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BA (PD) Leadership and Management

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**Module: Leading Inquiry –The Transitions programme run
by MACS(NI).**

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Statement of Authenticity

I hereby declare that the work produced throughout this research inquiry is my own and any secondary material has been appropriately acknowledged and referenced.

Signed: *Jennifer Nelson*

Jennifer Nelson Date: 09.03.15

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PART 1

1.0 Research Issue

This research inquiry was undertaken to evaluate the Transitions Equine Assisted Learning programme for young people involved in the Macs Supporting Young People charity and how possible improvements or enhancements could be made for the benefit of the MACS organisation.

1.1 Organisational Context

Macs Supporting Young People charity was formed in 1990 and provides a number of support services for young people such as Supported Housing, the Participation Now Project and Volunteers Inspiring Project. The young people involved with MACS have generally experienced issues such as homelessness, substance abuse, lack of education, leaving care or are generally considered at-risk. Macs use a project called “Transitions” Equine Assisted Growth and Learning in which equine specialists work with young people to explore personal meaning through activities with horses. These sessions help young people reflect on their thoughts and behaviours by using metaphors and observations generated from their participation in the programme. They encounter both benefits and challenges by participating in these sessions. (MACSNI, 2014)

1.2 Potential Professional Practice benefits

After determining the individual benefits and challenges of Equine Assisted Learning for these young people through the research it could be possible to replicate and enhance projects like these in all youth support clubs or agencies if it is deemed to be popular and beneficial. The evaluation of the programme could determine the benefits of the programme for the client and organisation and determine where improvements could be made to make it even more successful. As this area is of interest to the researcher it may be beneficial for the researcher to undergo equine assisted learning training as a facilitator if the research indicates that there is a demand for this therapy.

PART 2

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 What is Equine Assisted Learning?

Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) is the combined use of horses, a licensed therapist, an equine specialist and the patient or client (Trask, 2010). It is an emerging field of therapy in which horses are used as a tool for emotional growth and learning (Tetreault, 2006). EAP uses metaphors in the activities as an effective technique for working with individuals. The use of non-verbal communication with the horse helps clients understand how to relate to people in a more socially acceptable way. A model of EAP is Equine Assisted Growth and Learning and provides a structure for Equine Assisted Learning sessions which involves experiential learning (EAGALA, 2014). Experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, skills and values from direct experiences outside a traditional setting (ucdenver, 2014). All sessions are focused from the ground with no riding involved. Equine therapy is a way to experience change in a practical way by challenging people to look at themselves and the world in a new way.

2.2 How does equine assisted therapy work?

Horses have several characteristics similar to humans in their behavioural responses and social structures (Schultz, 2007). They live in herds in the wild and communicate with one another using finely tuned body language. An article written by McVeigh (2012), mentions a therapy counsellor Gabrielle Gardner of Shine For Life charity, who speaks about the horse being a mirror of human body language and capable of picking up on the way in which people are feeling and responding to this accordingly. Horses require humans to be engaged in physical and mental work for the sessions to be successful. This teaches groups or individuals that to be able to get the horse to respond to them as they wish then perhaps they need to reflect on and change their own behaviours and emotions (eagala, 2014). The students could ask themselves questions such as; how can they change their behaviour to make progress? Or; why did the horse react to them in that way? Horses are social animals like humans and have their own personalities, moods and attitudes and so provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning (Kersten and Thomas, 2004). A previous pilot study by MACSNI (2012) found that the horses facilitated self-awareness in a deep and profound way because the horse has no expectations, prejudices or motives. Some of the respondents who took part in this survey mentioned that by taking part in the EAL programme they were able to relate what was happening in these sessions to problems they were having with family and other personal relationships.

One respondent quoted;

“No one has ever hung out with me like this before” and the MACS programme facilitator concluded by saying “He left the arena with shining eyes and so did we” (MACSNI, 2012).

2.3 The benefits and challenges of Equine Assisted Learning

Young people who have had troubled pasts and struggle to make progress have made significant breakthroughs with equine therapy. Vivo (2011) mentions that it encourages students to take risks, attempt to problem solve by identifying and coping with their feelings and teaches the student to set boundaries. The student can learn valuable skills such as how to improve their behaviour, self-confidence and communication (Foran and Jones, 2002). A study carried out by Suarez (2005) to fill the research gap by examining the therapeutic outcomes of EAP in at-risk youths found that at-risk adolescents who participate in an EAP programme experience positive therapeutic progress and psychosocial functioning which both involve healing and the relationship between social and psychological functioning than those who do not participate in an EAP programme. An article written by Kane (2009) backs up this research but also mentions that when used in conjunction with other treatment types such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), experiential learning and meditation, equine assisted therapy and equine assisted psychotherapy facilitates the healing process. She also mentions that it is becoming an increasingly popular form of therapy depending on the particular needs of the patient (Kane, 2009). EAP is generally considered as short-term or a “brief” approach due to its intensity and effectiveness (Trask, 2010). Mental health professionals and researchers are always looking for methods of treatment for the problems of adolescents (Suarez, 2005).

Trask (2010), mentions that President Obama allocated funds to use EAP for army veterans rehabilitation and because it played a huge part in the rehabilitation of Jaycee Dugard’s abduction case. An American horse trainer named Frank Levinson mentions that it has been clinically documented that being around horse’s changes people’s emotions by calming the person down and becoming more centred and focused (McVeigh, 2012). As horses are large and powerful they can seem intimidating therefore challenging and have been reported to teach students to overcome fear and develop confidence at the same time (EAGALA, 2014).

An OFSTED evaluation report (2012) regarding a Nottingham based equine therapy centre called Rainbow Horses has commented on the impact of the EAL programme on students who suffered from both isolation and withdrawal issues in the past but who can now interact with other students on the programme. The report also mentions another student suffering from “selective mutism” engaged in extensive conversation with the inspector. Selective mutism now referred to as “elective mutism” which is a complex childhood anxiety disorder characterised by the child’s inability to speak effectively in social settings except where the child feels comfortable and relaxed (Shipon-Blum, 2015). Many of the challenges EAL students face are lack of communication skills, self-esteem issues and mental health issues. The Rainbow Horses OFSTED report mentions that these students make significant progress in personal interaction, social interaction and task engagement (Rainbow Horses, 2014). These findings are also backed up by O’Connor’s quote below.

O’Connor (2006; 5) states;

“It is the horse’s difference to the socialised man that brings about the success that the traditional therapist cannot achieve. Horses allow us to unite unconditionally with another living being. We can take our masks off without fear of rejection. The horse has no expectations, prejudice or motives. All of these traits allow the patient to open up, reveal themselves and receive feedback from the horse’s responses. This is the key to healing, expressing true feelings and interaction with another being to develop a true self- concept”

2.4 Key research questions

The governing body for equine assisted growth and learning known as Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association use the EAGALA model. This model focuses on using an equine specialist, mental health professional and the client. The sessions are based from the ground (no horse riding), are solution oriented and use a team approach to helping clients find solutions to problems and overcome issues such as homelessness, addiction, relationship problems and low esteem. The MACSNI charity use this as a form of therapy in a programme called Transitions so the researcher identified the following key questions relating to this programme.

1. What are the benefits and challenges of taking part in an equine assisted learning programme for MACSNI clients?
2. How can the MACSNI Transitions programme be improved?

PART 3

3.0 Research Methodology

3.0 Action Research Strategy

An action research strategy has been adopted for the purposes of this assignment. Action research is applied research which is carried out when a change or need is identified in the work place, which needs a recommendation for good practice or enhances the performance of the organisation (Bell, 2010). Walsh (2001) mentions Kumar (1996) who asserts that research investigations should follow a process that is undertaken within a clear philosophical framework and should use procedures methods and techniques that are valid and reliable. The research should be designed to be unbiased and objective. The focus of this inquiry was to determine the benefits and challenges of Equine Assisted Growth and Learning to young people in the Macs Supporting Young People charity and possible improvements or enhancements which could be made to make the programme even more successful in the future. Bell (1991:8) cites Cohen and Manion (1994:192) who point out that an important feature of action research is that the task is not finished when the project ends which is why possible future enhancements or improvements to the EAL programme at MACS was investigated. The research steps involved in action research and operationalised in this research are identifying an issue, gathering preliminary data, contacting the relevant personnel for permission, designing questionnaires, planning, research, reflection and evaluation. These steps will be taken by firstly contacting the Macs Supporting Young people organisation to gain permission for the research to be undertaken. Preliminary information will be gathered for the literature review by using various resources such as internet search engines, academic papers surrounding the topic of Equine Assisted Growth and Learning, books and newspaper articles. Planning will involve designing questionnaires on Survey Monkey which will cover two main research questions developed from the literature review in this assignment.

According to Bell (1999) “the research questions arise from an analysis of the problems of the practitioners in the situation and the immediate aim then becomes that of understanding those problems”.

When the questionnaires are designed they will be sent by email link online to the Transitions facilitators who will then ask the young people involved to complete the questionnaires. Other information will be gathered by carrying out interviews with approximately two EAL facilitators. When the questionnaires have been completed, results will be analysed, reported and evaluated. Reflection of learning in this module will identify the important lessons learned and should identify unresolved questions.

3.1 Inductive Approach

Inductive reasoning is open ended and exploratory and can begin with specific observations and measures which can be explored and then finally developed into conclusions or theories (Trochim, 2006). According to Walsh (2001) researchers who begin with a general question are said to adopt an inductive approach. This approach has been adopted for this inquiry as previous research has already shown that Equine Assisted Learning has been successful as a form of therapy for young people with troubled pasts.

As the Macs organisation already use this form of therapy, this study will determine the individual benefits and challenges for the young people involved by observing and processing their answers in survey monkey. The results will be analysed to see if any possible patterns emerge. In an inductive approach there is no theory at the beginning point of the research and theories may evolve as a result of the research (Research Methodology, 2015). This investigation will also determine where enhancements or development can be made to improve the programme even more by a possible theory evolving. Figure 1.0 below outlines the form of an inductive approach. It is often referred to as a “bottom up” approach where the researcher observes something and tries to identify a pattern before reaching a conclusion or theory.

Figure 1.0



Source (Research Methodology, 2015)

3.2 Respondent Sample and Sampling Procedure

The listing of the accessible population from which the researcher will draw their sample is called the sampling frame (Trochim, 2006). The respondent sample groups for this research were eight young clients who participate in the Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme through the MACS organisation and the EAL facilitators. These respondent samples have been chosen as they are directly involved in the Equine Assisted Learning programme and can assist in determining the benefits and challenges of EAL.

3.3 Respondent sample Group 1 – Clients

The sample is the group of people who the researcher selects to be in their study (Trochim, 2006). Sampling allows the researcher to study a relatively smaller number of units in place of a target population and to obtain data that are representative of a whole target population. Sampling is choosing the units of the target population which are to be included in the study (Sarantakos, 1997). After researching Equine Assisted Learning on the internet it was established that the MACS organisation facilitated this programme for young people from troubled backgrounds so saturation sampling was used for this research as the clients participating in the EAL group are readily available for sampling and have very recently taken part in the Transitions EAL programme and are a small group.

3.4 Respondent Sample group 2- EAL Facilitators

As this sample group is small purposive sampling will be used. Crossman (2015) describes purposive sampling as a sample that is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. Semi structured interviews will be carried out with two readily available EAL programme facilitators who are directly involved in the Transitions programme. Semi structured interviews lie somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews (McKeaveney, 2015). One facilitator is the EAL co-ordinator for Northern Ireland.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The main types of data collection instruments are questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations and indirect methods such as desk research, content analysis and projective methods. For this inquiry the data collection instruments chosen were questionnaires and semi structured interviews.

3.6 Client Questionnaires

Questionnaires were chosen as a data collection method for the young people involved in the MACS EAL programme as they allow the researcher to ask a variety of open and closed structured questions surrounding the subject area of EAL. They are a useful tool for gathering information of people's behaviour (Kirklees Council, 2015).

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection will be collected. The qualitative approach involves finding out what people think, their perceptions and how they interpret meanings. The quantitative approach is about asking questions in a structured way so the researcher can produce hard facts and figures to guide them (Willis, 2009). As a piloting exercise the researcher contacted the EAL facilitator to ask if they wished for specific questions to be added to the questionnaire. Taking this into account the researcher designed both open and closed ended questions to capture both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.7 EAL Facilitator Semi Structured interviews

Interviews can provide valuable insights into the research topic (Willis, 2009). Two Semi structured interviews involving the EAL facilitators at MACS was another form of data collection as they are directly involved with the programme and can offer a greater insight and knowledge regarding the benefits and challenges of the programme. They were also asked four specific questions from management perspective and offered insight as to how the programme could be enhanced. As they facilitate the course they have seen first-hand the types of challenges and benefits faced by the young people involved the EAL programme.

3.8 Research Ethics

When people are involved as participants in research there is specific interest in the analysis of ethics issues which may be raised (Walton, 2015). A research code of ethics has been presented with each questionnaire so respondents are aware that ethics issues have been addressed and taken into consideration. Please see appendix for details.

Part 4 Research Results and Reflection on Practice and Learning

4.0 Summary of Research Results

This research inquiry was to determine the benefits and challenges of participating in the Transitions Equine Assisted Learning programme to young clients in MACSNI and to determine if any improvements could be made to the programme to benefit the organisation. An equine facilitator within MACSNI was contacted to gain permission to undertake the research. After permission was granted the researcher determined there would be a total of eight young people to be used as a respondent sample. Questionnaires were sent by email link initially but proved to be a problem for the EAL facilitator due to a change of employment role and there was also a concern that the young clients involved would not complete the questionnaires by themselves. It was then decided by both the researcher and EAL facilitator that the questionnaires would be printed by the EAL facilitator and completed manually by the young clients involved. This proved useful as the young clients have a trusting relationship with the EAL facilitator and felt they could answer both open and closed ended questions while also expressing further comments throughout the questionnaires. The questionnaire results data was then entered manually into SurveyMonkey.com. Interviews with two EAL facilitators also took place to collect further data. In terms of the key questions asked in this research; the main results are as follows.

4.1 Research Results – The Challenges of participating in the Transitions programme at MACSNI.

The research results have indicated that 100% out of respondents didn't know what to expect and 22.2% of respondents confirmed they were nervous when starting the transitions programme. As Eagala (2014) mentions that some people find horses intimidating due to their size and also that horses have their own personalities and moods so being unpredictable. Perhaps these were the reasons the young people felt nervous and were unsure of what to expect. When asked what kind of emotions the respondents felt when starting the programme 55.5% said they felt anxious and 22.22% said they felt fear, which signifies that these were challenges involved with participating in the programme. (please see appendix for full details).

When asked to rank challenges in order of importance respondents ranked feeling intimidated by horses as their leading challenge. Other challenges faced were lack of confidence, anxiety and lack of communications skills. It would seem that there is a correlation between these results and the Rainbow Horses (2014) literature as they mention some of the biggest challenges faced by EAL students are lack of communication skills, mental health issues and self-esteem issues.

4.2 Research results – The benefits of participating in the Transitions programme within MACSNI.

When asked whether the Transitions programme had been of benefit to the respondents 88.89% answered yes and the remaining 11.11% felt they were unsure. When the clients were asked how the transitions programme benefitted them they mentioned they had improved communication skills and more self-confidence. One respondent quoted:

“The programme made me think about myself, speak up for myself, I feel stronger and can see a difference in myself”.

These results are backed up by Foran and Jones (2002) who mention that the student can learn valuable skills such as how to improve their behaviour, self-confidence and communication through EAL. Other benefits which the clients mentioned were problem solving, patience and improved mental health. These results seem to correlate to Vivo (2011) who mentions that EAL encourages students to take risks, attempt to problem solve by identifying and coping with their feelings and teaches the student to set boundaries. Perhaps by teaching the clients to reach their own conclusions by using metaphors can benefit them by improving their self-esteem too.

The results also outline what respondents enjoyed most about the transitions programme and 100% choose working with the horses. (see appendix for further details). Perhaps O’Connor (2006) was correct when they said horses allow us to unite unconditionally with another living being and perhaps these young people began to feel more comfortable working around them as the Transitions course progressed. One respondent quoted that they particularly liked grooming the horses therefore enjoying the interaction. Perhaps Frank Levinson as cited by McVeigh (2012) was correct by saying that that being around horse’s changes people’s emotions by calming the person down and becoming more centred and focused.

4.3 – The Improvements which could be made to the Transitions programme at MACSNI

When asked what improvements could be made to the Transitions programme at MACSNI two EAL facilitators responded by saying that they felt the Transitions programme should be a main service for young people and not just a part time programme. Often the Transitions programme takes up a lot of the EAL facilitators’ time which means that the facilitators have less time to spend with other at-risk young people. All facilitators mentioned they felt the main benefits of EAL for clients were improved communication skills, improved confidence and helped the clients identify goals. The challenges mentioned were feeling intimidated by the horses and getting the young people to commit and stick to the programme. Trask (2010) mentions that EAP is generally considered as short-term or a “brief” approach due to its intensity and effectiveness so perhaps this is a key to the young people sticking to the programme.

4.4 Reflection on practice

4.4.1 Recommendations

1. As many benefits of EAL have been outlined through this research perhaps with increased funding MACSNI could use Transitions as a main service therefore making it more available to more young people.
2. The EAL facilitators mentioned that it may be a good idea to develop a specific Transitions department which would run the programme entirely with its own specialised staff. This again would depend on allocated funding.
3. If a separate Transitions department was developed and set up, perhaps this would allow the current EAL facilitators to spend more time with other at-risk young people who participate in other programmes.
4. Creating more awareness of EAL and its benefits could eventually assist in securing more funding for the Transitions programme therefore the above recommendations could take place.

4.5 Reflection on learning

Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience and evaluate it (Boud et al, 1985). On reflection I have realised that by carrying out this research inquiry I have gained a much broader understanding of Equine Assisted Learning and its benefits. I felt I had to be proactive by contacting the MACSNI charity to gain permission to carry out the research as I felt it may benefit my career by opening new doors and possibly at a later stage commencing EAL facilitator training. As I researched the literature review I realised that as an equine industry professional remaining unbiased throughout the research was important because previous research by the MACSNI charity indicated that EAL may only be successful if the client is ready to delve into their past and may not suit everyone who participates. As I progressed through the methodology and sent out the questionnaires I felt anxious and questioned whether I would receive any completed questionnaires from the young people. On reflection it may have been best to organise a specific day with the EAL facilitator to come to meet some of the young people so that I could build a rapport with them before asking them to complete a questionnaire. As the EAL facilitator has a good relationship with the young clients, they were happy to complete the questionnaires manually when approached by him. The research inquiry experience has been an important part of my degree so far as I now feel more confident when considering topics for my dissertation. I also feel that being as prepared as possible and allocating a decent timeframe for collecting the data will assist things to run more smoothly. Being granted permission to complete the research, completing the literature review and seeing the results come together has given the most satisfaction in this unit.

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Appendix

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(ii) Covering Letter

26 Larch Lane,
Lisburn,
Co. Antrim
BT28 2ZX

Survey Questionnaire

A review of the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning programme within the MAC Supporting Young People association.

Dear Trevor,

Further to our telephone conversation a few days ago, I am delighted you confirmed that MACS are participating in the research I am undertaking as part of my degree programme. Equine assisted learning has always been a keen interest of mine and after doing some internet research on the EAGALA website I saw that the MACS group used this form of therapy. The research will involve reviewing the EAL course and finding out its benefits and possible challenges to some of the young people involved in your organisation. The results will not be published and are for my own studies only. As discussed feedback and results can be forwarded to you with the hope they may be beneficial to your organisation by evaluating the EAL course and its benefits to young people.

To be able to undertake this research I am required to use questionnaires as a means of collecting data. Would it be possible to have some of the youth members and previous course participants (as mentioned by you) complete some of these? I will send a link for the questionnaire survey by email so participants can complete them but if computer access will be a problem then I can print a number of questionnaires and bring them along at a time which suits to have them completed.

There will be approximately 10-12 questions on the questionnaire and all questions will be centred on the EAL course and its benefits and challenges to the young people participating. As discussed I do not intend to ask sensitive questions surrounding the young people's backgrounds etc. I aim to have the questionnaires ready for completion and sent to you in approximately a fortnight's time as discussed. I have over 20 years' experience working with horses and am at present completing a Level 3 Assessors award so I have experience working with young people. I also have an Enhanced Access NI certificate.

Can you please let me know if it will be ok to send the questionnaires by email link or whether they should be printed in hard copy etc? My contact details can be found below.

Many thanks in advance

Jennifer Nelson Mobile 078 85505959 Email Jennifer.cullen09@yahoo.co.uk

(iii) Covering Letter- Transitions Participants

26 Larch Lane,
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18.02.15

Survey Questionnaire

An evaluation of the Transitions programme within the MACSNI organisation.

Dear Transitions Participant,

Further to a telephone conversation with Trevor McMahon (Transitions co-ordinator) I am delighted to confirm that MACSNI are participating in the research I am undertaking as part of my degree programme. Equine assisted learning has always been a keen interest of mine and after doing some internet research on the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association website I saw that the MACS group used this programme. The research will involve reviewing the Transitions course and finding out its benefits and possible challenges to the young people involved in your organisation. Once processed the results will be sent to Trevor McMahon (Transitions co-ordinator) and are for my own studies only.

To be able to undertake this research I am required to use questionnaires as a means of collecting data .Would it be possible to have you the participant complete one of these to find out the benefits and challenges involved with participating on the Transitions programme? There will be approximately 12-13 multiple choice questions on the questionnaire and should take no longer than a few minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous and I do not endeavour to ask sensitive questions surrounding any participant's backgrounds etc. Your involvement in this survey will be greatly appreciated and the results of the survey will hopefully be of value to MACSNI as a means of evaluating Transitions. Please refer to the code of ethics at the end of the survey for further information.

Many thanks in advance for your co-operation

Jennifer Nelson

Mobile 078 85505959 Email jennifer.cullen09@yahoo.co.uk

(iv) Initial email sent to MACSNI to gain permission to evaluate the Transitions programme within MACSNI.

Equine assisted growth and learning

me
To
TrevorMcMahon@macsni.org
Jan 17

Good morning Trevor,

I am writing to you as I am studying a part time degree which requires me to undertake some research involving using questionnaires and possibly interviews to investigate a topic of interest to me which is equine assisted growth and learning and its benefits to young people. I have looked through your website and noticed you use one of these equine programmes with young people.

I have over 20 years' experience working with horses and have always felt the benefits of this so I am extremely interested in how it benefits teenagers from different backgrounds and how they feel it benefits them etc.

This is a small scale research project and the results will not be published etc as it is for my own studies only. I wondered if it would be possible to ask some of the young people involved in the equine programme if they would mind filling out a short questionnaire to find out their views and experiences from the equine assisted growth and learning? I have an enhanced access NI check certificate validated in the last month or so. I am also working towards a BTEC level 3 assessor award as I enjoy working with young people in work based situations.

Would it be possible to bring some questionnaires along on a day that some of these young people meet and perhaps speak to a couple of members of staff? I am based in the Lisburn area. If it would suit better to arrange a phonecall to discuss that is fine too.

Many thanks and I look forward to speaking to you.

Jennifer

Sent

(v) Leading Inquiry: Initial Research Planning Framework

Ethical and Access issues: Permission was granted from the Transitions co-ordinator and Leading Inquiry tutor to ask programme participants to fill out questionnaires and carry out interviews or focus groups.

Research Issue: An evaluation of the Transitions Equine Assisted Growth and Learning programme within MACSNI.

What are the benefits and challenges of taking part in an equine assisted learning programme for MACS clients? Has the Macs EAGL programme impacted positively on the behaviour and attitudes of participants?

How can the Macs EAGL programme be improved?

Why did MACSNI decide to facilitate the Transitions programme?

Literature Review: (relevant literature published on your research issue)

The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) consider themselves as the global standard for equine assisted psychotherapy and personal development (EAGALA, 2010). They use their own model which describes the equine assisted learning sessions as team driven and solution based. Their vision is that every person worldwide will have access to programmes such as Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Equine Assisted Learning. These services help change the lives of people who have experienced trauma, mental illness, addiction and homelessness. The MACSNI charity supports young people with problems such as these and uses an Equine Assisted Growth and Learning programme called Transitions to help overcome these issues.

These Equine Assisted Learning programmes have been used widely for these reasons in the U.S and are now becoming more popular as therapy for the U.S. war veterans (Brownley, 2014 cited by EAGALA, 2014).

Methodology:

Research Questions	Sampling Frame	Respondent Sample (s)	Sampling Procedures	Research strategy and methodological approach	Data Collection Instruments
<p>Q1. What are the benefits and challenges of taking part in an equine assisted learning programme for MACS clients?</p> <p>Q2. How can the Macs EAGL programme be improved</p>	<p>Students, Transitions facilitators</p>	<p>Approx 8 questionnaires</p>	<p>Q1. Saturation sampling will be used as the Equine Assisted Learning group currently participating in the course are readily available for sampling. Q2.Purposive sampling will be used by holding focus groups or interviews with readily available Youth mentors.</p>	<p>Strategy – Action research</p> <p>Methodological approach Quantitative approach for Q1&2 Qualitative approach for Q1 &2</p>	<p>Q1.Questionnaires to be filled out by young people participating on the EAL course for Q.1.</p> <p>Q2.Interviews & Focus groups with youth mentors and EAL course facilitators.</p>

(vi) A research inquiry to evaluate the Transitions programme within MACSNI.

Welcome to My Survey

26 Larch Lane,

Lisburn,

Co. Antrim

BT28 2ZX

18.02.15

Survey Questionnaire

An evaluation of the Transitions programme within the MACSNI organisation.

Dear Transitions Participant,

Further to a telephone conversation with Trevor McMahon (Transitions co-ordinator) I am delighted to confirm that MACSNI are participating in the research I am undertaking as part of my degree programme. Equine assisted learning has always been a keen interest of mine and after doing some internet research on the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association website I saw that the MACS group used this programme. The research will involve reviewing the Transitions course and finding out its benefits and possible challenges to the young people involved in your organisation. Once processed the results will be sent to Trevor McMahon (Transitions co-ordinator) and are for my own studies only.

To be able to undertake this research I am required to use questionnaires as a means of collecting data. Would it be possible to have you the participant complete one of these to find out the benefits and challenges involved with participating on the Transitions programme? There will be approximately 12-13 multiple choice questions on the questionnaire and should take no longer than a few minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous and I do not endeavour to ask sensitive questions surrounding any participant's backgrounds etc. Your involvement in this survey will be greatly appreciated and the results of the survey will hopefully be of value to MACSNI as a means of evaluating Transitions. Please refer to the ethical code of conduct page at the end.

Many thanks in advance for your co-operation

Jennifer Nelson

Mobile 078 85505959 Email jennifer.cullen09@yahoo.co.uk

A research inquiry to evaluate the Transitions programme within MACSNI.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. How much experience with horses did you have before participating on the Transitions programme?

- A lot of experience
- A little experience
- No previous experience

3. How did you feel when starting the Transitions programme for the first time? Please tick more than one box if required.

- Nervous
- Confident
- Didn't know what to expect

4. What kind of emotions did you feel when meeting the horses for the first time? Please tick more than one box if required.

- Excited
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Hope

5. How have you found the Transitions programme?

- A positive experience
- Unhelpful
- Not sure

6. What sort of challenges did you face when participating on the Transitions programme? Please rank in order of relevance to you.

Felt intimidated by the horses

Lack of confidence

Sadness

Lack of Communication skills

Low self esteem

Anxiety

Depression

7. Has the Transitions programme been of benefit to you?

Yes

No

Not Sure

8. In what way has the Transitions programme been of benefit to you?

9. Has the programme benefited you in any of the following areas? Please rank in order of relevance to you.

Increased confidence

Problem solving

Patience

Better communication skills

Improved mental health

More positive about the future

Better self esteem

None of the above

10. Do you think the involvement with horses and participating in the Transitions programme can help deal with problems such as the ones mentioned below? Please tick relevant boxes

	Yes	No	Maybe	None of these
Mental Health Issues	<input type="radio"/> Mental Health Issues Yes	<input type="radio"/> Mental Health Issues No	<input type="radio"/> Mental Health Issues Maybe	<input type="radio"/> Mental Health Issues None of these
Relationship problems	<input type="radio"/> Relationship problems Yes	<input type="radio"/> Relationship problems No	<input type="radio"/> Relationship problems Maybe	<input type="radio"/> Relationship problems None of these
Self Harm	<input type="radio"/> Self Harm Yes	<input type="radio"/> Self Harm No	<input type="radio"/> Self Harm Maybe	<input type="radio"/> Self Harm None of these
Low self esteem	<input type="radio"/> Low self esteem Yes	<input type="radio"/> Low self esteem No	<input type="radio"/> Low self esteem Maybe	<input type="radio"/> Low self esteem None of these
Loneliness	<input type="radio"/> Loneliness Yes	<input type="radio"/> Loneliness No	<input type="radio"/> Loneliness Maybe	<input type="radio"/> Loneliness None of these

11. What did you enjoy most about the Transitions programme? Please tick more than one box if required.

- A new challenge
- Improved skills
- Working with the horses
- Making new friends
- Other (please state below)

Other (please specify)

12. Would you recommend Transitions to others and if so why?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

(please specify)

13. Do you feel the Transitions programme could be improved and if so why?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Other (please specify)

A research inquiry to evaluate the Transitions programme within the MACSNI organisation.

Ethical Code of Practice

This research inquiry involves evaluating the benefits and challenges for young people participating in the Transitions programme at MACSNI, Before conducting this research permission was granted at the initial research planning stage from the BA(PD) Research Inquiry course tutor and the Transitions equine co-ordinator at MACSNI. A proposal letter was sent to the Transitions co-ordinator by email outlining the basis of the research and an explanation of how the research would be conducted was offered. Data collection in the form of questionnaires being sent by email and carrying out three semi structured interviews at the end of the course were also clarified with the Transitions co-ordinator by telephone and email. The researcher offered flexibility regarding the gathering of data by offering to either send the questionnaires by email link or printing hard copies and taking them to the MACSNI organisation.

The proposal letter stated that results were for the purposes of this assignment only and would not be published. It was also mentioned that MACSNI could be forwarded the results to use them as a means of evaluating the Transitions course. The researcher is aware that the young people participating on the Transitions programme come from different backgrounds and has endeavoured not to ask sensitive questions surrounding this.

Background knowledge and experience of the researcher have been mentioned in the survey proposal letter and the researcher has confirmed that they have Enhanced NI Certification as the Transitions programme has participants aged between 16 and 24. Should any queries arise from Transitions participants or facilitators throughout the survey the researcher has provided contact details on the survey cover letter. A timescale for each stage of the research was discussed by email and telephone with the Transitions co-ordinator. It is hoped that this research will be beneficial to the MACSNI organisation after the programme has been evaluated.

(vii) Semi structured Interviews with EAL Facilitators

The main comments made by the EAL facilitators were surrounding the benefits, challenges and improvements which could be made to the Transitions programme. All facilitators mentioned they felt the benefits of Transitions for young clients were improving how the young people spoke about their feelings and improved their overall communication skills. An interesting comment was made by the EAL team leader when he mentioned that the young people could see their own behaviours through seeing the horses mirroring them and then linking these behaviours using metaphors. All facilitators mentioned they felt Transitions was an excellent confidence builder and taught the young people to try to persevere with the programme until it finished. This in itself was a sense of achievement for the young people.

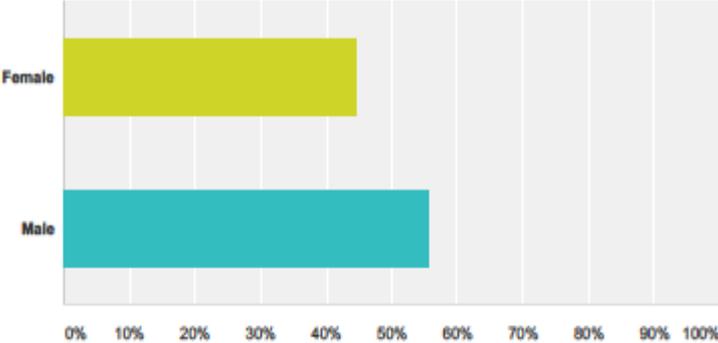
Some of the challenges mentioned were many of the young people are nervous and unsure of what to expect when starting the programme mainly because they are out of their comfort zone and have to take risks. One challenge for both the EAL facilitators and the clients was teaching the young people to find a balance between reading into everything the horses played out and just taking the important and relevant breakthroughs on board.

All facilitators mentioned that the programme could be improved by making Transitions a main service within MACSNI and allocating Transitions its very own specialised team. The facilitators felt that more time could be allocated to other young people in various programmes therefore benefitting the clients and MACSNI overall. They all mentioned that these changes could only be made with more secured funding.

All of the above comments seem to correlate to the current literature surrounding EAL and although there are many challenges faced by the young clients the benefits seem to outweigh them. Most of the young people surveyed said they would recommend the Transition programme to others.

Q1 What is your gender?

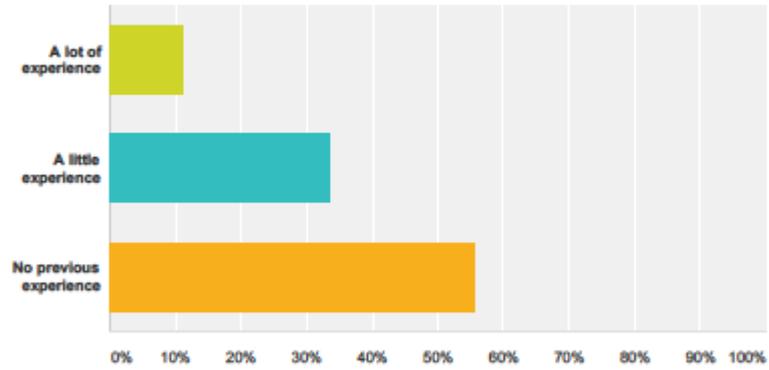
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Female	44.44% 4
Male	55.56% 5
Total	9

Q2 How much experience with horses did you have before participating on the Transitions programme?

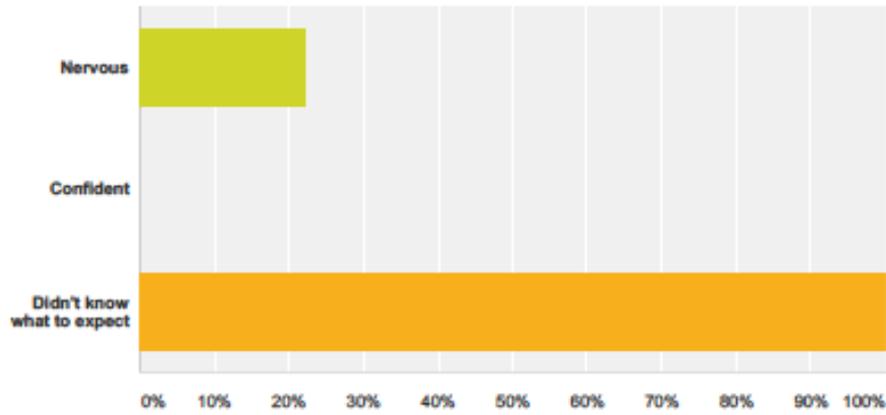
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
A lot of experience	11.11% 1
A little experience	33.33% 3
No previous experience	55.56% 5
Total	9

Q3 How did you feel when starting the Transitions programme for the first time? Please tick more than one box if required.

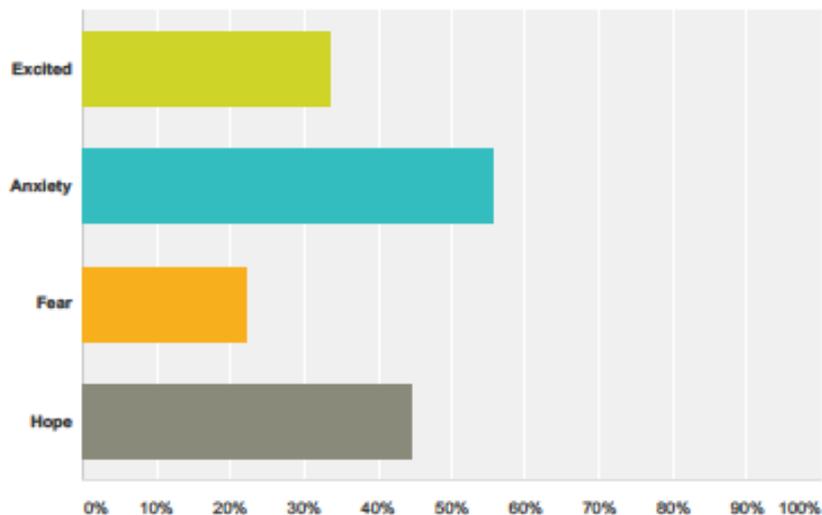
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Nervous	22.22% 2
Confident	0.00% 0
Didn't know what to expect	100.00% 9
Total Respondents: 9	

**Q4 What kind of emotions did you feel when meeting the horses for the first time?
Please tick more than one box if required.**

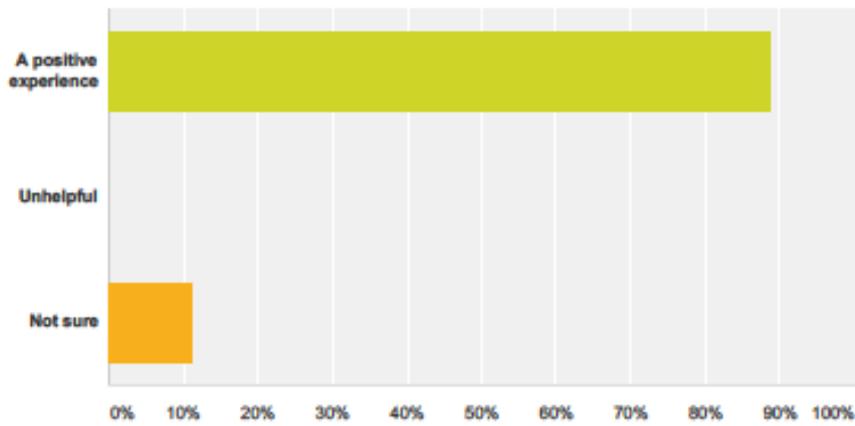
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Excited	33.33% 3
Anxiety	55.56% 5
Fear	22.22% 2
Hope	44.44% 4
Total Respondents: 9	

Q5 How have you found the Transitions programme?

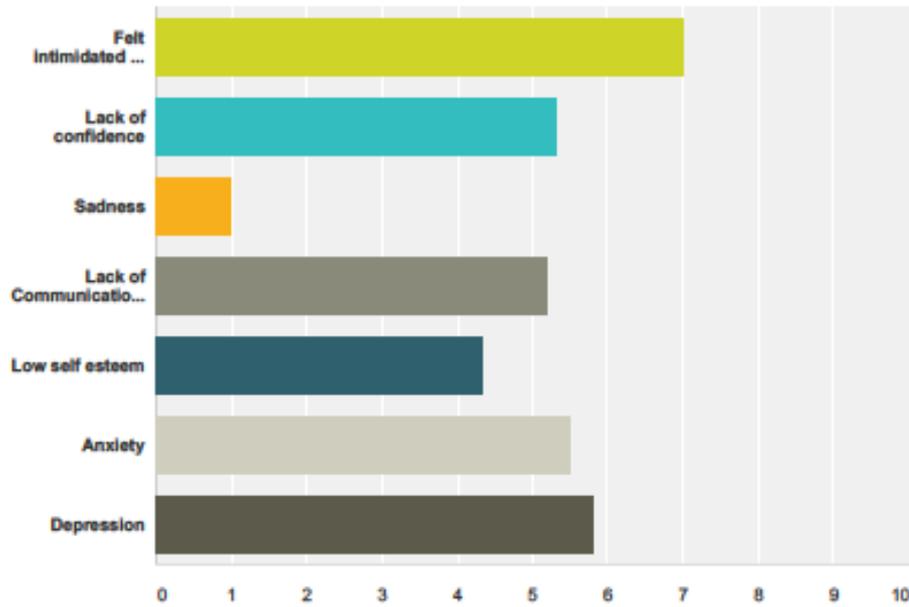
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
A positive experience	88.89% 8
Unhelpful	0.00% 0
Not sure	11.11% 1
Total	9

Q6 What sort of challenges did you face when participating on the Transitions programme? Please rank in order of relevance to you.

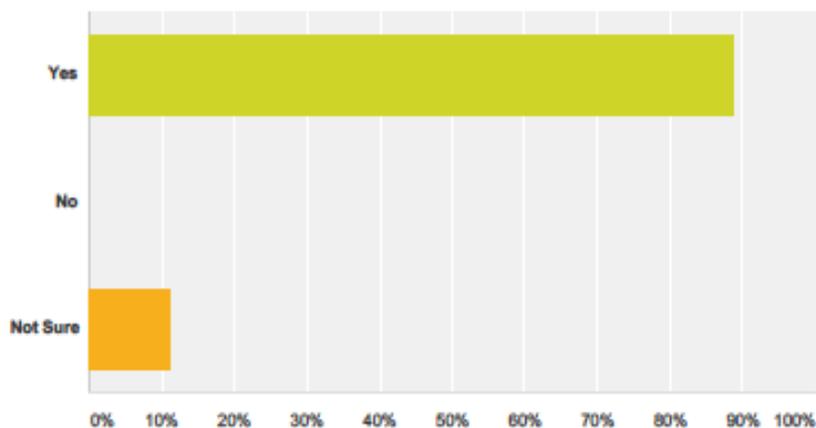
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Score
Felt intimidated by the horses	100.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2	7.00
Lack of confidence	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3	5.33
Sadness	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	1	1.00
Lack of Communication skills	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	5	5.20
Low self esteem	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3	4.33
Anxiety	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	6	5.50
Depression	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5	5.80

Q7 Has the Transitions programme been of benefit to you?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	88.89%	8
No	0.00%	0
Not Sure	11.11%	1
Total		9

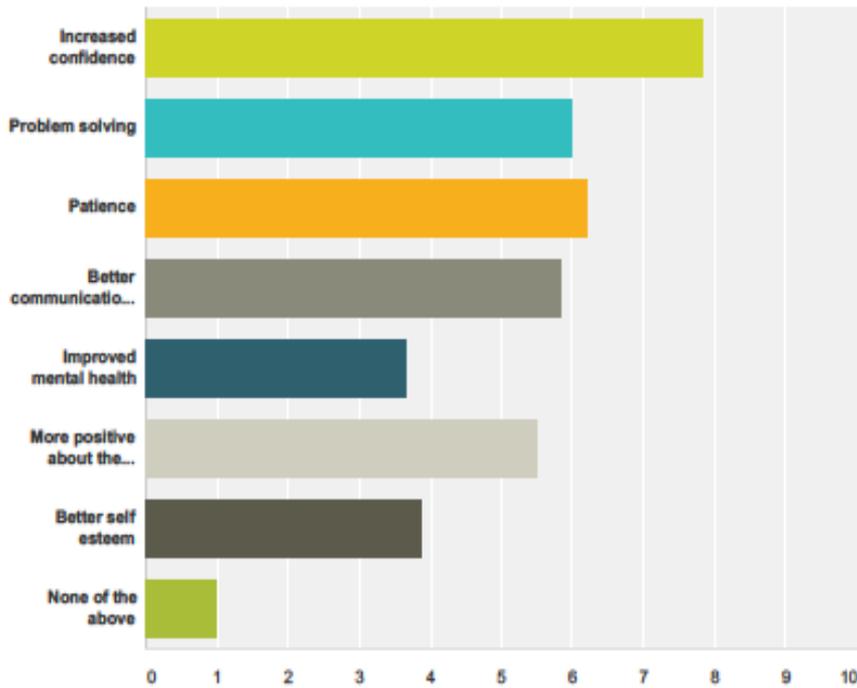
Q8 In what way has the Transitions programme been of benefit to you?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 4

#	Responses	Date
1	made me think about myself and speak up for myself. feel stronger and see a difference in self.	3/5/2015 7:44 AM
2	meeting new people and new skill	3/5/2015 7:40 AM
3	helped me communicate better	3/5/2015 7:37 AM
4	helped me with communication skills	3/5/2015 7:35 AM
5	helped me think of things in a different way and how I am with friends.	3/5/2015 7:24 AM

Q9 Has the programme benefited you in any of the following areas? Please rank in order of relevance to you.

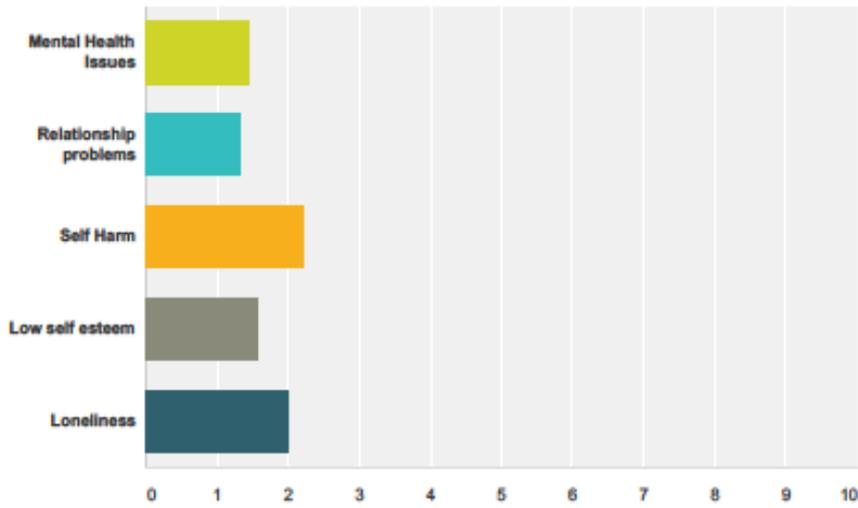
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Score
Increased confidence	83.33% 5	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6	7.83
Problem solving	0.00% 0	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6	6.00
Patience	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5	6.20
Better communication skills	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6	5.83
Improved mental health	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3	3.67
More positive about the future	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6	5.50
Better self esteem	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	14.29% 1	42.86% 3	0.00% 0	7	3.86
None of the above	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	1	1.00						

Q10 Do you think the involvement with horses and participating in the Transitions programme can help deal with problems such as the ones mentioned below? Please tick relevant boxes

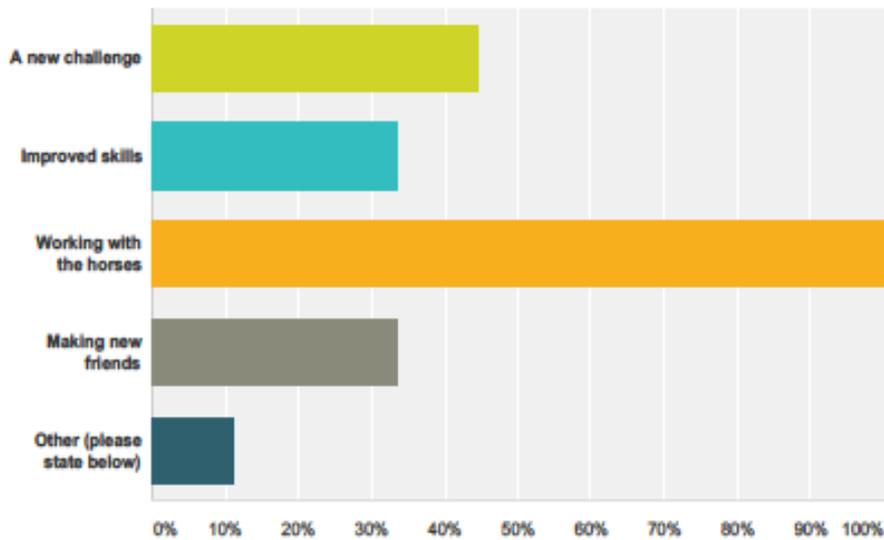
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



	Yes	No	Maybe	None of these	Total	Weighted Average
Mental Health Issues	77.78% 7	0.00% 0	22.22% 2	0.00% 0	9	1.44
Relationship problems	77.78% 7	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	9	1.33
Self Harm	33.33% 3	22.22% 2	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	9	2.22
Low self esteem	77.78% 7	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	9	1.56
Loneliness	55.56% 5	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	9	2.00

Q11 What did you enjoy most about the Transitions programme? Please tick more than one box if required.

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

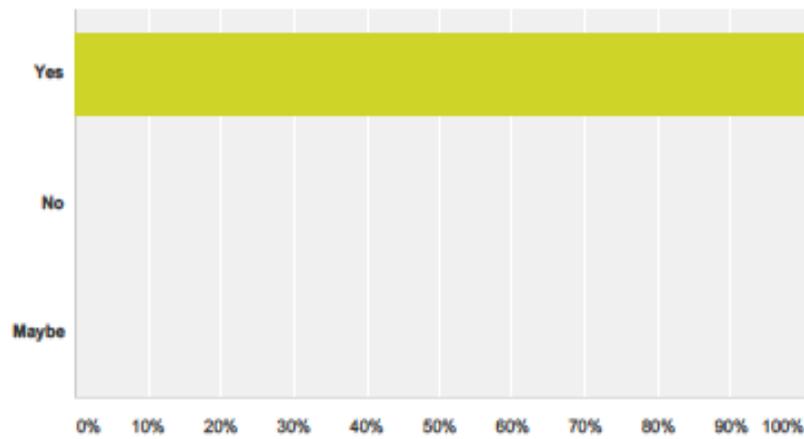


Answer Choices	Responses
A new challenge	44.44% 4
Improved skills	33.33% 3
Working with the horses	100.00% 9
Making new friends	33.33% 3
Other (please state below)	11.11% 1
Total Respondents: 9	

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	helped me learn how to express myself	3/5/2015 7:44 AM
2	helped me talk more about things	3/5/2015 7:37 AM
3	doing activities especially grooming	3/5/2015 7:35 AM
4	overcoming personal problems	3/5/2015 7:29 AM

Q12 Would you recommend Transitions to others and if so why?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

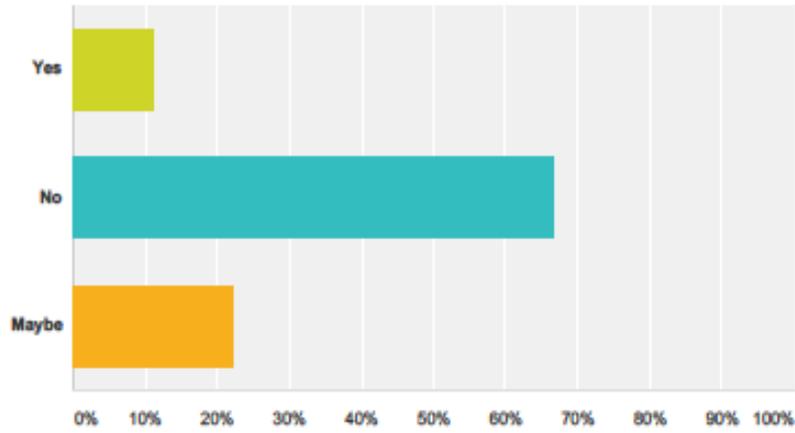


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	100.00% 9
No	0.00% 0
Maybe	0.00% 0
Total	9

#	(please specify)	Date
1	can now talk about problems after six weeks and confidence to ask for help	3/5/2015 7:44 AM
2	good to meet new people	3/5/2015 7:40 AM
3	it helped me	3/5/2015 7:37 AM
4	helped with my communication skills and built up my self esteem	3/5/2015 7:35 AM
5	one to ones are good. great to get out and have something to do with the horses.	3/5/2015 7:31 AM
6	definitely helps self confidence and helps to work out personal and family problems	3/5/2015 7:29 AM
7	think it could help some young people. liked it for the horses.	3/5/2015 7:27 AM

Q13 Do you feel the Transitions programme could be improved and if so why?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	11.11% 1
No	66.67% 6
Maybe	22.22% 2
Total	9

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	thought it was all good. makes you think and work things out for yourself not like counselling.	3/5/2015 7:44 AM
2	I found facilitators staring at me, then calling me over intimidating at first but they explained what they were doing and it got easier as the weeks went on	3/5/2015 7:35 AM