

Together Fund Centre Case Study

British Equestrian   **SPORT ENGLAND**
Together Fund



Strength and Learning Through Horses London

About the centre

Strength and Learning Through Horses (SLTH) is an Equine Assisted Therapy centre based in London, helping to improve mental health and education for young people.

The centre provides therapy sessions using the power of the horse to allow people to connect with their emotions and behaviours of both themselves and the horses. Employability and horsemanship skills education is also on offer, for those who need a helping hand gaining vital life skills for their future education or employment.



SLTH's Together Fund project involves teaching young people about horse care, training and psychology, as well as achieving qualifications in these areas. The participants also learn valuable teamwork skills to improve their employability in the future.

The Together Fund sessions have proven to be popular as the centre has an extensive waiting list, showing the importance of such a project to help those who need it. The staff dedicate a great deal of time in helping people begin their equestrian journey, individual sessions are provided for the new starters, teaching them basic horse skills and helping them feel confident within the environment as well as getting them settled into the group itself.

Staff have commented on the joyous atmosphere during the Together Fund sessions, with the young people working hard and chatting away whilst taking care of the horses and ponies.

The participants love working with the centre's horses and feel a profound sense of achievement at being given responsibilities, such as bringing horses back to full fitness and finishing off the yard duties at the end of their session. The staff at SLTH encourage them to make decisions on many aspects of horse care allowing them to feel a sense of independence, as well as contributing to their ability to make complex decisions in other areas of their lives.



The Together Fund sessions have provided young people the opportunity to experience the joy of spending time with horses, they have all carried on their equestrian journey with riding lessons, with a few volunteering at riding/ equine therapy centres and a couple looking to study equine care at college.

Laura Gill, programme lead and referrals manager, describes her experience of running the Together Fund project: "I personally witness the challenges these families are facing and I am lucky enough to watch the incredible changes experienced in the young people attending. The joy of running the group and seeing the positive changes in the students makes every minute of hard work so worthwhile."

Considerable positive changes have been seen in those who have been attending the sessions, "Each young person has grown measurably in confidence, both whilst at our centre and parents have fed back that this has transferred into their wider lives; some have managed to return to school, one managed to attend their first family event in over two years, and some wonderful friendships have started to form within the group. This has been so important for these young people in particular, as many struggle to maintain friendships." explains Laura. "Thank you so much for making this programme accessible to these young people that have such a passion for horses, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to be around them and therefore make them such a huge part of their lives."



SLTH has demonstrated the value of these Together Fund sessions for improving quality of life for the families that get involved, growing confidence and being active and social, surrounded by horses.

Running the Together Fund has increased the centre's reach to young people who wouldn't previously have been involved. This benefits both the local riding/ therapy centres and the wider equestrian community by allowing more people to experience the joy of spending time with horses.

Together Fund

A month with SLTH



Update one:

Tuesday this week was lunging day for the horses, the students did an incredible job of learning a new skill and learnt how their actions and body language influences the horse's behaviour.

Update two:

The students this week worked with the centre's new horse, Glory, an ex-racehorse. She is very anxious with quite big behaviours, her anxiety rubbed off on the students, making them feel slightly uneasy by her behaviours.

Through working with Glory in the arena and trying different ways to communicate with her, they learnt the effect their body language had on Glory and how to control it to effectively communicate. Through learning about the reasons behind her behaviours and how to understand her more, the students have been able to develop a relationship with Glory and have become much more comfortable around her.

Update three:

SLTH's new site has been getting ready to open and some of the students got the opportunity to go and visit the horses enjoying the wonderful new space.

Update four:

After the horses had a well deserved Christmas break, the Together Fund sessions got back up and running in the new year at SLTH's new centre. The students have braved the cold to spend time with the horses with which they have been building relationships with over the last few months.



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

Thank you to Thomas the therapy horse

A poem written by a participant of the SLTH Together Fund sessions

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.

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.

