



Paws for Progress Recruitment Pack

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Key details about the role

Job Title: Youth Practitioner

Location: HMP & YOI Polmont (with travel across sites over Central Belt of Scotland). Regular travel between Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home and HMP & YOI Polmont.

Reports To: Operations Manager

Salary: £26,865 FTE per year pro-rata.

Contract Type: Part-time, permanent contract, 4 days per week (0.8 FTE, 28 hours). This is a flexible role, and we are happy to discuss alternative hours.

Benefits: 5% pension contribution, 37 days annual leave (0.8 FTE pro-rata), access to Employee Assistance Programme, flexible working where possible to support work-life balance, paid training and development opportunities, and a supportive, inclusive, and values-driven workplace culture.

Typical Hours: Monday AM, Tuesday AM, Thursday AM and PM, with remaining hours flexibly scheduled (Mon–Fri, 8am–6pm) as agreed in advance.

Applications open: Thursday 18th December 2025.

Applications close: Monday 12th January 2026 at 12pm. **Early applications are encouraged**, as the closing date may be brought forward if enough high standard applications are received sooner.

Interviews: 2-stage taking part in January 2026. More details on the interview process provided on page 4.

Start Date: We would love for the successful candidate to join us as soon as possible. Taking notice periods into account, we anticipate a start date in **March 2026**, but we're happy to be flexible for the right person.

Role Overview

This is a unique and rewarding opportunity to join the expert team at Paws for Progress in a varied and meaningful role. The Youth Practitioner will play a central role in delivering our rescue dog training programme at HMP & YOI Polmont, supporting both young people (aged 18–23) and rescue dogs in a positive, inclusive, trauma-informed, and engaging learning environment.

This role combines practical, hands-on work supporting the care, training, and transport of rescue dogs with educational delivery for students, including employability skills, theory sessions, and the facilitation of qualifications. Ensuring wellbeing and positive learning experiences for both people and dogs is central to the role. The Youth Practitioner's approach is both dog-centred and person-centred, promoting learning, confidence, and progression for all participants.

The post-holder will work closely with the Training & Behaviour Specialist, the wider staff and volunteer team, and partner organisations to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and enjoyable learning experiences. A key part of this role involves collecting and transporting dogs between Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home (EH15 1EH, 8am collection) and HMP & YOI Polmont (FK2 0AB) two mornings a week, with a suitable vehicle and fuel provided for transporting the rescue dogs.

While primarily based at HMP & YOI Polmont, there may be occasional delivery in other settings such as schools or secure units, broadening the impact of the programme. The role focuses on working with disadvantaged or vulnerable young people from diverse backgrounds and may involve some engagement with adults.

This is a chance to make a tangible difference in the lives of young people and rescue dogs, while being part of a supportive, expert, and values-driven team at the forefront of Human-Animal Interaction practice.

Commitment to Accessibility and Inclusion

At Paws for Progress, we welcome applications from all sections of society. We believe in the potential of everyone regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, ethnic origin, different physical ability, age, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other form of diversity.

At Paws for Progress, we are committed to conscious inclusion that contributes to creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose. We welcome applications

from everyone who feels passionately about our vision; creating a world where people and dogs improve and enrich each other's lives.

We are committed to making our recruitment process as accessible and inclusive as possible. If there is anything we can do to support you during your application or interview, please contact our Operations Manager, Suzanne Ruby, at info@pawsforprogress.co.uk

Adjustments can include, but are not limited to:

- Providing interview questions in advance
- Flexible application format (e.g. video as cover letter)
- Flexible interview format (e.g. Support person or coach present, panel vs 1:1 interview, walking or alternative interview formats)
- Other adjustments tailored to your individual needs.

We encourage you to let us know your requirements so we can ensure the process works for you.

Recruitment Process:

You are invited to submit a **CV and 1 page cover letter**, setting out why you want to join us in this role, how you meet the person specification, and what you would bring to the role. These should be sent to our recruitment team by 12pm on **Monday 12th January** at info@pawsforprogress.co.uk.

Early applications are encouraged, as the closing date may be brought forward.

We will let you know by 5.30pm on Wednesday 14th January if you are being invited to progress to the interview stage of recruitment.

Stage 1: Online interviews will be conducted during the week beginning 19th January 2026. Evening slots and accessible adaptations will be offered.

Stage 2: In-person interview day local to HMP & YOI Polmont, during the week beginning 26th January 2026. This will include:

- A practical activity with dogs.
- An informal visit to our workshop at HMP & YOI Polmont to meet our team and experience the environment where you would be working.
- We look forward to welcoming you and giving you a real sense of life at Paws for Progress!

About Paws for Progress

Paws for Progress is an innovative Community Interest Company dedicated to improving the lives of young people while enhancing the welfare of dogs. With over 14 years of experience, we are pioneers in this field and internationally recognised as experts in Human-Animal Interaction.

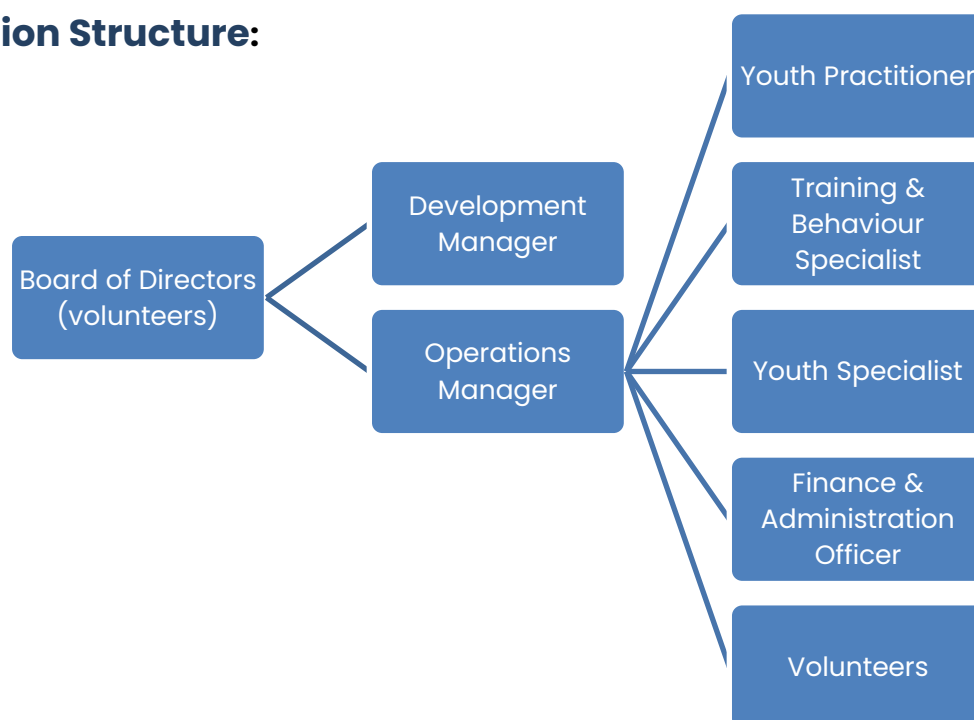
We achieve this through our Dog-Assisted Learning Programmes, delivered across Central Scotland. These programmes are highly engaging because they involve friendly, confident dogs who thrive on participating. At Paws for Progress, we believe that both the people and the dogs involved should enjoy and benefit from taking part.

Our commitment extends beyond the people and dogs we support; we are equally invested in our staff. Joining Paws for Progress means becoming part of a close-knit, supportive team where your input, experience, and perspective are valued. You will have opportunities to learn from our expertise and build your career in this growing field.

We are looking for the right person to join our team. If you are **passionate about our work** and **believe you could be a great fit**, we **encourage you to apply**, even if you don't meet every criterion listed.

Website: www.pawsforprogress.co.uk

Organisation Structure:



Youth Practitioner – Streamlined Job Description

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Programme Preparation & Planning

- Coordinate student groups with SPS, provide information and consent process, and complete pre/post assessments.
- Support induction training and rescue dog preparation with the Training & Behaviour Specialist.
- Plan sessions, develop learning materials, and organise schedules with partners.

Course Delivery

- Collect and transport rescue dogs to and from Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home and HMP & YOI Polmont (normally twice per week, with 8am collection) ensuring calm, safe, and welfare-focused handling.
- Co-deliver practical dog training, behaviour, and care sessions.
- Create a fun, positive, and inclusive learning environment for students and dogs while supporting completion of SQAs, ASDANs, and other learning activities.
- Track student progress, set individual goals, and support educational attainment using a strengths-based approach.
- Model positive, consent-based interactions with dogs and support students to do the same.
- Liaise with Scottish Prison Service staff, education providers, external speakers, and Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home staff; maintain workshop cleanliness standards.

Monitoring, Reporting & Partnership Working

- Lead ongoing student progress tracking and contribute to reports (monthly/quarterly/annual).
- Provide timely feedback to partner organisations including Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home.
- Participate in partner meetings and work with internal/external colleagues to review and improve delivery.
- Maintain accurate records for students and dogs.



Dog Welfare

- Support each dog's wellbeing, learning, and progression with a kind, positive, and force-free approach.
- Respond to individual needs, behaviour, and communication, working alongside the Training & Behaviour Specialist.
- Contribute to record-keeping to support continuity of care and welfare planning.
- Observe and support each dog's confidence and enjoyment during sessions.

Additional Service Delivery

- Provide cover across wider Paws for Progress programmes (prison and community) as required.
- Deliver sessions and lead practical rescue dog sessions when required.
- Report outcomes and contribute to service improvements.

Post-Release Support

- Facilitate volunteering/work experience with partner organisations.
- Support CVs, applications, references, and accompany students to interviews where needed.
- Monitor and report post-release outcomes and progression opportunities.

General Responsibilities

- Uphold equal opportunities, safeguarding, and high animal welfare standards.
- Maintain equipment, risk assessments, and Paws for Progress vehicles.
- Contribute to a supportive, inclusive, and strengths-based learning environment.
- Represent the organisation at events and support learning across Paws for Progress programmes.

Person Specification

Essential:

- Full, clean driving licence.
- Access to own vehicle for commuting and business use (we will also provide a custom vehicle provided for the purpose of transporting dogs participating in Paws for Progress services).
- Eligible for the PVG scheme.
- Experience supporting young people using an inclusive, trauma-informed approach to develop skills, learning, and confidence.
- Passionate about helping and supporting dogs, able to demonstrate a strong understanding of dog behaviour and welfare.
- Proven ability to support and motivate young people in a positive, respectful manner.
- Strong organisational and communication skills.
- Flexible, reliable, and able to work as part of a team.
- Comfortable working with rescue dogs and volunteer dogs, including collecting and transporting them.

Desirable:

- Extensive experience of working with dogs with appropriate accreditation.
- Living with a dog that would enjoy coming to work with you on occasion and participating in services (subject to ongoing assessment of your dog's suitability and enjoyment of participation).
- Experience working with and supporting dogs in a rescue environment.
- Educated to a considerable/degree level in a relevant discipline or equivalent training and experience i.e. Community Education, Social Work, Teaching, Social Science.

Other Information

- Travel between sites and occasional community visits is required.
- Some flexibility in working hours may be required, including early starts or occasional evenings / weekends.
- Commitment to promoting the ethos and aims of Paws for Progress CIC at all times is essential.
- In the future, there may be optional opportunities to involve your own dog in Paws for Progress services, if it is something you and your dog would enjoy and they are suitable for the role. Each case is considered individually and is not guaranteed.

Youth Practitioner – Full Job Description

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Pre-course duties:

- In collaboration with the Training & Behaviour Specialist:
 - Organise both new and continuing student groups, in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service.
 - Provide information to students, obtain consent, and carry out pre- and post-participation assessments.
 - Facilitate induction training covering: Safe Handling, Body Language, Training Methods, and practical sessions with staff dogs (“Ambassadors”) prior to introducing rescue dogs.
 - Support with rescue dog assessment and preparation tasks as required.

Facilitation of course delivery:

- Collect and transport rescue dogs to and from Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home and HMP & YOI Polmont (normally twice weekly, with 8am collections), ensuring transport is calm, safe and responsive to each dog’s individual needs and welfare.
- Co-ordinate lesson plans with the Training & Behaviour Specialist and Education Provider at HMP & YOI Polmont, integrating practical and educational sessions that are inclusive, trauma-informed and responsive to the diverse needs of learners.
- Prepare course materials and develop accessible learning resources that support different learning styles, communication needs and levels of confidence.
- Support the Training & Behaviour Specialist to deliver practical dog sessions and student learning in dog behaviour, training and care, using positive, force-free, welfare-led approaches that prioritise understanding and meeting each dog’s individual needs.
- Support students to engage safely and positively with dogs, modelling respectful handling, consent-based interactions and an awareness of canine body language, communication and wellbeing.
- Assist students to complete SQA qualifications in Communications, Numeracy, ICT and Personal Development, adapting support to individual strengths, needs and goals in partnership with the Education Provider at HMP & YOI Polmont.



- Assist students to complete ASDAN certificates in Animal Care where required, providing structured, person-centred support.
- Support students to develop materials promoting dogs for rehoming, linking learning outcomes with empathy, advocacy and educational attainment.
- Liaise with animal care organisations and arrange external speakers to enrich learning and broaden students' understanding of animal welfare and related career pathways.
- Work collaboratively with Paws for Progress and Scottish Prison Service colleagues to plan student bookings and maintain a safe, welcoming and well-organised Workshop, facilities and vehicle.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- In partnership with the Training & Behaviour Specialist:
 - Record and evaluate student progress, agreeing individual targets and goals using a person-centred, strengths-based approach.
 - Ensure each student is progressing towards their individual targets and receiving tailored, inclusive support that reflects individual needs.
 - Monitor the progress, behaviour and wellbeing of participating dogs, responding appropriately to individual needs and welfare indicators.
 - Provide timely feedback and updates to Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home staff as required, supporting continuity of care, welfare planning and strong partnership working.
- Contribute to the preparation of monthly, quarterly and annual progress reports.
- Attend and actively participate in monthly partner meetings with the Scottish Prison Service.

Dog welfare

- Transport rescue dogs, and staff / volunteer dogs when required, safely to and from service venues.
- Take care to ensure that all dogs are comfortable, safe, and benefiting from taking part when involved in service delivery.
- Support in preparing, supervising, and monitoring dogs to ensure welfare and enjoyment, with understanding and care for each individual dog's needs.
- Follow processes and abide by policies to ensure that standards for dogs involved in services are maintained at the highest level, ensuring safety and enjoyment for people and dogs.



- Support the Training & Behaviour Specialist to maintain accurate and up-to-date records on dogs involved in services.
- Facilitate education in animal welfare and humane education

Other duties

- Build excellent relationships with existing Paws for Progress staff and an understanding of all Paws for Progress projects.
- Contribute to the sharing of learning and best practice across the full range of services and activities
- Provide comprehensive reports to evaluate courses and support ongoing student progress and service development.
- Work with internal and external partners to review progress, agree changes, and enhance programme delivery.

Additional service delivery:

- Support the wider suite of Paws for Progress programmes at HMP & YOI Polmont and in the community across the central belt, providing cover when other staff are unavailable and working with young people aged 12+.
- This may involve preparing, facilitating, and reviewing lesson plans.
- Lead on facilitating the practical rescue dog sessions when the Training & Behaviour Specialist is unavailable, supported by a 2nd staff member.
- Report on outcomes and work with the team to improve delivery.

Ongoing student support:

- Facilitate volunteering and work experience opportunities with supporting animal care organisations.
- Provide references, support CV and application preparation, and support students with external progression opportunities.
- Monitor and report outcomes, summarising through progress reports.

General responsibilities:

- Commit to equal opportunities and the protection and wellbeing of young people.
- Maintain the highest level of animal welfare and promote compassionate, positive reinforcement training.
- Contribute to a supportive and engaging learning environment using a strengths-based approach.



- Demonstrate interest in learning about other Paws for Progress services and support colleagues where relevant.
- Organise service schedules in partnership with partner organisations.
- Monitor and report on services to funders, partners, and stakeholders.
- Maintain risk assessments and equipment, including Paws for Progress vehicles.
- Represent the organisation at events, fundraising initiatives, and publicity opportunities.