

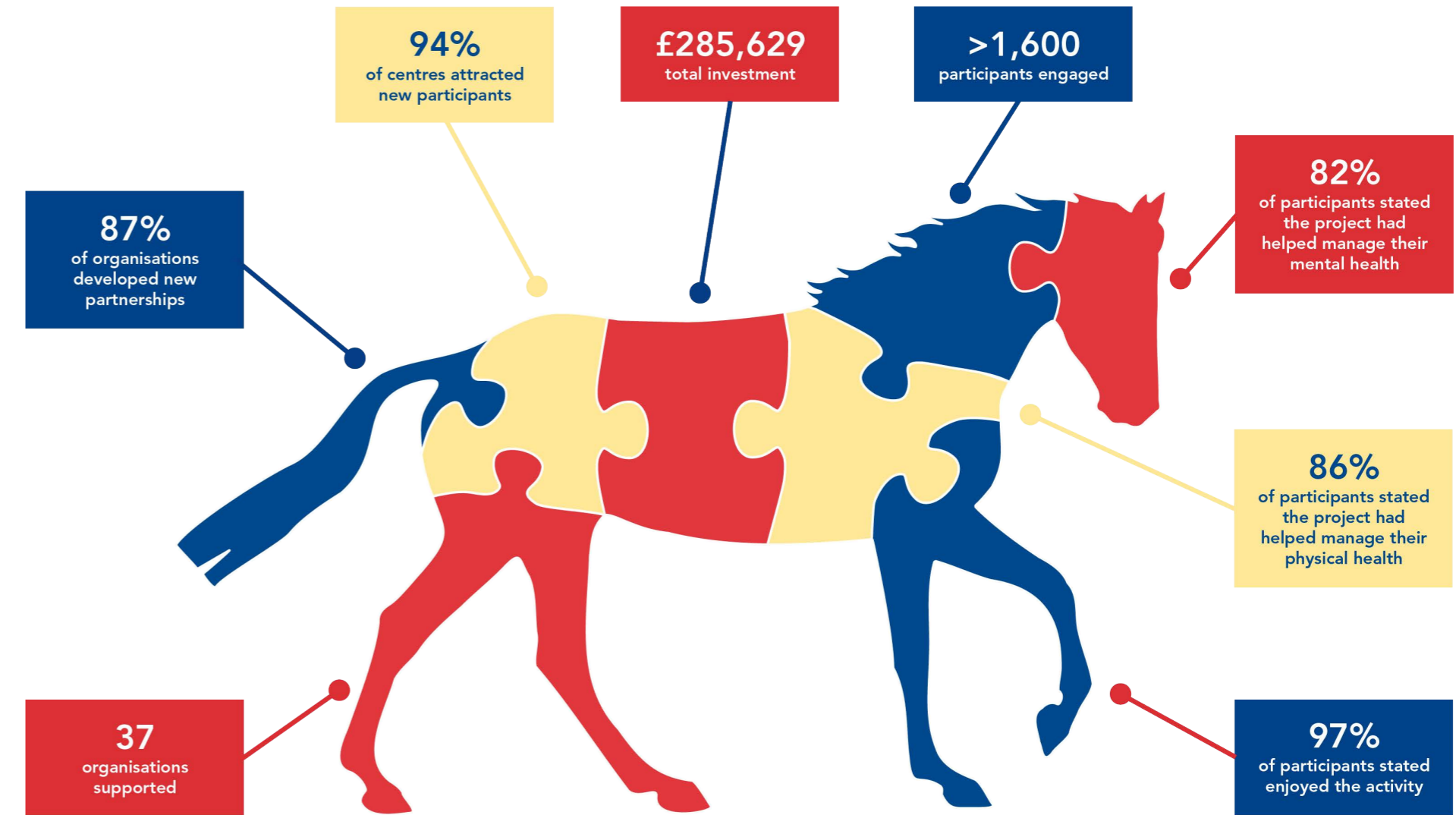
# British Equestrian Together Fund Impact and Learnings



British   
Equestrian

# British Equestrian

## BRITISH EQUESTRIAN TOGETHER FUND IMPACT AND LEARNINGS





## INTRODUCTION

The Together Fund (TF), a continuation of the Tackling Inequalities Fund, was part of Sport England's support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the pandemic.

Sport England provided British Equestrian (BEF) with funding of £195,000 to support equestrian centres, community groups and targeted organisations to provide riding activities aimed at engaging the following priority audiences:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- People with long term health conditions
- Culturally diverse communities
- Disabled people

**BEF were also successful in gaining £54,875 for resilience, to support equestrian centres to address challenges and be able to grow participation with the priority audiences.**

BEF were looking to address a number of areas to maximise the impact of this funding and our key objectives were:

- To support organisations who were able to deliver new riding activities aimed at these priority audiences and connect better with the communities around them.
- To shape new ways of linking with these priority audiences.
- To address operational issues and hardship amongst Equestrian centres (working with the priority audiences) still struggling to grow and recover from COVID.



*Really relaxed low-demand environment,  
perfect for kids who struggle with socialising  
and pressured environments*

Parent/Carer feedback



To achieve these objectives, our investment strands included:

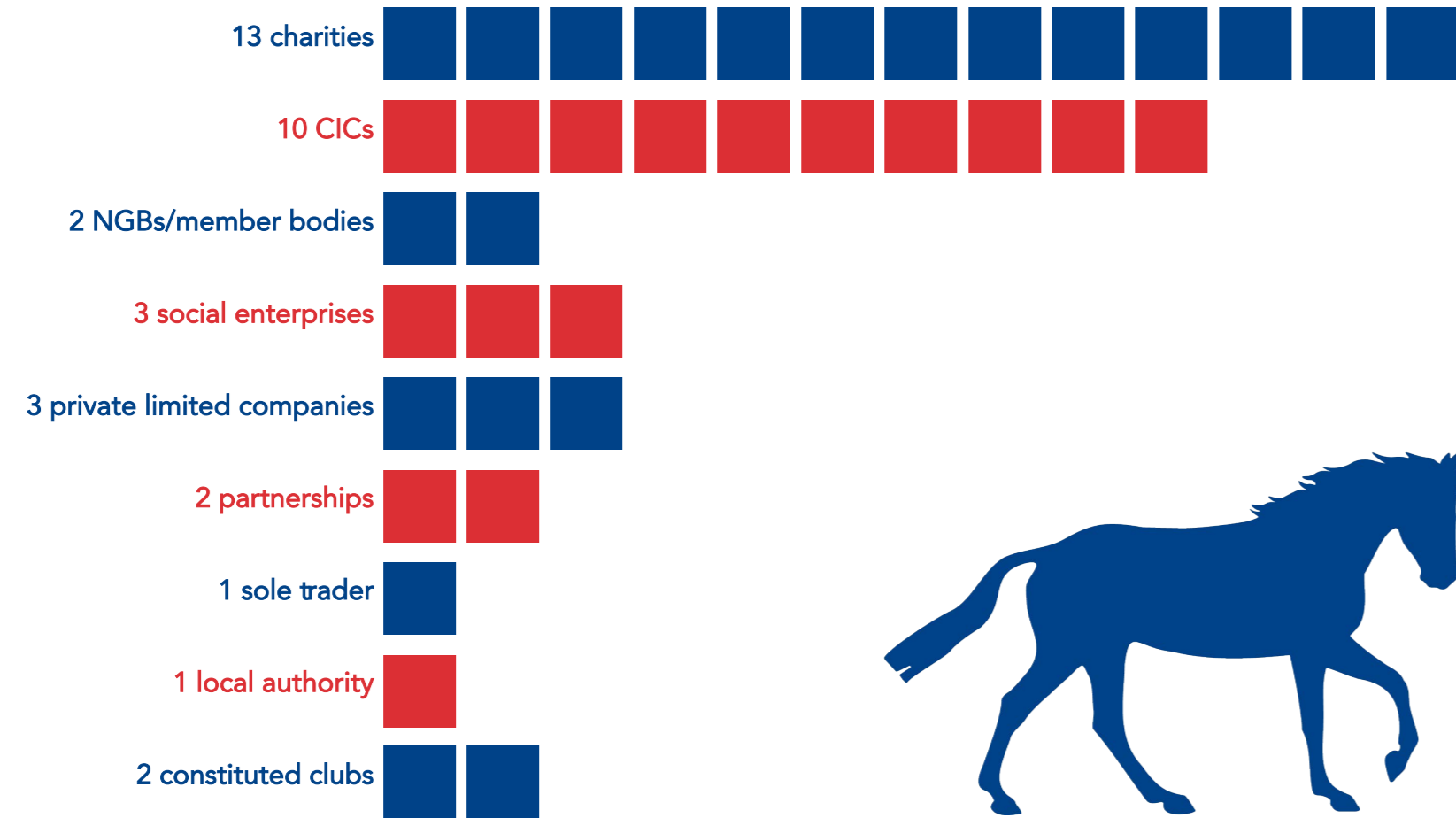
1. **Building capacity** and/or addressing hardship challenges that restrict riding centres from engaging with the priority audiences, as well as helping them to reach new audiences. This included the impact from the cost of living as well as post COVID impact
2. To further support and expand existing Tackling Inequalities projects targeting **specific audiences** (eg Faith groups)
3. Initiatives around **Equine Assisted Therapy** projects
4. The **Urban Equestrian Centres** (inner city or wider urban locations) to build capacity and offer opportunities for people in their local communities, to diversify our sport and target our underrepresented audiences
5. BEF's member organisations **approved riding centres to expand** and/or deliver new initiatives aimed at the key audiences. In particular: ie. expanding the Changing Lives Through Horses and other programmes to reach new priority audiences
6. **Innovative projects** in partnerships with targeted external stakeholders

Applicants could apply for a maximum grant of £10,000.

**BEF carried forward funding from the Tackling Inequalities fund to make the total TF pot £247,513 plus resilience of £54,875 and put in place an open application process.**

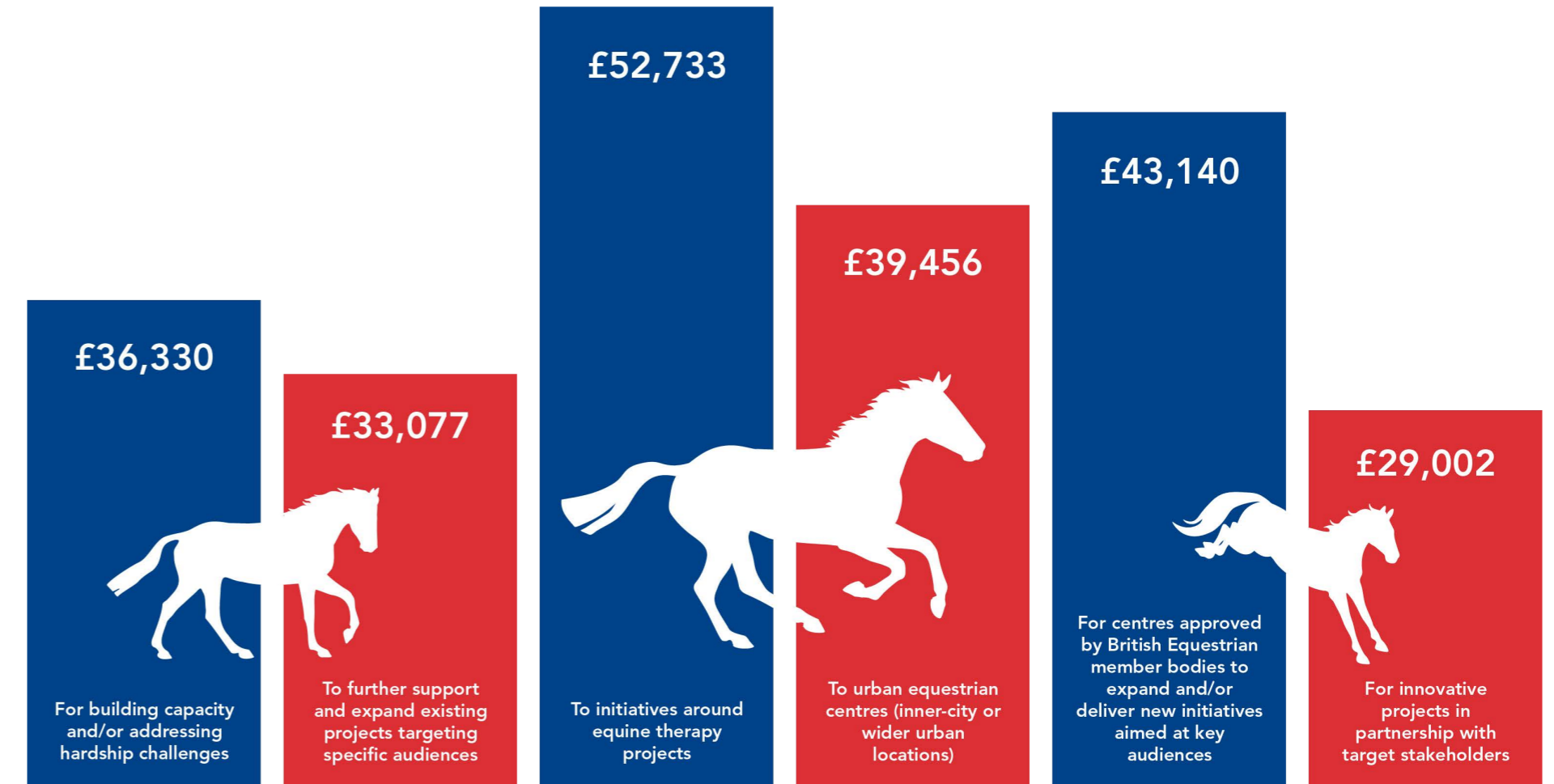
APPLICATIONS SUMMARY

- 52 applications received from July 2022 to March 2023
- 37 organisations supported
- £233,738 was allocated to 41 projects (4 organisations received funding to run a second project from April 23-Sept 23)
- £5,701 average grant



FUNDING WAS DISTRIBUTED TO OUR PRIORITY STRANDS AS FOLLOWS:

Please note that some projects could fall into more than one of the strands but were allocated to only one. For example, nearly £90k was allocated to centres or organisations working in densely populated urban areas across the strands.



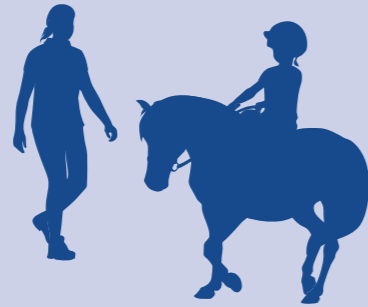


**PARTICIPANTS OVERVIEW**

We were able to successfully engage participants across all four priority audiences, with a high percentage of projects working with young disabled people or those with a long-term health condition and additional needs. The projects also engaged a high percentage of women and girls.

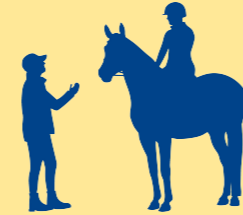
**Ethnicity:**

- 69%** White British
- 18%** Asian/Asian British
- 8%** Black/Black British
- 5%** Other/prefer not to say



Total number engaged across projects:

**>1,600**



Total number of participants who completed surveys: **488**

Disability/special educational needs/long-term health condition: **50%**

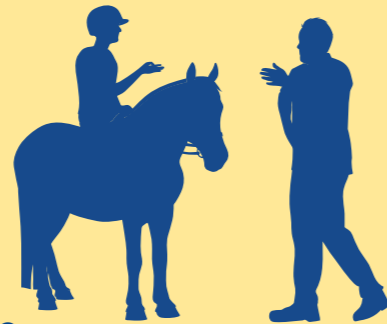


**Age:**

- U18s **67%**
- 18-34 **14%**
- 35-54 **14%**
- 55+ **5%**

**Gender split:**

- 70%** Female
- 25%** Male
- 2%** Non-binary
- 3%** Prefer not to say/prefer to self-describe



*I just wanted to say that this is Charlie's fourth round! He's now doing an online equine course with several different units from behaviour to health care, AND we have linked up with other horsey people! It's changed our whole life!*

Parent/Carer feedback





IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

The positive impact and enjoyment levels for participants across these projects is clear. As you will see from the survey responses, quotes from parents/carers/participants and case study, there is a clear theme on the impact being around horses and riding has on managing mental health, mental health conditions (anxiety, stress, depression) and on young people with neurodiverse conditions (ASD/ADHD). Participants also shared how the project benefited their physical health and confidence to be more active.

Below is a word cloud with words used by participants and parents/carers in the survey:

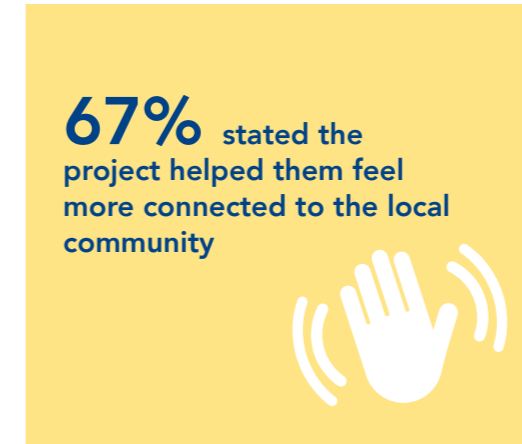
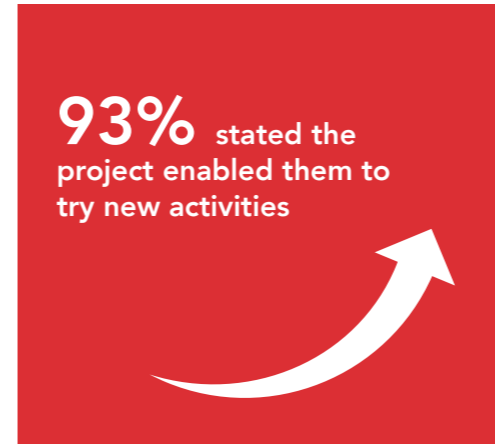
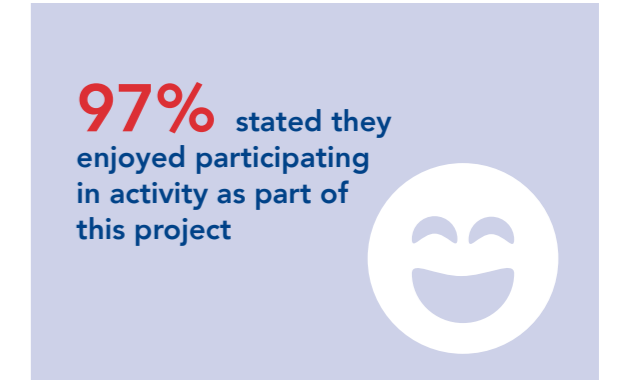


My confidence has grown and I have made new friends. I have just joined the gym too!

Participant feedback



SURVEY RESPONSES







*I am just so grateful you took my daughter on. She struggles a lot at school with ADHD and can be socially awkward, especially with new faces. She used to get angry quickly, but since being on the program I can see she's a lot calmer. She says herself she loves going to the stables and feels at peace there. Since the program has finished, she goes to the centre once a week to volunteer with her cousin, who was also on the program.*

Parent/Carer feedback



## CASE STUDY

I am a single mum with a 14-year-old son who is on the autistic spectrum. **The riding school has been a godsend and a turning point for us both.** Before lockdown, my son and I, were living with my parents and younger brother and felt very supported.

When lockdown started, my brother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, three months later my mum died of an asthma attack in Feb 2021. We moved house in July 2021 and in May 2022 my brother died at home. Soon after, my dad also moved out. The impact of grief, losses and changes, as well as starting secondary school, impacted my son very negatively. It heightened his social anxiety to the point that I was becoming really concerned.

After lockdown ended, he had no interest in participating back into any social or physical activities. He said he'd lost his confidence, was feeling picked on at school and his school attendance suffered.

He became depressed and reclusive. He started to talk about how he no longer saw the value in himself or his life. He spiralled downwards so rapidly. It felt dire. I was at a complete loss how to help him. I felt myself going under with him. **I felt I was losing him.**

In March 2022, I had a few days respite from looking after my brother and we went to an activity centre. My son refused to participate in the cycling and canoeing I'd booked for us, but he agreed to horse riding and he told me he enjoyed it. At the time, to find a physical or social activity that he was willing to do felt miraculous. It gave me hope.

I found the riding school and I was delighted he agreed to go to lessons for us two, and we've been going fortnightly since. It's still a battle each time to get him out the house, but he consistently replies that it was, 'good' or 'fun' when I ask him afterwards how the lesson went. From him this is high praise indeed!

Since starting the lessons, I've seen a positive change in him. **It's been the catalyst he needed.** His confidence is returning, his social anxiety is reduced, his school attendance has improved and, more importantly, he's finding himself again. His willingness to engage and show an interest in his life has steadily improved since then.

I'm really grateful to the riding school team. They've been brilliant.

**It's been a truly uplifting and therapeutic experience for us both!**



**IMPACT ON EQUESTRIAN CENTRES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS**

31 individuals from centres and community organisations fed back to us on the impact the Together Fund had on their organisation. As well as helping them survive the pandemic, it really helped to develop new partnerships, attract new participants and enabled them to offer more opportunities for audiences (new and existing) to be active. Only 39% felt the funding helped them to secure other funding, confirming our focus on fundraising for the resilience investment.

Below are some of the other benefits that centres stated for their local community.



*I came here because I am looking for ways to help with my anxiety. Being around the animals helped me to feel calm.*

Participant feedback



**ORGANISATION SURVEY FEEDBACK**

Has the unding helped.....

...your organisation survive the pandemic?

71 % YES

...improve your financial performance?

74 % YES

...secure funding from other places?

39 % YES

...develop new relationships/partnerships with other organisations?

87 % YES

...increase confidence to deliver sport and physical activity?

84 % YES

...upskill people in your organisation?

77 % YES

...attract new participants?

94 % YES

...you to offer more opportunities for people to be active?

97 % YES

...to provide you with recognition for the work you do for the community?

81 % YES



*We met two young lads, completely on their own, no friends, don't socialise or leave the house other than riding. We realised they were so alike, so slowly we moved their times closer and closer together until they overlapped. Last week we all rode out together and this week they exchanged phone numbers.*

*This has made me so want to proceed with my CIC adventure as I know this is what we need in the area.*

Great Trethew Trekking, Sole Trader





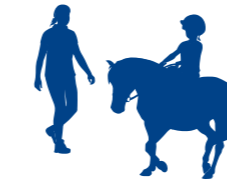


*The project has been a great success! One of the participants loved her time so much she's since filled in an application to volunteer with us.....we're over the moon volunteer wise, as are the girl and her parents. Couldn't have wished for better outcome*

North Ferriby RDA



## PROJECT CASE STUDIES



### Disabled people

**North Ferriby RDA** provided a bespoke package of equine activities for young people with a range of disabilities - [North Ferriby Case study.pdf \(britishequestrian.org.uk\)](#)



### Mental health

**Enborne Equestrian** centre linked with the charity **Sport in Mind** to offer horse riding for people experiencing mental health issues - [Sport in Mind Enborne TF- final.pdf \(britishequestrian.org.uk\)](#)



### Equine therapy

**Strength and Learning Through Horses** in London ran an equine therapy project for young people who struggle to engage in mainstream education - [SLTH TF case study.pdf \(britishequestrian.org.uk\)](#)



### Culturally diverse communities

**Club Ekta**, in Yorkshire, developed a project with **Cliff Hollins Riding School** to give women and girls from the Asian community a horse riding course - Ekta Equestrian - [Club Ekta Together Fund project](#)



### Lower socio-economic groups

**Kingleighs Equine Education Centre**, Worcester, offered a weekly pony club to young people on free school meals, local Ukranian refugees, and young people referred via the [Local Authority Together Fund video - YouTube](#)



**RESILIENCE SUPPORT**

Sport England provided funding to BEF to support equestrian establishments to improve their resilience by addressing challenges to help them grow and enable them to continue and expand working with one or more of the TF priority audiences.

Due to our learnings through the TF and Health of Riding schools, our investment focused on: **Fundraising Support, Governance Support** and **Organisational Development**.

Funding:  
**£51,891**  
 allocated to  
 resilience support




Development:  
 New **partnerships**  
 with Get Grants, Sported,  
 Sporting Assets, Sports  
 Structures and Equestrian  
 Business Unite Ltd



Support:  
**18** Equestrian  
 establishments  
 received 1-2-1  
 consultancy support



**£12,824**



Organisational  
 development

**£11,540**



Fundraising  
 support

**£7,707**



Website support

**£9,660**



Governance  
 development

**£3,060**



Workforce  
 planning

**£7,100**



Monitoring,  
 evaluation and  
 learning



*I cannot thank you enough for this funding. We popped up a Facebook post this morning, I have had over 50 children interested in this programme! I knew we had a need, but this is phenomenal! I'm turning my phone off now as it's not stopped all day!*

Deni Harper-Adams, Kingsleighs Equine Education Centre (Worcester Riding School)





## LEARNING, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the key learnings from this piece of work is the **impact all these projects have had on mental health**, not just the therapeutic projects. A huge added benefit from equestrian sports, not found in other sports is the interaction with the horse and the **therapeutic benefits** that brings. Due to this, audiences from disabled, neuro diverse young people or mental health conditions were the focus for many centres and really shows the impact horse riding and off the horse activities has on these audiences. With the strong evidence from the participant feedback this is an area centres could focus on to attract further funding and potentially work closer with health partners. All activities at the centres promote physical activity even if they don't include ridden activities.

Feedback from parents and carers also showed **the strength of equestrian sport in changing behaviour**, particularly around the challenges of school avoidance, exclusion and school anxiety. Using the interaction with a horse to get young people out of the house, moving more and interacting with people and animals is seen through all the projects supporting young people with additional needs.

The TF enabled centres to **reach a new audience**, who they would not have been able to offer opportunities to without this funding. Feedback from the centres showed that the funding had helped them to develop new partnerships either locally or wider. Partnerships to reach the target audience should be encouraged and promoted to equestrian establishments and for



*Really relaxed, low-demand environment, perfect for kids who struggle with socialising and pressured environments*

Parent/Carer feedback



member bodies to develop relationships and link to their centres. This is particularly important in **reaching more culturally diverse communities** and this audience should be a focus of future funding or partnership working. We saw from the applications we received that not enough centres are focusing on these communities. BEF and member bodies should help support riding centres to link with culturally diverse organisations, using the examples from TF of Nature Warriors, Club Ekta, BHS/Eastminster.

The TF funding, along with the resilience support, has allowed BEF to work closer with alternative structures, **to help them to grow their business and address operational issues**. Organisations such as British Ethnic Riders Foundation, St James City Farm and Urban Equestrian Academy are now working with BEF and providing a channel of communication. The TF has also enabled new partnerships with BEF and centres with national organisations such as Sport in Mind, Sported and Get Grants.

The nature of equestrian centres is very diverse with a vast range of organisation structures and Governance. The profit-making centres, not set up to attract funding, proved to run successful projects, with brilliant participant feedback and efficient in meeting the funding requirements. Focusing on ways to help those centres **develop a charitable arm or CIC to attract further funding** is an area to explore.

**Through the resilience funding we are working with Sport Structures to create an e-learning package to help centres with succession planning and income generation through their organisation structure and workforce.**





*The project has brought different communities together and helped people with integration in particular*

Nature Warriors



One of the challenges for the equestrian sector is the ability to sustain participants from funded projects. Feedback from organisations stated that the main reason participants couldn't continue beyond the project was due to finances and the high cost to continue. The reality is that horse riding as an activity is expensive, especially compared to other sports.

### **Models where a centre has managed to keep the costs lower should be explored, with case studies developed for centres to learn from.**

Some participants have managed to continue as volunteers, or schools have continued to pay for sessions or the participant has been able to afford it, but if we continue to initiate new projects like these, we need to support centres at the onset. The other area was accessibility and travel arrangements or lack of car with no public transport to the equestrian centre. However, it is still great to give people the opportunity to try an exciting, different activity which isn't offered in schools or considered a mainstream sport. It is still important to offer people the opportunity to give it a go.

### **The role of horse riding and equestrian activities on health and wellbeing should be shouted about and promoted widely, particularly the impact on mental health.**

Models of making it affordable should be looked at as examples for others to use to extend the reach of the sectors positive impact.







## Thank you to Thomas, the therapy horse

*Hey Thomas,  
Listen, please do.  
How you've changed my life,  
If only you knew.*

*You've taught me to slow down,  
To do things with patience.  
To handle situations calmly,  
With energy and perseverance.*

*You showed me what vulnerability is,  
And let me know that that's ok.  
You allowed me to explore and discover,  
To figure things out my own way.*

*You conveyed a meaningful message,  
That it's fine to ask for help.  
That doesn't mean I'm inferior,  
Or any less perfect. move this line*

*You made me push myself,  
Through boundaries I thought I'd never cross.  
Helping me surpass my expectations,  
Without feeling confused or lost.*

*You gave me the acceptance,  
The affection that I crave.*

*A day spent with you,  
Is the day I felt loved and safe.*

*It's a day where I can afford to feel,  
And allow my emotions to be heard.  
No need to constantly block out the noise,  
The ones I usually dread.*

*You listened and never judged,  
Encouraging me to believe.  
That I may be good at something,  
There may be things I too can achieve.*

*You allowed me to be honest,  
Accepting me in whichever mood I was in.  
Understanding me without talking,  
Giving me a chance to heal.*

*You're the best friend I've always wanted,  
Quirky and a ball of fun.  
You've instilled hope inside of me,  
Helping me smile again.*

*I 'aint saying goodbye,  
Cos you've lit up the dark.  
You've touched me deep inside,  
You're the only key to my heart.*





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