



Animals in Mind®  
Alternative Education 2023  
Programme Summary and Fees

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## Our Mission

Our **mission** is to help people learn, grow and heal through the benefits of the human animal bond, achieved by positive, inspiring, educative or therapeutic interactions with animals and nature.

## What you can expect from Animals in Mind

Animals in Mind offers a unique experience of Animal Assisted Intervention and Education to meet the diverse and fluctuating needs of our clients.

Our clients can expect a nurturing coaching / mentoring approach based on their own interests and motivations. Some clients chose to work with particular animals, some like to spend time working with their hands, or on nature based / forest school type activities.

Our Alternative Education programmes are new from 2022 and this demand grew out of our the demonstrable impacts and transferable learning observed in our clients in their home / education and other settings and in the person's relationship with self and others. Our clients report significant changes in behaviours and confidence following a course of education or intervention.

We have a very low key setting within our home, garden and surrounding greenspaces, including our goat and small animal paddock. Our setting is peaceful and non-intimidating, which is highly beneficial to those who struggle with informal educational or clinical settings.

## Our Clients

We work with Children and Adults with special educational needs (SEN), learning difficulties and / or emotional, social and/or mental health difficulties. The majority of our clients are neuro-diverse (ASD, PDA, ADHD etc) and need a particular approach and hands-on experience to meet their educational and developmental needs.

Many of our clients are self-funding through personal budgets, EOTAS, or are paid directly from education providers or local authority / NHS or charitable funding sources.

## Our activities

Our educational activities are designed and delivered flexibly to meet the needs of each individual's likes, needs, wants and motivations. We create physically and psychologically safe spaces for 'hands-on' learning and for experiential learning. We have two main pathways for our Alternative Education; Animal Pathway, incorporates working with our Therapy Animals and a Nature Based Pathway incorporates Nature Based Activities. A Hybrid option is also available and ideal for those clients visiting more than once per week.

Whatever the pathway selected, we believe in the 'curiosity approach', allowing the individuals interests to factor into planned sessions, thus engaging the individual fully in their planned programme.

## Animal Pathway

### How does working with the animals help?

The integration of animals enhances the persons developmental and psychosocial health, as well as their physical health, such a core strength, mobility, and proprioception. Animals are non-



judgemental sentient beings and positive interactions with animals through the provision of care, grooming, or simply having moments of mindfulness and quiet with the animals is highly beneficial to people of all ages and acts as a metaphor for developing empathy, kindness and essential life and social skills.

There will be plenty of opportunities to assist in daily duties with animals, which might involve health checking, grooming, feeding, cleaning, being creative and designing new enrichment for enclosures or simply enjoying their company and playfulness.

The presence of the animal acts as a bridge or motivator for the individual to participate in interventions, and / or as a metaphor for connecting the client in the determined areas of development. For example, a client with a goal of increased tolerance, or patience can develop these through the kind and empathetic interactions with a chosen animal or animals, with an emphasis on relationships and animal welfare.

Our Animal Pathway provides opportunities to work with a range of animals to discover their



individual needs and personalities and to bond with one (or more animals). It is most usual for learners and clients to select the animal that they connect with most and for this animal to be a consistent presence during the programme. This builds the human-animal bond and strengthens the development of learning, relationships, and behaviour.

Most of the animals at AiM are companion animals formerly from rescue. Most animals communicate non-verbally, a useful survival tool for most prey species and one from which we can derive many lessons on how we personally communicate and self-regulate. Building reflection into how a learner /client responds and is responded to builds self-awareness. The animal does not judge the person's background, race, disability, or

'difference'; they simply act in a pure 'in-the moment' way. This is particularly beneficial for those people who need a quieter learning environment, or suffer from anxiety or have encountered trauma.

## Nature Based Pathway

### How do nature-based activities help?

Our Nature Pathway incorporates a range of activities in the greenspaces of Northamptonshire, or in the safe area surrounding our animal paddock. Activities are diverse and tailored to the client need, but may include forest school type activities, foraging, woodland and conservation craft. Clients may get involved in building shelters, creating and cooking by campfires, woodland walking and conservation-based activities such as animal tracking, species monitoring, building / planting and monitoring habitats and basic crafts. Our location in the village of Scaldwell and our new paddocks afford lots of opportunities to get involved in planting and maintaining trees, shrubs and pasture, and in building wildlife houses, bird boxes, and bug hotels for example. Outdoor learning instils self-belief, confidence, learning capacity, enthusiasm, communication and problem-solving skills and emotional well-being.



Being primarily outdoors (in all weather) is stimulating and therapeutic, and improves heightened senses supporting self-regulation.

## Animal / Nature Hybrid Pathway

The Hybrid Pathway uses a combination of approaches, led by the learners choices and needs. The learner determines week by week the seasonal activities that they wish to participate in. Whether the client wishes to work with animals, or nature, or both, all of our activities are carried out via an empowerment approach that focuses on building strengths while resolving any perceived difficulties. The hybrid pathway is ideal for clients who thrive on leading their own learning and is particularly beneficial for those attending three hours or more across one or more sessions a week.



Our programmes place emphasis on personal development, autonomy, and resilience, with goals (if required) or learning objectives determined prior to the programme commencement and regularly reviewed. We will provide Animals in Mind® Certificate of Achievements / Record of Achievement.

Activities can also be delivered **1-1 Option**, or in **Small group Option<sup>1</sup>** (usually two- four (maximum))

The small group option is ideal for those wanting to build connections and social activities into their goals and is for those clients who have already completed a six-week (or more) programme of 1-1 sessions.

We may consider direct entry for Small Group sessions, following a suitability assessment as the dynamics of small groups are vital to ensure the efficacy of these programmes.

We feel that group work is a vital transition for our clients to stay or reconnect with society and we support our clients to develop positive and meaningful interactions with their peer group. However, we strongly recognise individuality and all small group programmes are highly differentiated to each and every person.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to availability, and after a programme of 1-1 activity has been completed.

## 1-1 Programme Option

Our 1-1 programmes are for individuals, often with a wide range of emotional and behavioural issues and for those facing specific barriers to learning. The programme of learning will be individualised to the client based on an initial assessment and discussion with the prospective client and or their care giver about interests and needs. Where objectives are set and impact measures



outlined, we will firstly plan an induction session to get to know the person, then in the week leading up to session two, will structure an outline of different potential learning outcomes for each week.

For clients with ASD and particularly with the PDA profile, we may not always 'follow the plan' as it is vital for us to go where their curiosity takes them' and for the learning to be informal and driven by their own motivations and strengths. For PDA clients, we may not suggest specific learning objectives or goals (unless the person want these) and sessions may develop organically.

Our 1-1 sessions are usually for those aged 8 and upwards, but we can support children as young as 12 with specific referral needs.

Please see our 'learner journey infographic' that outlines the stages prior to a client commencing their programme with us. This includes an application phase / initial assessment of needs from which we will agree any intended goals and learning outcomes. The latter being particularly important for referral agencies to be able to demonstrate the impact of the allocated funding.

Getting started may also require us to work in partnership with other multi-disciplinary professionals and referring organisations, so may take a couple of weeks to get everything in place, but this ensures that clients with complex needs, have these addressed cohesively with a multiagency approach and provides the assurances for the client (and responsible care giver) and of course all agencies responsible for the persons education and safeguarding.

One to one sessions are usually two hours (shorter can be arranged), and we can provide up to three hours<sup>2</sup>. We recommend a minimum of six sessions; prior to learners progressing (where relevant) onto small group sessions. This may be significantly more, where the person has recently suffered burn-out, trauma or PTSD.

For people, who are agoraphobic, or still recovering from burn-out, we can do visits to the home, however we have limited availability for this service, and do have to charge for travel. Additionally, we are more limited in the animal species that can accompany us to your home / setting.

## Small-Group Programme Option

Our small group engagement programmes run from 5-7 weeks, usually for half a day per week (3 hours). Groups are deliberately small; usually three or four (max) working with a lead practitioner and an assistant. These group sessions are subject to availability, and we carefully plan the groupings based on prior knowledge of the individual and how they work with others. We do not mix adult and

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<sup>2</sup> NB, we would not ordinarily enrol a young person into the small group learning, until completion of at least the six-week 1-1 programme, which can be biased towards animal assisted therapy or education.

child groups for safeguarding purposes. These sessions are ideal for people in some of the following circumstances:

- People who find formal learning settings unsuitable or unable to meet their needs.
- People who have a tendency towards hands-on learning and a love of animals and nature
- Children that are disengaged on a non-attender in school (for a variety of reasons) or excluded or at risk of exclusion from school.
- Young people struggling with the transition to a new school or class/year group.
- Young people who are 'not fine in school', such as those in transition and waiting for EHC assessment, plan or funding, or those who are EOTAS, or elected home schooling.
- Adults with learning difficulties to develop citizenship and life skills.
- Those completing a course of 1-1's to take their learning to the next stage and prevention plateau.

These programme uses a mixture of animal related, and nature based hands-on activities specifically designed to develop:

- Building and maintaining healthy relationships
- Team working, cooperation and
- Managing and regulating emotions
- Communication
- Resilience and preparing for change.
- Building confidence, self-belief, and self-esteem
- Resolving conflict
- Addressing limiting self-beliefs

Upon completion, participants will gain an in-house Certificate in Personal Development and will be given opportunities to progress towards ASDAN life skills challenges and / or qualifications in Animal Care, Land-based or Employability.<sup>3</sup>



### What might a typical day look like?

There actually is no typical day or session, as this is dependent on the client, the pathway, the season, and the weather. Some clients will spend much of our time outside in the fresh air and begin with a mini-briefing, make collective session choices and check our clothing and equipment before heading off on our daily adventure. Others may prefer a warmer choice on a given day, and we will work with the exotic residents.

We will always do a quick check on clothing suitability, or PPE<sup>4</sup> and promptly head off to explore and learn. On nature pathways, we may even begin the day by building a shelter and getting the fire pit set up and fire lit, ready to make a welcoming hot drink!

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<sup>3</sup> Commencing January 2023, see the 197 Life Challenges options for land-based <https://www.lifeskillschallenge.org.uk/category/land-based>. Additional costs for these include certification, materials and registration with ASDAN awarding organisation.

<sup>4</sup> We will advise you ahead of time about suitable clothing. This will mostly been weather dependant, and any specific PPE such as overshoes, gloves, ear-defenders etc will be provided by us according to the activity. We will mostly require clients to come with a change of clothing and this will be explained according to the activity / pathway.

Clients on half-day programmes will have a built in snack break (according to needs), and any need for sensory / movement breaks will be 'at free will' of the client.

## Pedagogical approach



Whilst Lynn is a trained teacher (PGCE), a qualified Animal Assisted Play Therapist (IIAPT) and a Nature Based Interventional Professional, we mentor and coach people, rather than formerly teach them! We use 'play therapy principles' so that learning is fun and enjoyable. We have an ethos for a flexible learner led approach, based on the person's own agenda / curiosity and enquiring mind. We find this more suited to individuals who are neuro-diverse than following a pre-prescribed or traditional 'teaching method'.

## Meeting education provider's needs.

The beauty of Alternative Education is the freedom for our clients in being able to learn and develop in a 'non-traditional' environment, free from regulatory control of what 'education should look like'. However, we can equally on 1-1 programmes demonstrate and report to funders how the client is developing the essential topic areas identified by Ofsted, such as:

- Maintaining and forming positive relationships
- Health and wellbeing (using the animals as a metaphor for transferable learning but also continuing to embed the personal development aspect of self-esteem),
- Confidence and understanding their behaviour in everyday life and the impact this has on them as individuals as well as those around them.

Our programmes and activities also support the achievement of the four preparing for adulthood outcomes, outlined in the [SEND Code of Practice](#) for England. These are:

- employment
- independent living
- friends, relationships and community
- good health

Sessions naturally cover the identified four broad areas of need in line with part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- sensory and physical need



## Developing essential life skills

At Animals in Mind, we also recognise the need for people to achieve, engage and maintain their



confidence in essential skills that enhance independence such as Maths and English. This in turn allows people fulfil their potential in life, study, or employment. We understand barriers to maths and English for some people, so we build confidence by developing naturally occurring opportunities to enhance communication (English) and calculation (maths). Our strategy is to help people develop growth mind-sets towards their own learning potential, raising their confidence, whilst challenging negative belief patterns. Life skills can be functional and contextualised or targeted to engage a love of such skills. In the image the client loved reading to the Bearded Dragon. Great context specific examples might be weighing out food, measuring wood for enclosures, identifying, and learning new species vocabulary etc.

## Term Dates January 2023 onwards:

From January 2023, we offer Alternative Education programmes in a minimum of six session blocks. Sessions usually run to coincide with the Northamptonshire school term times, so that sessions fit into family commitments for siblings attending mainstream education. However, we may also be able to offer a service throughout the year, or part way through a term, if a place becomes available. We also offer spaces on summer camps, so please do ask. Our programme dates from January 2023 are:

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February – 6 weeks

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March – 6 weeks

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May – 6 weeks

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July – 7 weeks

## Referrals and reserving a place.

Referrals can be made at any stage in the year; albeit September and January start dates are increasingly popular. Regrettably due to demand for our places, we cannot reserve a place on our programmes until we receive all of the applications phases outlined in our 'client journey' ([see here](#)) Our on-boarding process is thorough and is in place to safeguard and to assure that the service we offer is suitable to the clients' needs. Please do allow time for completion of these as all are required along with a signed informed consent prior to a place being offered / reserved.

## Fees

<b>Duration &amp; Frequency</b>	<b>2 hrs per week (one session)</b>	<b>3 hrs per week (one session)</b>	<b>4 hrs per week (two sessions)</b>	<b>6 hrs per week (two sessions)</b>
<b>6 weeks</b>	£816 (£68ph)	£1170 (£65ph)	£1440 (£60ph)	£1980 (£55ph)
<b>7 weeks</b>	£910 (£65ph)	£1302 (£62ph)	£1624 (£58ph)	£2229 (53ph)

## Summary of what our programmes include:

- **Individualised Curriculum** – a person led curriculum that meets individual needs, motivations and development goals – this is usually through working with our animals, or through nature based / forest school type activities to suit the motivation and likes of the client.
- **Mentorship, coaching and facilitated learning and reviews** – Through fully qualified educational professionals and subject specialist in conservation, environment and animal welfare and behaviour.
- **Access to our wide range of animals**, such as goats, chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs, lizards, tortoises, snakes and invertebrates. Our paddocks and animals are all on private land / access via the security of our home with exclusive access.
- **Animals in Mind Certificate / Record of Achievement** – mapping significant milestones.
- **Access to ASDAN qualifications in land-based studies** (e.g., animal care / conservation). NB, this is subject to an additional registration, materials and certification fee of approximately £95 per chosen pathway.
- **Progression / Transition Activities** – where applicable sessions include activities to support transition to further learning or employment.

## Invoicing and Payment

Once we are in receipt of the client application, health questionnaire and informed consent, we will confirm a place on a programme and issue an invoice. Privately funded individuals will be required to pay a 10% deposit<sup>5</sup> within 48 hours of issue of the invoice to confirm acceptance of the place. The balance is payable in full, a minimum of four weeks prior to the programme start, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed.

If a place is being funded through the local authority / an education provider or other funding agency, we will require a purchase order number prior to reserving a place on a programme.

Regrettably, we may need to release dates to other clients on our waiting list if the terms of payment and confirmation noted above are not met as we need to operate on a first come, first served basis to meet demand for sessions.

We can accept cheques or same-day bank transfers, the latter is preferred, we cannot take over the phone card payments at this time. Same day receipts will be sent to you electronically directly from QuickBooks accounting software. Invoices and receipts will be provided to you, or your carer / advocate / parent automatically and usually to the provided email address, but paper receipts either handed to you, or posted can be provided.

## Attendance

Our programmes are tightly timetabled, and staffed and the programme covers a set period of time as confirmed in the booking confirmation. We are unable to offer additional sessions for any that are missed / not attended unless agreed at the time of the booking (full terms and conditions will be issued upon confirmation of booking).

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<sup>5</sup> Or full payment, if the programme is due to start within four weeks.

## Notification of absence / lateness.

For all clients under 18, or those of limited capacity, we will expect to receive a telephone call prior to the due start time if the client is unable to attend. If no call is received and the client does not arrive within 15 minutes of the due start time, we will invoke our 'missing in education procedure' as part of our safeguarding policy. We will therefore call the emergency procedures provided to check on the welfare of the client. We therefore ask you to notify us if you are running late for the start of a session.

Where the client is attending a small group session, lateness can adversely impact on the other members of the group, as we may have already set off into the wilderness. We therefore ask care givers / anyone providing transport to be mindful of the impact on other clients through lateness. If attending on time may be a challenge due to the clients personal circumstances, such as PDA / Anxiety / becoming nocturnal, we may recommend the 1-1 option is more suitable.

## Satisfaction

We believe that every client that comes to Animals in Mind deserves a rewarding fulfilling and life changing experience. We value all feedback, at all stages of the programme and indeed will solicit your views throughout to ensure we can adapt and evolve the programme to suit the uniqueness of you – our client.

We trust this guide provides all the essential information about our Alternative Education Programme and we look forward to working with you.

*Lynn Hart* (MAEd, PGCE, BSc Hons)

Owner and Director, Animals in Mind® - Animal Assisted Therapy and Education