

Case study

**British Horseracing
Authority/Go Racing
Green— yard visits for local
Minds**

Project at a glance

- Mind, the British Horseracing Association and Go Racing Green worked together to pilot sessions where people who use local Mind services could meet racehorses and their trainers.
- Twenty people took part in the pilots, where they met the horses, learned how they were looked after and got to socialise with others.

100% of participants experienced an uplift in mood post visit



77% of participants with low mood pre-visit reported a positive mood post-visit

Spending time with animals outside as part of a group has the power to lift people's moods.

So in 2021, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) came together with Mind to explore a national partnership to enhance people's lives through racehorses.

The BHA work with a charity called Go Racing Green who aim to make horseracing more inclusive. They offered people that use local Mind services 'yard visits' to meet horses and their trainers.

“The objectives were improving people's wellbeing by getting up close with the horses, learning and understanding how racehorses are cared for and socialising in a safe and friendly place with other people.”

Judy Bratt, Physical Activity Team Coordinator at Mind.

“Also, the training yards are in areas of outstanding natural beauty – places that many of the people involved haven't been able to experience before.”

Two local Minds (West Sussex Mind and Andover Mind) got involved with 20 people taking part in the visits.

The results were positive – every person who completed a post-session survey said the visit improved their mood. And over three-quarters (77%) of people with low mood before the visit reported a positive mood afterwards.

“People enjoyed meeting the horses and hearing about how they were looked after,” says Judy.

“One of the most important things is the social engagement side of the visits. At the end people can come together as a group, have coffee and cake, and discuss what they’ve done.”

One of the project’s challenges was matching visitors’ needs to the training yards’ busy schedules.

“Normally, these kind of visits would happen very early in the morning – like 8am,” says Judy. “That’s so yards can fit in time for training and races. But it wouldn’t work for people who use local Mind services. Plus, many of the yards were over an hour’s drive from local Minds, which was a problem.”

Judy says that Go Racing Green’s experience was invaluable in meeting this challenge. Their extensive contacts in horseracing meant they could connect with the right yards.

The pilot is set to grow with local Minds across England and Wales getting support to organise their own trips.

“When you have that connection with an animal, and the experience of being out in nature, it can be very powerful. Along with the social engagement it can really enhance people’s wellbeing.”



Quotes from participants

“I’ve got BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder), I felt like it [the yard visit] really helped me and made me happy, distracted me from a few bad things that have happened recently.”

“I really liked meeting the other service users in an informal environment. [I] loved spending time with the animals.”

“[I most enjoyed] meeting other people that I don't know and seeing the horses and finding out stuff about them.”

What Go Racing Green’s founder and yard facilitator, Debbie Matthews, had to say:

“Personally, working alongside the Mind service users at the stable visits, and seeing the effect it has had on them has been an immensely rewarding and humbling experience, especially so with those who had not had contact with horses previously.

It was also clear that they not only benefitted from the equine experience, but also the tranquil settings in which the visits take place, and being around likeminded people in a small group environment.”

Learning

- **Build a relationship with people in the know**
Having an experienced staff member at Go Green Racing, who had good relationships with training yards, made it easier to connect trainers and local Minds.
- **Try to understand the challenges of those involved from the start**
It was difficult to establish the pilot yard visits at the start. This was because of the trainers' busy schedules and local Minds not being able to arrive until later in the day. Once the team understood the challenges, they could work together to solve them.



Relevant support available

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: Making physical activities inclusive to people experiencing mental health problems

Mental Health Awareness for Sport & Physical Activity+ eLearning

Our local Mind network

