



Enter & View Report

Animal Antiks

February 2022



What was the project about?

Healthwatch Bucks wanted to find out about people's experiences of attending Animal Antiks community opportunities.

Why did we do the project?

In 2021-22 we are looking at COVID-19 response and recovery in Health and Social Care. Together with our cross-cutting interest in lesser heard voices, we decided to visit locations where community opportunities are provided. These had to close in 2020 during the pandemic and then adapt to changing circumstances as they opened through 2020 and 2021.

We wanted to hear the from those who attend day care provision in Buckinghamshire. We wanted to hear what they gain from the experience and how it promotes well-being and self-reliance, one of the aims of [Our Ambition | Buckinghamshire Council \(buckscc.gov.uk\)](https://www.buckscc.gov.uk). In this, Buckinghamshire Council are looking to develop “meaningful and appropriate day and employment opportunities in the community to enable people to live fulfilling lives. We want to support a culture of choice for individuals rather than the current culture of dependency and having to fit in to services”.

We also wanted to identify good practice and ways to improve service delivery.

What did we do?

Our Enter & View visit to the service on 25th January was planned with the provider in advance. For more details on Healthwatch Enter and View and full details of the visit, including the names of our authorised representatives, please see Appendix 1.

We talked to 5 clients and 5 members of staff. We also observed the interactions between these people, 11 other clients and 3 other staff members. Some clients are non-verbal, and others chose to not talk to us. Our authorised representatives used a set of questions to guide their conversation with service users. It covered topics such as:

- what did they like doing at Animal Antiks?
- what skills had they improved since attending
- what would they like to change?
- how did the feel about the service?

What did we discover?

Animal Antiks aims to build confidence, knowledge, and self-esteem, whilst developing key social, life and work skills, using the farm environment as a backdrop. They offer farm therapy, work experience, wellbeing walks and post-16 training.

How people were treated

When we arrived, three people were helping a staff member unload a potting bench and box from a car. They seemed happy to help carry it to where the other plants were being overwintered. They were praised on the journey and thanked at the end. Staff knew individuals well and worked to engage them in an activity or worked with them until they were ready to participate. Two individuals sat away from the rest of the group when we observed an activity. One was ready to interact with everyone else at lunchtime and then talked to us and others. The other person still chose to sit apart, and their choice was respected. We also heard a staff member explain coping strategies to another client at lunch time when they asked, “what would you suggest to someone who was frustrated?”

Staff were encouraging. “You have a go, X.” We saw a staff member explain how to make pinecone bird feeders and then help clients where help was needed. “Are you alright X? How are you getting on?” They asked and answered questions as well as repeated back what they thought they had heard. We were told these feeders were being made for the RSPB birdwatch count which clients were planning to take part in on Friday. We also saw some staff use BSL with one signing “you look sad” to a client. Another client asked a member of staff, “what’s the sign for sandwich?” They then used it to communicate with the person next to them. There was a lot of interaction at lunchtime when different groups came together to eat. Most clients and staff ate together in this room. One client handed around mini sausage rolls and here was a lot of conversation. We were told that there was a quiet room, and space outside, where some people also chose to eat.

Although clients brought in their own lunches, we were told that some simple cooking was done on site using food donated by local supermarkets.

What do you like doing?

We could see some clients enjoying making pinecone feeders whilst others preferred to listen to music and watch. There was good personal interaction. “Guess the next song!” Outside another group of clients were mucking out the various animals in the barn and filling water troughs. A staff member explained how some clients were very reassured by stroking the guinea pigs. We saw some people cheerily returning from a walk with the alpacas. A smaller group were enjoying a walk around the farm with the Shetland ponies. We were told that those who engaged with woodwork particularly liked the electric sanders.

In the barn, there is a suggestions box up on one wall, and a photography challenge written on the whiteboard. The latter listed suggestions of what clients could take photos of.

What have you got better at since coming here?

One person told us they like the fact that most of the work is practical, “I want to own a farm.” When the farrier or vet comes, people who are interested can learn about animal first aid and how hooves need to be cared for. Some people are developing portfolios to show the skills they have learned. Several clients were working towards their City & Guilds Level 1 and Level 2 work based Animal or Equine Care. One client is now employed by the farm and undertaking a level 3

qualification. As well as developing animal husbandry skills, we were told about the bird boxes clients make which are for sale at the shop and on the website. Many enjoy working with electrical and hand woodworking tools which they haven't used elsewhere. One client helped a staff member put a fire extinguisher on the wall that morning.

We commented on the bulbs starting to emerge in planters. We were shown strawberry plants which had been moved to the new hot beds. A staff member told us how one of the clients we met had overcome their fear of horses and had sat on one despite their trembling. They were very proud with their achievement afterwards. One client was very pleased to tell us about what they had done to clean out and feed the chickens and ducks. "I scatter food in areas so they [different birds] don't get bullied". They knew all about avian flu and the importance of keeping the birds in a netted space. "I find them very curious." They also told us about cleaning and boxing the eggs for sale.

What could make your experience better?

None of the clients we spoke to could think of anything that would make their experience better at Animal Antiks.

A staff member showed us the area where the new kitchen garden is being built. There will be raised beds to make gardening accessible to all their clients. Everyone will be encouraged to take ownership of a small area. "If they grow something they love here, they can see they can do this at home." A staff member said told us they try to build everyone's self-belief. "From that grows self-confidence and clients realise they can do new things". Animal Antiks intend to introduce beehives. They have planned their range of plants with this in mind and missing areas of hedgerows will also to be replaced. Another barn is also being prepared as alternative inside space. They will run Duke of Edinburgh activities and bushcraft opportunities from here.

How do you feel about the service?

One person told us how they enjoyed the farm work regardless of the weather. "It's fun. They don't force you to do anything you don't want to. The staff are great. They understand you."

Our recommendations

Based on what clients told us and our observations, we recommend Animal Antiks:

- looks to cook/prepare food that they grow in the kitchen garden to demonstrate the whole farm to fork experience with vegetables and fruit grown by the clients.
- puts battery operated LED lighting in the portable toilets outside. No natural light can come in through the roofs because they are positioned under the eaves of the shop.

Service Provider Response

Thank you for sending your report through. I can confirm that the lights mentioned for the portaloos were already on order and they are now in the loos. Please note that these loos are only short term as we are in the process of installing our new toilet facilities. The cubicles are up but we are just waiting for some issues with plumbing / sewage to be resolved before the rest are installed.

With regard to cooking the food grown, this has always been the plan. And, in addition we will be operating a small shop to sell any excess we have, so that the members get the opportunity to operate the shop and experience the cash handling around that. We have a number of people each week to come to the farm to attend the alpaca wellbeing walks and we hope they will use our shop (already selling craft items being made onsite).

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bucks would like to thank Animal Antiks clients and staff for their contributions to this Enter and View visit.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all clients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Appendix 1: Enter and View Background and Visit Details

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to watch how services are delivered and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues, however, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

| Details of visit: | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Service Provider | Animal Antiks |
| Service Address | Manor Farm St Johns Lane North Marston Buckingham, MK18 3PU |
| Date and Time | 25 th January 2022 10.15am - 12.45pm |
| Authorised Representatives | Alison Holloway Jenny Cassidy |

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us.

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