

Presenter's name: Kezia Sullivan

Degree, affiliation: MSc Social Cognition (UCL), Bournemouth University

Curriculum vitae:

Kezia Sullivan is a researcher working in collaboration with Professor Ann Hemingway at the University of Bournemouth & several charities within Equine Assisted Services to develop an evidence base for understanding the efficacy of EAS.

Petra Ingram is an experienced charity sector leader; in 2009 she combined her personal passion for horses with her professional experience as an accountant, becoming CEO at Brooke, an international equine charity. In 2020 she became CEO at HorseWorld Trust which, in addition to the rescue of horses for over 70 years, has been running the Discovery programme since 2007, an EAS education provision registered with 4 local authorities and supporting around 300 young people each year. With a 5-year strategy in place, HorseWorld has an exciting future ahead collaborating with others to increase the positive impact on both horses and young people.

Category: oral presentation

Topic: Special program / project

Authors:

Kezia Sullivan, MSc Social Cognition: Research and Applications

Ann Hemingway, Professor of Public Health and Wellbeing Bournemouth University

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Title: PILOT STUDY: A SHORT TERM EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING PROGRAM IMPROVES FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

Keyword 1: family relationship

Keyword 2: early intervention

Keyword 3: equine assisted learning

Abstract:

Objective: Young people with special educational needs and their families were particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with many parents reporting feeling overwhelmed. This study reports on outcomes of an equine assisted learning program piloted in summer 2021, which aimed to improve the wellbeing of families by providing them with a positive group experience.

Results: Analysis revealed a significant positive impact of the program on family relationships scores at a total level which was maintained at a 2-month follow up, as well as at item level for the majority of items in the short-term. There was also a positive change in SDQ scores for the young people, although this was non-significant.

Design: The design was an observational study of outcomes before and after the intervention. Data were collected by HorseWorld facilitators and by referrers from the Families in Focus early intervention

team. The data were collected before the program, immediately after the program, and at a 2-month follow up to the program. Data were anonymised and sent to the independent researcher, who analysed the data in order to compare participant scores from before and after the program.

Conclusion: The results of this pilot study indicate that a short-term family-focussed equine assisted learning intervention may be effective for improving family relationships, which are known to contribute to individual wellbeing. A larger-scale randomised controlled trial would be beneficial to allow the results of this study to be generalised further in future.