

Fostering Compassion

Animal Welfare Policy



INTRODUCTION

This document is the Animal Welfare Policy for Fostering Compassion which will be followed by all staff and volunteers of the organisation and followed and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organisation.

The purpose of the organisation is to run animal and nature based workshops for looked after children who as a result of their own difficult experiences may be struggling with the world around them. Through the medium of animals and nature we help them learn compassion and empathy which in turn, we hope will help to improve their emotional intelligence and literacy. Through the workshops, the children learn to see animals as sentient beings who can share similar emotions to them. Through sharing the stories of rescued domestic and wild animals', the children gain a greater understanding of their own circumstances and the workshops help provide the children with healthier ways to express their emotions learn to see animals as sentient beings who can share similar emotions as them.

BEST PRACTICE

To ensure standards of best practice during our human-animal interaction work, we have drawn up our Animal Welfare Policy with the assistance of the undernoted organisations* and with reference to the IAHAIO White Paper 'Definitions for Animal Assisted Intervention and Guidelines for Wellness of Animals Involved.' and the Society for Companion Animals (SCAS) AAI Code of Practice (2019). Our policy will be reviewed regularly as practice methods evolve in this ever growing field.

DEFINITIONS

Animal Assisted Education(AAE) - is a goal oriented, planned and structured intervention directed and/or delivered by educational and related service professional. AAE is conducted by qualified (with degree) general and special education teacher. Regular education teachers who conduct AAE must have knowledge of the animals involved. An example of AAE delivered by a regular education teacher is an educational visit that promotes responsible pet ownership. AAE, when done by special (remedial) education teachers is also considered therapeutic and a goal oriented intervention. The focus of the activities is on academic goals, pro-social skills and cognitive functioning. The student's progress is measured and documented. An example of AAE delivered by a special education teacher is a dog-assisted reading program.

Animal Assisted Activity (AAA) - AAA is a planned and goal oriented informal interaction and visitation conducted by the human-animal team for motivational, educational and

recreational purposes. Human-animal teams must have received at least introductory training, preparation and assessment to participate in informal visitations. Human-animal teams who provide AAA may also work formally and directly with a healthcare, educator and/or human service provider or on specific documentable goals. Examples of AAA include animal assisted crisis response that focuses on providing comfort and support for trauma, crisis and disaster survivors, and visiting companion animals for 'meet and greet' activities with residents in nursing homes.

OUR ANIMALS

Dogs - all dogs part of the Fostering Compassion team are temperament tested Therapets provided by Canine Concern Scotland Trust. Their time 'on duty' is always limited to one hour or less and water bowls are always out. There is always access to an outdoor area if the dogs need to answer the call of nature and there are quiet areas in our activity rooms if they need time out. We adopt a no raw food diet policy.

Donkeys and Shetland Ponies - our visit to the Scottish Borders Donkey Sanctuary, in St. Boswells, Melrose allows the children to get hands on experience grooming and feeding the animals. The most suitable donkeys and ponies are selected by the Sanctuary owners who know the animals and their temperaments.

Miniature Shetland Ponies - join us for our 'Horsing Around - Why the Long Face' workshop. They are provided by Therapy Ponies Scotland and all participants of the workshops are fully briefed on how to behave around the ponies prior to their arrival and during their visit.

Bears - the children are taken to visit the rescued ex circus bears Carmen and Suzy and Henk and Eso, bears rescued from the tourist trade at the Five Sisters Zoo. This activity revolves around education about wild animals exploited for human entertainment. The children observe the bears and learn about the eight species of bear, what they like to eat and what happens during hibernation.

HUMAN WELL-BEING

Before each of our activities the children are told a bit about each animal and how to be gentle with them and let them rest if they need to. They are told how to behave around the animal so as not to overwhelm it. Where we are working with wild animals, the workshops revolve around education and observation.

Before each family takes part in Fostering Compassion activities, they are asked to complete an 'In case of emergency form' and they are asked at this point, if any participants have any species or breed specific allergies, or any fear of animals. Any concerns re allergies, fears, religious or cultural issues would be discussed with the participants beforehand.

ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Only animals that are in good health both physically and emotionally and enjoy this type of interaction will be brought into the programme. All handlers must be familiar with their animals. The well-being of the animals must be monitored throughout the activities, and consideration given to their safety at all times.

It must be remembered that the animal, independent of the species, is not simply a tool, but a living being.

Professionals and Participants must treat the animals with respect at all times. Animals participating in AAI should never be involved in such ways that their safety and comfort are jeopardized. Examples of such inappropriate activities and therapy exercises include, but are not limited to, recipients (children and adults) jumping or bending over animals, dressing up animals in human clothes or costumes, outfitting animals with uncomfortable accessories (dressing other than clothes such as bandanas, weather related jackets, booties designed specifically for animals), or asking an animal to perform physically challenging or stressful tasks (e.g., crawling, leaning/bending in unnatural positions, pulling heavy gear) or tricks and exercises that require such movements and postures. Recipients should be supervised at all times and in all settings (e.g., schools, therapy sites, nursing homes) to make sure that they are not teasing the animal (e.g., pulling tail/ears, sitting on or crawling under the animal) or otherwise treating the animal inappropriately, thereby putting themselves and the animal at risk.

Those responsible for the well-being of the animal during activities must ensure that the animal is healthy, well rested, comfortable, and cared for during and after the sessions (e.g., provision of fresh water, work floors that are safe and suitable). Animals must not be overworked or overwhelmed.

Given the biological and psychological evidence for the innate affinity of humans to companion animals and vice-versa and a commitment to their health and welfare, the members of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations overwhelmingly embrace the concept of "One Health," which asserts that the health and wellness of animals, people, and the environment are inextricably linked (<http://www.iahaio.org/files/declarationchicago.pdf>, IAHAIO 2013 Chicago Declaration) .

*Prepared with the assistance of IAHAIO (International Association for Human-Animal Interactions) and SCAS (the Society for Companion Animal Studies)