

# **A Feasibility study of an equine assisted intervention for young people with social and emotional issues**

## **Background and statement of problem**

This paper presents the findings from a feasibility study of an equine assisted intervention (EAI) which brings together young people with social and emotional issues and horses to learn natural horsemanship skills. The intervention under study is referred many young people with problems such as anxiety/depression, anger management/violence, ADHD, self-harm and relationship issues.

## **Study Aim and Objectives**

This feasibility study aimed to assess whether this intervention was suitable for further study using a randomised controlled trial. The different dimensions of the study as outlined below are intended to assess whether this intervention will lend itself to expansion and roll out across further areas in the UK if shown to be effective.

## **Study Design**

Before and after measure comparison study, using a feasibility study framework which outlines eight areas of focus which will be addressed (Bowen et al., 2009) acceptability, demand, implementation, practicality, adaptation, integration, expansion and efficacy testing.

## **Study population and sampling**

n=155 young people aged 8-18 make up the convenience sample.

## **Data Collection Methods and Measures**

Before and after measures were completed by the social worker or teacher who referred the young person the tool used is a star chart which was inspired by the

mental health recovery star tool (UK). A qualitative interview with charity founder to explore feasibility study areas was also undertaken.

### **Data Analysis Method**

We used a non-parametric, related sample sign test using SPSS Version 19.

### **Duration of study**

Two years.

### **Outcome/Results**

Statistically significant positive improvements across eight areas were shown through the analysis: Assertiveness, calmness, empathy, engagement with education, communication, taking responsibility, focus and perseverance and realistic analysis and planning. A further four skills were assessed two months after the intervention by the referrer which also showed significant improvement on analysis, engagement with education, problem behaviours, relationships and sense of identity.