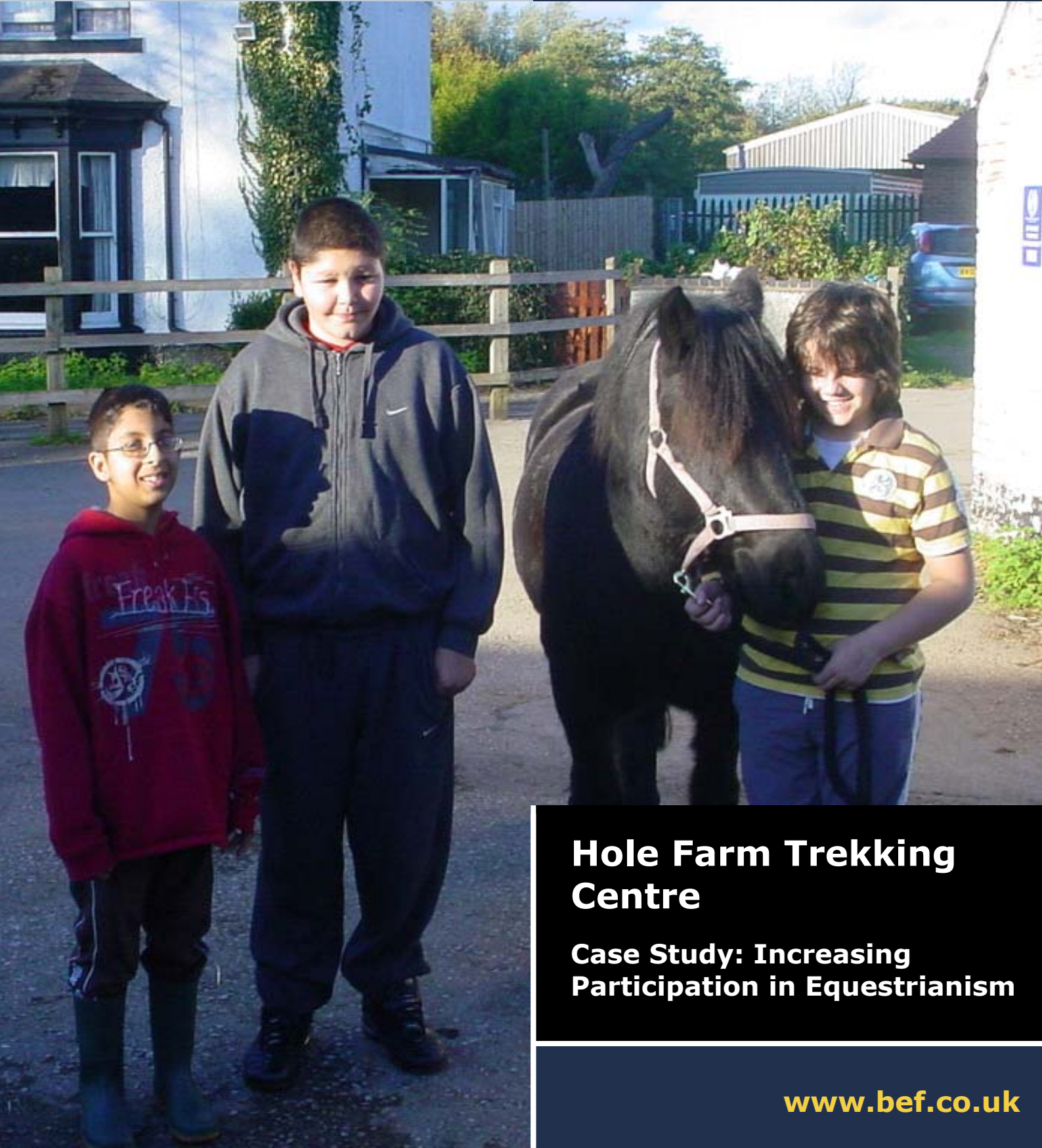




BRITISH
EQUESTRIAN
FEDERATION



Hole Farm Trekking Centre

**Case Study: Increasing
Participation in Equestrianism**

www.bef.co.uk

Hole Farm Trekking Centre

Hole Farm Trekking Centre is a municipal equestrian facility owned by Birmingham City Council. Its remit is to provide open access horse riding and trekking to the community. The Council own the physical infrastructure, pay the salary of the stable manager, and provide her with a house at a reduced rent. In return she owns the horses and generates the income required to run the facility. The result of the indirect subsidy from the Council is that the cost of riding at the centre is considerably lower than commercial establishments.

Background

Hole Farm is recognised as a high quality establishment by the British Equestrian Federation and the British Horse Society, and has recently become the home to the newly formed Woodgate Valley Riding for the Disabled group (RDA). It is also a Pony Club Centre.

The centre is located on the edge of the 450 acre Woodgate Valley Country Park amongst some of the most deprived edge of city estates in Birmingham. The centre is supported by the Park Ranger Service which can provide it with all of its hay, at no cost, from fields within the Country Park. There are 60 acres of paddocks.

There has always been some schools use of the facility but this has increased significantly since September 2006 through support from the two local Schools Sports Partnerships. Networking within the Childrens, Young People, and Families Directorate has also seen the Looked After Childrens Service (LACES) using the facility with these vulnerable individuals.



Collaboration with Schools Sports Partnerships (SSPs)

There are 11 SSPs in Birmingham and the Partnership Development Managers (PDMs) collaborate closely for the benefit of the City's children. The Centre falls within the boundaries of two of these, Lordswood Boys' School SSP, and Colmers SSP.

The Lordswood SSP included horse riding as one of its Big Lottery funded out of school hours activities for Frankley Community High School, a challenging school situated on a large edge of city council estate. The programme started in September 2006 and is funded for three years. After year one the scheme has proved to be so successful that the school has established a second group beyond the provision allowed for by BLF support.

Both SSPs received funding from the Youth Sports Trust to identify and train Gifted and Talented disabled pupils. By pooling this money the two partnerships were able to release the School Sports Co-ordinator (SSCO) from Selly Oak Special School to work for one day a week, across both partnerships, to develop disability sport. This has resulted in more special schools accessing riding opportunities as well as the establishment of the RDA group.

SSPs are working hand in hand with the newly formed Extended Schools Clusters in the area. There is significant interest from the Cluster Co-ordinators in being able to offer equestrian opportunities outside of school hours, including weekends and holidays. One particular attraction for them is its location within the centre of a community that is very reluctant to travel outside its own narrow neighbourhood.



Many young people are encouraged to progress through the BHS, Pony Club, and RDA award schemes. In the future it is hoped that the centre will offer a pathway to employment for some of these pupils.

Participation

In the academic year 2006/7 three special schools and two mainstream secondary schools from the two local SSPs rode on a weekly basis. Analysis of rider registration forms enables the break down of pupils by age, gender, and ethnicity to be identified.

For the academic year 2007/8 the Lordswood Boys' SSP was granted £3000 through the BEF, BHS and Sport England to help increase participation from other schools in the partnership. Due to some of the constraints listed below this project is only just beginning and will increase in capacity over the coming months. It has allowed three groups, totalling 24 pupils, from Lordswood Boys' School to start riding. Two are drawn from year 7 and one from year 10. The latter are all pupils enrolled on the Skills Active Young Apprenticeship Scheme. All these pupils are from a BME background.

The seed money has also enabled Selly Park Technology College for Girls to increase the number of pupils riding. There are now seven pupils riding

drawn from years 9 and 10 who are all either South Asian or White British.

Frankley Community High School has also increased its number of weekly sessions from one to two. Their target pupils have been girls (although one boy is riding) who have been identified as not participating in PE and School Sport in years 10 and 11. There are nine pupils in each group. All are White British.

The three special schools continue to ride and break down as follows:

- One primary special school for children with severe learning difficulties
- One secondary school for children with moderate learning difficulties
- One secondary school for children with severe autism.

The Looked After Childrens Service and The Link (who deal with pupils excluded from school) also use the centre on a regular basis.

For further information on other participation projects the BEF is involved with across the UK visit www.bef.co.uk

Constraints

There are a number of constraints to increasing participation through this type of environment. Some are general and others are site specific.

General Constraints

Apart from funding the two biggest barriers to schools participating in horse riding are:

- Transport
- The School Timetable

In many instances schools either do not have a minibus, or there are conflicting demands upon it in which school competitive sporting fixtures take priority.

Most school timetables have lessons in hourly blocks that does not easily lend itself to the time required to transport pupils to and from the stables and allow enough time for riding in between. A significant number of schools also operate a two weekly timetable that makes booking regular lessons extremely difficult.



Site Specific Constraints

The absence of an indoor riding school and flood lighting severely limits the amount of riding that can take place over the course of the year. After school riding ceases from October half term holiday until Easter due to the lack of light. In wet weather either it is too unpleasant for novices to ride or the ground is so wet that riding out with horses would cause unacceptable damage. The lack of an indoor facility, and the limitation of only having one outdoor school also restricts the capacity of the centre to meet the undoubted demand.

Currently there are no toilet facilities other than a portaloo. This is unacceptable especially for special needs groups.

Data Collection

A rigorous system of data collection is being established to collate participation by:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Ethnicity

Summary

The potential of the centre to have a significant positive impact on the lives of young people is only just beginning to be exploited. Apart from helping to deliver national, local and NGB participation targets the centre will also contribute to the schools/pupils academic attainment, emotional and physical health, and employment prospects. Unfortunately its capacity to deliver on these outcomes is limited by the lack of indoor facilities.