



FARMS FOR CITY CHILDREN



IMPACT REPORT 2023-24



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WELCOME

Farms for City Children exists to remove the barriers that prevent children and young people having meaningful access to the natural world. Through our food, farming, and nature-connected wellbeing offer, we strive to empower the next generation to experience the physical and mental health benefits of being in the countryside, and to see themselves as the custodians of our landscape for generations to come.



During an immersive five-day residential stay on one of our stunning heritage farms in Devon, Gloucestershire, and Pembrokeshire, children and young people participate in seasonal farming tasks alongside experienced farm teams and partner Farmers.

Quite simply, we “grow children”. During a week in wellies our beneficiaries experience a profound connection to our animals and land, develop a sense of their own social and moral responsibility to be stewards of our planet, and leave us as more curious, courageous, and compassionate young people able to forge and sustain committed relationships with teachers and peers.

2023-24 was an incredible year for Farms for City Children with more weeks of activity on the farms than ever before in our almost 50 year history. The diversity of our beneficiaries continued to grow with new partnerships across maintained primary and secondary schools, FE colleges, community associations, Scouts, and Gold Award Duke of Edinburgh participants. 83 loyal returning schools were joined by 16 new schools from 20 counties across England and Wales, and 16 London boroughs.

In June, with donors, partners, teachers and our beneficiaries, the charity celebrated a Festival of Learning at the Butchers' Hall in central London, in a farm take-over that saw us bring all three farms

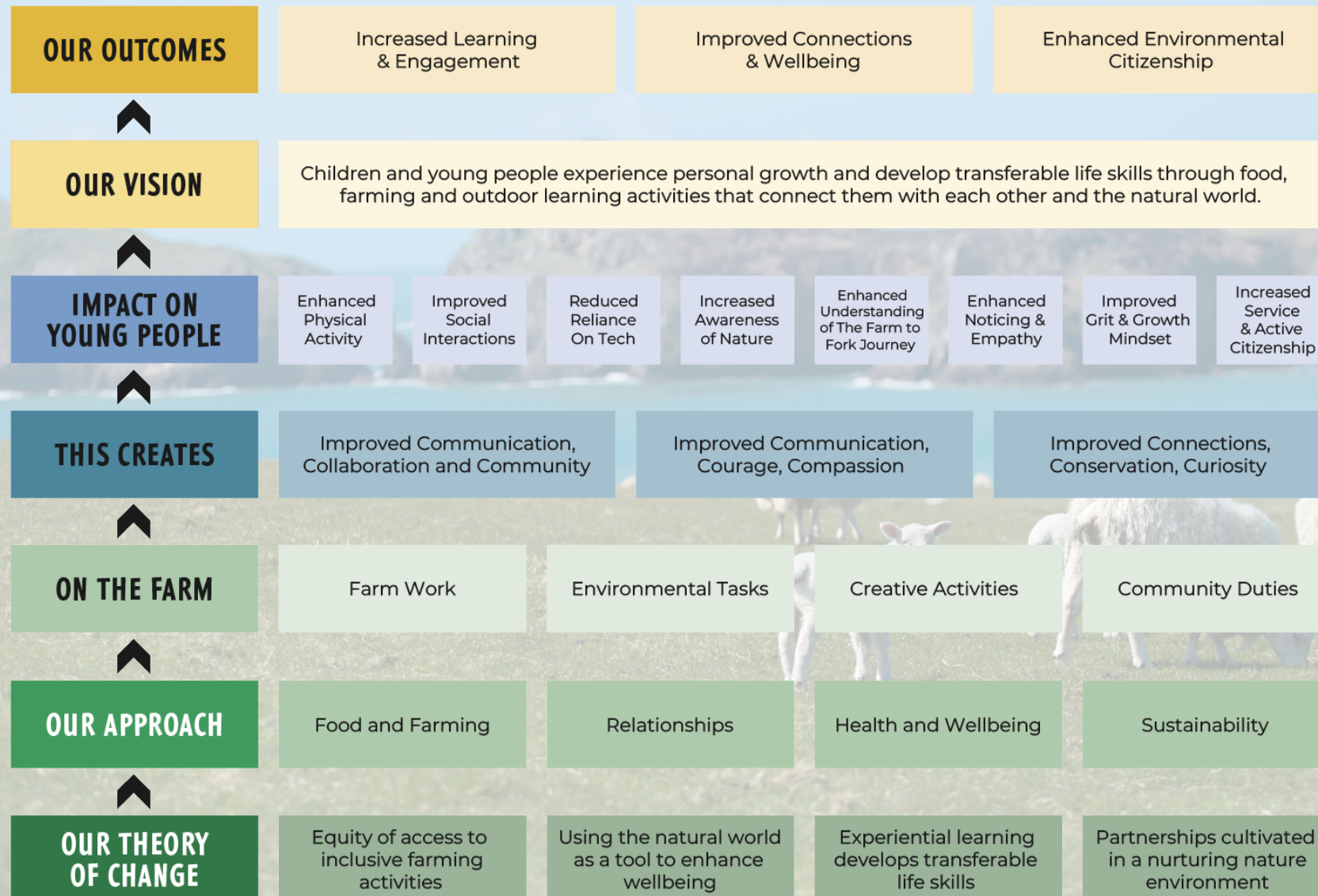
into the square mile to showcase the work that we do. This was a joyous occasion, made even more celebratory by the attendance of the Worshipful Company of Butchers livery, an array of VIP guests and ambassadors, and of course, our incredible Patron, HRH the Princess Royal.

With the charity going from strength-to-strength every year, we eagerly await 2024/25 and all the wonderful experiences that we will deliver for our children and young people.

Donna Edmonds
CEO



THEORY OF CHANGE



INCREASED LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Learning outdoors enhances engagement and promotes active learning, helping young people make links between curriculum lessons and real-life scenarios.

Positive outcomes include practical experience of a variety of subject areas, collaborative working, greater motivation and improved behaviour.

A week on one of our farms exposes young people to a breadth of farming tasks and wellbeing activities which enable our beneficiaries to grow in mindset, build resilience, and develop transferable life skills such as communication and collaboration.

From applying literacy and numeracy knowledge to real-work problems, to seeing practical applications of STEAM subject knowledge in tasks across the farm, children and young people gain an introduction to the world of work through hands on activities where they are responsible for the livestock, and each other.

100% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on young people's **physical activity**.

95% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on their young people's development of a **growth mindset**.

"I am excited to be able to know how the world works and how to take care of animals that I didn't know before."

Pupil, Keyham Barton Catholic Primary, Plymouth.

"Strengthening relationships between the teacher and children, particularly a child who struggles to learn in a 'traditional way'. This boy really excelled at the farm, and it showed staff that he needs to learn in a more 'hands on' way and that he isn't being oppositional, more he can't necessarily access the learning in the same ways as most children."

Lead Teacher Reflection, Smallwood Primary School, Wandsworth.



IMPROVED CONNECTIONS AND WELLBEING

Studies show that in 2023, 20.3% of 8 – 16 year olds had a probable mental health issue; that's 5 or more children in every classroom! Children and young people, and the teachers who care for them, need the opportunity to come together outside of the classroom and invest in health, wellbeing, and relationships.

The chance to work and play in nature, tell stories, to participate in field studies, and learn about their own connection to the land, offers both the children and their teachers a time to decompress from the stresses of life and experience the mental health benefits of a digital detox.

Living on the farm for the week liberates imaginations, and children and their teachers talk to each other, share discoveries and build connections that improve behaviour and engagement upon return to school.

The self-esteem built from conquering challenging farm tasks is complemented by the space to just 'be' during nature sessions, on coastal or biodiversity walks, trying natural arts and crafts or from mindfulness sessions, helping improve existing bonds and create new relationships.

100% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on their young people's **social connections**.

99% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on **reducing their young people's reliance on technology and digital devices**.

"The core value of compassion is most important to us. We feel that this is the behaviour that our children (this year group especially) struggle with so much in school. They find it hard to have empathy with others, but we have seen some lovely examples of care between the children."

Lead teacher, John Donne School, Peckham, London.

"I am proud of waking up early and getting on with things that don't involve a piece of technology."

Pupil, Goodrich Community Primary School, Southwark, London.



ENHANCED ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

The Natural History Museum's Biodiversity Index places the UK in the bottom 10% of 240 nations for original nature preservation. This means that we live in "one of the most nature depleted countries on Earth". Little wonder that out of 14 nations surveyed, the UK ranks bottom in Europe for nature connectedness and wellbeing.

Stress, anxiety and depression are positively moderated by connection to nature.

A week at Farms for City Children explicitly teaches young people and their teachers how to be the future stewards of the countryside, and how to connect more meaningfully with nature as it exists in their home locations.

Learning about regenerative farming and its links to climate protection, about biodiversity and securing species and habitats, and linking children and young people to where their food comes from, is a key outcome of the work of the charity. Growing, harvesting, preparing, and cooking their own food improves children's food choices, increases consumption of locally sourced fresh products and highlights the benefits for health around good eating habits.

Children return home, knowing that even back in the city there are choices they can make to protect our planet.

100% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on their young people's **awareness of nature.**

"Huge experience, learning how to farm and about the animals, and where our food comes from. How important farm animals are. How hard farmers' work."

Year 6 pupil, St George and St Teresa Catholic Primary School, Solihull.



98% of our school and group leaders said that their farm residential had a good or outstanding impact on their young people's understanding of the **farm to fork journey.**

"The staff were all so knowledgeable and passionate about the environment, the children came away with a great understanding of their place within the environment, and their responsibilities as citizens."

Lead teacher, Holton Primary School, Wales.



A YEAR IN NUMBERS

Total number of children
and young people:

3,188

Total number of
accompanying adults:

442

Total number of schools and groups
that visited one of our farms in the
2023/24 academic year:

106

MEETING OUR PLEDGED OUTCOMES

100% of lead adults said the farm visit met or exceeded our pledge to **increase beneficiary learning and engagement.**

100% of lead adults said that young people's **social connections and wellbeing** was improved as a result of the visit.

99% of lead adults said that beneficiaries left with an **enhanced sense of environmental citizenship.**



3,015
SCHOOL BENEFICIARIES



16 NEW SCHOOLS



83
RETURNING SCHOOLS



7 COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



3 NEW COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS




BENEFICIARIES FROM 20 COUNTIES ACROSS THE UK



52 BENEFICIARY GROUPS FROM GREATER LONDON



96% OF SCHOOL BENEFICIARIES COME FROM URBAN AREAS



37% OF BENEFICIARIES ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND PUPIL PREMIUM FUNDING



55% OF BENEFICIARIES FROM 30% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS



48% OF BENEFICIARIES HAVE MINORITY ETHNIC HERITAGE

WHERE OUR BENEFICIARIES COME FROM

Region	Percentage
London	25%
South East	18%
North East	9%
North West	9%
Yorkshire and the Humber	5%
West Midlands	5%
East of England	8%
South West	5%
West of England	4%
East of England	3%
North East	4%
North West	4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1%
West Midlands	1%
East of England	1%
South East	1%
South West	1%
North East	2%



2552 HOURS OF ACTIVITIES



LEGACY OF VISIT

“We are now more aware of bringing learning into the outdoor environment, with plans for more science experiments and each year group to have a dedicated area to grow their own veg, flowers or plants.”

**6-week post-visit teacher feedback,
Victoria Road Primary School, Plymouth.**

WHAT OUR BENEFICIARIES TELL US

Improved Connections and Wellbeing

76% said they had a better “not giving up” attitude than before

70% said they had enjoyed a break from digital technology

“I am most proud of walking on grass for the first time and being with Maria the donkey.”

Pupil, Harris Primary Crystal Palace, London.

89% said they now know more about nature

82% said they know more about where their food comes from

Increased Learning and Engagement

“I am excited to be able to know how the world works and how to take care of animals that I didn’t know before.”

Pupil Keyham Barton Catholic Primary, Plymouth.

“I am proud of finding the courage to get out of my house and go to Nethercott Farm and it was the right choice. This also improved my resilience, my self-confidence and I am a way better chef!”

Pupil, Flora Gardens Primary, Hammersmith, London.

Enhanced Environmental Citizenship

“I am proud of planting multiple trees that will be important for other people as well.”

Pupil, Portway Primary School, Newham, London.

“First, I overcame my fears of the things I didn’t want to do, and learnt all the things I wanted to about the farm! Also, I got to know more about everyone and everything, I really enjoyed it here.”

Pupil, St George and St Teresa Catholic Primary, Solihull.

81% said they made new friends or got to know their friends better

87% said they were more active on the farm than they usually are at home

“Being outdoors makes me feel calm, relaxed, happy, and connected with nature.”

Pupil, Laira Green Primary School, Plymouth.



**NETHERCOTT
HOUSE**

IDDESLEIGH, DEVON

This year, we have provided residentials for 1058 young beneficiaries and 147 accompanying adults. They have come from 31 schools, 3 groups and an FE college

drawn, geographically, from the Midlands, London and the South East, the South and South West of England.

Since taking back approximately 40 acres of land at Burrow Farm, our beneficiaries have been able to work alongside other agencies to help develop our nature rich, regenerative farming offer. Our wood pasture creation project in association with The Woodland Trust comprises of circular 'roundels' which have been planted up by a mix of local groups and visiting schools across autumn and into early winter. These 14 fenced, circular enclosures are like 30 metre diameter stepping stones for nature with a central, large canopy tree surrounded by native shrub. It has been a pleasure to hear how passionately our beneficiaries, young people from North East Surrey College of Technology, and children from a number of primary schools have described their experience of being involved in this major tree planting initiative. The experience will stay with them for a lifetime and benefit the landscape for years to come.



From opening our beehives in the spring to harvesting the honey in the autumn, our beneficiaries are engaged with the bees' life cycle, enabling them to understand the impact these insects have on our entire ecosystem. Likewise, manuring and mulching the kitchen garden gives way to planting, weeding and hoeing until it is time for the children to bring in the crops. Onions, squash, brassicas, apples, pears and soft fruits make delicious meals and broaden young palates. Daily collecting through the year teaches children the assortment of colours eggs actually come in, and provide them with breakfasts, Yorkshire puddings, pancakes, eggy bread and cakes.

We were excited to bale our first cut from the new hay meadow, ready for the children to feed our rare breed cattle in the sheds during winter when they can't be out in the fields. As the weather gets colder, climbing aboard the tractor and trailer as the sun rises on crisp mornings, and journeying through windy Devon lanes to stock check the animals, is a memory that will last a lifetime. Marvelling at the Hawthorn, Elder, Blackthorn and Hazel nuts and berries, birds and small mammals in the hedgerows and in our orchards, inspires young people to have a life-long connection to nature.



**LOWER
TREGINNIS**

ST DAVIDS, PEMBROKESHIRE

This year, we have hosted 34 groups at Lower Treginnis, serving 1,060 children and young people and 102 teachers. A third of our beneficiaries visit

us from Welsh schools, allowing us to impact not only those children from an urban setting, but those from rural and coastal areas that, despite their setting, sadly share those barriers that prevent children and young people from having meaningful access to the natural world.

We continue to work with the Ernest Cook Trust's Outdoor Week of Learning (OWL) collaboration to address the needs of deprived communities in the Vale of Glamorgan, and are ever grateful to our local fundraisers – the Friends of Treginnis – who ensure that local Pembrokeshire schools have access to a week of muck and magic on the farm.

In addition to our traditional school visits, we continue to serve other groups as part of our commitment to providing transformative educational experiences for all. In July, we hosted a



group of children from military families and welcomed a group of 37 children and young people from the Redditch District Scouts to our farm in April. The young people particularly enjoyed going out into the sheep fields with our partner farmer Aled, and those who were lucky enough to witness him assisting with a live lambing have since said it was a “once in a lifetime opportunity” that “we will probably never get to see again”.

Such visits from a more varied group of beneficiaries have helped us explore different perspectives of the farm's educational scope, broadening the horizons of our visiting children and young people. This has allowed us to experiment with a more bespoke itinerary which has included: beach cleans for a local sustainability community group, evening storytelling sessions led by the amazing writer Nicola Davies and illustrator Jackie Morris, as well as an opportunity to work alongside Câr-y-Môr, the UK's first community-owned seaweed and shellfish farm. This collaboration introduces visiting children to the innovative field of aquaculture, with children observing the seaweed farm on their coastal walk, participating in workshops about seaweed farming, and identifying and harvesting seaweed during their time on the beach.



WICK COURT

ARLINGHAM, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

This year, Wick Court has delivered 38 weeks of farming to 1071 young people and 157 adults; hosting 34 primary schools, one secondary school, one FE college and two

youth groups, and our events welcomed over a thousand guests to the farm. A large proportion of our beneficiary groups returned from London, and we also welcomed new groups from cities in the north, including Liverpool and Manchester. Thanks to funding through the OWL Collaboration, we hosted three Gloucester schools. These schools are located within one of the most socio-economically deprived areas of the country, and we have never been more convinced that there is a need right on our doorstep. We are pleased to extend this offer to four local schools next year.

The weeks without groups in residence have also proven productive throughout this busy year. As tradition defines, we held our Wick Court Wassail in January, and in June, we held the increasingly popular Open Farm Sunday. This is becoming an annual staple within the community, but we are also seeing more visitors from further afield like Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean. We offered house tours, craft activities, storytelling and den building, attracting an impressive 718 people and, in the same month, Wick Court Farm School Manager, Stevie Edge-McKee, alongside Nethercott House Farm School Leader Sophie Khayat, gave a presentation to 200 attendees at the sixth University of Derby Nature Connection

Conference. We focussed on the role of online learning as a scaffold to engagement within on-farm beekeeping sessions and young people's wider connection to invertebrates.

Out on the farm we have welcomed lots of new additions including Dorset and Ryland Gloucester calves and Old Spot piglets. We continue to supply meat into our local farm shop, Eastington, and to award-winning CIC pay-what-you-can restaurant The Long Table. We welcomed back consistent numbers of rare bats in the roost in the attic and enjoy sharing information about these fascinating mammals with our young beneficiaries.

Importantly, we are pleased to report a bumper year for fruit production, and that the perry pears Wick Court are known for were processed by the young people into tasty juice. In April we worked with poet James Crowden to create work inspired by orchard blossom for permanent display in the house. In May we held our first Orchard Blossom Day with a focus on environmentally themed family activities. The day enabled us to work with partners including Tyler Grange and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Following this we have given special attention to the Wick Court Produce Room. With new floors and ceiling, we hope to extend juicing into the winter months thanks to a 5-star hygiene rating and the kind donation of two new chest freezers. We are also celebrating a bumper year of honey, eggs and vegetables!

FINAL WORDS OF THANKS

2023-2024 has been an incredible year for Farms for City Children, touching and changing the lives of more children and young people than ever before in the charity's long 48-year history.

The clarity of our mission has been enhanced by our Theory of Change, which clearly lays out the route to achieving our three pledges for our beneficiaries: i) Increased Learning & Engagement, ii) Improved Connections & Wellbeing, and iii) Enhanced Environmental Citizenship.

The impact data laid out in this report demonstrates that we are excelling in the delivery of our goals, and we will strive to do even better in the years ahead. None of this would be possible without the unwavering support and energy of our all our staff, volunteers, trustees and, of course, funders. A huge 'Thank You' to each and every one of you.

With the framework of our new 2024-2027 Business Plan, we are hugely excited for what the future will bring to our charity over the next 3-years, and beyond.

Bookings for 2024-2025 are already at near-full capacity, and we will focus our efforts on increased fundraising so that we can continue to reach even more beneficiaries.

The cost-of-living crisis is having a profound impact on so many of our schools and community groups, so it is vital that we do all we can to ensure our product offering is affordable to all.

We are also looking ahead to 2026, a year in which we will celebrate our 50th Anniversary milestone with a collection of exciting events. Our wish is to raise the profile of Farms for City Children, and increase income through funding, so that we, just like our beneficiaries, are resilient to what lies ahead.

Rachel Goult
Chair of Trustees



ARE YOU READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The work outlined in this report has a tremendous impact on the lives of young people across England and Wales. None of this would be possible without the generous support from trusts and foundations, individual donors, corporate organisations, and community fundraising events.

Your support, whether through grants, employee fundraising, regular gifts, donating to match funding campaigns, or responding to appeals, makes a significant difference to our future planning, and the lives of our beneficiaries.

As we strive to reach more young beneficiaries, we need to expand our fundraising efforts to continue nurturing children and young people through our food, farming, and outdoor learning program. Since 1976, we've welcomed over 100,000 beneficiaries, and with your help, we can reach even more deserving children and young people.

You can make a difference by donating, setting up a regular gift, or supporting our work through your company or foundation.

Take action now through our website by clicking "[donate](#)", or reach out to our Fundraising Team to discuss other ways to get involved, such as a bank transfer, a grant award, corporate support, leaving a gift in your will, or organising a fundraising event. Every contribution matters, and we extend our sincere thanks to every donor for the support we received in 2023/24. Join us in making a positive impact on the lives of young people!

MAKE A GIFT TODAY:

QR Code:

Scan your phone's camera over this code:



Online: Visit farmsforcitychildren.org and click [DONATE](#)



By Post: Send a cheque to Farms for City Children, Huxham Barns, Huxham, Exeter, Devon, EX5 4EJ



Bank Transfer: Call 01392 276678 or email fundraising@farmsforcitychildren.org



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