

# Edinburgh Zoo invites 96 children to become Zoo explorers

✘ This Easter Edinburgh Zoo's Discovery and Learning department is working in partnership with Edinburgh City Council to provide a unique day out for children from Edinburgh's Drylaw, Wester Hailes, Sighthill, Craigmillar and Leith communities.

The Zoo Explorers programme offers children aged between eight and 12 years old the chance to spend a day at the Zoo, combining a fun day out with extended access to educational facilities. The Council worked with youth groups, community centres and development workers within four key areas of Edinburgh to invite a total of 96 children to take part in Zoo Explorers.

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As part of their day out, the children will make enrichment for the Zoo's animals, such as sun bears, banteng, monkeys and big cats, and then watch as the animals enjoy their treats. They also get to experience a hands-on meet and greet with some presentations animals including Dillon the three-banded armadillo and the Zoo's group of giant African land snails.

Amy Cox, Senior Education Officer for the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), the charity that owns and operates Edinburgh Zoo, said:

"We are delighted to work with Edinburgh City Council to bring children to the Zoo who otherwise may not have the opportunity. This is the second year we have run Zoo Explorers and the feedback we receive from the kids is fantastic. They

especially love the hands on element, where they get to make various types of enrichment for our animals, like filling boxes with scented hay, and then watching the animals forage and play. Our giant African land snails, which can be longer than a child's hand, and Dillon the armadillo are star attractions during the animal meet and greets.

Councillor Paul Godzik, Education Convener for The City of Edinburgh Council, said:

"The Council's partnership programme with Edinburgh Zoo has enabled these children to have a unique day out. Across the year, the Council provides young people from different communities with access to a range of positive experiences such as learning about the life of a zookeeper. We support this service through contracts and grants and the Capital Coalition is determined to provide fair access to the best that Edinburgh has to offer, helping to ensure every child has the best start in life."

RZSS runs a variety of educational workshops and outreach programmes with schools and groups all around Scotland with the aim of increasing awareness about the importance of conservation as well as to inspire the next generation into action. Funding received by players of People's Postcode Lottery assists in the Society's educational aims, including the Zoo Explorers programme.

Hazel Johnstone, Trusts Manager at People's Postcode Lottery, said:

"I am pleased that the funding received from players of People's Postcode Lottery is helping to further expand the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's educational projects both onsite and around Scotland."

Zoo Explorers runs until Thursday 17 April.