

The value of equestrianism

What is social value?

The UK government defines social or public value as “all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population”. Equestrian activity has extensive benefits for individuals and communities. Physical activity and social connection, along with the partnership with horses, brings a unique impact of the sector. Through our social value work we can show that equestrian activity can be a vital contributor to public health, providing substantial public benefit and the impact participation in equestrian activity has on individuals and society.

Why should we use it?

The findings can be used as a way to help you communicate the value of your equestrian activity. Riding schools, livery yards and equestrian centres across the UK face growing pressure from redevelopment, rising land values and changes in local planning policy. Protecting your site requires clear, evidence-based arguments that demonstrate their health, social, economic, and community value.

When would we use it?

In any situation where you need to demonstrate the importance of protecting and investing in equestrian activity, including:

- Strengthening a case for your riding establishment
- Making objections to redevelopment proposals
- Evidencing the impact of your work for a funding application

What are some of the key areas to focus on?

The closure of a riding school means more than lost lessons, it represents the loss of: community connection, improved physical and mental health, wellbeing support, lifelong learning, local economic value. We must ensure we protect and invest in our essential community assets that boost wellbeing and create social inclusion.

Headline stats:

- Total annual social value of equestrian activity in the UK: £1.2 billion
- 25% of this is generated by riding schools, with an average annual value of £292,000 per school
- On-horse participation: £2,000 of social value per year for an adult riding twice monthly or £3,500 per year for a young person riding weekly
- Off-horse participation: £2,000 of social value per person per year
- Volunteering: £2,100 of social value per year for weekly volunteering or £1,000 per year for monthly volunteering.

The literature review found strong evidence that equestrianism has positive impacts across five key social outcome areas.

1. Physical health

- Equestrian activities, including riding and yard work, are classified as physical activity, meaning they help to improve cardiorespiratory function.

- Hippotherapy (the use of horse riding as a therapeutic or rehabilitative treatment) enhances motor functions such as balance, walking and posture, as well as reducing chronic pain.
- 2. **Mental health**
 - Equestrianism benefits individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and substance abuse problems by providing a calming and therapeutic environment.
- 3. **Subjective wellbeing**
 - Horse ownership and equine-assisted therapy contribute to higher satisfaction levels, reduced stress and improved quality of life.
 - Caregivers of individuals with disabilities also reported enhanced wellbeing due to their participation in equestrian activities.
- 4. **Individual development**
 - Volunteering in equestrian settings builds long-term skills, employability and confidence.
 - Equestrianism fosters pro-social behaviour and boosts self-esteem, although competitive settings can sometimes challenge confidence.
- 5. **Social and community development**
 - Engagement with equestrian activities improves communication skills in neurodivergent individuals and those with dementia.
 - Equestrianism helps participants develop strong community bonds through shared passions and experiences.

The research findings closely align with the government's Get Active strategy and the health outcomes it seeks to achieve. Evidence suggests there is a unique value in equestrianism not found in other activities. Due to the involvement of horses, it's one of only a few types of physical activity to have the therapeutic benefits of animal-assisted therapy.

Our reach

We're an industry that successfully reaches audiences that are often underrepresented in other areas:

- Women and girls (85% of participants)
- Older adults (30% are over 55+)
- Disabled people (18%)
- Lower socio-economic groups (14%)

Economic value

The equine industry contributes around £5 billion to the UK economy and supports approximately 230,000 jobs. An equestrian centre directly supports: Coaches, grooms, yard, maintenance, administrative staff, and Volunteers. It also sustains essential local rural supply-chain businesses.

Links:

[State of the Nation 2024 report](#)

[Uniting the Movement](#) and [Get Active Strategy](#)

[Social value of equestrianism - British Equestrian reconomics-3-0-2026---full-report-270126103507.pdf](#)