

Families Fund Evaluation

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Introduction & Approach



HorseWorld Trust

- HorseWorld is a UK charity, formed in 1952
- We rescue, rehabilitate and rehome horses, with 110 horses on site and 180 in loan homes nearby
- Often the horses have been abandoned, neglected or abused - they have experienced trauma in their lives
- In 2007 we established the Discovery programme, an equine assisted learning provision, supporting 4 local authorities and welcoming around 300 young people on site each year
- In 2021 we wanted to take a more holistic approach to supporting young people by involving their families, so we established the Families Fund



Discovery Families Fund work

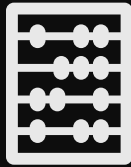
- Discovery students attend for a 90-minute session
- We wanted our Discovery young people to experience the programme with family members
- We invited 20 families of up to 6 people each, to attend for a half day, half the families would attend a second half day
- They learnt about the horses and worked together as a team to enjoy time with them.
- This involved grooming, leading, long reining and tackling challenging obstacles



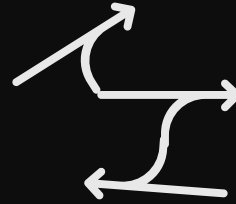
Approach to Evaluation:

A → B

Discussion with HorseWorld about the intervention aims



Researched measurement tools to find the most specific and user-friendly tools



Tool selection process in collaboration with HorseWorld – discussed the pros and cons of each tool



HorseWorld chose the tools, and these were put into a referrer pack / facilitator pack to be used throughout



The intervention ran across a few months, with data being collected for each family via an interactive questionnaire



HorseWorld sent us (Ann and Kez) the anonymised data for analysis

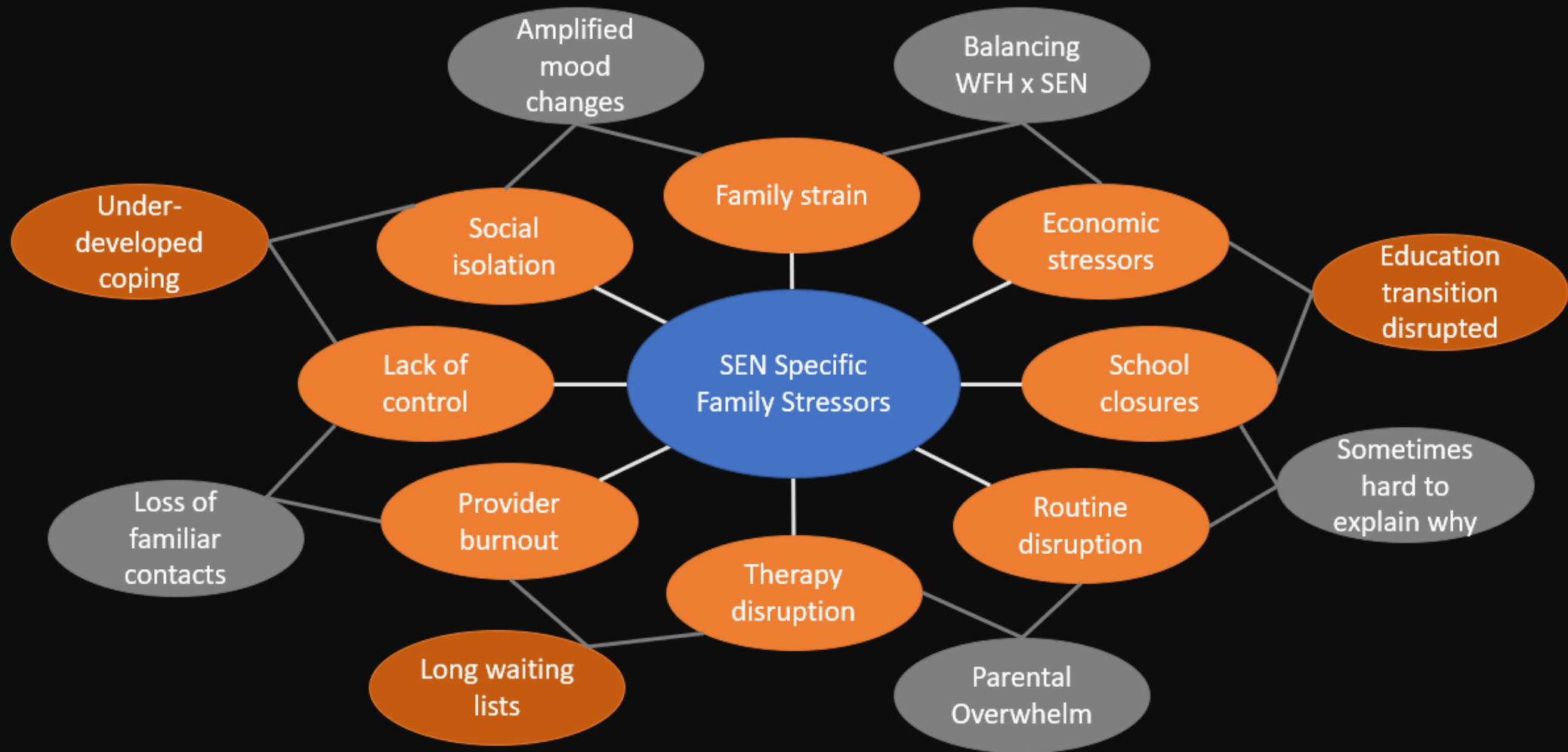


An internal report & workshop, a funder report, & publication in the HETI journal

Effects of the Covid-19 Crisis



Challenges adapting to Covid-19 lockdowns were amplified for SEN students, and many parents felt unprepared to take on specialised education tasks



HorseWorld Families Fund Aims & Outcomes



Families Fund Aims

Core

- Build positive relationships
- Improve wellbeing
- Develop communication skills

Secondary

- Confidence
- Quality time spent together as a family
- Build emotional skills

Skill-based objectives

- Leadership ability
- Sequencing skills and problem solving
- Ability to follow instructions

Referral data revealed a wide range of issues affecting families, with most families experiencing several issues at once

| Issue | % Affected |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Anxiety | 54% |
| Trauma | 46% |
| Parental separation | 38% |
| Domestic violence | 38% |
| Sibling overshadowing | 38% |
| ADHD | 38% |
| Engaged with other services | 38% |
| Poor sibling relationships | 31% |
| Child has violent episodes | 31% |
| Poor mental health | 23% |

Qualitative analysis of the referral forms found that a total of

36 separate issues

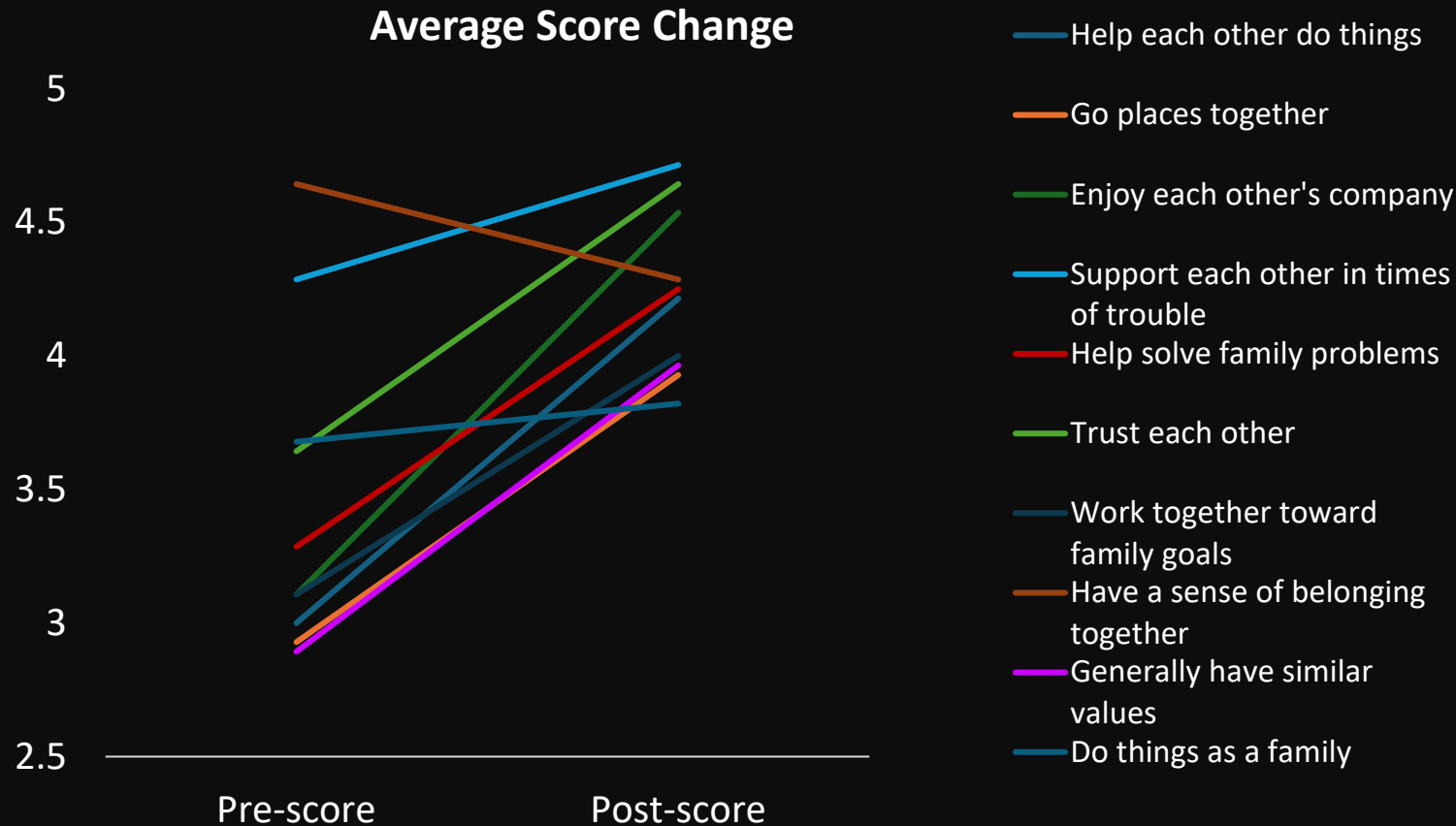
were detailed across the families, with each family experiencing

6.7 issues

on average.

Anxiety and trauma were the most frequently reported family issues, followed by parental separation and domestic violence.

Most items showed increased scores at post-test, particularly “Enjoying each others company” and “Helping each other do things”

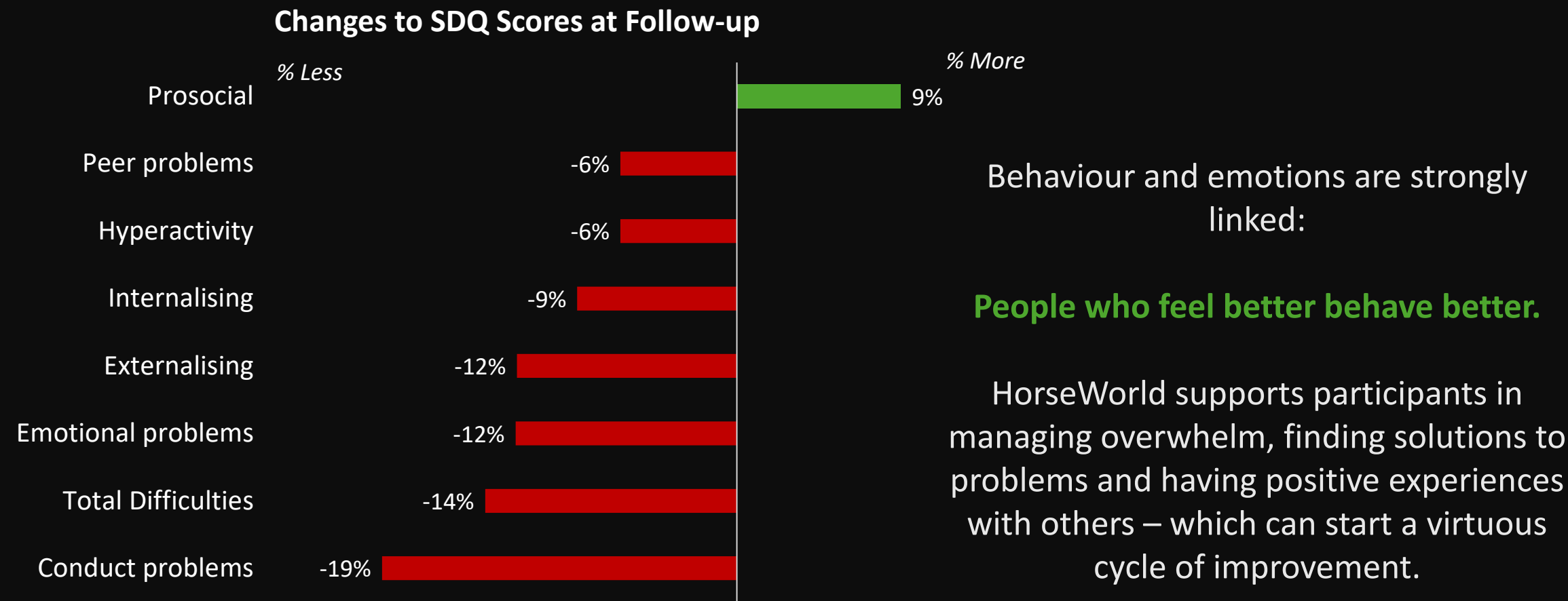


Most aspects showed substantial improvement at post-test compared to pre-test, although 4 families showed a decreased score on “Have a sense of belonging together” at post-test, whilst 3 showed an increase*.

It is possible that “Belonging together” represents an implicit / passive aspect of being a family, which is impacted by examining and working on explicit / active factors such as “working together towards family goals”.

* The difference was not significant when analysed using a T-test

Referrer SDQ ratings at follow-up revealed positive changes compared to before the sessions, particularly for reducing conduct problems



Summary | The Future of the Families Fund

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| We found that a short-term family-focussed intervention is effective for improving family wellbeing | Goal setting could help families to focus on intended outcomes & develop closer bonds | Both the Discovery horses and facilitators needed some downtime between terms; this is an important operational consideration | The Family closeness star was a useful tool – but needs to be adapted more closely to the participant group | We found significant positive results, which indicate that HorseWorld's Families Fund program improved family wellbeing |



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Thank You

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