community Fund
– Reaching Communities

The Elsie Davis Trust

Cottam Brushes

The Wellesley Trust

Yeti

The Hospital of God at Greatham



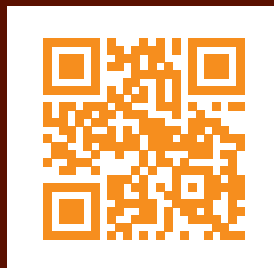
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