



Intuitive Horse

"Seeing you for who you really are"

How horses help heal young people: Five case studies from Intuitive Horse



Dedicated to a boy who wasn't yet born when the project took place, named Kobe.

Dedicated to all the children who took part in the project, who can't be named.

Dedicated to all animals, human and non-human, with names and without names.



I realise that being told to be quiet is not the same as feeling the quiet that is always all around us; like when I lay down with the pony.

9 YR OLD CHILD REFLECTING ON HER INTUITIVE HORSE SESSION

Intuitive Horse Pilot Project

Emma Ross (owner and founder)

Dr Amelia Roberts (author and researcher)



Contents



Introduction	5
Intuitive Horse: ‘seeing you for who you really are’	5
First Encounters with Intuitive Horse	5
How the research project began	6
Attachment Theory	7
Theoretical background	8
Literature Review	9
Research Questions	12
Methodology	13
Research design	13
Data collection	14
Unexpected data	14
Structure of programme	14
Participant selection	14
Participant histories	15
Ethical considerations	15
Results	16
Likert Scales	16
Likert scales: children’s overall perceptions of Intuitive Horse	20
Likert scales: conclusion	21
A narrative account of participant experiences	22
Savannah	22
Charlotte	24
Lucy	25
Rosanne	26
Imogen	27
Summary of results	28
Underlying processes and mechanisms that may underpin the effects of Intuitive Horse	29
Conclusion	32
What overall impressions do vulnerable children (and key adults in their life) form after their encounters with Intuitive Horse?	32
Is it possible to observe themes arising from clients’ perceptions of work with equines?	32
Do these themes link to themes associated with concepts associated with attachment theory?	32
Is there an identifiable ‘essential element’ to the ‘Intuitive Horse’ approach?	33
Concluding Thoughts from Amelia	33
Concluding Thoughts from Emma	34
What has happened at Intuitive Horse since the Research project ended	35
The Big Lottery funded sessions	35
References	39
Appendices	40
Appendix 1: Introduction letter and consent form	40
Appendix 2: The programme structure	42
Appendix 3: Data collection	44

Introduction



Intuitive Horse: ‘seeing you for who you really are’

Intuitive Horse is an Equine Assisted Personal Development (EAPD) experience for adults, young people and children, founded by Emma Ross- coach and facilitator, in 2009.

The Intuitive Horse approach is an experiential learning method. It draws on a range of modalities such as Mindfulness and Nature-based theories, whilst following the horses’ behaviours as a guide to help develop a person’s level of self-awareness and help find resolution to particular areas in their life that have been identified. At all times, the horses’ wellbeing and comfort is paramount and is considered by understanding and providing an environment that holds their innate needs at the forefront of the EAPD work.

Horses are experts at helping us in areas of:

- Relationship and connection both with ourselves and others
- Developing self-awareness in areas of emotional intelligence and thought patterns
- Mastering how to live in a present moment state, what that actually means and why it is beneficial for us
- Understanding how our past conditioning can hold us back in the present moment

Intuitive Horse is currently home to a herd of sixteen equines, two of which are donkeys, seven sheep, two dogs and two cats. The majority of the herd members are ‘rescue’ horses and none of them are ridden. The herd are kept as naturally as possible, living out all year round on the 110 acre farm in Hastings, East Sussex. People who attend sessions at Intuitive Horse experience the work in the natural setting either with the herd or one horse.

First Encounters with Intuitive Horse

I always knew how much I was drawn to horses. I also knew that all animals can have a healing and soothing effect on human beings. The American Psychological Society’s Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin, published monthly, is a rich source of peer reviewed articles specifically on this topic.

My first encounter was experiential and powerful. Intuitive Horse combines encounters with horses with an intention to support personal growth. I was initially sceptical, not of the delights of being near a horse, but of the idea that specific and focused personal growth could be supported in this way. I stood next to a tall Appaloosa who was grazing and tried to interact, without success. This was not a formal session, just a meeting. Emma suggested a way to encourage his interest, by standing calmly and tugging at a few strands of grass. I did so, and the powerful equine head moved towards me and touched my hand. To my surprise, this acknowledgement from the horse made me feel emotional. I realised that the recognition from the horse had provided me with a vivid glimpse of how much I needed to be acknowledged and recognised. This was my first experience of how horses could highlight specific areas within my psyche, areas that needed recognition, acknowledgement and healing.

As a result of this, I embarked on some individual sessions and three day retreats. The sessions included classic techniques such as meditation and techniques to deepen self awareness, but these were blended with understanding equine nature and needs and paying deep attention to the interaction between human and horse and the emotions that arose from these. Sometimes the emotions were of deep comfort and connection, such as when a deep connection occurs with a horse. This might be indicated by stillness and close proximity, with horse and human standing very near each other. Sometimes you can feel the breath of the horse on your cheek. At other times, you might be stroking a shoulder or cheek, while the horse is so relaxed that her lower lip goes loose and wobbly. All sorts of pleasant emotions may accompany this, such as a deep sensation of comfort or the indulgence of mutual trust. All senses come into play, from touch, pressure and warmth to smells and sounds.

At other times the emotions might be difficult, such as a time I was walking in the field and every time I approached a horse, he or she would gently shift away from me. This evoked sensations of rejection, loneliness and finally pointlessness. I then realised that there was an air of neediness around me. Knowing this didn't mean that it would go away, but it meant that I could acknowledge it and name it, deepening my own authenticity. It seems as if the horses don't need perfection, just authenticity. As soon as I became aware of my own deeper emotions, the horses responded very differently to me. One walked towards me, dropping her beautiful face close to mine for a moment of deep connection. I noticed over many visits, that the horses' response to authenticity was striking and often deeply moving. It was as a result of these experiences that brought me to ask Emma whether we should investigate more formally the effects of Intuitive Horse for vulnerable young people.

How the research project began

I am a Principal Teaching Fellow at the Institute of Education, UCL. I first began lecturing on Attachment Theory to Foster Carers, Social Workers and Designated Teachers and encouraged people to think about how to use attachment-related ideas to support vulnerable children. At about the same time I began to explore some personal growth sessions with Intuitive Horse. Founded by Emma Ross, the individual sessions are described as helping you *'to see yourself through the eyes of a horse'*. I enjoyed my sessions with the horses and found the experiences to be long lasting in respect of insights into my personality and behaviour patterns.

'Intuitive Horse' invites clients to build a relationship with a horse, while paying particular attention to the horse's response to the client. The client is invited to notice and name their feelings and to understand the impact of their actions and behaviours on the horse. Clients are also invited to experience a 'present moment' state, similar to a meditative state in which one pays close attention to the information derived through the senses. Additionally, for people who like horses, the moment when a horse acknowledges you and bonds with you can feel extremely powerful, seeming to evoke sensations similar to attachment experiences with key attachment figures.

Over a period of time, I began to link my personal experiences with the academic theories behind the lectures I was delivering. Therapeutic activities suggested by Attachment Theory, such as reflecting on one's affective states (feelings) and linking these with physiological awareness, were a core part of the Intuitive Horse sessions. It seemed possible that equine assisted personal development might enable these elements to occur in a fun and accessible way.

The strong sense of fulfilment when achieving a 'present moment' connection with a horse and the horse's response to the human can feel deeply profound. The deeply meaningful emotion I felt when bonding with a horse felt similar to the deeply felt emotions characteristic of early attachment processes. I started to wonder whether this type of experience would be useful or meaningful to children who were vulnerable, specifically those in receipt of social service intervention or care. I discussed this with Emma Ross in early 2014, and we started the Intuitive Horse Pilot Project at the end of the year.

Emma Ross, owner and founder of Intuitive Horse and myself, Dr. Amelia Roberts, educational researcher therefore designed this small pilot project to explore the effects of Intuitive Horse for looked-after and vulnerable children.

Attachment Theory



Attachment Theory (Bowlby 1960) has enjoyed a recent resurgence (Sutton Trust 2014), particularly in helping educational professionals to support vulnerable children and children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Code of Practice 2015). Attachment Theory highlights the difficulties faced by children for whom the early attachment process was impaired or interrupted. These difficulties may last many years and the effects may be wide-ranging, affecting not only emotional, social and mental health, but all aspects of the developmental process. Neurologists have identified neurological changes due to impoverished nurturing and stimulation in the first few months of life (Romeo, Tang and Sullivan 2009). These changes can be linked to later difficulties with children's language development, mental health, social skills and cognitive and/or sensory processing.

Attachment Theory has been criticised for pushing a prescribed model of parenting, but the notion of safety, responsive and attentive caring and building bonds with important adults early in life is cross-cultural and enduring. School-based interventions based on Attachment Theory, such as Nurture Groups, have an evidence base of efficacy. Attachment based approaches emphasise key attachment figures, building secure relationships based on trust and the importance of feeling safe.



Theoretical background



Several possible theoretical perspectives may be relevant. Attachment theory links the experience of early infancy to brain development and subsequent acquisition of learning ability, communication, language and social skills. Concepts such as the provision of a secure base, providing trustworthy key attachment figures and learning how to build mutually meaningful relationships are known to support children who have had poor attachment experiences. Equine assisted personal development often enables these elements to occur in a new and accessible way.

Theorists like Carl Rogers suggest that warm, genuine and meaningful relationships are a powerful therapeutic influence. In my experience of stables who work with horses and clients, such as Intuitive Horse, the horses themselves offer a tangible and vivid experience of compassion and acceptance that seems to touch children and adults deeply. In turn, the facilitators and carers witnessing this are often deeply moved, which in turn enables another powerful relational experience for vulnerable children. Looked after children may not have many opportunities to bring genuine joy to other adults, making this a potentially powerful additional component to the equine-facilitated process. Additionally, there is an emerging evidence base of the importance of nature and the outdoors as a therapeutic environment (Derrien et al 2020).



Literature Review



Attachment theory was proposed by John Bowlby in the 1930s. Bowlby suggested that early attachment experiences with an infants' primary caregivers are crucial to a child's development. Poor attachment experiences can impact not only on the ability to trust people or develop social skills, but also on other attributes such as anger management, impulse control, development of language skills and cognitive abilities like problem solving skills.

The Sutton Trust report 'Baby Bonds' (Moullin, Waldfogel and Washbrook, 2014) is a literature review of over 120 books, reports, journal articles and policy documents. It makes a convincing case for the importance of considering the impact of early parenting on children's emotional well-being, behaviour and overall resilience:

'Children with insecure attachment are at risk of the most prominent impediments to education and upward social mobility in the UK: behavioural problems, poor literacy, and leaving school without further education, employment or training.' (p.4)

The report explains the impact of poor attachment on the neurobiology of babies and children (p.11) including the increase of the stress hormone cortisol in children whose distress is not quickly soothed by a key attachment figure.

There are numerous case studies that report positive effects from personal growth activities or therapy with horses. A large meta-analysis looked at several research studies to calculate a statistical effect size of horse-based support for young people. The studies examined the efficacy of equine therapy among an at-risk youth population. Seven studies quantitatively assessed the treatment effects following involvement in an equine therapy program. The random effects model was used to aggregate each study into an overall effect size. Seven effect sizes were included in the pre-versus post-comparison analysis. The results indicate a medium effect size ($g = 0.714$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.364, 1.064]). Five effect sizes were included in the treatment versus control comparison analysis. The results also indicate a medium effect size ($g = 0.402$, $p = 0.002$, 95% C.I. [0.149, 0.655]). Overall, the results indicate that equine therapy is a viable alternative to conventional intervention strategies among at-risk youth (Wilkie, Germaine and Theule 2018).

A recent review (Bator et al 2020) found:

'13 findings were found in autism spectrum disorders (1 review paper and 5 research papers), post-traumatic stress syndrome (1 review paper and 4 research papers), schizophrenia (1 review paper), and children whose parents were addicted (1 research paper). Summary: the results of the research indicate that Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAA/T)... may be beneficial for people with mental illnesses and disorders, such as autism spectrum disorders, post-traumatic stress syndrome, schizophrenia, and for people whose parents were addicted. The promising results so far support further research projects.' (p310)

Several possible theoretical perspectives may be relevant. Attachment theory links the experience of early infancy to brain development and subsequent acquisition of learning ability, communication, language and social skills. Concepts such as the provision of a secure base, providing trustworthy key attachment figures and learning how to build mutually meaningful relationships are known to support children who have had poor attachment experiences (Cairns 2004; Howard 2012).

Zilberstein (2014) argues against attachment theory being utilised to the exclusion of other therapeutic approaches or client expressed needs but makes the point that as a core element of the developmental process there are sound arguments for an attachment awareness as part of all therapeutic approaches. Such an approach encourages practitioners to identify themes such as building relationships; sensory processing; self-awareness; stress management and impulse control yet remain person-centred in their

therapeutic approach. Carl Rogers, the originator of 'person-centred' counselling (1949) laid out core aspects of effective client support: *'Individuals who have maintained an orientation which stresses the significance and worth of each person can learn readily client-centered techniques. The counselor's function is to assume, as far as he can, the internal frame of reference of the client, to perceive the world as the client sees it, to perceive the client himself as he is seen by himself ...'* (Abstract). This attitude of watchful acceptance is a core intention of the Intuitive Horse interactions.

Burton, Gammage and Hedron (2018) suggest a wide range of therapeutic theoretical approaches that might underpin the client-horse-therapist relationship, including Philosophical and psychological theories/ models of Non-Violent Communication, Object Relations, Play and Dramatherapy, Mindfulness practice, and Attachment Theory, all set within a person-centred and relationship-based approach. The authors report the central role relationship plays between client-horse-therapist and horse-handler in the building of trust and resolution of the impact of trauma.

Equine therapeutic approaches can be related to approaches such as recreation therapy (Duffy 2018), with a particular focus on improving quality of life. *'The findings substantiate both AAT (Animal Assisted Therapy) and EAL (Equine Assisted Learning) as promising practices, focused on quality of life (QoL) outcomes within health and mental health care services. The secondary focus of the review explores the possibility of a conceptual link between AAT, EAL, recreation therapy, and psychosocial rehabilitation purpose statements and goals; a shared purpose was found under the goal of improved QoL for patients'* (Abstract).

Hauge et al (2013) worked with 29 adolescents on a series of tasks with horses and explored whether these tasks encouraged persistence over a period of 16 weeks. They describe the horses' reactions as mainly neutral or positive and state that 'petting' horses was the preferred activity. Participants worked with one horse throughout and the focus was on developing a relationship or friendship with the horse rather than on becoming proficient in horse management skills. Overall, adolescents showed greater persistence across tasks such as riding, grooming and stable-work. The authors suggest that persistence may be a factor in self-efficacy as young people develop an increasing sense of mastery over chosen activities.

....the intervention might serve to enhance task-specific self-efficacy among the adolescents during activities with horses. Even though it was not measured in this study, experiences of mastery in one arena might lead to a positive belief in one self in other arenas, positive for adolescents' development. (p. 71)

Lanning et al (2013) identified a similar positive influence on children with autism. They used quality of life assessments to determine the behavioral changes of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who participated in equine assisted activities over 9 weeks. They were compared to a control group who participated in a non-equine programme. Parents noted significant improvements in their child's physical, emotional and social functioning following the first 6 weeks of the equine assisted approach and the degree of change was greater than in the control group.

Equine work and its impact on human emotions is not a new idea. People have been aware of the therapeutic benefit of horses for thousands of years and even Winston Churchill is reputed to have said, *'There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man'*.

Leigh Shambo conducted a case study in 2010 exploring the impact of equine therapy on adults who had experienced trauma. The authors measured specific changes and durability of change for adult women with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder who were victims of traumatic interpersonal violence. Measures were taken of levels of depression, anxiety, dissociation and life-skills functioning and were taken at four points: pre, mid, post, and 4 months post treatment. Shambo found significant positive changes in depression, dissociative symptoms, and treatment effectiveness overall. The effect continued after the treatment had finished as participants' scores showed even more improvement in a four month follow up.

MacLean (2011) identifies the role of equine work in helping veterans with skills such as communication and emotional management:

'Each veteran identifies one or two goals on which he or she would like to focus; some of the more common goals are improving verbal and nonverbal communication, decreasing anxiety, handling frustration, building confidence and self-esteem, completing tasks, and becoming more aware of feelings'.

The equine work reduced stress in the veterans and supported an increase in targeted social skills.

Work with children has found similar effects. A recent randomised control trial (Pendry, Smith and Roester 2014) compared two groups of young people referred with counselling needs. One group received a 12 week programme involving interaction with horses, while the other group were placed on a waiting list. The group receiving interaction with the horse were found to have a significantly decreased cortisol level than the control group. Reduction in cortisol levels signify a reduction in stress levels in humans. It should be noted, however, that the control group experienced no intervention; it would be interesting to compare equine sessions with non-equine sessions, such as stress de-escalation techniques.

In the studies above, a wide range of approaches and intentions are utilised. It therefore seems valuable to consider a broad 'burning' question in respect of exploring the processes of equine-facilitated work with people.

Research Questions



1. Are there common themes arising from clients' perceptions of work with equines at Intuitive Horse?
2. Do these themes link to concepts associated with attachment theory?
3. Is there an identifiable 'essential element' to the 'Intuitive Horse' approach?
4. What overall impressions do vulnerable children (and key adults in their life) form after their encounters with Intuitive Horse?



The Intuitive Horse Project was designed to explore the ways in which equine facilitation helps children. The project focused on five vulnerable children with difficulties with:

- Self-regulating, such as managing stress levels and impulse control
- Processing information and making sense of the world
- Managing relationships
- Anger management
- Impulse control
- Making/maintaining friendships
- Overwhelming feelings (e.g. sadness, anxiety, loneliness, low confidence)
- Difficulty in achieving a 'calm alert' state of mind

Children do not ride the horses, but they learn how to approach and make friends. The facilitator asks participants to explore their emotions during the process. Each child had three sessions and were offered three more as the project progressed. Four out of the five children took the full six sessions.

Research design

This project is a case study based on 5 children and young people. A case study approach was chosen to explore the complex relationships between a wide variety of factors offered by Intuitive Horse and the experience of these by participants. Some of the factors implicit to a session at Intuitive Horse might include:

- Being outdoors
- Engaging in an activity of 'special interest' to the participant
- The participant being in the company of at least two focused and caring adults (the facilitator and the adult – key worker/foster carer – making time to bring the participant to an extra-curricular activity)
- The design of the sessions
- The presence of animals, including horses

A multi-faceted environment requires a case study approach to attempt to understand the nuances and themes relevant to participants' experiences.

There are still sustained assaults on the ability of case study research to be meaningful in other contexts. Some authors take the view that generalizations happen instinctively on the part of the reader, if the study is well chosen and well defined. Stake (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000) claim that the value of case-study research lies in its illustrative and illuminatory effect on the reader, such that while the researcher may not make generalizations from the unique context, the case study *'may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization.'* (p. 19)

Another role of theory is in archiving and describing case studies. Tripp's article (Tripp, 1985) on Naturalistic Generalization outlines four distinct steps in how to link the vast quantities of case studies into a body of work *'so each case study would not only exist in its own right, but would also contribute to a cycle of progress in scientific understanding of education'*. The implication is that the theory is proved, not through a rigorous testing in a much larger population but through a very clear definition of the boundaries of the 'case' in which it is true. The value of theorizing is seen as the ability to link a large number of discrete and diverse case studies together and enable ease of access. Theory here is akin to sophisticated coding because it provides a semantic framework and common vocabulary to access and examine collections of related case-studies. Without a theoretical framework, it would be very difficult to identify common features in studies, thereby keeping them hidden.

The project was intended to be as naturalistic as possible, with participants selected who were typical of people accessing the 'Intuitive Horse' programme. Participants were asked whether the equine sessions were considered to be part of their Personalised Education Programme (PEP) or equivalent. This was to ensure that the project dovetailed with the goals, aspirations or preferences of the participants. See 'Consent Form' (Appendix).

Data collection

Data was drawn from the perspectives of the facilitator, the participant and the participant's adult support person. The facilitator wrote detailed notes after each session. These notes form part of a confidential set of records defining the process of the child and used to structure the priorities for the next session. These notes were discussed orally with the researcher and are infused into the overall comments in the discussion section.

The participant was asked about their experience in the form of Likert scales. Likert Scales were developed by psychologist Rensis Likert as a psychometric scale to assess the degree of intensity participants felt around questionnaire items. This data collection method is being piloted in this context. The Likert Scales were used to identify the potential impact of the sessions on emotional and social aspects such as self-confidence, ability to make friends, managing anger and feelings of calm. Some control questions were included, such as liking school and ability to sleep. The full Likert Scales are given in the appendix.

Originally, participants were required to complete other forms of data collection, such as a drawing of a problem they wanted to solve using a visual template. Participants were also asked to debrief at the end of the session and re-consider the Likert Scales. However, after the sessions, young people were usually stimulated and appeared happy. We were reluctant to alter this, by insisting on a paper-based debriefing activity.

Participants were also asked to give their opinions of the sessions at the end of the process. The participant's adult support person was also asked about their opinions and observations of the process.

Unexpected data

Several times after the sessions, the young people sent e-mails, power point presentation and thank you letters via their carers. A selection of these, alongside the accompanying adults' comments, have been compiled as part of a narrative in the results section.

Structure of programme

The programme is non-riding, and to some extent tailored to the participants' presenting and emerging needs. A full structure of the first three components is given in the appendix. The programme focuses on:

- Body awareness when in the presence of the horse and in response to any actions by the horse.
- Participants are encouraged to verbalise their own experience and describe what they are observing in the horse.
- Enabling an environment whereby the participant creates a sufficient level of calmness for the horse to choose to engage meaningfully with the participant. This is described as 'connecting'. When connecting did not occur, participants were asked to consider their own emotional responses and behaviours and reflect on how this may have impacted on the horse. It is worth noting that usually a connection was made, and that this moment appeared to be warm and meaningful to both participant and horse.

Participant selection

Participant selection was opportunistic. A call was put out via the Intuitive Horse website and other contacts, asking for young people either who were looked-after or on a child-in-need register, to participate in three free sessions. The criteria for inclusion were:

- A looked-after child or young person currently supported by a foster-carer or key worker. The child will need to be accompanied by this person at all times during the sessions.
- The young person must have a current PEP and the equine assisted personal development sessions must be evaluated as being supportive of the child's overall goals and care/education plan.
- The young person must understand that this is a research project and their opinions of the sessions are extremely valuable. The foster-carer and/or key worker are also crucial in the feedback process.
- No known allergies or other health-related difficulty in respect of horses or a farm environment.

Participant histories

All participants were in the care system or on the child in need register. One participant does not know where her father is and lost her mother 18 months ago to alcoholism. Illnesses at 3yrs old led to developmental delay and low school attainment and literacy difficulties. Another participant lives in a residential children's home. One participant has Autism and another has learning difficulties. All children have experienced trauma.

Ethical considerations

Due to the vulnerabilities of the participants, the sessions were only offered to children who would be likely to explore this type of activity as part of their on-going care plan. The additional elements of the research process, such as additional scrutiny, were very carefully planned. For example, the second sessions were conducted without the external researcher present and the only data collected were the notes made by the facilitator. The nature of the Intuitive Horse sessions are intrinsically focused on reading the body language and emotional state of both client and horse, and this degree of awareness and scrutiny was present throughout the process. Participants were always accompanied by a foster carer or key worker who were present at all points.

The research process and purpose was clearly explained and the options of confidentiality and right to withdrawal were made very clear (see Introduction and Consent Form in Appendix)

Work with horses can be intrinsically dangerous if the needs of the horse are not fully understood. This is mitigated in several ways. Emma Ross, the facilitator and owner of the horses is acutely aware of the horses' wellbeing and this process begins even at the selection stage of which horse to work with on any particular day. If a horse is unwilling to leave the herd, that horse would not be selected for a session on that day. Additionally, and as part of the therapeutic process, all participants are introduced to safety procedures. This is partly to understand how to keep themselves and the horse safe, but also to begin the process of establishing psychological boundaries of 'safety'. This is an important concept in terms of psychological health and it can be argued that practical considerations of safety and personal boundaries in terms of preferred degrees of physical closeness with a horse can be a metaphor for psychological safety and considerations of autonomy and self-worth.

We did, however, encounter an unexpected ethical issue. The project was designed to offer 3 sessions to participants, and this was provided free by Intuitive Horse. At the end of three sessions, four out of five participants seemed to feel real sadness at the prospect of the termination of the process. Both the researcher and the facilitator recognised the potential for distress. All of these children had suffered loss previously and we were concerned that experiencing another loss of an enjoyable activity, plus relationships built up with horses (and indeed other animals at the Intuitive Horse farm) would be detrimental to the children. We therefore decided to offer an additional three sessions, sponsored by the Researcher, to these children. All five participants were delighted by the offer, which was taken up by four of them.

After the additional sessions, three participants seemed less fragile and were able to accept the end of the process with much less evidence of upset. The fourth participant was able to continue the sessions using her own allocated resources.

We would conclude that future projects consider a minimum of six sessions as this appeared to allow enough exposure to the therapeutic aspects of the process to enable the ending to be tolerable to vulnerable young people.

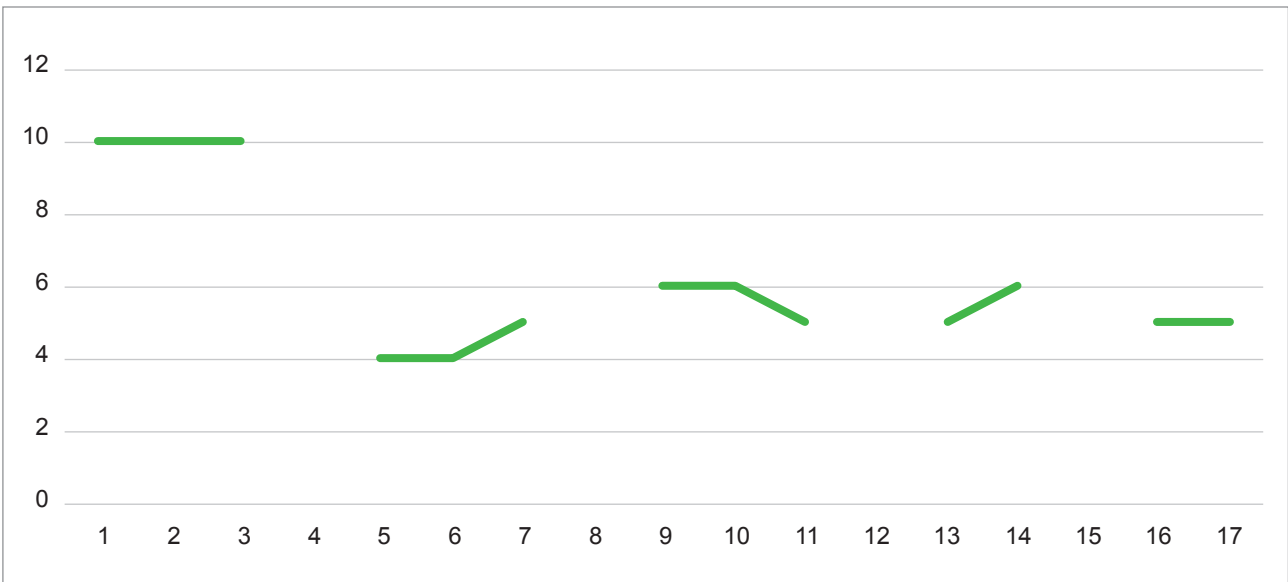
Results



Likert Scales

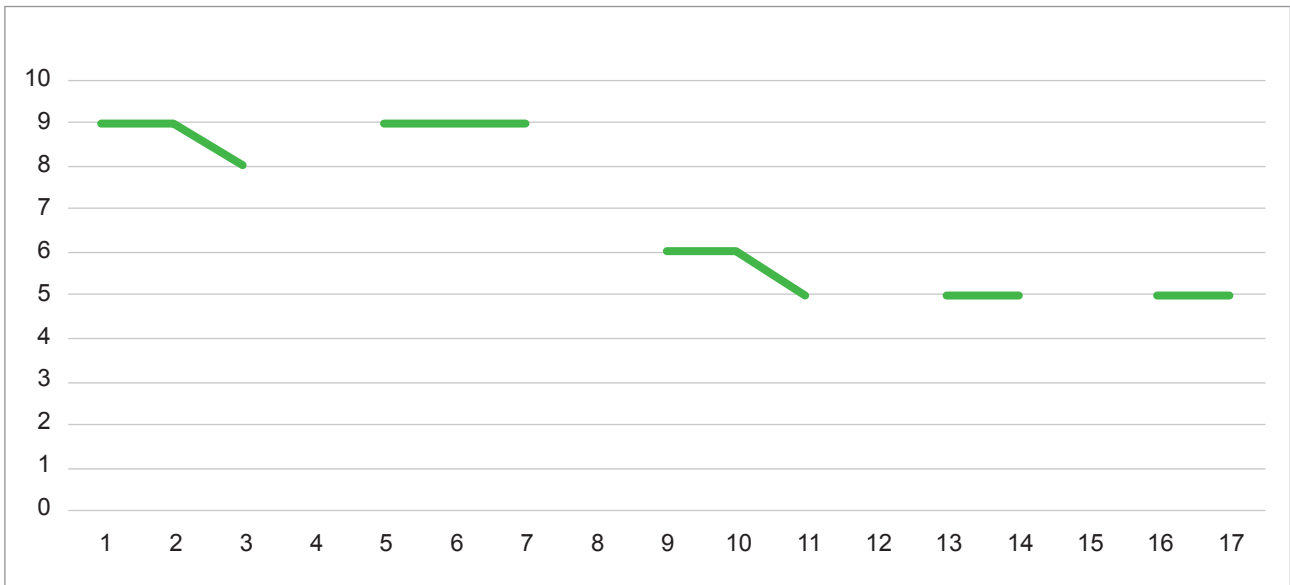
It is difficult to ascribe reliable significance to the Likert Scales due to the very small numbers of participants involved. However, some general observations can be made. On the 'neutral' scales, 'feeling tired' and 'enjoying school', all children remained fairly constant in their self assessment ratings, moving one point or none across a period of several weeks. This shows two things. Firstly, that children are using the scale consistently, as these two responses are unlikely to change as a result of the work with the horses and that is how the children scored them – consistently and with very little movement. This suggests that the other changes that are reported are genuinely recorded by the children and may indicate something about their responses to the equine work.

Table 1: I often feel tired



In Table 1, across three measurement points at least a week apart, for five children, the mean movement (variance) was 0.6 across a scale of 10, or a change of 6%.

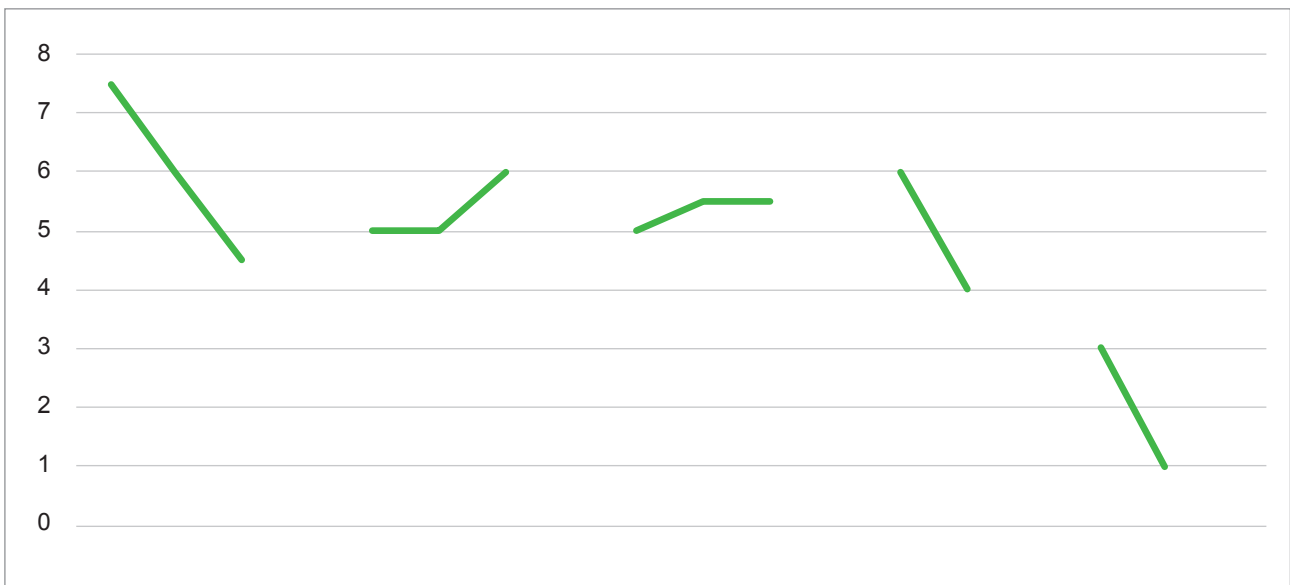
Table 2: I enjoy school



In Table 2, across three measurement points at least a week apart, the mean movement (variance) was 0.4 across a scale of 10, or a change of 4%. We wouldn't expect the horse work to change a child's perception of school or college and this was supported by the children's self-rating across the project. This suggests that children were using the scales consistently even across a three to eight week period of time, adding greater meaning to their use of scales measuring different items.

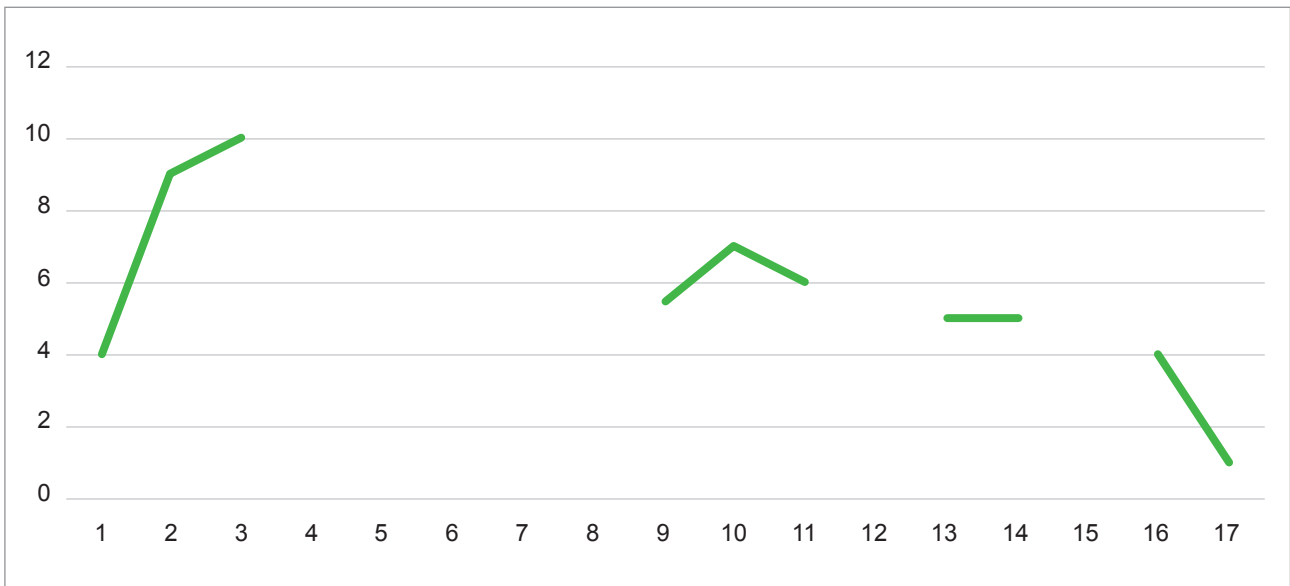
The following scales should be seen as indicative only, due to the small sample size.

Table 3: I find it hard to control my anger



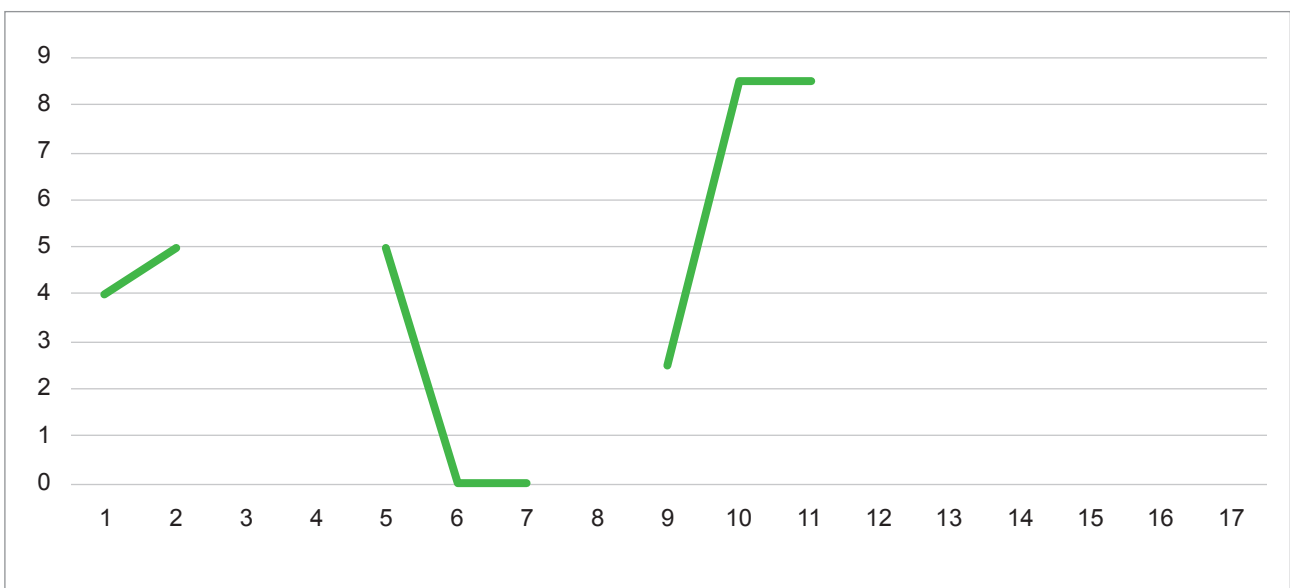
Two children self-rated that it was not easier to control their anger. In both cases the shift was 1 point only (a ten percent shift). Of the three children who felt that it was easier to control their anger at the end of the sessions, the shifts were larger, two at 2 points and one at 3 points (a mean of 23%). It would be interesting to see if this difference was observed in a much larger group of children. If so, we might be able to say that the work with horses impacts on anger management in some children, but not others and explore reasons why this might be the case.

Table 4: Easy to calm down



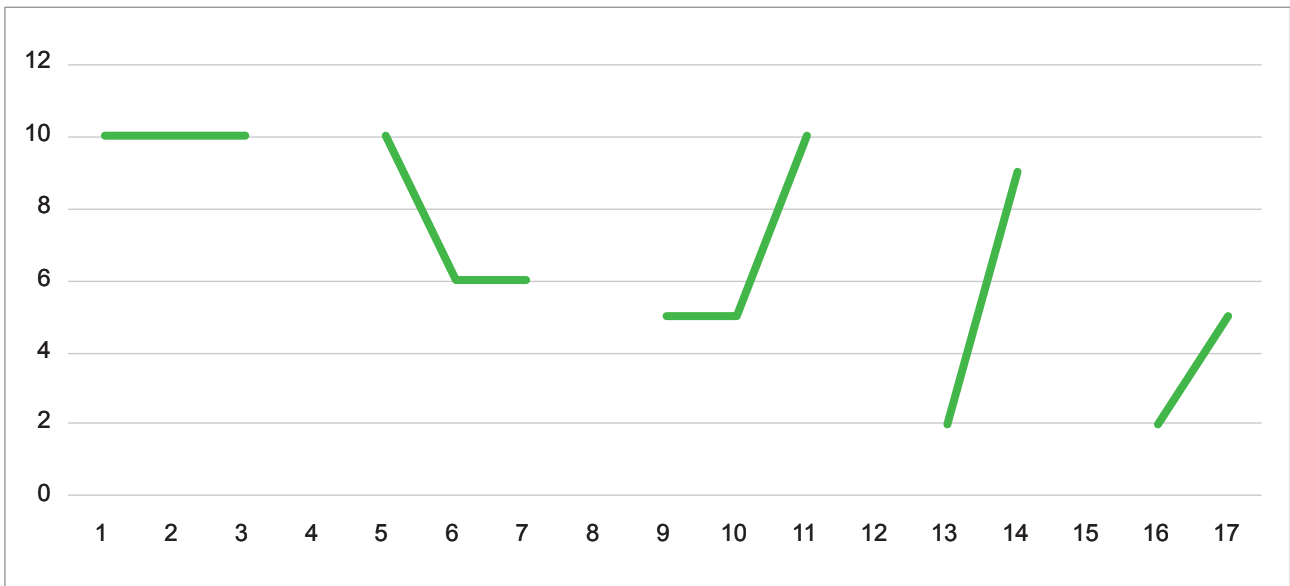
This scale is difficult to interpret, with one child seeming to experience a 6 point positive shift, while another experiencing a 3 point negative shift, two children experiencing no shift and one data set absent. It is possible that the Likert Scale itself was difficult to understand as the directionality of the scale was reported as being ambiguous. Table 5, below, was also considered to be ambiguous. The question was meant to be about impulse control, but in fact was not easily understood by participants, with two children not completing it at all.

Table 5: I sometimes act without thinking



It would be interesting to understand more about the responses of the two children who reported a 5 and 6 point difference respectively, albeit in different directions. Again, the ambiguity of the statement in relation to the scale makes this impossible to interpret. When replicating this study, the researcher will need to revise this question to elicit examples of impulse control issues and make sure this is clear to the participants.

Table 6: I make friends easily



This table is also difficult to interpret. The question was designed to explore self-confidence and social skills, but the friendship process is a long and complex one and dependent on other factors such as opportunities. Three children self-rated a positive impact, with improvement shifts of 3, 5 and 7 points out of 10 (mean 53% increase), one child rated no change and one reported a downward shift of 4 points (40% drop).

Emotional states

Table 7: Emotions

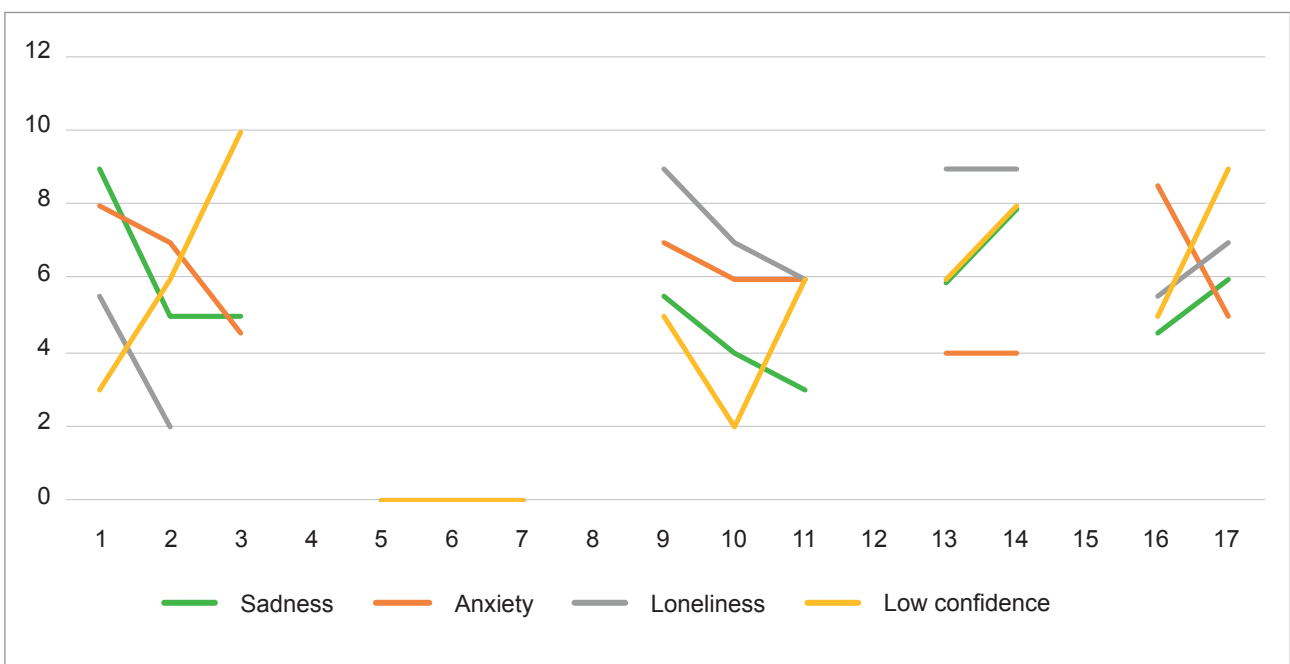


Table 7 has been clustered so we can see how each child reported their emotional states, and also compare emotional states across children. One child declined to complete these, other than recording a zero for confidence across all three measurement points.

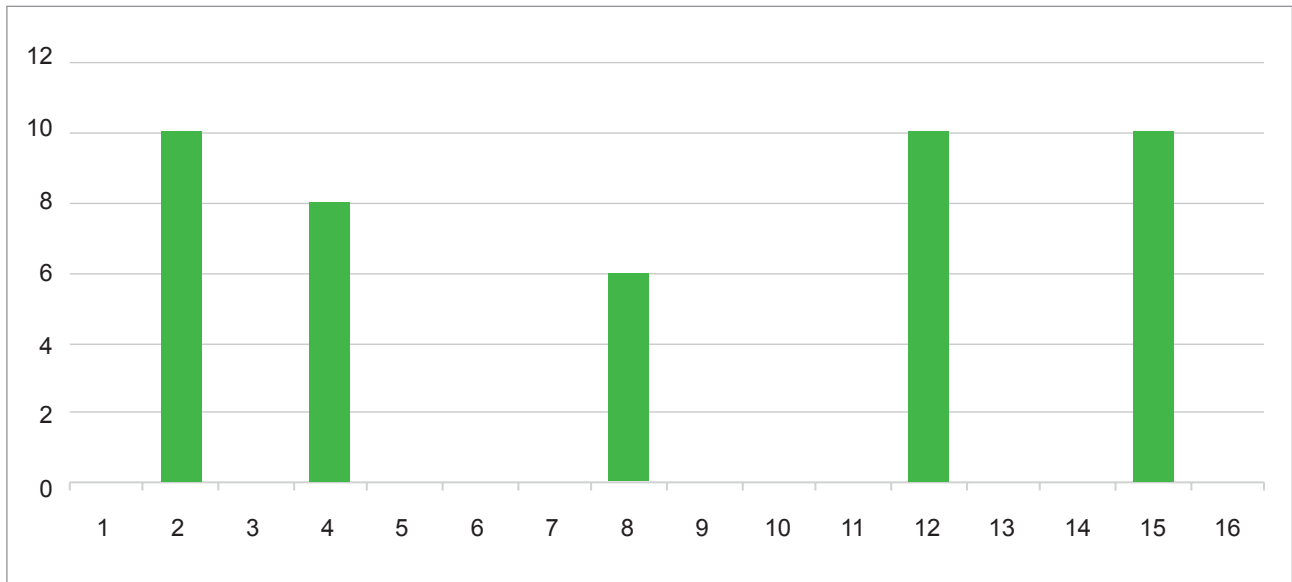
Child 1 reported an average of 4 point reduction in sensations of sadness, anxiety and loneliness, and a 7 point increase in confidence levels. Child 2 reported a one to three point drop in sadness, anxiety and loneliness and a single point overall increase in self confidence. Children 3 and 4 reported a 2 point rise in sadness and one reported a 1.5 increase in loneliness. Child 3 reported no change in anxiety levels, while child 4 reported a 3.5 drop in anxiety.

Confidence increased for all five children, with a mean increase overall of 3.5 (35%). Three children reported a drop in anxiety levels, while one recorded no change. Future research might explore whether the drop in anxiety and increase in confidence is a robust finding across children’s experience of working with horses and whether the two are connected; as anxiety drops, so confidence increases.

Likert scales: children’s overall perceptions of Intuitive Horse

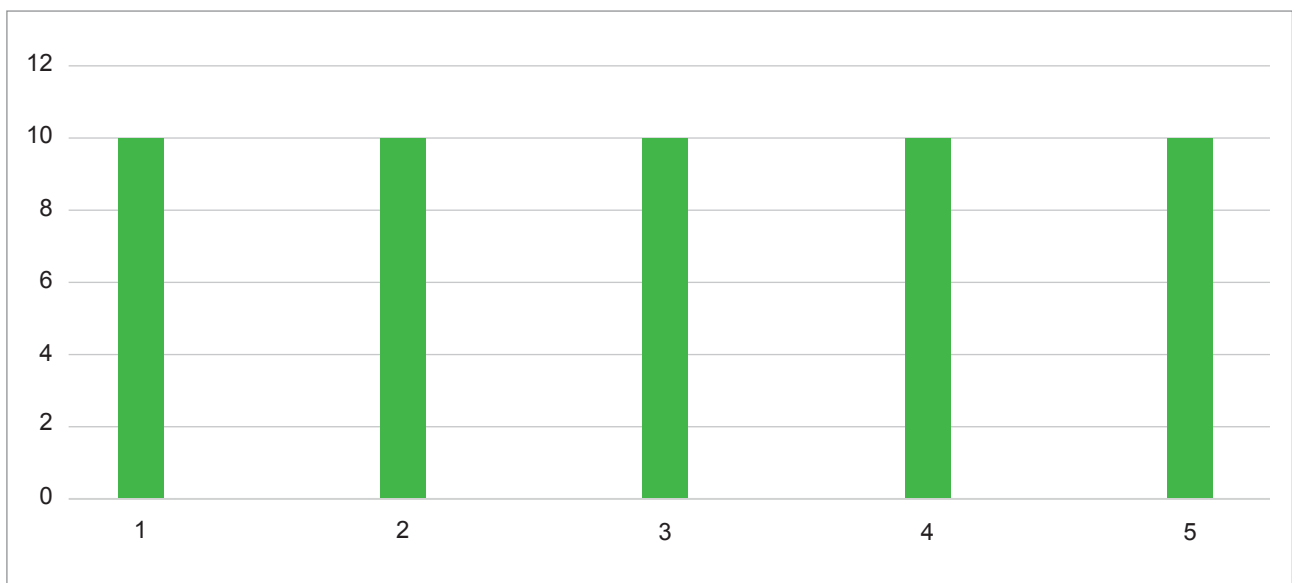
The two following tables are the most robust and tell a clear story about the participants’ experience of intuitive horse.

Table 8: How much did you enjoy your experience?



In this chart, three children rated a ‘ten’ out of ten. It should be noted that two of these children added additional markings to the paper, with one adding +++++ to indicate ‘plus, plus, plus’ and another adding higher numbers to indicate the strength of their feeling. The child reporting only a ‘6’ expressed enjoyment of the sessions, but felt that she was missing out on other activities with friends as the journey time was lengthy for her.

Table 9: Should we offer this to other children?



This final table is particularly robust. All participants were confident in using the Likert Scales to express their positive and negative experiences. Every single participant scored a full ‘10’ out of 10 for whether Intuitive Horse should be offered to other children. The only proviso from one child was that the child ‘*should be old enough*’.

Likert scales: conclusion

The Likert Scales seemed to be a useful method of recording change, but should be described more clearly, such as using a phrase like 'I feel very confident/I do not feel at all confident' to make the polarised ends clearer. One scale was very unclear: 'I act before thinking'. Although designed to measure impulse control, this was not well phrased.

For four out of five participants, there was a demonstrable improvement in self-confidence. Three children reported a drop in anxiety, and three noted an increase in ability to make friendships. All five children reported a positive experience of Intuitive Horse, with all five children scoring the full 10 on recommending the process to other children like themselves.

A narrative account of participant experiences



The narratives presented vary between participants. Some individuals were very eloquent in their description of how they had experienced Intuitive Horse. In these cases, we have used their voice with comments added from foster carers or support adults, alongside comments from the facilitator and the researcher where appropriate. These narratives 'set the scene'. For other children, we have used a more detailed scrutiny of the facilitator's notes, to identify points when change or personal growth appear to take place.

Savannah

My first impression of Savannah was of her warmth and interest in other people. She clearly enjoyed relationships with adults and finds this type of interaction stimulating. Her mannerisms appeared younger than her chronological age. She was very tactile with her foster mother and liked playing hiding games. She was not very verbally communicative and did not come across as sophisticated. She was, however, easy to be with and offered an emotional openness that is reassuring to adults who are supporting her.

Comments on her first session

'With Bobby. S very gentle with animals and clearly derived much joy in their presence. Movements calm and measured eg stroking Bobby and instinctively 'scratching' at withers and gently pulling forelock. Clearly easy for S to make a connection with the pony - interestingly, she is also warm towards people. With both Emma and myself there was a warmth and ease from S.'

Attachment needs seemed not to be relational, at least not in this context. Issues more concerned with verbal articulation, including both 'shyness' and oral articulation. Most noticeable during the session was the difficulty of locating sensations within the body. However, right at the end, anxiety about touching Bobby's tail was located 'in the tummy' and described as 'butterflies'. Early on, when asked to focus on her feet, there seemed a deepening of S's calm state, as evidenced by longer strokes across Bobby's back.'

I was sure that Savannah had enjoyed her session and that she had found it calming. The facilitator had worked hard at drawing S's attention to her physical sensation. S had found this difficult, but at the end had been able to link her emotional state (anxiety) to the physical sensations of 'butterflies' in her tummy.

I had found the session moving, particularly that initial glimpse that Savannah showed an intuitive skill around horses. There was an instinctive knowing of how to stroke and scratch them in the right way and in the right place, leading to the horses becoming calm, with relaxed eyes and floppy ears.

I thought it less likely, however, that S would understand the full complexity and subtleties possible with the work with horses. In the brief feedback given she had conveyed sincere enjoyment, but no specific insights. I did not think she had the verbal skills to convey this complexity, even if she was aware of it. I was happily proven wrong very soon after this first session.

S had spontaneously produced a power point presentation, which was forwarded to me by her Foster Mother. The first few slides had pictures of horses with relational and affective words such as: joyful, loveable, fun, calm, peaceful, kind, relaxed, huggable.

The sixth slide said:

'The way the horse talk to me - The horse spoken to me by nosing me with its head and it came over to me ... turn to the back of the horse and touched the back of its legs and I felt ok about it. I wasn't nerves.'

The seventh slide said:

'Do I like the horses? Because I like the horses and have such a good relationship with the horses I like them so very much and I am going to work with horses in college'.

I realised that she had gained much more on an intellectual level than I had realised. She had made links between the way the horses had interacted with her to her own emotional state. She also understood the potential benefit of the relationship between human and horse on achieving other wider outcomes, such as calming anxiety. She recognised the impact of this on her and made a significant career choice - a college course - to further her knowledge and skills with horses. For somebody with poor school attainment, the level of sophistication here exceeded that of many adults on their first session with horses.

The PowerPoint presentation from S was a significant turning point for me. I realised for the first time how much the project was going to impact on me personally. I realised that the impact of the work with horses with young people could be more astonishing than I had at first thought.

I also recognised that S was shaping the project's research design and that 'spontaneous communication' from participants was possible and if given, extremely powerful. She also planted the seed that we needed to consider our longer term responsibilities to participants by considering what their 'next steps' should be if the project had been beneficial to them. She opened my awareness to the significance of spontaneous communication from participants. She made it clear that 3 sessions may not be enough and that the researcher might respond personally to very subtle elements of the communication from participants. Savannah continued to write during the sessions and by session three, it was clear that we should extend the project by another three sessions.

This is an extract from one of her letters:

To dear Amelia

Thank you for (me) being the first one to do it with you and Emma. I liked it so much I want to do it again on day I want to see Spot and Bobbie again one time. And Thank you for letting me and Annabelle (foster carer) to come over to meet you and I enjoyed working with Emma and the horses. I was really happy when you gave the horse for my last session with you and Emma I really like it so much I wanted to stay there a bit longer to get to know the horse a bit longer and I want to be more brave with the horse and get to know the horse a bit better and be wear of her feelings more and I want Annabelle to come in with me and Emma next time to get to know the know the horse well. I have looked on the website it have got lots of good information on the website and I have seen Spot and Bobbie and the other horses. I missed them a lot and I am thinking about them very day and very week and I am thinking about Emma too. This is what I have felt about the horse. Also I want you to know that I do miss you and I like when you watched me with the horse I have enjoyed it a lot when I was there I like you and Emma.

Love From S XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Savannah's final thank you letter to me was this:

To Amelia,

I just wanted to say thank you for everything you have done (with) Emma and thank you for letting me and Annabelle come down to do this horse thing with Emma. And I will enjoy doing this equine course in college and I will e-mail you when I am doing well. When I finish I will go back to do another level doing the equine course.

Love from S

On the same day, her Foster Mother wrote this in the Intuitive Horse visitors' book:

This has been the most remarkable moving experience anyone could hope to have. To watch my foster daughter grow in confidence and find a new found love in horses has been mind-blowing. Thank you so much xx

To dear Emma

I just want to say that thank you for having me for working with the horses I have enjoyed it and I like working with them. ... When I get angry with myself with someone I was thinking about the horses I was and also I was thinking about the very day and very week. I liked Spot when I was walking with him and also ... when he walk with me I think that was fun to be with Spot because I liked when he put his nose on me to made me want to walk with him. Spot was really nice and calm to be round with him. I love Spot the horse and Bobbie the horse. I have writing about the video on the website I have been on. This is what have felt about the horse I have felt really happy with the horses and like being with them and I like spending time with the horse. And Emma always say that be wear of your body and felt really fine about it, I like Bobbie because I liked him he was really cute and very huggable and very funny and very sweet horse.

I do really miss you a lot and the horses.

Love Savannah

Her Foster mother commented: *I think the fact that the equine experience was in so many ways a shared experience was what made it so very therapeutic for Savannah and actually me too. Sharing her success and delight was such a privilege and one I shall be forever grateful for. As you say this 'joyful experience' enabled a powerful additional component to the Equine experience as S was aware of how moved I was watching her. It offered us the opportunity to discuss her obvious gift further in the week therefore enabling the therapeutic process to continue long after the sessions.*

Researcher notes state two other comments from Savannah's foster mother:

- You've changed a young person's life
- There have been no more difficulties at school.

Charlotte

Charlotte arrived very angry and extremely reluctant to communicate. She responded to even basic communication such as 'Hello Charlotte' with avoidance, such as saying 'That's not my name'. Even after the first session, however she was keen to return each time and seemed to sense the value of the work to her own personal wellbeing. Whilst Charlotte could appear rude to the adults in the session at times and didn't wish to interact much verbally, she was very drawn to the horses and being with them. The dog and one of the resident cats became key players in each of her sessions too, both always turning up to the session when she arrived (not something the cat did often). C would express how she needed her 'cat time', which involved the cat sitting on her lap being stroked, her 'dog time' which involved her sitting on the floor with the dog and stoking her and then her horse time. As the sessions progressed the one bit of feedback she would consistently give is that the horses made her feel calm. We would often witness times of stillness in her when she was interacting with them which she didn't have at any other time, according to her key worker. Charlotte came from a very hectic life and this time at Intuitive Horse seemed to become her calm time.

After the second session, I recorded the following:

Key worker D asked me why it was 3 sessions. Had the research identified that this was the most effective/appropriate length of time? I noticed that C, who was clinging to D's back, had become very still, quiet and focused on the answer.

I started to explain that we felt 3 was enough to show if the sessions were valuable, but because Emma was running a business, future sessions would need to be purchased. C said she would ask (her keyworker who allocated funding). I became struck by the possibility of giving something easily to a young person for whom life hadn't given many gifts. I knew that it had become a possibility in the project that I might feel moved to offer 3 further sessions. Whatever intangible communication had occurred between myself and C had now brought me to this point, so I said that it was possible for me to offer her 3 more sessions, that I would pay for. Her communication was instant, clear and direct: Yes, please.

This communication was significant because Charlotte found it difficult to ask directly for what she wanted. However she was quite unequivocal in the clarity with which she wanted to continue the sessions. She in fact pursued the matter of continued sessions after the six free ones were completed and continued to come regularly to Intuitive Horse for many months after the research project had concluded.

Lucy

Lucy was extremely scared of horses and dogs when she attended the first session. However, she was really keen to overcome her fear as she liked horses. She worked with a very gentle but big horse the first time and was able to articulate clearly how she felt during the session. Lucy was shown an area she could get away from the horse to feel safe if she wanted to, at any time. We frequently went back to this area to help her regulate her feelings while going through the process of getting to know the horse. In the second half of the first session she spontaneously reached out and stroked the dog who was lying down nearby. At first she was unsure as she reached out but seeing the dog sit quietly and allow her to stroke her then gave her the confidence to try stroking the horse for the first time. This was a spontaneous action by her but one that worked for her. After this her confidence grew rapidly. Realising she could remove herself from feelings of fear and be in control of when to try again seemed to enable her to regulate her feelings well, and as a result overcome her fear of dogs and horses. Lucy recognised that a horse more proportionate to her size (ie a smaller horse) might make things easier for her next time she attended and in asking for that to happen she showed she was thinking about how to improve her environment to help her achieve her goal of getting over her fear of horses.

The first session

We received this beautiful piece of writing from Lucy:

Brilliant Bobby by Lucy

The first session:

On the 27th of March 2015 at the first session of Intuitive Horse I had a lovely white horse called Harvey and I got change his name if I wanted to so I called him Barley as I chose something to connect with Harvey. I was really nervous and worried as I haven't been as close to a big horse before. Even though I knew Harvey was trained to be nice, I was still on a scared scale of 5 out of 10, maybe more, but Emma was there and made it feel less scary. By the end of the first session with Harvey I found out there was only one pony in the whole field with all the other horses so I wanted to give it a try with the pony and to make friends with him.

The second session

Researcher notes on Lucy's second session:

Lucy states that she is 'excited' and 'still proud from last time'.

The second session:

When I saw how fluffy the pony was I thought I was in a fairy tale. As he was already called Bobby I wanted to stay with that name. He was small and fluffy with short legs and was lovely and warm – someone who you could cuddle all day long. His hair waved slowly in the wind as every breeze passed. I learnt that when horses lick their lips it's a sign of peace and also when they rest their back hooves and place one hoof on the ground it shows that they are relaxed. I learnt a lot in the second session about the pony and the horses' actions and I was pleased that I remembered everything that Emma taught me. (Authors' note: licking lips in equines may have a number of meanings; this was the child's interpretation and was meaningful to her).

The third session

Researcher notes on Lucy's second session:

Lucy's carer - S and I observed Lucy and the pony lying down in stillness next to each other. Me and S were both moved to tears by this.

The third session:

Every time we left the farm, Emma always checked the car for cats and dogs and usually plays around and sees if 'Bobby' is in the car hiding! At the first session I was too scared to touch the horse by myself in the beginning but by the end I stroked him. In the third session 'Bobby' and I just looked at each other and then he lay down and I lay down with him and Emma too. He made me feel relaxed and peaceful. I was the only child who had ever laid next to a pony in Intuitive Horse. I was so brave and got along with 'Bobby' so well that Emma and Amelia offered me three extra sessions to have over the summer and now I have to wait excitedly for the next sessions. At the end of the third session I also put a harness on Bobby and led him down to the field!

When I think of Bobby I feel proud, brave, happy and calm. Bobby is always quiet which makes me feel quiet, but 'Harvey' shouts at the other horses! Emma helped me with being brave because she was always honest about how the horses and Bobby were feeling which made me feel safe. She said everything would be OK and it was. She told me I could try things, but also said it was OK to just do nothing and wait.

I am going to tell my nephew Alfie about the horses when he grows up – he is just a baby now. I might like to work with children and horses when I am older. In the car with S I made up a game where I asked if we could be quiet for about 10 minutes and just listen to the sounds around us as I wanted to hear more. I could hear the breeze rushing through the window and the rattle in the car. Then we both made up stories from the sounds we'd heard. I have learnt from Intuitive Horse that being told to be quiet is different from feeling the quiet that is already there, like when Bobby lay down.

Rosanne

Rosanne's experience of Intuitive Horse is best narrated through the facilitator's description of the sessions. In these, we can see how the facilitator uses the time to encourage Rosanne to reflect on her emotions and movements and to observe the effect she is having on Bobby the pony:

First session

'Rosanne approached Bobby quite quickly and started stroking him. Whilst it was clear to see that Rosanne had an affection for him and was keen to connect, at no point did she allow for him to respond towards her'.

We discussed different ways of communication, with the big difference between people and horses/animals being our spoken language. ... working with horses makes us think about communicating through our body language and feeling states.

I observed ... that she was the one doing all the work in the relationship between the two of them off the back of her commenting that she was talking to herself because he wasn't responding to her. ... When I asked if she is often the one who puts more effort into relationships with people ... (keyworker) thought it was true ... Rosanne agreed.

(Using emotion scales 1 – 10 for low to high energy)

'We identified Bobby was at 0. I asked Rosanne where she was at and she said 10. I used the scale as a way to get her to think about where she was at and where Bobby was at and how she needed to adapt her ... behaviour in order to work with Bobby and build his trust. ... I asked her to try and be aware of his head at all times... I asked where she was on the scale and she said 5. .. I encouraged her to stroke slower and not talk. All of a sudden, Bobby started to 'come alive' ... turning his head and gently nuzzling hers...'

'Rosanne seemed to recognise by slowing down it gave Bobby a chance to respond. I asked at the end where she was on her scale and she said 'a 1'.

(Key worker) commented towards end of session Rosanne was being calm (compared to) how she normally is.

Second and third sessions

Wants movement as a way of being stimulated and (as a) sign of the horse liking her.

Forgets quite quickly to consider the horse in her actions; needs to be reminded quite frequently.

Key worker states that Rosanne is much calmer than she used to be.

Researcher interview at end of sessions:

Rosanne circled a 10 for both Likert scales for 'Did you enjoy this experience' and 'Should we offer this to other young people'.

When asked how she had found the experience, she said: *'I would have to say 'Good'; being with the horses'. Would she recommend the experience to other young people? 'Oh God, yeah, definitely. If I love them, I'm sure other people would love it.'*

When asked if it had helped any area in her life, she replied *'Not really'*. When asked if we could improve the overall experience, she replied *'No, I don't think so.'*

We concluded from this that Rosanne had enjoyed the sessions but had not had a deep experience in the same way as the other four participants. It was possible to observe micro shifts during the sessions, but the experience as a whole seemed to have had a less profound impact.

Imogen

Imogen was able to work deeply in the sessions, experiencing and embracing a number of transformative moments. For the avoidance of repetition, a more detailed analysis of these moments is given below as these exhibit powerful examples of how the facilitator uses the sessions to model well-known personal growth strategies.

Imogen expressed great fondness for the sessions and her key worker observed deepening of calm throughout the process.

Imogen was unable to articulate herself well through words. She was very shy and didn't say much. Whilst Imogen was described as having a lot of 'anger issues', her quiet demeanour around the horses was well received when she interacted with them. Imogen shared some very touching and tender moments with one of the horses which left her feeling relaxed. Her social worker who attended the sessions could see her relaxing which she found encouraging as she normally found it hard to relax.

Imogen could be quite hard on herself to 'get it right' at times during sessions. 'Getting it right' might be the horse allowing her to stroke them. With encouragement and education on how to read and respond to the horses' body language she was able to make authentic connections with the horses every time. Over the six sessions her confidence grew around the horses and she showed times where her and the horse would move in synchronised movements spontaneously, suggesting a level of mutual resonance and rapport. Imogen's social worker was encouraged to see her confidence grow and noted how Imogen being encouraged rather than told helped her to build confidence, recognising that this seemed more effective than the normal practice of being told what to do. As a result of her confidence building, in her fifth session Imogen spontaneously starting telling us what was happening between her and the horse and was accurate in her assessment. Her social worker commented how it was confusing to hear Imogen talk with that much awareness of her surroundings as it was not something she usually did, given her diagnosis of Atypical Autism.

The words Imogen used to sum up her whole experience were 'Good, Calming, Happy'.

Summary of results

Data was collected both quantitatively through the use of Likert Scales for children to self-rate a range of emotional experiences, such as making friends and enjoying school. They were asked to rate their confidence and other emotions such as anxiety. These scales were taken before and after the sessions.

Qualitative information was gathered via interview questions before and after the sessions, observation and informal discussion with foster carers and young people. Interestingly, unexpected data was collected through spontaneous communication from young people, which included pictures, power-point presentations and thank you messages.

The rating scales showed that young people reported more stability in the majority of their emotional scales after the sessions. Particularly striking was that on the rating scale asking whether the young person had enjoyed the sessions, three out of five young people vigorously circled the 10. In the scale asking whether this should be offered to other children, five out five circled 10.

Verbal and written data was overwhelmingly positive. For two out of the five participants, one pursued her new found love of horses with an equine course in college and the other secured longer term funding to continue the sessions at Intuitive Horse. All verbally expressed enjoyment of the sessions and all said that there was a calming effect from the equine facilitated work. Every child formed an affection for at least one horse or pony and every child experienced the deepening of their relationship with their key horse or pony.

Overall degree of effect

Out of five participants, for two children the effect of the Intuitive Horse sessions were profound and life changing. For a further two, the sessions were psychologically meaningful and contributed to their personal growth, but it is difficult to show longevity of effect. For one child, they appeared to have a pleasant experience at the time, but it is unlikely that psychological reflection occurred.

Underlying processes and mechanisms that may underpin the effects of Intuitive Horse



As the researcher reviewed the facilitator notes, there seemed to be three core themes arising in the accounts of the sessions undertaken with the young people:

- **Observations of progress made by participant and/or their foster-carer or key worker (see above)**
The notes recorded numerous examples of the young person and/or the key adult identifying changes in the behaviour or demeanour of the young person during their sessions when with a horse.
- **Using the Intuitive Horse context to practice and/or learn new strategies to support wellbeing**
The use of strategies such as recognition and naming of emotional states, mindfulness and activities to encourage 'present moment' awareness are core features in the Intuitive Horse sessions. Examples of how the activities are enhanced by the equine environment are given below.
- **Examples of a connection or bonding moment with the horse, or other member of the team (dog, cat, human or wildlife)**
Connection or bonding is often demonstrated by closeness, shared physical contact, mutual interest/curiosity or synchronised activity (including limbic synchronisation). The type of connections that were observed and reported in the facilitator notes are detailed below. These connection-making and experience of bonding are often very powerful encounters, particularly for people who have experienced rejection, grief, trauma or neglect.

USING THE INTUITIVE HORSE CONTEXT TO PRACTICE AND/OR LEARN NEW STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT WELLBEING

Imogen:

From notes written by the facilitator from Imogen's session/s, the following types of strategy were identified:

- One or more adults giving specific 'feeling words' to describe their perceptions of a young person's behaviour, gestures and facial expressions:

'Social worker kept using words like 'still, calm, patient' to describe what she saw'

Verbalising emotion states and helping the young person to increase their vocabulary to be able to describe their emotions, bodily sensations and feeling states is often explored as part of mindfulness and wellbeing activities. This links to early attachment experiences in two different ways. Firstly, the shared naming of experiences of the world is part of the early bonding process. Secondly, shared naming reinforces the common experience of these feelings, helping young people to feel less alone with their pain and experience the recognition of other people who can validate the painful emotions. This relates to the synchronisation of emotions which an infant experiences with his or her caregiver.

- Supportive adults are pleased to see the interactions between child and horse:

'nice to see' (Social worker)

There is healing potential in the act of being observed by another, particularly when this is in an approving or celebratory manner. This relates to the attachment process in that young children are very keen for the caregiver to observe them as they make progress. We often hear young children say 'Look at me!' Children in care or in receipt of social work support are often in the spotlight, but this is often because they are receiving support or help. When children during the Intuitive Horse sessions heard genuine praise, or saw their key adults take pleasure in their progress, it provided an opportunity to experience unconditional positive regard and approval. Sometimes, young people were able to experience the possibility of a different identity, such as of somebody kind or with a 'magic touch' with animals.

-
- Enjoyable context to explore stress management techniques:

'I showed her a Mandala and she was keen to do one between now and the next session'.

'Showed me Mandala ... had a sad face in one side saying 'down' and a bigger smiley face on the other, saying 'up'.

Here we see an example of Imogen using a stress management technique to identify emotions. The sessions with the horses tended to be pleasant and stimulating, providing a context in which well-known activities could be introduced. Perhaps trust had been built up between the facilitator and participant or perhaps children felt good about themselves and therefore more accepting of ideas to build stress-management strategies, but this was a common feature observed in the sessions.

- Identifying emotions in others and developing empathy

'(She) identified Ebony as calm. Ebony rolled and we talked about why – itchy, losing winter coat. I then showed (her) how to groom a horse, using little pressure to firmer pressure. We practised on (key worker) which Imogen thought was funny. (The key worker) then did it to Imogen, so she could experience how it felt. ... I also mentioned when showing her the different pressures to be aware of her hand and the other she was touching ie Ebony'

Carefully watching the horse and noticing the ways in which the horse responds to different actions provides a powerful opportunity to develop awareness of 'the other' and develop greater understanding and empathy. Here Imogen identifies emotion in another. She is also encouraged to focus on sensory processing, through the use of different types of touch. Both development of empathy and exploration of sensory stimulus are important components of the early attachment process. The activity encouraged noticing and articulating, as well as developing responsiveness to the needs of another, as the needs of the horse had to be met. This provides a rich example of how known, valuable, therapeutic strategies can be contextualised in a real-life, meaningful, pleasurable context.

Lucy:

'...using a 1-10 ... scale of how she was feeling, was able to identify nervous feeling was also excitement and able to describe some of the physical sensations in her body.'

Here Lucy is using emotion rating scales which are often used in Solution Focused or Brief Therapy therapeutic approaches. She was able to use the approaches to identify, locate the physiological sensation and verbalise her experience.

Lucy 'would retreat to a safe space when felt out of her depth'.

This is a powerful excerpt as we see an example of a young person identifying whether or not she feels safe and independently taking action to keep herself from harm. Using the 'real life' potential danger inherent to being in the presence of any large animal provides a sense of urgency and encourages focus, yet the context is warm and nurturing, with adult support to keep both child and horse free from harm. Many traumatised young people find it difficult to recognise danger and take action to keep themselves safe, so the opportunity to explore these skills in a way that is both meaningful, yet safe, is potentially extremely powerful. This element of the session enabled the introduction of the concept of a 'safe space'.

Lucy 'felt calmer when she engaged with her breathing.' A focus on breathing is an integral part of most mindfulness practices and is a core part of traditional practice such as yoga and meditation. Again we observe that a practice such as mindful breathing is more acceptable to a young person as part of an equine-enhanced experience than when offered in a more ordinary environment, such as a classroom or office. Perhaps the horse confers status or salience ('coolness') to these activities?

Lucy 'Progressed to stroking him through the fence after managing to stroke Gypsy which then gave her more confidence'.

Gypsy is a dog, who gave Lucy confidence to stroke a horse. Here we see a gradual exposure to an anxiety-raising stimuli to increase tolerance and build up confidence. Also, stroking an animal is a sensory experience which is known to soothe and increase oxytocin. By staying behind the fence, Lucy was exploring a new situation from a safe space and taking responsibility for both her own sense of safety and her own levels of anxiety.

EXAMPLES OF A CONNECTION OR BONDING MOMENT WITH THE HORSE, OR OTHER MEMBER OF THE TEAM (DOG, CAT, HUMAN OR WILDLIFE)

Imogen:

'At that point, Ebony moved in towards her and kept doing that throughout the session. Ebony very still with Imogen, almost falling asleep at times.'

'After some time they connected, Ebony sniffing Imogen's hand, Ebony then moved toward Imogen and Imogen moved at the same time. Ebony then continued to follow. Imogen stopped and paused, I encouraged her to try walking as Ebony might follow her and she did! The rest of the session, Imogen spent time walking with Ebony following her'.

When a horse feels in tune with a young person, following them out of choice, without any kind of lead rope or head collar, this is a very powerful example of connection. These occasions were often very powerful and meaningful to the young person, accompanied by feelings of real closeness. Also, synchronised actions were observed, such as a horse walking in step with a child or both standing very close to each other in calm closeness.

These interactions are clearly linked to the early attachment process, where early connection and the feelings of closeness and love are vital to the full healthy development of an infant.

Lucy:

'Lovely moment when she asked Harvey to verbally come to her, and he did.'

It is important to state here that the horses aren't trained to come to the call. Time and again, we observed 'impossible moments', such as a horse responding to a young person in a way they might not have done with an adult. It is difficult to know what a horse is thinking or to understand certain responses, but all observing adults agreed that horses offer something very profound to the children. There seems to be genuine compassion, willing shared.

Charlotte:

'She stood with him at the gate for most of the session. Arthur was very soft and engaging with her... keyworker said it was rare for her to be so still.'

This is a glimpse of the powerful stillness that can occur when horse and young person 'connect'.

Sometimes the horse seemed able to 'see through' a young person's façade, responding to a genuine need rather than the outward show of bravado:

'(young person) can be quite verbally abusive either to me or (the key-worker) or the horse. However, Arthur is still keen to be with her even when she 'rejects' him. This suggests an incongruity (between) her spoken words and feeling state around him.'

The researcher noted the following when observing this session: 'Arthur astonishing with her. 'Putty in her hands'... followed her and followed her and followed her'

We can only guess at how meaningful this must have been for Charlotte.

Conclusion



What overall impressions do vulnerable children (and key adults in their life) form after their encounters with Intuitive Horse?

All five participants and their key adults were positive about the experience. The levels of positivity ranged from pleased to overwhelmingly happy. Four out of five participants wrote thank you notes, poems, letters or drew pictures to express their thanks. Most children formed a connection with at least one horse. Adults used phrases such as 'never seen her so calm' and 'this has been absolutely amazing'.

Two young people experienced life changing effects: one took a course at college in equine care, the other came for two years and continues to come for 'top up' sessions to support her from time to time as an adult. Two others wrote beautiful notes, including the phrase: *'I realise that being told to be quiet is not the same as feeling the quiet that is always all around us; like when I lay down with the pony'*

All five children circled 'ten' on the 'one to ten' scale when asked whether we should offer Intuitive Horse to other children.

On a personal note, as a researcher, I was often deeply moved by what I observed in the sessions. Often I was moved to tears, such as when a child and horse stood silently beside each other, or when a horse followed a child around an arena. Emma and I were so convinced that we were observing something powerful, that we doubled the sessions from three to six, at our own expense, to allow children to complete the powerful process they had started. Our observation was that children who were beginning to trust the process and see benefits were not ready to stop after three sessions, yet after six sessions they seemed less vulnerable.

Is it possible to observe themes arising from clients' perceptions of work with equines?

There seem to be a number of factors at work here. For some children, the proximity to the horse is profoundly meaningful and this may help them to experience relationship in a way that feels safe and nourishing. Many of the aspects of the process, such as body awareness, naming emotions and increased awareness seem to be easier to access in the company of the horse. For some children, they astonished their foster carer with their movement around the horse or their ability to connect with the horse and this brought another dimension to some carer-child relationships.

Time and time again, we saw horses respond in ways we could never have imagined. Some horses remained calm even when approached insensitively. At other times, we observed different responses. For example, on one occasion, a young person swore at a horse. Despite this inappropriate behaviour near an animal, the horse seemed to understand that this verbalisation represented a deeper need. The horse approached the child and even followed her, despite this vocalisation, possibly demonstrating an empathic response to the deeper pain held by the young person.

Do these themes link to themes associated with concepts associated with attachment theory?

An examination of the facilitator feedback indicated that two core elements occur within the session:

- **Examples of a connection or bonding moment with the horse, or other member of the team (dog, cat, human or wildlife).** This includes building relationships, experiencing a moment of 'connection', touch (such as stroking), shared attention or synchronised movements. All of these are often experienced during an Intuitive Horse session and can be seen to link closely to concepts related to Attachment Theory.
- **Using the Intuitive Horse session to practice and/or teach learning strategies to support wellbeing. This includes activities associated with supporting wellbeing** and building resilience such as recognition and naming of emotional states and practicing mindfulness or 'present moment' activities.

We are continuing to explore this exciting and emerging area of equine facilitation with vulnerable children and we continue to learn how to modify the sessions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. We may never be able to fully explain all of the processes at work, but we are gathering more and more information from young people and the adults who support them. The evidence consistently points to real value when facilitating a relationship between a vulnerable child and horse in a respectful and reflective way.

Theorists like Carl Rogers suggest that warm, genuine and meaningful relationships are a powerful therapeutic influence. In my experience of therapeutic stables, such as Intuitive Horse, the horses themselves offer a tangible yet vivid experience of compassion and acceptance that seems to touch children and adults deeply. In turn, the facilitators witnessing this are often deeply moved, which in turn enables another joyful connection that children can experience. Looked after children may not have many opportunities to bring genuine joy to other adults, making this a potentially powerful additional component to the equine-facilitated therapeutic process. We may not be able to fully explain all of these processes, but in equine assisted personal development, science, humanity, intuition and the mysterious influence of animals on people are brought together, often with deeply humbling results.

Is there an identifiable ‘essential element’ to the ‘Intuitive Horse’ approach?

The facilitator Emma Ross is a talented, intuitive practitioner who would undoubtedly be effective in many fields of therapeutic work. Working with horses offers an added dimension. One core element is the relationship that Emma builds with her herd of horses and other animals. Emma creates a partnership in which the animals are equal partners in the process. This means the horses are always loose in Intuitive Horse sessions, enabling them to have choice at all times. The horses always have a choice about whether or not to engage with the client. Their wellbeing is paramount. This means that when a horse decides to engage with a client, they are drawn to do so because they are curious and choose to engage with the young person. Therefore the interaction is genuine. Carl Rogers talks about ‘unconditional positive regard’ as the power of someone liking you and being able to show you that they like you. He surmises that unconditional positive regard is the single most powerful way to help any human ‘self actualise’ and realise their true potential. When Emma’s horses engage with you, it is because they are drawn to you and can show you this. They are not ‘trained’ to behave in a certain way. This means that the connection between child and horse is genuine, authentic and congruent. This unconditional positive regard, from one of the most mesmerising animals on the planet, creates joy. From joy comes personal growth. The horses offer children a tangible, visceral experience of what connection and love feels like, and by doing so, they prove to the young person that they are worthy recipients of love.

Concluding Thoughts from Amelia

What we seem to be seeing here is the application of well known personal development techniques, such as mindfulness, identification of emotions and their intensity, awareness of body sensations and personal reflection, utilised during time with the horse. While it is known that these are effective strategies, working with the horse seem to provide additional advantages. Horses are fun, beautiful, mesmerising and engaging, so the session is generally approached with enthusiasm and positivity by the child. There may be a reduction of stress because of this, with a concomitant increase in ‘feel good’ hormones such as oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine. These are known to facilitate learning and increased sensations of wellbeing.

Often, and this is the part we find difficult to explain scientifically, other than remembering that horses as a herd animal are likely to be attuned to the emotional state of other mammals, the horse seems to add a precise and additional dimension to the process. They are not bystanders in the therapeutic exchange. We have seen horses respond with gentleness; mirror a child’s behaviour; connect when all connection seemed impossible and behave in a variety of ways that provide comfort and meaning.

Some of the horses’ input seemed to mirror processes that are commonly associated with attachment theory, such as gentle gaze; closeness and proximity; shared attention; sharing touch; soothing behaviours; stimulating behaviours and above all, affectionate and tender interactions. We have no doubt that these experiences of connection are psychologically powerful.

Carl Rogers, the father of person-centred counselling posits that ‘Unconditional Positive Regard’ is at the root of all healing. Simply put, if another being genuinely likes you and can convey that to you in some way, you will flourish. For children who had experienced many rejections, traumas and tragedies, this unconditional positive regard came in many forms. It came from the key worker who took the time to bring them to Intuitive Horse; it came from the facilitator and it came from the horses. Because horses cannot be fake and cannot lie, even the most damaged child can see that the unconditional positive regard is real. It is visceral and undeniable and this, we think, is where the deep healing occurs.

Concluding Thoughts from Emma

Horses have many attributes that make them wonderful beings to spend time with. By following the herd's natural behaviours we not only allow the horses to be in full expression of their natural desires and needs, we also can tune in and join them in so many ways that sync with our needs as a human too. With common ground, that being we are all mammals, there are some similar innate desires such as the desire to keep safe and to have meaningful connection. Whilst of course we are species appropriate in what that looks like, we can see how many of the horses' attributes can help children.

Being the herd animal they are, horses have a keen desire for connection and communication with each herd member. Ethologist Lucy Rees observes wild herds operate in an egalitarian way and have regular moments of synchronization with each other throughout the day alongside an independence within the herd. The synchronization is what allows them to operate as a whole so they can move from one activity to the next, be that grazing to moving onto another area or stopping to shade under the trees. When in synchronization they are in harmony with each other thus making them less likely to draw attention to themselves and allowing them to remain present to the environment around them, both essential for survival.

We know with attachment that connection and synchronization are essential for survival reasons; to ensure we get our needs met, not only physically but emotionally too.

With the horse being so accustomed to synchronizing, the possibility for a flow to occur between a child/person and horse can be high in the right circumstances. Should the child and horse naturally find that flow of synchronization a feeling of connection will be present. This feeling of connection can be very healing in many ways and help in areas such as emotional regulation, feeling calm, safe and good in themselves, and seen and understood.

What has happened at Intuitive Horse since the Research project ended



The Big Lottery funded sessions

The research project illustrated and highlighted the benefit of being around horses and with nature for young people/children and showed how it can help them in many ways. As a result of the research project and its effectiveness with helping young people, a carer who was on the committee board for East Sussex Foster Care Association, who experienced the work first hand with her foster child recommended our services to the committee.

In July 2016 East Sussex Foster Care Association won funding through the National Lottery for the project 'Stable Connections' with Intuitive Horse. The project offered 25 looked after children 6 sessions each to attend at Intuitive Horse with their long term carers. The project was set up to help the children in areas such as learning the basics of horse communication through observation and interaction with the horses, developing self-regulation, emotional awareness, communication skills, empathy, building self confidence and esteem, to feel calm and form attachment/relationship with their long term carers and others.

A key area of focus was identified for each child between the carer, child and facilitator and reflected on throughout the duration of the sessions to help the child integrate the experience with the horses with other experiences in their life where appropriate. This was done in a gentle, relaxed reflective style.

The project ended up offering 24 young people sessions in total. Not all sessions were attended for various reasons such as being away on holiday as it was in the summer, moving placement, deciding it was too far to drive to, the carer not being able to commit to the sessions or the child deciding not to come at the last minute.

The sessions:

Twenty-four children were invited to take part in the the project. Of these, 8 attended all the sessions, 5 attended 5 sessions, 5 attended 2-3 sessions, 5 attended 1 session and 2 didn't attend any sessions. Twelve feedback forms were collected.

Feedback from young people:

The young people were asked to find one word to describe their sessions with the horses. The words generated were:

- Happy
- Brilliant
- Incredible
- Has helped me with my feelings
- Unique
- Love
- Fun
- Joy
- Awemafantic (awesome, amazing, fantastic made into one word)
- Good
- Exlent (Excellent)
- Calm
- I love Bobby Bobsta
- I would definitely attend again

When asked if they would recommend this to other children, one child said 'yes for my sister to feel calm'. All the children said 'Yes' to recommending the experience to other children. Some children spontaneously wrote cards or drew pictures for the facilitator of their favourite horse/pony, showing us how much the sessions meant to them.

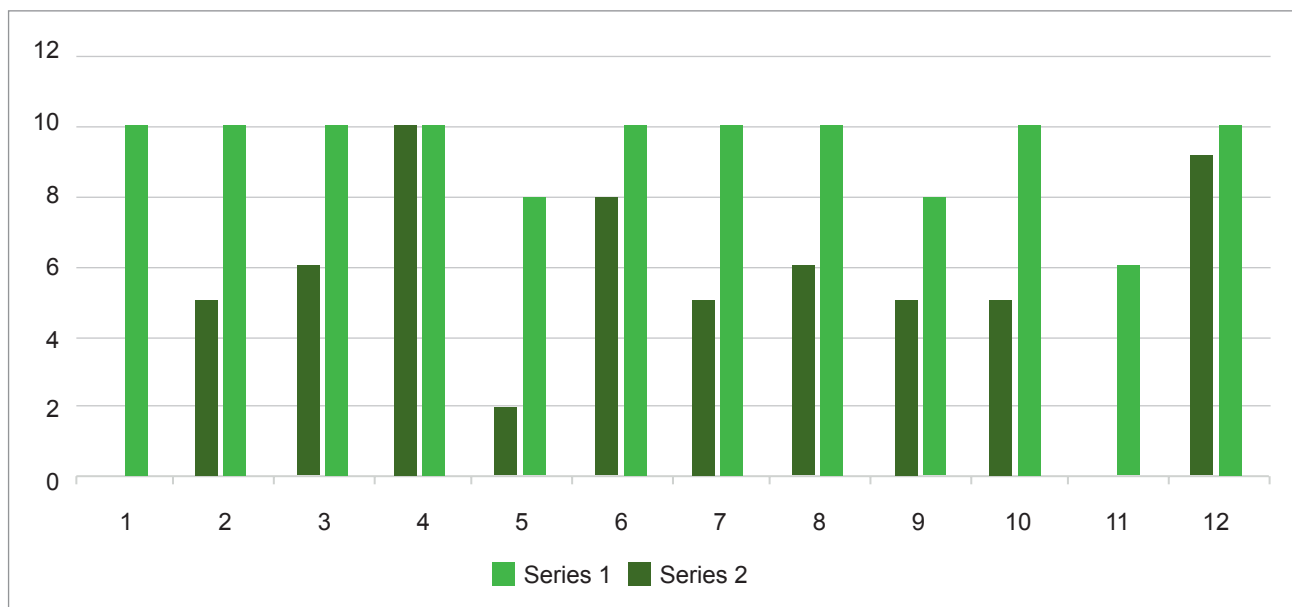
Confidence around horses:

When asked how confident they felt around horses after attending the sessions, the children's 'before and after' responses were recorded. 1 being not confident and 10 very confident.

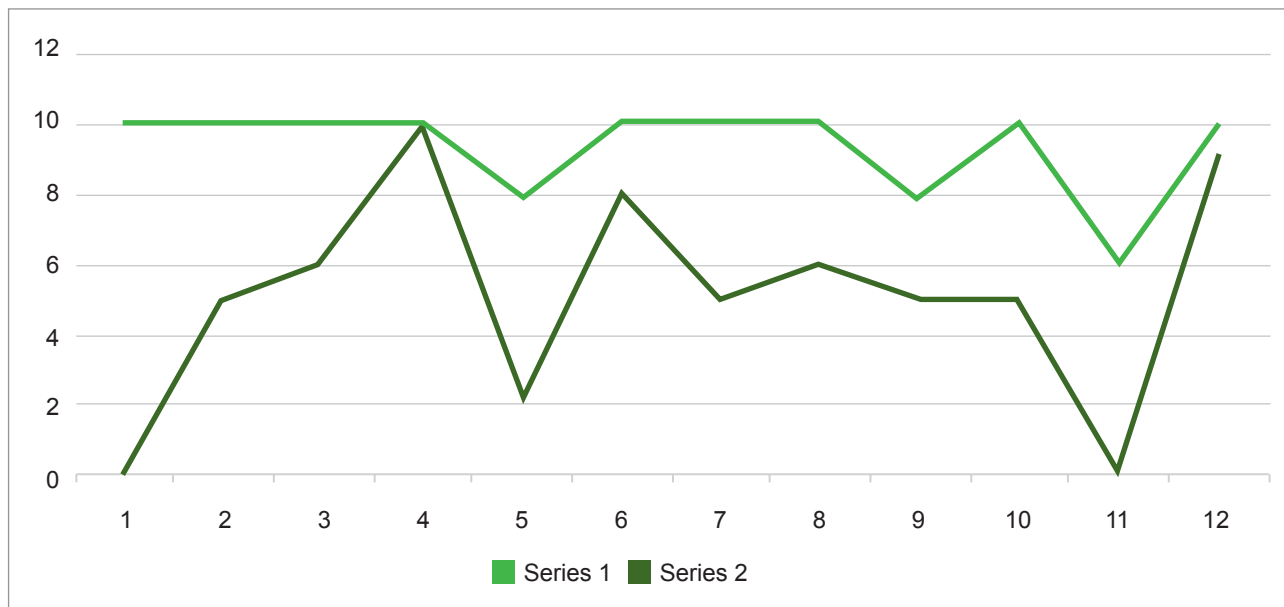
Confidence rating: Before sessions	Confidence rating: After sessions
0	10
5	10
6	10
10	10
2	8
8	10
5	10
6	10
5	8
5	10
0	6
9	10

These can be displayed graphically (below), to show the overall positive increase in confidence for all children (except for one whose confidence was already at 10 (maximum score)).

Confidence around horses



Confidence around horses



The Intuitive Horse model has progressed since the conclusion of the research. The project helped shape how we work with young people and children today, as well as our progression in the overall Intuitive Horse method. We offer six sessions as standard practice now for any young person or child who attends. Six sessions is often enough, depending on their reason for attending. Some young people/children who really take to the work do however continue with further sessions, either as top up sessions or in another block of six sessions again. This is frequently identified formally as part of their overall Personal Education Plan (PEP).

We have come to recognise the importance of having a carer or guardian present in the sessions, as the research notes, for encouragement and to enable dedicated and specific time carved out for them with their carer or key worker. We have also observed the carers' role has a significant impact on the young person/child being able to integrate their learning from the time with the horses into other areas of their life and potentially enabling a lasting impact beyond the visceral feelings they may take away with them each time, such as when they experience calmness or happiness after a session. The carer is seen as the bridge in this regard, so ensuring the carer understands and supports the work is essential. For this reason, we now have a consultation with the carer/guardian prior to the young person/child starting their sessions to talk them through how the sessions work and what their role in them is. We also keep in contact with them between sessions to keep updated on the young person's progress. This helps inform us how we might conduct the next session to address ongoing needs whilst also striking a balance for working intuitively with what the young person/child presents on the day.

Intuitive Horse has moved to a completely hands-off approach in terms of asking a horse to 'do' anything for a client, although this was only ever minimal beforehand (such as occasionally putting a head collar on a horse and leading them); to ensure emotional wellbeing for the horse at all times. We have observed this to be highly effective for both the young person/child and horse. Once the young person/child has gained a level of confidence around horses we extend the sessions to working with the whole herd. This is extremely impactful in many ways for the young person/child and horses. This mutually beneficial interaction makes the whole process authentic and also educates the young person/child on how to respect animals for the sentient beings they are.

The sessions always have a focus specific to the young person/child, that they and their carer have identified as being an area personal to them to work on such as confidence-building. The sessions offer focused attention to the area identified whilst also educating and helping them develop in the following areas:

- Experiencing calm
- Developing empathy
- Developing communication skills
- Learning how to listen to others and read body language
- Developing emotional awareness (Emotional Intelligence)
- Building confidence and self-esteem
- Developing focus and patience
- Building trusting relationships
- Understanding how their behaviour can have a direct impact on their immediate environment (others)
- Learning about horse behaviour and communication

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Appendix 1: Introduction letter and consent form

Horse project: Registration and Consent Form

Name, role and contact details of supporting adult:
Name of young person:
Emergency contact details:
Has the equine assisted personal development work been incorporated as part of the young person's PEP or other personalised plan?
Are there any health, safety, medical or other issues of which we need to be aware to ensure that the sessions are safe and enjoyable for all participants?

Is the young person happy to be part of a research project, including giving feedback as part of the process?

The research project can keep identities anonymous. Some people prefer to be acknowledged as part of the research project. Could both the supporting adult and young person state whether they wish to be acknowledged or kept anonymous? You will have the opportunity to change your mind later if necessary.

Supporting adult:

Young person:

‘I have read the Letter of Introduction and am happy with the proposed outline’

Supporting adult:

Date:

Signature:

Young person:

Date:

Signature:

Dear...

Emma Ross from Intuitive Horse, Hastings, and Dr. Amelia Roberts, a university lecturer (University of Roehampton and University of London) and educational researcher are undertaking a small pilot project. The aim is to explore 3 sessions of equine-assisted confidence building work with looked-after children.

We are looking for 5 participants to join us in working on the programme (see details below). Participants will need to be:

- A looked-after child or young person currently supported by a foster-carer or key worker. The child will need to be accompanied by this person at all times during the sessions.
- The young person must have a current PEP and the equine-assisted personal development sessions must be evaluated as being supportive of the child's overall goals and care/education plan.
- The young person must understand that this is a research project and their opinions of the sessions are extremely valuable. The foster-carer and/or key worker are also crucial in the feedback process.
- No known allergies or other health-related difficulty in respect of horses or a farm environment.

As this is a research project:

1. There is no charge for participating in the sessions.
2. Participants will be asked initially to complete and sign a registration and consent form.
3. The opinion of the young person and the key worker will be sought.
4. We would like to collect feedback after the sessions.
5. All individual information will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of the project.
6. We will show you the finished report and explain how we intend to use the report.
7. You have the right to withdraw at any time. This includes completing the sessions, but deciding that you do not wish to be part of the finished report.

If you would be interested in being part of this project or have any further questions, please contact Emma Ross on: info@intuitivehorse.co.uk

Further information about Intuitive Horse can be found at: <http://www.intuitivehorse.com/>

Appendix 2: The programme structure

Helping children build confidence through interaction with horses.

For children with difficulties with:

- Self-regulating, such as managing stress levels and impulse control
- Processing information and making sense of the world
- Managing relationships

Looked-after children and young people with attachment difficulties (up to 40% according to the Sutton Trust 2014) may have difficulties accessing school and maintaining relationships.

This 3 session outline is designed for young people who are already supported by a key worker.

Preliminary work

Young person and key worker agree an area of difficulty upon which they wish to focus. This could include:

- Anger management
- Impulse control
- Making/maintaining friendships
- Overwhelming feelings (e.g. sadness, anxiety, loneliness, low confidence)
- Difficulty in achieving a 'calm alert' state of mind.

Once this area is chosen, use the visual framework provided to explore some aspects of the issue in greater detail. There will also be a brief questionnaire and a registration form to be completed.

Session 1

Feeling safe and being calm – connecting with the horse

Picking the horse they would like to work with:

A selection of horses will be shown to the child and they will be asked to pick a horse they feel most drawn to. This process may take the entire session if the child finds it hard to make a decision or it may be a part of the first session. The facilitator will support them through the process.

Once the horse has been picked and some discussion over the decision has taken place we will progress into the arena with the child and horse.

The key worker or foster carer will be present at all times and can be seated in the viewing area.

Depending on how confident or unconfident the child is will depend on how soon they enter the arena with the horse.

The horse will be loose in the arena. The task for the child will be to go up to the horse to say hello, they can touch the horse if they would like to and they can ask any questions that they would like to the facilitator.

Approaching the horse may be a difficult task for the child and we will support the child through this process.

If the child has said hello to the horse and feels comfortable around the horse they will then be asked to explore different areas on the horse using their different senses one at a time and encouraged to describe it as they go along. e.g., how does the horse's hair feel on the neck, mane, nose. What direction does the hair sit in, how does the horse smell etc etc.

By engaging the child in their senses the intention is for them to become calm and in a present moment state and allow them to become aware of bodily sensations they may not have experienced before. e.g. temperature of the horse's body, feeling of different textures, feeling calm around another being.

Session 2

Knowing yourself: regulating impulse and listening to the body (maybe link this to a situation or experience that the young person finds difficult - visual framework) - explore horse's response to arising emotions and see how horse's response changes when young person recognises and can name the emotion and/or recognise associated physical sensation.

Self awareness in the body

This session will be continuing from the first with an emphasis on helping the child to recognise how they are feeling in the moment. It will build on the previous sessions exercises and experiences and only progress if the child is ready.

This will be done through introducing an exercise to encourage them to become aware of the body. This exercise is done with the facilitator talking them through it separate from the horse.

Once in the session with the horse the facilitator will then keep referring back to the child's awareness of their body and seeing if they can recognise how they feel when around the horse at certain times.

This will tie in with the child firstly approaching the horse, as they have done before, and becoming aware of how the horse is responding to them.

If the child is ready they will be asked to go up to the horse and put a rope around their neck, then a head collar.

The child will be asked, as before, how they felt the horse responded to them and through the facilitator's observations certain questions will be asked to help them recognise how they are feeling, how the horse is responding, how this runs parallel in their lives and how to achieve the task with the horse.

Session 3

Building confidence (especially in relationship building) Continue to build and deepen relationship with horse.

The child will approach the horse as they have learnt previously, use the senses and body awareness skills, put the head collar on and ask the horse to go for a walk with them. This session will focus on what it is like to be heard by another being. When they ask the horse to do something, the discussion will focus on how the horse responds and how can we improve on that if necessary.

Appendix 3: Data collection

GATHERING FEEDBACK:

This is done collaboratively with the young person and supporting adult both contributing.

Session 1.

1. Informal conversation with participant and supporting adult:

- a. Explain that we want to explore whether work with horses is enjoyable and helpful. Also, we are interested in any ideas that would make it better.
- b. Ask a little about participant, especially about their history/relationships with animals.

2. Identifying focus:

- a. Is there anything in your life that you would like to be easier?
- b. Visual framework: Put 'the thing' in the centre and discuss/write/draw elements in the 3 antecedent and consequent boxes. Facilitator may prompt the discussion, by focusing on physical sensations and emotional responses. Triggers, deep rooted issues, consequences for self and others, in both long and short term would all be relevant areas for inclusion if appropriate and participant centred.

3. Sliding scales:

It is hard to control my anger:

0 -----10

It is easy to calm myself down:

0 -----10

I can sometimes act without thinking:

0 -----10

I make friends easily:

0 -----10

I enjoy school:

0 -----10

I often feel tired:

0 -----10

Sometimes, I can feel:

Sadness

0 -----10

Anxiety

0 -----10

Loneliness

0 -----10

Low confidence

0 -----10

Thank you very much for your help.

Are you ready to spend some time with your horse?

Feedback after the session:

Researcher asks young person and supporting adult how they found the session. Drawing may be used as well or instead of discussion. This is brief and 'light touch' with the researcher jotting down notes and key phrases used.

This should be short, to allow participants to enjoy the conclusion of their session and not allow the research process to detract from this.

Researcher notes:

Session 2 unfolds without research scrutiny

Session 3 Feedback Session, conducted at end of session:

1. Informal conversation with participant and supporting adult:

- a. How have you found the overall experience? Would you, for example, recommend horses to be introduced to other young people?
- b. Do you think it has helped you in any area of your life?
- c. How could we improve the overall experience?

2. Identifying focus:

- a. At the beginning, you talked about Has there been any change for you?
- b. Visual framework: Put 'the thing' in the centre and discuss/write/draw elements in the 3 antecedent and consequent boxes. Facilitator may prompt the discussion, by focusing on physical sensations and emotional responses. Triggers, deep rooted issues, consequences for self and others, in both long and short term would all be relevant areas for inclusion if appropriate and participant centred.

3. Sliding scales:

It is hard to control my anger:

0 -----10

It is easy to calm myself down:

0 -----10

I can do things without thinking:

0 -----10

I make friends easily:

0 -----10

I enjoy school:

0 -----10

I often feel tired:

0 -----10

Sometimes, I can feel:

Sadness

0 -----10

Anxiety

0 -----10

Loneliness

0 -----10

Low confidence

0 -----10

Two more:

Did you enjoy this experience?

0 -----10

Should we offer it to other young people?

0 -----10

Any further thoughts?

Researcher asks young person and supporting if there is anything else to add. Drawing may be used as well or instead of discussion. This is brief and 'light touch' with the researcher jotting down notes and key phrases used.

Researcher notes:

Outline of Sessions

Over the 3 sessions the child will work with the same horse so they can start to build a relationship with it and recognise any progress.

After and throughout the 3 sessions the child will be asked how they think they have worked with the horse, how they would like to progress with the relationship with the horse and if they can take any learnings from their time with the horse to try in day to day life. The care worker will be able to learn some of the exercises to continue with the child when not around the horses to help the child become more and more familiar with the skills and to see that they can be used anywhere, not just with the horses.

Throughout each session the equine specialist will observe the horse's behaviour towards and around the child. This will give her insight to how the child may be feeling at that moment and start to recognise possible social patterns of the child. This information can then be used to ask the child how they are feeling/getting on in that moment and whether they can relate the experiences to their lives, then help them find a way to move through it.

Full permission from the children and their guardians has been granted to use the pictures in this report. None of the children who took part in the project are in the photos.



Intuitive Horse
"Seeing you for who you really are"



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