

**Animal-Facilitated Intervention**

**'Goat Yoga'**

**SET Outdoors in association with SET Connects, The Adoption & Permanence  
Service  
and Castlescreen Farm**



## Introduction

'Animal Assisted Therapy' refers to the purposeful inclusion of an animal into therapy which is focused on health improvement and achieving specific health-related goals. Literature suggests that animal-assisted interventions are effective treatments for a variety of psychosocial and physical problems (Kaputska & Budzynska, 2020).

Animals can be great motivators during therapy for children. The use of animals to promote mental health might include a child being encouraged to gently pet and talk to an animal to teach appropriate touch, reduce anxiety, increase a sense of connection to a living being, reduce loneliness, and develop a variety of skills (Chandler 2005). The use of an animal in therapy may be beneficial because animals seem to have a natural tendency to create a bond with people (Nimer & Lundahl, 2015).

A good therapy animal will seek affection and interaction with the client. Studies have demonstrated that goats respond to subtle behavioural changes by humans (Nawroth, 2017). Animals promote a warm and safe atmosphere that can be independently therapeutic and help clients accept interventions offered by the treatment provider. Animal assisted therapy/intervention are not generally viewed as a stand-alone treatment; animals are used as a supplement or in conjunction with other mental health interventions (Nimer & Lundahl, 2015).



## SET Outdoors

The aim of SET Outdoors is to support South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) Children's Services to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of vulnerable young people (aged 0-24\*) via engagement in purposeful, outdoor, nature-based and/or animal-facilitate activities/therapy.

\*0-18 unless Looked After Child/Prison Healthcare

From the SET Outdoors perspective, the main objectives for this animal facilitated intervention are to:

1. For young people who have been adopted to participate in animal-facilitated therapy with the goal of improving mental health, emotional regulation, attachment and attunement.
2. To design and deliver, in association with SET Connects, The Adoption & Permanence Service and Castlescreen Farm, a high quality healthcare intervention.
3. To develop ways of effectively evaluating the impact of the ‘Goat Yoga’ programme on participants and staff.

The SEHSCT is an organisational member (level 3) of The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL). As such, SET Connects & Social Work staff will be expected to adhere to The IOL ‘Members Code of Conduct’ and ‘Statements of Good Practice’. Further details can be found at <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/>

SET Outdoors will operate in accordance with the Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model (Richards, Hardie and Anderson 2019).

Figure 1 – Zones of Practice – Range of Outdoor Mental Health Interventions

Zone 1		Zone 2	Zone 3
Self-led Activities	Outdoor Engagement	Therapeutic Enhancement	Integrated Outdoor Therapy
Choosing to engage in activities and experiences in the outdoors to sustain or improve own health & well-being.	Adding a psychological or outdoor dimension to enrich the experience provided by a session or service.	Using complimentary outdoor activities and psycho-therapeutic practices to enhance the approach and benefits offered.	Integrating professional competences in both outdoor learning and psychological therapy to provide unique and dynamic interventions.

This intervention is facilitated by a clinical psychologist in collaboration with animal handlers/experts and will therefore sit within Zone 3 of the Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model.

'Goat Yoga' sessions will be co-facilitated by:

- Bridget Tiernan (Clinical Psychologist & Yoga Instructor)
- Hannah Kelly (Social Worker, Adoption & Permanence Service)
- Jackie & Damien Tumelty (Castlescreen Farm).



### SET Connects

SET Connects is a specialist therapeutic and consultation service for children aged 0-18, who are in foster care or adopted. Service delivery is guided by models of attachment, child development and complex trauma. The service offers consultation and training to professionals, parents and carers, as well as therapeutic support to parents/carers and children to strengthen their relationships and support the child's social and emotional development.

### The Adoption & Permanence Team

The Permanence Service believe that a genuine partnership between all parties involved in an adoption is essential to deliver the best outcomes for children & young people. Adoption is an evolving life-long process for everyone in the adoptive family. The Permanence Service recognises that sensitive issues raised by adoption may resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.

Young people who are adopted should have access to information & services to enable them to address adoption-related matters throughout their life. The Permanence Services within the SEHSCT provide interventions to promote the welfare of all parties involved in adoption and work in partnership with young people and their families.

Interventions include financial support, workshops and training on adoption-specific issues, therapeutic services for children, counselling, advice & information, assistance with contact arrangements and telephone consultations.



## Castlescreen Farm

Jackie Gibson and Damien Tumelty run Castlescreen Farm; a small family farm on the outskirts of Downpatrick. The focus of Castlescreen Farm is sustainability, with the family taking a regenerative approach to looking after every inch of every field for the welfare of the animals and the benefit of the planet. Castlescreen Farm is the only PFLA certified Dexter farm in Northern Ireland. As well as selling PFLA certified Dexter beef, lamb, pork and chicken from the on-site farm shop, the family love welcoming people onto the farm for farm tours. Castlescreen Farm work with NI Food Tours, Farm to Fork tours and are currently registering as a Social Farm.

At Castlescreen you will meet the menagerie of animals from mini Dexter cattle, to sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks, miniature donkey Rosie and pony Primrose. The real characters on the farm are pygmy goats Bonnie & Clyde, with babies Martha & Muffin, Raymond & Gary providing a lot of entertainment and fun.



## SET Connects & Permanence Service 'Goat Yoga' Programme Objectives:

- To build human- animal relationships, including mutual trust & respect.
- To encourage the nurturing of an animal; which can promote self-care and empathy.
- To promote service user (including adoptive parents) social skills, self-esteem & confidence within the context of a group setting of their peers.
- To develop coping and emotional regulation strategies via Just Right State principles and yoga practices.
- To improve attachment relationships and attunement (between children and their parent) using a fun, motivating and child-centred therapeutic activity.
- To provide an enjoyable sensory experience (including the promotion of safe touch) for service users.
- To provide service users with an opportunity to engage with nature and the farm environment.

### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Young people must be open to the Adoption & Permanence Service.
- The young person must consent to engaging in the group intervention.
- Young people attending the group programme must be 6-9 years of age.
- Pre-group outcome measures must be completed prior to acceptance onto the programme.

### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- A young person who has not consented to engage in this therapeutic intervention, or who is outside of the 6-9 year age range.
- A history of harming animals is not a reason to exclude a young person from participation. However, this should be brought to the attention of the clinical psychologist prior to intervention commencing.

**NB – medical history will be requested to ensure safe participation in therapeutic activities**

## The Just Right State Programme

The Just Right State Programme is based on Sensory Attachment Intervention (SAI). SAI is an integrative approach to the treatment of children and adults who have suffered abuse or severe neglect.

### **The Just Right State Children's & Parent' Programme**

The Just Right State programme looks at the use of sensory activities and foods, to help children learn how to self-regulate their emotional states and behaviour. Cartoon characters called 'The Scared Gang' are used to represent the different survival and attachment patterns of behaviour. The different characters tell the children how they react to situations and what each of them does to achieve the "Just-Right State".

### **The Just Right State Parent's Programme**

The aim of the programme is to enhance parents' awareness of their own engagement patterns and how this impacts on their child's emotional states. Parents learn how to regulate their child from sensory and attachment perspectives.

[The Just Right State | ebsaic \(sensoryattachmentintervention.com\)](http://ebsaic(sensoryattachmentintervention.com))

The clinical psychologist will use key principles from these programmes alongside yoga techniques during the group intervention.



SET Connects & Permanence Service 'Goat Yoga' Session Plan:

Session	Programme of Activities
<p>1 19/5/21 4-6pm (Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcome and Introductions</li> <li>● How we start to get to know each other (thinking about starting to get to know the goats).</li> <li>● Setting up the focus of the group – care for bodies and feelings, fun time together, learn about how we survive in the world – animals – goats and yoga.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, yoga postures aimed at energising, strength and confidence. Yoga Games. Breathing. Relaxation.</li> <li>● JRS Alerting Content.</li> </ul>
<p>2 2/6/21 4-6pm (Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group welcome. Recap on last week-review of what helpful/hard/what people have been thinking about over the week.</li> <li>● Thinking about survival and working together/how goats herd etc.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, parent child yoga postures – bringing in connection and attachment. Yoga Games. Postures for balance when we feel agitated. Breathing Activity and Relaxation.</li> <li>● JRS Content re: Agitated States.</li> </ul>
<p>3 16/6/21 4-6pm (Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group welcome. Recap on last week-review of what helpful/hard/what people have been thinking about over the week.</li> <li>● Building on familiarity of goat-what noticing about behaviour and what this tells us about what the goat might be feeling. Noticing what goats seem to like/not like and how we work this out.</li> <li>● Build into what feels good to our bodies. Noticing feelings and how we work out what our bodies need.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, Yoga postures for cross feelings, when we need time out. Yoga Story. Breathing Activity and Relaxation.</li> <li>● JRS Content re: Angry states.</li> </ul>

<p>4 30/6/21 4-6pm(Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group welcome. Recap on last week-review of what helpful/hard/what people have been thinking about over the week.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, parent child yoga postures – bringing in connection and attachment. Yoga Games. Breathing Activity and Relaxation. Relate to how goats and other animals get nurture and comfort from each other to help them in the world.</li> <li>● JRS Nurture and Comfort Content.</li> </ul>
<p>5 7/7/21 4-6pm(Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group welcome. Recap on last week-review of what helpful/hard/what people have been thinking about over the week.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, yoga postures for comfort/cut off from over stimulation. Yoga Games. Breathing Activity and Relaxation. Relating content to the goats.</li> <li>● JRS Content re: Cutting Off.</li> </ul>
<p>6 21/7/21 4-6pm(Session begins 4.15pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final Week - Recap on last week-review of what helpful/hard/what people have been thinking about over the week.</li> <li>● Putting together what we have learned and more thinking about what would how to continue at home. Finding a way to say goodbye to each other and goats. Feelings around endings – sadness but carrying goodness/things that are helpful on with us.</li> <li>● Set a goal/intention. Warm Up, Sun Dance, yoga story on theme of ending. Yoga Games. Child and Parent opportunities to lead on favourite postures etc. Breathing Activity and Relaxation.</li> <li>● Snack &amp; Chat; sausages and burgers supplied by Castlescreen. Give Booklet summarising course content. Closing questionnaires/feedback forms.</li> </ul>

## Risk Management

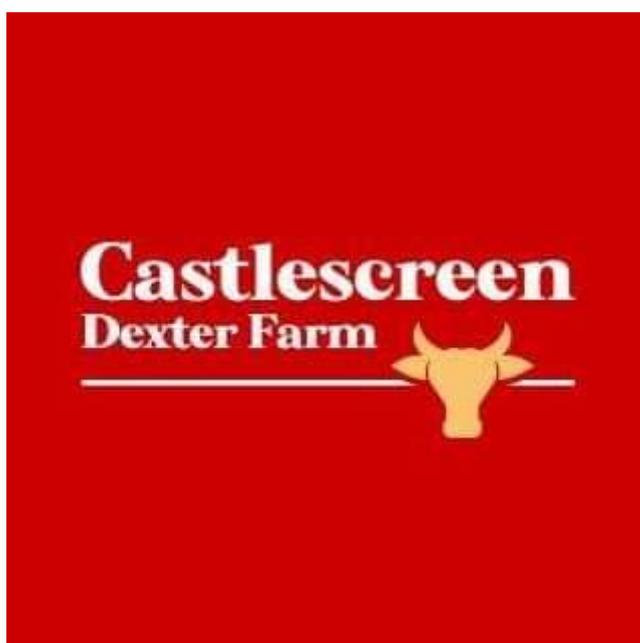
Please refer to the attached risk assessment (Appendix 1). SET Connects & The Adoption & Permanence Service are responsible for updating the risk assessment (to ensure it is specific to the group programme at the time of delivery) and for ensuring that a copy of the risk assessment is in the young person's clinical notes.

SEHSCT staff must ensure that their mandatory training (specifically basic life support) is up to date.

Local and regional child protection policy will be adhered to.

The sessions, and discussions that occur within the sessions are confidential. SEHSCT staff will adhere to local policies in regards confidentiality. No photographs should be taken by staff, participants or Castlescreen Staff with the exception of SEHSCT sanctioned publicity/media.

Castlescreen Farm are responsible for risk assessing the farm environment, venue and goats (Appendix 3). Castlescreen Farm are responsible for animal care and welfare during the yoga sessions. SEHSCT staff are responsible for individual risk assessment of the young person (as per local policy) and hold clinical responsibility for the young people for the duration of the programme, including documenting the programme in clinical notes as per local policy and professional standards.



## Outcome Measurement

Outcome measurement will be a crucial aspect of programme delivery. Participant and staff qualitative feedback will be collected at the end of the group programme (Appendix 2 & 3). Quantitative feedback will gathered prior to and at the end of programme.

*The Emotional Regulation Checklist (Shields & Cicchetti, 1995) [Appendix 4]*

The Emotion Regulation Checklist was developed by Shields & Cicchetti (1995) to assess the children's emotion regulation at the age of 5-12. The Emotion Regulation Checklist can be administered to teachers, school counsellors, and parents to assess and monitor children's emotion regulation. The Checklist consists of 24 items and items are scored on a 4- point Likert scale (1=Never; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often; 4=Almost always).

*The Human-Animal Interaction Scale (Fournier et al, 2016) [Appendix 5].*

The Human-Animal Interaction Scale (HAIS) (Appendix 2) is a 24-item self-report instrument designed to describe and quantify a human's interaction with a non-human animal. The interactions that are measured by the HAIS play a critical role in personal growth & development, physical health as well as mental health and wellbeing. Total scores can range from -24 to 76 with higher scores indicating a greater quantity of positive human-animal interaction (Fournier et al, 2016).

Group members will be encouraged to complete the HAIS Participant Form at the end of each goat yoga session.

## References:

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Nawroth C (2017) Socio-cognitive capacities of goats and their impact on human–animal interactions. *Small Ruminant Research*, 150, 0-75.

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Children. Poster session presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN.

