



## **Equine Assisted Learning Programme** **'Building Connections'**

### **Outline**

This 6-10 week programme introduces a participant to a process, **TLC**, which aims to build positive relationships through the experience of connecting and partnering with a horse. They will develop concepts, skills and knowledge in how to safely approach a horse, understand its emotional state and with a non-confrontational attitude ask it to participate in activities of their design and choice i.e. show leadership.

### **Overall Aims**

The participant will be able to connect their learning experiences from this programme into wider social settings (e.g. at school, work, home) to enable them to create and experience more positive relationships and to communicate their needs and emotions in a non-confrontational manner. The participant will develop skills in emotional intelligence and empathic thinking.

### **Objectives**

- Observe horse body language & social interactions
- Approach horses within different environments and move around them in a safe way
- Groom a horse and discuss their physical & emotional needs
- Put on head collar and remove head collar
- Lift horse's hoofs / clean hoofs
- Lead a horse on a lead rope (without pulling)
- Lead a horse around, over or under, familiar and unfamiliar obstacles
- Talk about, past histories, identify and label emotions - Seeking, fear, rage, panic, play, lust, care (Panksepp -1998)

### **Process**

#### Session 1 ***Hello and welcome***

- Introduced to coach
- Safety issues and boundaries introduced and agreed
- Observe, meet horses and explore environment
- Groom a horse
- Introducing process of experiential learning & applying TLC (Trust, Listen, Connect)

#### Session 2 ***Trust***

- Exploring how to build *Trust* with the horse and internally with yourself.
- Identify a personal goal to achieve 'I would like to / be able to.... ' (with a horse)
- Various activities with a horse as agreed and planned with participant based on their confidence and the coach's assessment of potential for success

### Session 3 ***Listen***

- Exploring how to *Listen* to a horse (and internally to yourself,) to observe its behaviours (body language) and what it tells us.
- Identifying what horses need for their health and wellbeing.
- Various activities with a horse as agreed and planned with participant based on their confidence and the coach's assessment of potential for success.

### Session 4 ***Connect***

- Exploring how through applying Trust and Listening, to yourself and the horse, a Connection can be made.
- Establishing, mapping and stretching comfort zones.
- Various activities with a horse as agreed and planned with participant based on their confidence and the coach's assessment of potential for success

### Session 5 ***TLC***

- Participant and coach to complete a 'quality triangle' and review what successes have been achieved so far.
- Explore ways these learning experiences can be implemented within different social settings.
- Revisit session one's goal, has it been achieved? What needs to be in place to achieve this? Is there a new or different goal?

Sessions 6-10 will be based on this assessment unless a full 10-week programme has been agreed prior to this. Some participants may wish or need to spend longer consolidating and applying their learning so they can present their learning to family, carers, key school staff or colleagues during the final session.

### **Envisaged Outcomes**

1. The participant will be able to name different emotional states of a horse through observation of its behaviour
2. The participant will explore and understand how their own or another's different emotional state could impact on the horse's behaviour
3. The participant will consider how the environment, physical state or unmet needs of the horse will affect its emotional state and behaviour (empathy).
4. The participant will respond and adapt to the horse's emotional state in order to maintain a positive relationship
5. The participant will develop a relationship with a horse or horses which will enable them to handle them and complete tasks (as described in Objectives)

### **Broader potential Outcomes**

- Improvement in personal self-belief, identity, confidence and assertiveness
- Ability to observe realistic goals and respond through planning, plus evaluate through reflective thought
- Development of new interest
- Have loads of play and fun