

Exploring the Development and Use of Equine Assisted Personal Development for Adults with a Mild/Moderate Intellectual Disability

by

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List of Abbreviations

AAA	Animal-Assisted Activities
AAT	Animal-Assisted Therapy
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
DS	Day Service
EAET	Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy
EAGALA	Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
EAL	Equine-Assisted Learning
EAP	Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy
EAPD	Equine-Assisted Personal Development
EAT	Equine-Assisted Therapy
EFL	Equine-Facilitated Learning
EFMHA	Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association
ETP	Equestrian Training Programme
ID	Intellectual Disabilities
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
PD	Personal Development
TTP	Transition Training Programme

Abstract

The aim of the present study was to explore the development and use of an equine-assisted personal development module, with a view to understanding the potential contribution of Equine-Assisted programmes in supporting and promoting personal development for adults with Intellectual Disability. The aim of these modules generally is to promote self-awareness and development through guided interactions in small groups, using horses. The present study used an action research design as the Researcher was working within the host organisation and was involved in delivering similar modules. Participants represented a number of different groups, including service users (n = 7) Coaches (n = 2), Facilitators (n = 1) and the Researcher/co-Facilitator (n = 1). Data were collected from participants using a combination of methods including interviews, a focus group, Facilitator notes, service user worksheets, and the Researcher's own research journal. The data collected from these groups and sources explored the nature of these modules, the goals for the development of the programme and individuals' views on the programme. Inductive thematic analysis was conducted on the transcribed data from the interviews and focus group, the worksheets, Facilitator notes, with reference to the research journal. Overall, study findings supported the existing body of literature by describing a range of personal development benefits for participants in the modules. The key findings were reported improvements in interpersonal communication skills, verbal and non-verbal; better problem-solving and team work; relationship building and repair; development of tolerance and respect; better focus on tasks; improved confidence and reflection on personal life and relationships. The discussion examined the challenges of conducting EAPD with people with ID and the implications of the findings for the development of a model for EAPD for ID; made recommendations for the improvement of the current module and suggestions for future research in the area.

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CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL & EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Overview

This chapter will consider the literature and research evidence relating to the two concepts central to the present study, equine assisted learning and personal development for adults with intellectual disabilities. The chapter begins by clarifying key concepts and discussing relevant theories. In addition it will consider the various approaches taken to personal development for adults in general; with and without the assistance of animals in the process; and then specifically to personal development for adults with ID, both standard and involving the use of horses in the process. The aim of the chapter is to establish the rationale for the present study and review the relevant research.

1.2 Defining key concepts

This section outlines some of the key concepts of the present study. It also provides definitions for the different terms used in the literature for human-horse activities and therapies. A brief definition is offered for each; however the related theories are considered in the next section.

1.2.1 Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

Animal-assisted activities are an opportunity for people to interact with an animal and potential benefits of this include awareness, understanding, and empathy for animals. The activities are conducted in various settings by specially trained professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers, in association with animals that meet specific criteria. Activities include "meet and greet" activities that involve pets and their handlers visiting people on a scheduled or spontaneous basis, as well as programmes permitting family

members or friends of facility residents to bring their own pet or the resident's pet for a visit. The same activity may be repeated with many individuals or be conducted in groups; unlike therapy programmes, they are not tailored to a particular person or medical condition. Visit content is spontaneous and visits are as long or as short as necessary. (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)

1.2.2 Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

According to the Delta Society, Animal-Assisted Therapy "...is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. Working animals must be screened, trained and meet specific criteria. A credentialed therapist, working within the scope of practice of his/her profession sets therapeutic goals, guides the interaction between patient and animal, measures progress toward meeting therapy goals, and evaluates the process" (The Delta Society, 1997, p. 1). AAT involves the use of a variety of animals, such as dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, dolphins, and even elephants. For example, Oakley and Bardin (n.d.) suggested that an Occupational Therapist may conduct a therapy session using a dog as a modality to facilitate the development of skills needed by a child to achieve independent functioning in the areas of self-help, play and learning. The therapist may ask the child to reach out with a weak arm to pet, brush or even feed the dog. Thus the child is motivated to participate in the therapy by the presence of, and interaction with the animal.

1.2.3 Equine Assisted Approaches to Therapy and Learning

There are many different forms of equine-assisted approaches to therapy and learning and they are referred to by a broad range of terms in the literature. In order to clarify the

differences between the various forms, the main terms are defined and briefly described below.

Equine-Assisted Therapy (EAT)

AAT with horses is known specifically as Equine-assisted therapy (EAT). EAT is unique in that the therapist(s) or Facilitator(s) uses horses as part of the treatment / learning structure and process. It is also held in a setting (usually an arena) away from the traditional therapy rooms and classrooms.

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

One form of EAT to receive much attention from Researchers and therapists alike, is Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). Schultz, Remick-Barlow and Robbins (2007) defined EAP as “a specialized form of psychotherapy using the horse as a therapeutic tool” (p. 266). It is designed to address self-esteem, communication, interpersonal effectiveness, trust, boundaries and limit-setting, personal confidence and group cohesion (Kersten & Thomas, 2000). EAP is also known as “Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy” (Lentini & Knox, 2008).

Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy (EAET)

Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy (EAET) is a combination of experiential therapy (learning by doing) and specific activities involving horses (Klontz *et al.* (2007). It is designed to enable clients to work through unfinished business, live more fully in the present and alter destructive behaviour patterns. The core treatment model of EAET is based on the theory and techniques of “Psychdrama” (Dayton, 1994; Fox, 1988); a model already demonstrated to be effective without the animal component. (Klontz *et al.*, 2007)

Equine-Facilitated Learning/ Equine-Assisted Learning

Equine-Facilitated Learning (EFL) or Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) refers to an experiential method which uses horses as “therapeutic co-Facilitators and education enhancers” (Ewing *et al.*, 2007, p. 60). According to *Festina Lente* Foundation in Co. Wicklow, pioneers of the practice of EAL in Ireland, it is a process where young people work with horses to develop their emotional growth, personal awareness, relationships and trust. The team involved comprises the horse, the participant, an equestrian adviser and a Facilitator (or a Psychotherapist in the case of EAP). The focus of the sessions is generally on the person working with a horse on the ground, so riding is not usually involved. (*Festina Lente*, 2008)

In summary, there are several different approaches which use horses to facilitate therapy and learning for humans. Some approaches use horses to compliment more formal, established methods, such as psychotherapy; whereas others are more exploratory, in informal settings, where learning and healing are supported and encouraged by the use of horses. For the purpose of the present study, the term Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) will be used henceforth for clarity and consistency. Another use of EAL is as a means to facilitate personal development. The following section will define what is meant by personal development, again for the purpose of the present study.

1.2.4 Personal Development

While there is no clear conceptual definition of personal development (PD) in the literature, a number of key principles are highlighted in previous studies, such as self esteem (Lawrence, 2006), social skills, relationships and sexuality, protective behaviours (Sheppard, 2006), life skills (Danish & Donohue, 1995), psychological skills required to

deal with the demands of everyday life, which are physical (e.g. choosing the correct posture), behavioural (e.g. effective communication) or cognitive (e.g. effective decision-making) (Danish & Donohue, 1995; Danish & Nellen, 1997), enhancing quality of life (Whitney-Thomas, 1997) and self development, intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977). Given the variation evident in this concept, the present study focuses on personal development as it pertains to improvement of self-esteem, development of personal and interpersonal skills such as communication, relationships, social skills, problem solving, boundary setting and decision making and developing self-awareness.

Personal development is relevant to many groups in society, as it is necessary for people to be able to participate fully in the community, to live fulfilling lives and to develop a sense of their personal identity. The present study focuses on one particular group in society; namely those with intellectual disabilities, the nature of which will now be defined.

1.2.5 Intellectual Disability

The term “Intellectual Disability (ID)” is used to refer to the type of disability affecting the target group of the present study. Burton (1997) defined intellectual disability as “a disability which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development, which results in reduced ability to cope independently due to reduced ability to understand new information and to learn new skills (p. 37). Intellectual disability is classified into four groups (mild, moderate, severe and profound) based on IQ and functional ability. The World Health Organisation (2007) describes the nature of the four degrees of ID as follows: mild ID refers to people with an approximate IQ range of 50-69 and according to

the WHO, they are likely to experience some learning difficulties in school; however, many adults will be able to work and maintain good social relationships and contribute to society. Moderate ID refers to an IQ of 35-49 and people who are likely to have marked developmental delays in childhood, but who can learn to develop some degree of independence in self-care and acquire adequate communication and academic skills and need varying degrees of support to live and work in the community (WHO, 2007). People with severe ID have an IQ of between 20 and 34 and are likely to have a need for continuous support. Finally, people with profound levels of ID have an IQ range of under 20 and have severe limitations in self-care, continence, communication and mobility etc.

The present study focuses on people with mild and moderate ID. There were 25,613 people registered on the National Intellectual Disability Database (NIDD) in April 2007; and the prevalence rate for mild ID in Ireland is approximately 1.96 per 1,000 and the combined prevalence rate for moderate, severe and profound ID is approximately 3.48 per 1,000 (Health Research Board, 2007).

1.3 Theoretical context

This section outlines some of the theories which provide the framework for the present study. As Lentini and Knox (2008) pointed out, the terminology, methods and theories in the field of EAL vary extensively; thus it is important to consider the main theories underlying its method of action, when using them to inform the evaluation and development of EAL programmes.

1.3.1 Animal-Assisted Therapy

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning (thinking and intellectual skills). AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature (The Delta Society, 1996). An example of AAT is Dolphin Therapy, where dolphins are used as a tool in the therapeutic process for children with Autism. Animals have been found to have therapeutic benefits, which are believed to be for a number of reasons. Firstly, animals can have a calming effect on people, especially for those with mental health difficulties or disabilities. This was shown in one study by Katcher and Wilkins (1997) which looked at the effectiveness of AAT for children with ADHD and conduct disorders and found that the animals captured and held the children's attention and directed it outwards. In another study, which used dogs in a classroom study with children with Down's syndrome, Limond *et al.* (1997) found that the dog helped them to sustain their focus for positive and co-operative interactions with the adult.

AAT is also believed to be effective as animals can have a normalising effect on people, especially those in a vulnerable state, due to illness, loss, disability or old age. Hart (2006) believes that AAT is effective because animals offer engaging and accepting interactions, without reflecting back any of the negatives of difficult situations and this helps to put people at ease. It has also been proposed that animals can help normalise the social environment by removing barriers between people with disabilities and people without disabilities, as the presence of the animal helps to override discomfort with the disability. This was evident in a study where children in wheelchairs in a playground with service dogs were approached more often and received a warmer and more welcoming

reception than those without dogs and were treated as though they were able-bodied (Mader *et al.*, 1989).

Finally, it is believed that companion animals can also help ease mental and emotional crises. This was supported by Fritz *et al.* (1995) who reported less aggressive outbursts and anxious episodes among patients with Alzheimer's disease when they had regular contact with a companion animal. Developing the link between animals and emotional wellbeing, Fine (2000) reported that the animal helped people to elicit a wide range of emotions from sorrow to joy, to understand the behaviours of themselves and others more accurately and to reduce their stress and overcome their anxiety of being in therapy.

Thus, there appears to be evidence in support of the theory behind using animals in therapy and learning, as they have been found to be useful in helping a range of different needs and situations. However, these studies explored the role of animals such as dogs and cats. Larger animals, such as horses, have also been successfully used in therapy and development work. The following section will examine the theoretical basis for Equine-assisted approaches.

1.3.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Equine-Assisted Approaches

The human-horse relationship has been found to have many therapeutic benefits (McCormick & McCormick, 1997). Horses were used in rehabilitation in the fifth century B.C. (Gamache, 2004); and the first documented use of horses in the treatment of mental health difficulties was as early as 1792 (Trivedi & Perl, 1995). They have been used for some time in educational and therapeutic settings with people of all ages. However, centres using horses in a specifically therapeutic or developmental capacity with people

were only opened in the US in the 1960s (Engel, 1984). Since then, horses have been used in the treatment of a broad range of psychological and physical problems (Klontz *et al.*, 2007).

Human development is affected by multiple factors, which include bonds with caregivers, family, friends and peers and in more recent times, it has been reported that the human/animal bond can also have a significant impact (Melson, 2001). According to Wagner and Fine (1980) attachment to an object of love is at the root of successful development. Children are often extremely trusting and easily achieve a level of intimacy with animals. This special bond contributes to pets' effectiveness as co-therapists (Oakley & Bardin, n.d.); and this has also been found especially with people and horses.

A large body of current literature focuses on therapeutic riding for people with physical disabilities; usually referred to as "Hippotherapy" (Gasalberti, 2006). More recently, other applications of equine-assisted approaches to therapy have emerged, such as rehabilitation of children and adolescents "at-risk" of developing problems; those demonstrating social and behavioural problems; adults suffering from emotional trauma and parents with poor coping skills etc. (Bowers & MacDonald, 2001; Moreau, 2001; Schultz, Remick-Barlow & Robbins, 2007).

Rector (2005) believes that Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EAP) offers an opportunity for the client to work in an experiential, hands-on process to access the psyche. A relational dynamic will then develop between the client and the horse, which brings awareness to the patterns of thought and behaviour which shape the individual's world view. Indeed, there are a number of conceptualisations surrounding the mechanisms of

EAP. One is based on Jungian philosophy of archetypes, such the Pegasus and the unicorn (Vidrine *et al.*, 2002). These are important in understanding what children, or people with intellectual disability (and so child-like ideas) may imagine the horse to represent for them; for example they may see the horse as magical, beautiful, strong and brave etc. and thus be attracted to the idea of the horse and so find the presence of a live horse a very positive experience. It may also partly explain the therapeutic benefits of EAP for young people and what motivates them to participate. Finally, Schultz, *et al.* (2007) point out that the treatment modality of EAP is very similar to Gestalt therapy, in that a basic tool of the therapy and learning is body-language. Thus, EAP facilitates productive and positive interactions with the horse, which embodies a number of different aspects that prove beneficial to human individuals that are in need of an alternative and effective approach to their healing and growth.

In moving away from a more ‘therapeutic’ approach, participation in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme is offered as an alternative to more traditional forms of therapy, such as one-to-one counselling sessions. This approach has been found to be effective with many different groups, especially those who are not responding well to other forms of therapy or intervention (Moreau, 2005). The Equine-Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA) states that the objective of EAL is to instil a sense of order and of trust, to create an understanding of boundaries and to improve people’s focus (2003). Dorsey and Dorsey (1998) suggest that the healing process can be described as “a gradual awakening to a deeper sense of the self (and of the self in relation to others) in a way that effects profound change” (p. 36). EAL provides the opportunity to achieve this awakening to the self.

Therefore, there appears to be a strong argument for the theoretical basis for equine-assisted approaches to supporting individuals; however, given the focus of the present study on the potential contribution of EAL to personal development, this will be considered next.

1.3.3 EAL for Personal Development

As defined earlier, personal development refers to growth and learning which enables humans to better meet the demands of life, gain self-knowledge and identity, develop talents and potential, enhance quality of life and realise dreams and aspirations. EAL can be used as a method for facilitating individuals and groups to engage in PD. This section examines how EAL can be applied to PD programmes and describes the theoretical support for this model of personal enhancement.

According to Moreau (2005), EAL involves teaching people how to work with and relate to horses by getting them to perform developmental tasks based on those outlined by Erikson (1950) in his lifespan model. These tasks include: Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, and Identity vs. Identity Confusion. Trust is developed by getting to know and accept the horse, and in turn, being accepted by it. Autonomy is encouraged by the acts of grooming, riding independently, and trotting. Risk-taking, skill acquisition, and stable-yard chores help the person to learn about initiative and to practice industry. As time passes, they begin to see him or herself as someone capable of accomplishing positive things. Thus, their identity evolves from that of bad person, to that of rider, caregiver, and helper, good person. Moreover, Moreau believes that during this evolution, the youth practices empathy and compassion, which are the most crucial elements of healing (Moreau, 2005). However, this conceptualisation

does not take into account the possible benefits of the physical contact with the horse, or the spiritual benefits of human/horse interactions. Furthermore, it fails to consider the role of the Facilitator in the therapeutic process.

EAL is specifically aimed at assisting and supporting the participant in working on their personal growth and development of life skills, and models have been developed that look at this issue specifically. In Chris Irwin's "Equine-Assisted Personal Development" (EAPD) model (2008), it states that the horse goes from being a therapeutic tool used to elicit emotions and provoke reflection and self-awareness, to being a direct teacher. In addition, as Moreau (2005) pointed out, the horse's sheer size commands respect, despite the fact that horses are prey and humans are predators. This almost role-reversal in some way explains why the unique dynamic of human/horse interactions can have significant effects on an individual. As Irwin (2008) asserted, a person cannot earn a horse's respect, trust, focus and willingness until they learn to balance their own predator-based behaviours with the horse's prey-based behaviours. Irwin believes that in this process of learning to be a "better horse", people will almost inevitably become a better person for it.

In addition, Moreau (2005) points out that EAL provides individuals with the opportunity to form positive bonds and attachments, which have been described as the roots of successful development (Wagner & Fine, 1980). People in "at-risk" groups in society, such as juvenile delinquents, have often experienced poor attachments and so try to protect themselves from more hurt by avoiding attachments altogether (Bowlby, 1944). However, within the EAL process, horses are believed to facilitate the building of trust and connection, as they do not present with the same judgements as human peers do.

Horses, as domesticated animals, also respond to care and attention from humans with patience and cooperation and this offers further potential for human/horse attachment to be fostered, as kindness, care etc. from the person are rewarded, whereas fear and anger elicit negative responses from the horse (Schultz *et al.*, 2007). It then becomes easier for individuals to gradually apply this strategy to their human relationships.

In a more focused setting and programme, EAL is specifically designed to help individuals reach certain goals and outcomes. Since a horse cannot over think a person's motives, their sensitivity to nonverbal stimuli helps them read people and reflect individual emotions through observable and physical feedback, such as pinned ears or swishing tails (Kaleidoscope Learning Circle LLC, 2002). The common language of non-verbal body-language between horses and humans forces humans to return to congruence of expression and intention in their interactions (Pegasus Project, 2008). These patterns and behaviours are a core feature of any EAL programme. Schultz *et al.* (2007) proposed that horses bear similar characteristics to humans in their behavioural responses and social structures. This mirroring effect enables people to gain insight into their own lives in a unique and safe setting.

In summary, EAL is believed to be beneficial for personal developments for a number of reasons. Firstly, horses' size commands respect and holds attention; it also gives a sense of success when co-operation is achieved. They are also believed to be useful as a tool to elicit emotions and to help people work through developmental stages. Horses are also thought to be like a mirror to help transfer experiences in EAL back to people's own lives; as well as providing comfort, companionship, a calming effect and encouraging trust etc. Finally, the unique setting and the nature of the interactions with the horse all

appear to contribute to the effectiveness of EAL at aiding personal growth and development. However, in considering the theoretical basis for EAL for learning and personal development, it is important to examine the actual nature of EAL programmes.

1.4 The nature of EAL programmes

The following section describes the typical structure of EAL programmes, their various durations and some considerations to be taken into account when conducting group EAL programmes.

1.4.1 EAL Programme Structure and Activities

EAL sessions are typically delivered by a qualified equestrian adviser “who is responsible for ensuring safety as well as providing proper instruction for interacting with horses” (Klontz *et al.*, 2007, p. 258) and a Facilitator, experienced in working with people in group facilitation. Individual sessions in a programme are conducted lasting anywhere from 90 minutes (Bowers & MacDonald, 2004) to a full day at a time (Klontz *et al.*, 2007). Programmes run for anything between four days to a year (Vidrine *et al.*, 2002).

Equine activities can be combined with experiential therapy tools such as role-playing (Klontz *et al.*, 2007) and the basic tool of Gestalt therapy, which is body language (Schultz *et al.*, 2007). Participants are taught about body language of the horse and how to send more congruent messages with their own spoken and body language (Vidrine *et al.*, 2002). Horses respond to non-verbal cues from people, so activities are planned to utilise this, in order to bring awareness to people’s feelings and behaviours and the responses they elicit from the horse. Then discussion between the participants and the Facilitator can help them to process these feelings etc. (Schultz *et al.*, 2007).

1.4.2 Long term Vs Short term programmes

Looking at the literature on EAL, programmes are described as having a range of lengths of delivery. Long term EAL programmes (i.e. six months or longer) have been shown to be effective for children and adolescents with various disabilities (e.g. MacKinnon *et al.*, 1995, who looked at a six-month programme). However, little research exists evaluating short term EAL programmes (i.e. of six to twelve sessions); Ewing *et al.* (2007) conducted nine sessions of Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) with children with severe learning and behavioural problems; and Bowers and MacDonald conducted seven sessions of EFP with at-risk adolescents with depressive symptoms. Both studies found positive results qualitatively through self-report methods, despite the short course of therapy. However, Ewing *et al.* (2007) did not find significant quantitative results, which may have been due to a number of methodological issues, for instance the measures used may not have been appropriate for the population in the study as they were too long for children with ADHD. Also, Klontz *et al.* (2007) did find significant reductions in psychological distress and enhancements in well-being; however, they did not have any control or comparison group and the sample used was non-random.

The methodology of some studies however, suggests that caution should be exercised when interpreting the results. For example Glazer, Clark and Stein (2004) conducted a 6-week programme of Equine-Assisted Therapy for children who had experienced bereavement of a family member. They found that it increased self-confidence, trust, self-esteem and communication skills, which transferred to their home environments. However, as parental and volunteer reporting only were used and the children were not asked directly to comment on their own experiences of the programme, a greater depth to the findings may have been overlooked by the Researchers, or the parents may have been

over-amplifying the results due to a desire to see an improvement in their child. In saying that, it must be noted that very clear triangulation was used in the analyses to verify the reliability of the coding frame and to decide on the interpretation of the data.

Therefore, long and short EAL programmes have been shown to be beneficial for different populations by numerous studies (see Lentini & Knox, 2008); however, the evidence in support of them is not rigorous or conclusive and may not be generalisable beyond the specific populations they sampled. Another variation in EAL studies is whether the programme was conducted with individuals or groups. The following subsection will examine the evidence in support of group settings.

1.4.3 Group Therapy

Most of the studies on EAL have been conducted in group settings. As Vidrine *et al.* (2002) pointed out, developmental psychologists such as Erikson and Vygotsky, believed that social interaction is the best way for young people to grow and develop psychosocially. This is due to a number of reasons, including the point made by Vygotsky in 1962, that children's intellect grows through receiving feedback from their environment (such as when they are working as part of a group) and that group therapy allows for the practice and reinforcement of language (which is a social means of thought). In addition, as Vidrine *et al.* (2002) noted, when EAL is done as a group activity, it can widen a person's "circle of trust" and encourage interpersonal interaction. This is especially pertinent for individuals with ID, as some of them would find it a challenge to form friendships, express themselves verbally and to relate to others, due to various factors such as shyness, poor social skills, speech impairments and Autistic tendencies etc.

However, in considering the potential of EAL for individuals, there is qualitative evidence to suggest that one-to-one sessions of EAL can have very positive results. In case studies conducted by Ewing *et al.* (2007), four individual children with a variety of difficulties and disabilities that received one-to-one EAL, were observed to make great improvements in communication, interpersonal skills, confidence and self-esteem following the programme.

In conclusion, it appears that EAL programmes are of varying duration, depending on participant needs, available resources and considerations of the Facilitators as to what is sufficient to achieve the desired impact. EAL is also conducted with both groups and individuals and again, this depends on the participants and their specific needs etc. Finally, EAL is conducted by an equine-handler and a Facilitator, who use a horse as part of the learning process in which participants take part in a variety of tasks and activities with the horse and use their experiences during the sessions to gain insight into their life by making transferences.

However, given the range of variables in the nature of EAL programmes, the evidence in support of its effectiveness must be considered. The following section will examine the existing research with, particular reference to studies conducted with people with ID in light of the focus of the present study.

1.5 Empirical Context

Since EAL is a developing field in terms of theory, practice, and research, the literature on practice is greater than on research and theory (Taylor, 2001). As Vidrine *et al.* (2002) pointed out, “most publications on the subject are case studies, anecdotal data, uncontrolled or poorly translated” (p. 591); thus it proved a challenge to locate reliable empirical studies from traditional databases and peer-reviewed journals. A number of unpublished postgraduate manuscripts on EAL were also found and they provided some interesting findings.

One aspect of this literature is the variation in the nature of the studies conducted. Some experimental studies have shown a positive outcome for EAL programmes when treating clients (e.g. Aduddell, 2003; Bray, 2002). However, Researchers have tended towards exploratory studies more than comparative studies, which are necessary in order to reliably determine how effective EAL may be as compared to traditional therapeutic approaches (Russell-Martin, 2006). Lentini & Knox (2008) also draw attention to the variations in the literature regarding the treatment populations, language used and the measures conducted. Nonetheless, the available research does provide a number of important insights, of relevance to the present study.

One key issue relates to the evidence for the use of EAL with a wide range of target groups. People from all walks of life can benefit from some form of EAL; for instance, couples dealing with issues of relationship adjustment were treated with a form of EAL tailored specifically for couples (Russell-Martin, 2006). EAL has also been used for the personal development of more mainstream populations of adults, as demonstrated by Chris Irwin, in relation to personal development for people from corporate leadership,

sports psychology, parenting, teaching, and many other backgrounds (Irwin, 2008). Other studies using samples from non-clinical populations include Kaiser *et al.* (2004) who reported significant decreases in anger, improved quality of life and improved self-esteem in 16 able-bodied children after a week of therapeutic riding; and Emory (1992) who found therapeutic horsemanship to have a statistically significant improvement in the self-concept of asocial adolescent males.

However, the majority of empirical studies on EAL with adults are with clinical samples, as the use of the experiential therapy with adults from non-clinical populations is still relatively new. One study using EAL with adults experiencing psychological distress was a clinical trial by Klontz *et al.* (2007) with 31 adults (9 men and 22 women) who participated in a form of EAL known as Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy (EAET). The participants showed a significant enhancement in psychological well-being, even six months following the treatment. However, the majority of the participants were woman, so this may have skewed results if gender was a potential factor in the success of the treatment.

In addition to these target groups, research available on EAL has explored its effectiveness with “at-risk” children and adolescents. Horses have been used with many different groups of young people, such as children experiencing intra-family violence (Schultz *et al.*, 2007), children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (Levinson, 2004), children in special education (Kaiser *et al.*, 2006), children with multiple impairments (Lehrman & Ross, 2001), adolescents at risk of leaving school (Myers, 2004) and Juvenile Capital Offenders (Moreau, 2001).

Aside from the target groups, EAL programmes have also been found to be effective in different ways, including soliciting respect, restoring pride (Melson, 2001), improving interpersonal communication, sensitivity towards others and relationship building (Vidrine, Owen-Smith & Faulkner, 2002) and increasing self-esteem and internal locus of control (MacDonald & Cappo, 2003). EAL has also been shown to develop an understanding that being open and vulnerable is more likely to elicit positive reactions than an approach of defiance and aggression (McCormick & McCormick, 1997). EAL can also improve psychological, social and school functioning; this was evidenced by a quantitative study conducted by Schultz, Remick-Barlow and Robbins (2007) with children who have experienced intra-family violence (defined as any combination of interparental violence, physical abuse / neglect and sexual abuse). Myers (2004) also found that EAL tasks such as teaching a 500kg horse to kick a ball, helped adolescents recovering from alcoholism to think creatively, take risks, break down tasks into manageable steps and to work as a team. Myers believes that it is the immediate response of the horse that speeds up the learning process and concretises skills more effectively than traditional therapeutic programmes.

Thus, the literature on EAL suggests that it is an effective approach to therapy and learning for a broad range of groups. Although the findings are generally positive, the methodology employed by different Researchers varies greatly, from qualitative to quantitative, as well as the general approach used, from experiential learning to psychotherapy etc. Moreover, limitations of the studies, such as biased samples, limited measures (e.g. Schultz *et al.*, 2007); lack of a control or comparison group, non-random samples (e.g. Klontz *et al.*, 2007) and the inability to control external variables such as

medication (e.g. Ewing *et al.*, 2007) mean that the findings are not consistently reliable or valid.

Therefore, having considered the evidence for EAL for personal development and therapeutic applications and the nature of EAL programmes in general, it is necessary to consider the evidence for alternative approaches to personal development for the present study's sample population, namely people with intellectual disability. The following subsection will examine the literature on the topic.

1.5.1 Research on personal development for ID

There has been a dilemma for many years regarding the best education for young people with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). As Jenkinson (1997) argues, both parents and educators often have to decide between mainstream or special schooling for young people with special educational needs (SEN). Children with ID need the opportunity to relate to and play with typically developing children of their age; they also need the same experiences of achievement and opportunities to grow into adults with prosperous and fulfilling lives. Most importantly, they need to develop healthy self-respect and achieve a good sense of belonging and attachment. However, Jenkinson also points out that in order to reach their full potential, they need a far greater level of support than can be reasonably provided in mainstream classrooms.

Moreau (2001) believes out that children with ID will experience difficulty in mastering the stages of development successfully. They may progress through the early stages at a typical rate; however, their impairments often mean that their development is affected at a later stage, meaning their adjustments in the school environment and later childhood

activities are extremely stressful for them. Consequently, children with ID may resort to using primitive coping mechanisms, which mean they become even more alienated from their peers.

Looking more specifically at supporting development, according to Petersen and Adderley (2002), social skills programmes are common; as poor relations with peers have the potential to cause long-lasting negative effects. Chandler and Pankaskie (2004) point out that for the majority of people, social skills develop naturally, as they socialise and mature; however, for many people with ID, this often does not happen in the same way, as many extraneous factors can impact on their maturation. As a result, people with ID typically require special training in social skills and special assistance with socialisation. Petersen and Adderley (2002) specify some of the social skills that need to be taught; these include: how to listen, ask questions, consider others' needs, make compromises, resolve conflicts, be assertive, empathise and share common interests with peers. Furthermore, self-knowledge, knowledge of others and practice at assertive communication are necessary for the development of protective behaviours; such as recognising safe and unsafe situations, how to deal with strangers, asking for help when needed, safe sexual practices and being informed about the risks of substance abuse (Agran, 2004).

With specific reference to young people with ID, Sheppard (2006) reported an evaluation of a PD programme (called the *Growing Pains Program*) that was designed to address the needs of students between the ages of 11 to 15 years with ID in a special school in Australia. It focused on seven topics that were identified as being important in supporting the students through the physical and emotional changes experienced during adolescence.

Similarly, the sample population in the present study were selected to participate by their instructors due to the identified presence of an ID, with associated problems such as learning difficulties, poor self-esteem and poor communication / social skills. However, the Australian context of the study differs significantly from the cultural context of the present study, as it is a special school for younger people and the Australian system of education and service provision for people with ID is far more progressive than the current Irish system. The findings included that ‘social skills’, relationship and sexuality’ and ‘protective behaviours’ were the topics that were observed to have the most improvement in scores pre-post programme; whereas ‘personal hygiene’ was the topic which showed the least improvement overall. However, a number of challenges arose for them during the study. These included that the evaluation relied on the availability of the class teachers to complete the post-programme checklists. In addition, a very poor response rate from parents meant that the opinions of this group were under-represented in the evaluation.

The literature suggests that personal development programmes are very important for young people with ID. This is especially true with regards to social skills, protective behaviours, relationships and sexuality and communication, which are typically weak among the ID population. However, as they require greater support and than people in mainstream education, it is important that appropriate approaches are employed for the delivery of PD programmes and that these programmes are specially tailored to suit their specific needs. Thus, the following sub-section will examine the evidence for using EAL for people with ID.

1.5.2 The impact of EAL for people with disabilities

In considering the empirical evidence for EAL with people with disabilities, it is important to note that the literature relates to groups with a broad range of difficulties, including mental health, emotional, behavioural, social, cognitive and learning as well as disabilities, both physical and intellectual. This section will examine the evidence for EAL with people who are “at-risk” due to mental health difficulties and people with disabilities, since relevant insights can be taken from across these studies.

A range of impacts have been identified by studies on EAL with people with mental health difficulties and disabilities, from a significant increase in self-esteem and internal locus of control, improved attention span, concentration, listening skills, self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem and motivation (MacDonald & Cappo, 2003; MacKinnon *et al.*, 1995), to improvements in interpersonal communication skills, honesty, patience, respect, sensitivity towards others, relationship building and proper use of power and control (Bowers and MacDonald, 2001; Vidrine *et al.*, 2002). EAL has also proven effective in helping children with ADHD focus for long periods of time when grooming or leading the horse, and that the child’s self-esteem increased once they learned how to elicit the desired responses from the horse (Levinson, 2004). Additional impacts already mentioned include, helping young people at risk of mental health to learn respect, restore their pride (Melson, 2001), improve their interpersonal communication, sensitivity towards others and relationship building (Vidrine, Owen-Smith & Faulkner, 2002); as well as to develop an understanding that an open and vulnerable attitude is more likely to elicit positive reactions than an approach of defiance and aggression (McCormick & McCormick, 1997); and in terms of their functioning, improvements were seen to their psychological, social and school functioning (Schultz *et al.*, 2007); and finally, by working through

tasks, they were helped to think creatively, take risks, break down tasks into manageable steps and to work as a team (Myers, 2004).

Therefore, findings from numerous studies have provided significant evidence for the positive effects of EAL for PD for people with disabilities. However, on examination of the body of previous research, a number of methodological limitations were highlighted such as the lack of control or comparison groups (e.g. Klontz *et al.*, 2007), as well as a broad variety of methodologies and EAL models employed by Researchers; which make comparisons across studies difficult and unreliable. This means that caution must be exercised when considering the value of the studies; as the findings across studies were not consistently reliable or valid.

These studies are valuable as they were conducted specifically with people with a variety of disabilities and they provide useful insight into the various challenges associated with conducting EAL with people with disabilities, such as often disrupted family lives, medication, limited attention spans and social desirability bias among others. Most importantly, the literature provides evidence to support the effectiveness of EAL as an approach to PD for people with ID, as well as providing examples of issues to be considered and addressed by future research.

1.6 Conclusion

The empirical evidence in the literature suggests that EAL programmes can be effective in helping young people with disabilities to develop life skills. Previous research suggests that both long and short term programmes can be beneficial and that EAL works both individually and in group settings. Within this context, the aim of the present study was to

explore the potential of EAL by exploring the experiences of individuals representing different stakeholders on an EAL programme.

CHAPTER 2: THE PRESENT STUDY

2.1 Overview

Following a review of the relevant theory and previous research findings, the purpose of this chapter is to clarify the rationale and aim of the present study. The context of this specific approach to PD will also be discussed and the research questions addressed by the present study will be outlined.

2.2 Rationale for study

The primary rationale behind the selection of the current study topic was an interest in the area as a result of the Researcher's experience of EAPD through her informal knowledge of adults with ID who participate in EAPD in her workplace and her previous experience of exploratory research on EAL (see Guerin & O'Gorman, 2008). Young adults with disabilities often find it a challenge to fully integrate into the community due to various personal issues that arise indirectly as a result of their condition, such as communication, social and behavioural problems. They are at risk of social isolation and of being unable to secure and hold down employment (Morrison & Cosden, 1997) among other things, which can impact on their self-esteem, self-actualisation and overall wellbeing. However, to date, there has been little attempt to address these issues using EAL as part of intellectual disability services in an Irish context.

Within this context, overall aim of the present study is to explore the potential of Equine-Assisted Learning in supporting and promoting personal development for adults with Intellectual Disability in an Irish service provider context.

2.3 Wider Service Context

The service context of the current study is the way personal development is facilitated for people with intellectual disability by Irish service providers. The majority of formal personal development programmes for people with mild to moderate ID in Irish services are conducted by means of FETAC accredited modules, such as Level 1 and 2 Certificates in *General Learning and Communication* on day service programmes etc. with modules including *Personal Decision Making, Listening and Speaking* and *Non-verbal Communications*; or at higher levels, such as *Personal Effectiveness* (Level 3), *Personal and Interpersonal Skills* (Level 3) etc., as part of special education schools or rehabilitative / vocational training programmes. Programmes for personal development in primary and secondary schools involve Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programmes, developed by the Department of Education. According to the SPHE Support Service (2009), SPHE,

“...as part of the curriculum, supports the personal development, health and well-being of young people and helps them create and maintain supportive relationships. The Education Act (1998) places an obligation on schools to promote the social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them.”

Generally speaking, ID service providers in Ireland aim to promote PD for their service-users. Examples of this can be seen in the mission statement of organisations such as Cheeverstown House, which state that one of their goals is to “*develop each person’s full potential and ensure his or her long-term well being within a positive environment*” (2008, p. 4); Sunbeam House Services, which aim to promote the “*independence, self respect and individuality of the person using the service*” (2009); and St John of God Carmona Services is “*committed to helping and encouraging people who have an intellectual disability to develop attitudes, knowledge and skills, which are necessary for*

them to achieve fulfilment” (2009). Therefore, it is clear that personal development is considered of high importance to the well being of people with ID in Irish services.

2.4 Research Context

The present study evaluated modules conducted by an Irish rehabilitation service provider. This section provides a brief background of the organisation and its programmes and describes the development of the Equine-Assisted Learning programmes within the organisation.

2.4.1 *Festina Lente* Foundation

Festina Lente Foundation has been involved in delivering equine assisted work programmes over the past 20 years, which originated with the development of an equestrian vocational training programme for people with disabilities and employment in the Riding School for staff with ID. This followed with the strategic decision to include a higher percentage of people with a disability into riding lessons in the Riding School. Also included in the equine assisted work was the involvement of volunteers, work placements and community placements for people who wished to be around horses for a variety of different personal reasons. (Guerin & O’Gorman, 2008).

The Foundation also provides other services such as an adult day service, transition training programme and employment in the Walled Garden, to people whose needs have not been met by mainstream education or open employment. (*Festina Lente* Foundation, 2008) Some of the service-users have intellectual disabilities and psychiatric disorders (e.g. ADHD, Autism and Personality Disorder) and others come from disadvantaged

areas and experience disadvantaged home lives. The staff and instructors that work on the programmes often become mentors, confidantes and role-models for them.

2.4.2 Equine Assisted Learning at *Festina Lente*

Acknowledging the intrinsic value being experienced by the different people coming into contact with horses, *Festina Lente* Foundation made a decision to focus the person / horse contact and develop Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) and personal development. Starting in July 2006, EAL sessions were offered to current trainees of the different programmes offered by the Foundation and also to individuals from the local community (Guerin & O’Gorman, 2008). Based on the personal satisfaction expressed by the participants, and the requests made from three local schools, *Festina Lente* Foundation decided to continue to develop the EAL service and open it up to a small number of groups. (Guerin & O’Gorman, 2008) *Festina Lente* now runs a full-time Equine Assisted Learning Service, with sessions being delivered at both *Festina Lente*, a satellite site in Tallaght and around the countryside, with funding from the AIB Better Ireland Programme (*Festina Lente*, 2009).

The model of EAL used in *Festina Lente* is based on the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) model (EAGALA, 2009). The key elements of the EAGALA model as *Festina Lente* deliver it are the use of horses experientially for emotional growth and learning, with a collaborative effort between a Facilitator and a horse professional working with people and horses to address certain goals and to learn about themselves and others by participating in activities with the horses, and then discussing their feelings, behaviours, and patterns etc. (EAGALA, 2009)

2.4.3 Equine-Assisted Personal Development in *Festina Lente*

In September 2008 the Foundation commenced the delivery of an Equine-Assisted Personal Development module as part of the Equestrian Training Programme (ETP). The Equestrian Training Programme aims “*to equip learners whose needs have not been met by mainstream services with the necessary skills and knowledge so that they can progress to working in the equestrian industry or to further studies*” (*Festina Lente*, 2008, p. 6). Personal development on the programme prior to 2008, involved the completion of FETAC modules such as *Personal Effectiveness* (Level 3). A significant proportion of the participants on the training programme have various levels of ID, ranging from borderline to moderate, and others are at risk due to mental health difficulties or disadvantaged backgrounds. EAPD was introduced to further address the aim of the training programme to equip the trainees with the skills necessary to secure and maintain employment or to continue on to further training. It involves participation in a weekly, hour-long EAPD session, delivered to all the trainees in small groups, with one equestrian programme Coach facilitating each session. The groups carry out tasks with the horses and this is followed by discussion and the completion of worksheets which were designed specifically for the EAPD module by *Festina Lente*.

Rationale for developing the pilot EAPD module in Phase 2

As mentioned previously, the Foundation is funded by AIB to conduct a full-time Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) service for ‘at-risk’ children and adolescents around Ireland. During the development of this service, EAL sessions were piloted with some of the employees of the Garden Programme in *Festina Lente* and then rolled out on an informal level to the trainees on the Equestrian Training Programme by the Coaches. EAL was

formally integrated into the ETP in September 2008, with the introduction of the Equine-Assisted Personal Development module.

However, before the present study, there was no EAL conducted on the adult Day Service (DS) or Transition Training Programmes (TTP), despite the need for ongoing personal development among the service-users. In light of this, the Researcher (from the DS) and a staff member from the TTP were requested by the Organisation to conduct a pilot EAPD module together, with a number of the service-users from their respective programmes. The aim of this was to see how it would work with a population with generally higher support needs than the population on the ETP. Furthermore, the possibility of continuing the EAPD sessions on a more regular basis with some of the service-users was also discussed as a potential to be examined at some stage in the future. The present study grew out of the planning in response to these discussions.

2.5 Structure and Objectives of the Present Study

The research project is structured in two phases, which run concurrently. One phase is drawing on an existing programme, which is conducted for adults with a range of difficulties, not just ID; and the programme is not focused purely on personal development; but on providing adults with the knowledge, attitude and personal and practical skills necessary to prepare them for employment in the Equestrian industry, or to continue on to further training. In contrast, the module in Phase two was designed specifically to be a short-term, personal development programme for adults with ID.

2.5.1 Phase 1

Phase one aims to explore the experiences of adults with intellectual disability on an Equine-assisted Personal Development module in a vocational training programme; and the experiences of their Coaches to ascertain what works and what could work better etc. As the module is part of a bigger, and more established programme, it will provide important insights into the potential of this approach. A number of specific objectives will be addressed:

- **Objective 1:** To gather information on the experiences of trainees on an Equine-assisted Personal Development Module, using focus group interviews.
- **Objective 2:** To gather information on the experiences of Coaches on an Equine-assisted Personal Development Module, using individual interviews.

The focus groups and interviews conducted in Phase one of the study are intended to explore the Equestrian Trainees' (with ID) and the Coaches' experiences and perceptions of the new EAPD module on the Equestrian Training Programme. This feedback will be used to fulfil the overall objective of Phase one; that is, an action research project designed to facilitate discussion and provide the necessary feedback information to empower the organisation to evaluate and improve their new EAPD module. This evaluation will explore the perceptions of the Coaches and Trainees and gauge how closely they match with the objectives set out by the Equestrian programme itself, as well as the ideals, objectives and measured/perceived outcomes of EAL and personal development for people with disabilities, as found in the available literature.

2.5.2 Phase 2

Phase two aims to pilot a six-week Equine Assisted Personal Development Module for use with adults with mild/moderate Intellectual Disability on the Day Service and Rehabilitation Training Programmes at *Festina Lente* Foundation, Bray, Co. Wicklow. The design will be partly informed by the structure and goals of the long-term EAPD Module conducted as part of the Equestrian Training programme; and partly developed progressively by the Facilitators as the pilot runs over the six weeks, based on their experiences of how the course is running, and their perceived needs and abilities of the participants. As part of this Phase, a number of separate objectives will be addressed:

- **Objective 1:** To gather information on the experiences of participants on a six-week pilot Equine-assisted Personal Development Module, using individual interviews
- **Objective 2:** To gather information on the experiences of a Facilitator on a six-week pilot Equine-assisted Personal Development Module, using an individual interview.
- **Objective 3:** To gather information on the experience of the Researcher as a Facilitator on a six-week pilot Equine-assisted Personal Development Module, using her personal Facilitator notes, diary and observations.

The interviews conducted in Phase two of the study are intended to explore the participants' (with ID) experiences and perceptions of the six-week pilot EAPD module on the Day Service and Transition Training Programmes. The interview with the Researcher's co-Facilitator on the pilot module is intended to explore her experiences on the development and running of the module, as well as her opinions on the effectiveness of such a short course. The interview will also explore her ideas for how the module

could be changed and improved for future use with a similar population. Finally, the diary kept by the Researcher herself is intended to be a resource exploring her own observations, ideas and experiences as a direct part of the process, tracing from the development phase to conducting the module over the six weeks.

The Researcher has a participatory role in the study, as opposed to a purely exploratory role as an outsider looking in. As a direct Facilitator in the Phase two module, designing and delivering the sessions, as well as reflecting on them afterwards, she is a component of the EAPD programme herself. This will impact on her perspective as a Researcher, as she will be approaching it from the angle of one with direct experience of the process, and from the angle of a human scientist collecting data.

This feedback will be used to fulfil the overall objective of Phase two; that is, to use the feedback from participants and the experiences of the Facilitators to evaluate the brief pilot, and so provide the ideas and information (i.e. highlighted strengths and weaknesses, possible areas for change, and participants' opinions to be considered etc.) necessary to develop a new short EAPD module, suitable for, and of benefit to, people with mild/moderate ID on Adult Day Service and Transition Training Programmes. As the pilot will be developed progressively as it is conducted, it will be carried out and evaluated by gauging it against the ideals, objectives and measured outcomes of EAL programmes for people with mild and more moderate intellectual disabilities, as found in the available literature.

2.6 Conclusion

Finally, the information gathered in Phases one and two can be used to inform the development and use of a model for a short equine-assisted personal development for people with mild/moderate intellectual disability. It provides a basic structure for a short module, sample Facilitator notes and participant worksheets, an insight into the effectiveness of a variety of possible exercises to use; information taken from interviews, which relate personal experiences of participation in the module, from the populations in question (i.e. people with mild or moderate ID); experiences and personal observations from the Researcher and staff members who facilitated modules themselves. These data will allow the Researcher to identify some of the possible pitfalls and challenges that may be encountered in designing a module such as this, for those particular populations.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the present study. To begin, the overall design of the study is described. Following this, the Researcher's background and own perspective are discussed. Finally, Phase one and Phase two methodology are described separately using the same headings.

3.2 Research Design

Both phases of the study targeted individuals involved in both delivering and taking part in the EAPD modules programme, between September 2008 and April 2009. Inviting members of each of these groups to take part in the research ensured that the full range of experiences were included. In describing the participants, only basic demographics are included in order to protect the anonymity of the individuals involved.

3.2.1 Action Research

The present study used an action research design, in order to allow the organisation to consider the potential contribution of EAPD for one group of its service users. The study focuses on reflecting on the existing Equestrian Training Programme in Phase one; with feedback from participants within the organisation's services, as well as input by the staff responsible for developing and facilitating the pilot module. This will be used to inform the development of a model for short EAPD modules for people with mild/moderate I.D in the second phase of the study.

Action Research is "*...the kind in which the people touched by a topic come together to get a sense of the situation, through a research project, to hear one another and decide*

how to move forward' (Malekoff & Schwartzberg, 2008, p. 1). This approach is very common in service-based research in ID. Malekoff, Johnson & Klappersack (1991) conducted an action-research project to empower parents of children with learning disabilities and the professionals working with them to enhance their collaboration. It emphasised the importance of engaging those the research was about, in order to help the accuracy of the conceptual framework of the study; and therefore ensure the results were as meaningful and useful as possible to the target audience: the participants themselves. Moreover, Whitney-Thomas (1997) advocated the use of participatory action research as an approach to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Malekoff et al. (1991) identified four main tasks involved in the action-research process; these are: needs assessment, program development, coalition building and replication. The process involves small group development of ideas, plans and group purpose; followed by the small group interacting with larger systems, such as the host agency of the programme. This process was developed based both on a model for stages of development in social work groups and the reciprocal model. The former model emphasises "closeness" as the most important element in small-group development, in order to convey the sense that "the group experience involves social beings and group emotions" (Garland et al., 1973, p. 29). According to Malekoff et al., the process can be defined by the verbs: irritate, contemplate, investigate, elevate, stimulate and activate (1991). At "irritate", the project begins with the recruitment of a small group to develop and guide the research and its aims and conceptual framework, done by interviews and meetings. "Contemplate" involves brainstorming and the development of measures etc. "Investigate" includes identifying the target groups of the research, conducting of the measures/ interviews etc. "Elevate" is the stage where data is collated and the results are

analysed and reviewed; and there is interaction between the small and large groups. “Stimulate” then follows, with intergroup conferences and the formation of a coalition to move towards achieving the research aims and objectives. Finally, “activate” is the last stage where individual and/or collective action plans are developed. (Malekoff et al., 1991)

In designing the specific elements of the present study, the Researcher was informed by the procedure employed by Malekoff, Johnson and Klappersack (1991) in their study (see Table 1 for a summary of the process). The Irritate and Contemplate phases described in Table 1 took place between September and December 2008. The Investigate phase took place between December 2008 and June 2009; as the timetable for this was delayed by separate submissions to the Ethics committee for the two phases, challenges in scheduling time for the interviews and focus group; as well as the relocation of the co-Facilitator to another country. The present study reports on the findings of the Investigate Phase (Phase 3).

The Investigate phase in Phase one involved two of the Equestrian Training Programme Coaches being interviewed around 3-4 months into the module; while five of the trainees with ID on the Equestrian Training Programme were interviewed seven months after the module commenced, in order to explore their views and experiences of the module. In Phase two, an independent third party interviewed the staff member who co-facilitated the pilot module with the Researcher and two of the service-users who participated in the pilot module, a few weeks following the completion of the six-week pilot module.

Table 1: Structure of the action research project (after Malekoff *et al.*, 1991)

Phase	Features	Main project
1. Irritate	Form committee and identify purpose	The organisation had designed and introduced an EAPD module to the Equestrian Training Programme and identified the need for a formal evaluation. The Researcher also met with the CEO and staff members to identify the PD needs of adults on the Day Service and Rehabilitative Training.
2. Contemplate	Brainstorming	The Researcher met with the CEO to discuss the exploratory evaluation of the current module; and the programmes manager and her co-Facilitator on a number of occasions to discuss the development of the pilot module.
3. Investigate	Identify participants and collect data	A focus group held with trainees on the current module and interviews held with Coaches to explore experiences, issues, and opinions at ground level. Interviews held with service-users and the co-Facilitator on the pilot module; also, Researcher's own journal of experiences, participant worksheets and Facilitators' notes.
4. Elevate	Analyse data	Findings from the focus group, interviews, worksheets, Facilitator notes and Researcher's journal analysed using inductive thematic analysis
5. Stimulate	Presentation of findings	Findings submitted to the organisation to inform the improvement of the current module. Findings also used to inform the development of a model for EAPD for people with mild/ moderate ID
6. Activate	Development of plans	The outcomes of the study reflected on by the organisation and an action plan drawn up to improve the current EAPD module; and to roll out EAPD to other services in the organisation.

The Elevate phase in Phase one took place between June and July 2009; and involved inductive thematic analysis of the data collected from the focus group and interviews, with a second person acting as a second coder for reliability of the coding frame. In Phase two, inductive thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews, Facilitator notes, worksheets and Researcher's journal was conducted, again using a second person acting as a second coder for reliability of the coding frame.

The Stimulate phase of the study was conducted from August 2009, as the recommendations could not be made prior to the completion of the present study. Findings were submitted to the organisation in the form of a report on the current EAPD module and the pilot module. Findings were also used to inform the development of a model for EAPD for people with mild/ moderate ID, as discussed in the Discussion section.

The Activate phase was conducted after August 2009, after the report was submitted to the organisation and reviewed by the relevant parties. The action plan was drawn up in consultation with the Researcher to address the recommendations made regarding the improvement of the current EAPD module; and to make plans to continue conducting EAPD with the other services in the organisation, as part of their programmes.

3.3 Researcher's Perspective

As recommended by Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie (1999), the Researcher recognises a number of factors that may have affected this study, primarily the Researcher's life experiences with a congenital physical impairment, her existing relationships with people with physical disabilities, as well as her close relationship with horses, which has lasted for most of her life. This section outlines the Researcher's previous experience, training, personal expectations and theoretical orientation, for the purpose of transparency and clarity in the present study.

3.3.1 Personal experience and training relevant to the subject matter

The Researcher is a 23 year old female, currently working in the area of day service provision for adults with mild/ moderate ID. Through her experiences competing at

international level with horses and more recently, through her postgraduate studies in the area of Developmental Disabilities and work with adults with ID, the Researcher has developed a number of assumptions and beliefs about personal development, ID and the effect of interactions with horses.

Her beliefs about disability include that individuals with ID often have issues with skills such as communication, personal/ interpersonal skills, self-esteem issues and problem-solving/ decision-making skills. She believes that this is often due to a combination of bad experiences at school, due to poor literacy, or speech and language difficulties which may have resulted in them avoiding interactions with peers or having difficulty forming friendships; bullying or at least unfavourable attitudes of peers towards them because of their disability; as well as under-developed insight and self-awareness and over-compensatory attitudes and behaviours by their families and caregivers.

Following years of experience competing with horses, the Researcher believes strongly that the human/ horse relationship has many benefits, including therapeutic/ healing effects on the person, calming influences, confidence boosting effects and positive outcomes both short- and longer-term for the person through the bonds built with the animal and the enjoyment gained through activities unique to horse-riding and care, such as working with a powerful partner, experiencing the sensations of being carried, moving at great speed as one and spending time in the presence of a non-verbal, non-judgemental creature. In a professional capacity, the Researcher also has experience of exploring the benefits of equine-assisted learning with a variety of groups, ranging in age and background, experiencing various emotional and behavioural challenges and life

stressors. This work explored how their interactions with the horses impacted positively on their own attitudes, behaviours and responses in their lives outside the horse setting.

3.3.2 The Researcher's theoretical orientation

The Researcher has concluded that equine-assisted therapies are very beneficial to people, especially those with special needs. Her experience and work with people with disabilities and with horses have helped her to develop her insight into how equine-assisted therapies can be used effectively to support people with all kinds of needs to develop their self-awareness and personal skills and to increase their self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence etc.

The Researcher, as a result of her previous work in the field, would support the ideas suggested by the findings of Bowers and MacDonald (2001), who reported that an EAL programme fostered “development of life skills including open and direct communication, honesty, patience, respect, and proper use of power and control (p. 69). In addition, she would agree with MacDonald & Cappo (2003), who found that EAL significantly increased adolescents' self-esteem and internal locus of control; and Vidrine et al. (2002), who found that working with horses helped young people in a residential centre to improve their interpersonal communication, sensitivity towards others and relationship building. The Researcher concluded that she must exercise caution when conducting the interviews and focus group, so as to avoid leading questions or conveying her assumptions and beliefs, which could influence participants' responses. In the analysis process, the Researcher is aware that underlying assumptions could colour her interpretation of the findings; thus a second coder will verify the coding frames in order to counter any misinterpretations etc.

3.3.3 Personal expectations

Given this previous experience and perspective on EAPD, the Researcher felt it was important to state her expectations for the study in advance of the analysis of data, in order to support a reflexive approach.

The Researcher anticipated that the participants in Phase one of the study would report back generally favourably on their experiences of the EAPD module. She expected that participants would be satisfied overall with how the course is run and would report enjoyment of the sessions, with possibly a generally unfavourable attitude towards the need for completion of a worksheet following each session, for the purpose of keeping records of training and progress. The Researcher did not expect the participants to report being aware of any particular or noticeable change in their skills or self-esteem etc. as a direct result of participating in the module, but rather would just report learning more about how to read the horses' body language and how to approach them etc.; as opposed to making the connection that the exercises had made them more aware of the need for team-work, or improved their ability to problem-solve etc.

With regards to her anticipations for Phase two, the Researcher believed that the participants would also report a favourable experience of the pilot module. She expected that the service-users would report enjoying the sessions, but again, she did not expect them to report being aware of any particular or noticeable change in their skills or self-esteem etc. as a direct result of participating in the pilot module, but rather expected they would just report enjoying the experience of interacting with the horses in a different way, as they both have prior experience of traditional riding lessons. The Researcher expected that the Facilitator would report that the pilot module was a success in terms of

how it was conducted and that it had a positive impact on the service-users who took part. In terms of the fact that she would be directly involved in the facilitation of the pilot module, the Researcher understood that it would have implications for her analysis and interpretation of the findings, as well as her for how she delivered the module and her opinions about the implications for future research etc. However, she believed that her firsthand experience of conducting EAPD with adults with ID would benefit and enrich the quality of the insight, interpretations and recommendations of the present study.

Based on the findings of the present study, the Researcher still holds with her initial perspective on the benefits of EAPD for people with ID. However, she also revised her perspective to include a number of additional aspects not reported in the previous literature, such as the benefits of physical contact with the horse, the key role of the flexibility of the Facilitators in the process; and the need for alternative self-report methods of tapping into the impact of EAPD on people with ID.

3.4 Phase 1 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed in Phase one of the study.

3.4.1 Participants and sampling

Phase one targeted two distinct groups in exploring individuals' views of the existing EAPD module at Festina Lente.

Adults attending the Equestrian training programme: Seven young adults with ID took part in the EAPD module (four males aged between 20-24 years and three females aged between 19-32 years). They were on the vocational training programme to gain the

personal and practical skills necessary to prepare them for employment in the Equestrian industry, or to continue on to further training. They attend the service in *Festina Lente* Foundation as a result of a variety of personal, social, behavioural and learning difficulties that were presenting a challenge to their participation in mainstream settings. All adults with ID on the training programme were invited to participate in the study. Of the seven adults invited, one trainee opted out of participating in the study, while the other trainees (n = 6) gave their consent. However, one trainee was unwell at the time of the focus group and so was unable to attend. The Researcher conducted a focus group with those trainees present on the assigned day (n = 5). The ratio of males to females was 2:3 and the age distribution was 21 to 33. Mild and moderate ID were represented among the participants.

Staff involved in the programme: Two Coaches involved in delivering the module took part in the exploratory evaluation. The aim of including the staff was to explore issues in the delivery of the programme and its perceived benefits and suggestions for improvements to be made. All the Coaches on the programme were invited to take part in the study and two agreed to participate. Between them, they had previous experience of conducting EAL in large and small with people with disabilities, mental health difficulties and from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience of Natural Horsemanship and of mentoring young adults.

3.4.2 Materials

Given the exploratory nature of the evaluation, a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A for sample) and a focus group schedule (see Appendix B for sample) were developed. These allowed the Researcher to explore key issues, while also allowing

participants to raise relevant issues themselves. There were four different schedules used in the study, in order to address issues relevant to each group. In Phase one, key questions included:

- Initial expectations of the programme
- Current impressions of the module
- The most beneficial aspects of the programme
- The least beneficial aspects of the programme
- The impact of participation in EAPD
- The challenges or negative factors associated with participation
- The nature of EAPD programmes
- Opinions on how the module is structured (e.g. exercises used etc.)
- Suggestions for changes to the programme

However, the focus group also involved questions around favourite horses worked with, previous experience with horses and of EAL, in order to engage the participants and put them at ease in the interview environment. Moreover, the focus group explored their previous experience of personal development programmes. In contrast, the Coaches' interview schedule included questions exploring previous experience of facilitating EAL and PD classes and of mentoring, and their opinions on their effectiveness.

3.4.3 Procedure

The Coaches responsible for delivering the EAPD module were asked to give invitations to an information meeting (see Appendix C) to adults on the Equestrian Training Programme ("Trainees") who were identified by them as having an ID. At the information meeting, the Researcher provided the trainees with information sheets and

consent forms (see Appendix D for samples) explaining the nature and aim of the study. They were invited to return the signed consent form if they agreed to participate in the study, as well as being reassured that they could contact the Researcher if they had any questions or needed any further information about the study before deciding whether or not to participate. An independent person, not connected to the Organisation in any way, met with the participants prior to the focus group to ensure they understood what participation would involve and that they were giving informed consent if they agreed to take part.

All the Coaches involved in facilitating the EAPD module were approached directly by the Researcher and provided with an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix E for sample) and invited to return the form signed if they decide to participate in the study. Individual interviews with the Coaches who agreed to participate ($n = 2$) were conducted mid-way through the module (3-4 months) by the Researcher.

3.5 Phase 2 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed in Phase two of the study. This phase drew on a number of sources and data types in order to meet its objectives.

3.5.1 Participants and sampling

As with Phase one, two groups of participants were targeted.

Adults attending the Day Service and Rehabilitation Training Programmes (who volunteered to participate in the pilot EAPD module): There were five participants in the pilot module, with a range of behavioural, mental health, social and learning difficulties

and intellectual disabilities. From the number who participated in the pilot module (n = 5) only those who met the criteria of “intellectual disability” (n = 2) were invited to take part. One participant had mild ID and the other had moderate ID. They were both males and they had an age range of 22-23 years. They had both been accessing services in Festina Lente for a number of years and take regular riding lessons there too.

Staff involved in the programme: Two staff involved in delivering the pilot module took part in the second phase of the study: the Researcher and Facilitator of the pilot, and her Co-Facilitator. The aim of including the staff was to explore the potential of Equine-Assisted Learning in supporting and promoting personal development for adults with mild/moderate Intellectual Disability, as well as issues around the delivery of the module and tailoring it to meet the needs of the specific population. Both Facilitators have experience with horses and a background in Psychology, as well as experience working with adults with mild/moderate ID in training and day services.

3.5.2 Materials

Given the exploratory nature of the pilot module, semi-structured interview schedules were developed. These allowed the Researcher to explore key issues, while also allowing participants to raise relevant issues themselves. The service-user interview schedule (see Appendix F for sample) was designed to explore the experiences of a population with higher support needs than the trainee focus group and included key questions such as:

- Previous experience of EAL and PD
- Initial expectations of the programme
- The most liked aspects of the programme
- The least liked aspects of the programme

- Surprising and interesting aspects of the programme
- The positive changes associated with participation
- The challenges or negative factors associated with participation
- Opinions on how the module is structured (e.g. exercises used etc.)
- The nature of the EAPD programme
- Suggestions for changes to the programme

A sample of the co-Facilitator interview schedule is included in Appendix G; and key questions included:

- Previous experience of EAL and PD
- Initial expectations of the programme
- Current impressions of the module
- The horse's contribution to the EAPD process
- The most beneficial aspects of the programme
- The least beneficial aspects of the programme
- The impact of participation in EAPD on the service-users

The interview aimed to explore the Facilitator's experience of conducting the pilot module with the Researcher and she was also asked to comment on her opinion of the Facilitator notes, the service-users' worksheets and to describe the nature of the EAPD programme. The Researcher kept a journal of her thoughts, reflections and experiences before and during the pilot module and anecdotes were drawn from the journal for the purpose of enriching the worksheet and Facilitator notes findings. She and her co-Facilitator also kept Facilitator notes after each session in order to reflect upon the exercises used, the responses and interactions of the participants, the behaviours of the

horse(s) and to note what exercise(s) would be used in the next session. These exercises were based on a schedule devised by the Researcher and the Co-Facilitator prior to the commencement of the pilot module (see Appendix H for a sample). In addition, some of the programme materials, such as worksheets (see Appendix I for sample) and Facilitator notes (see Appendix J for sample) were used as data sources for the present study. The keys sections of the worksheet included:

- Description of each session
- Likes and dislikes of the programme
- Surprising, interesting and memorable aspects

Whereas key sections of the Facilitator notes included:

- Notes on the discussion that took place among the group
- Noteworthy issues and events among the group
- Noteworthy events among the horses
- Plans for the next session and changes or follow up required.

3.5.3 Procedure

Participants in Phase two were members of the Day Service and Rehabilitation Training programmes who were identified as having an ID, as well as the staff responsible for facilitating the pilot EAPD module. The Researcher approached the staff on participants' respective programmes (who were responsible for deciding who met the inclusion criteria, independent of the Researcher) and provided them with information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix K) for participants, explaining the nature and aim of the study; and the Researcher clarified the study at an information meeting. However, in order to avoid the participants feeling obliged to take part in the study, an independent third party was asked to come to Festina and ensure that they fully understand the

information they were given, and that any agreement to consent was fully informed. They were invited to return the consent form if they agreed to participate in the study, as well as being reassured that they could speak with the independent person if they need any further information about the study before they decide whether or not to participate.

The Co-Facilitator involved in the pilot EAPD module was approached directly by the Researcher, who explained the study and asked if she would be interested in participating in an interview. She moved back to Germany following the pilot module, so she was posted an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix L for sample) to sign and return if she agreed to consent.

Individual interviews with the pilot module participants with ID were conducted by the independent person following the 6-week course. A telephone interview was then conducted with the co-Facilitator by the Project Supervisor, a number of weeks after the course finished.

3.6 Ethical Issues

A number of ethical issues were considered in the design of the present study. As the study was conducted with adults with ID, the Researcher was aware of a range of ethical issues that would be necessary to consider throughout the process. In line with the Irish National Disability Authority's recommendations (NDA, 2004a), the Researcher was keen to directly include people with ID in the study, as opposed to using proxy reporters.

In both phases of the study, given the inclusion of people with ID, it was important that informed consent (ensuring that participants were fully informed about the nature of the

study and what their participation would involve) was sought. This was ensured by an independent person, not connected to the organisation or participants in any way. In addition, as the staff participants are colleagues of the Researcher, they were informed and reassured that there was no requirement on them to take part in the research, and that if they declined or withdrew at any stage that their employment would not be effected in any way.

All participants in both phases were fully informed of the nature of the study and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without this decision effecting their employment, participation in the EAPD modules or any other service provided by Festina Lente Foundation. The subject matter of the interviews was not be aimed at exploring any issues that the participants may have found sensitive, but instead at discussing their experiences of how the module is run and how they think it could work better in the future etc. However, in case any of the participants got anxious or upset during the focus group, there was a member of staff designated to debrief participants; including providing information about additional supports etc. in case of any more serious upset that may have arisen as a result of issues discussed during participation. Participants were informed of this provision in advance of the study. In order to protect participants' confidentiality, all data connected with the study was handled and stored securely.

With regards to Phase one in particular, the Researcher is a staff member of the organisation providing the Equestrian training programme; however, she has no professional association with the non-staff participants, has only minimal contact with them on the premises (shared canteen area etc.) and is not connected with the Equestrian training programme in any professional capacity.

In Phase two, it was necessary that an independent Researcher conducted the interviews with participants and the co-Facilitator, as the Researcher was directly involved in the development and delivery of the pilot module. Secondly, given that one of the target groups was from a vulnerable population, fully informed consent was secured at the outset of the study, again by an independent third party. Informed consent was also secured by post for the staff member's participation. In addition, as the staff participant was a colleague of the Researcher, she was informed and reassured that there was no requirement on her to take part in the research, and that if she declined or withdrew at any stage, her employment would not be effected in any way.

Both phases of the study were reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Humanities sub-committee) in University College Dublin.

3.7 Conclusion

There were a small number of participants in the present study, due to the specialised nature of EAPD in Ireland. However, a complex collection of data from the different sources and in various formats was gathered and the following section will outline the methods of analysis and the findings from the data gathered; with the focus on clarity and coherence throughout.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1 Overview

The following chapter will present details of the specific analysis conducted on the data and the findings generated. The present study was conducted in two distinct phases; therefore the findings are presented sequentially, in two separate sections, in order to ensure clarity. In addressing each phase, the analysis is presented, followed by the findings for each section of the phase and then a summary of the patterns emerging between the sets of findings are provided. In addition, the development of the module in Phase two will be described, in order to document the stages and issues which arose, as it pertains to part of the findings of Phase two.

4.2 Data Analysis Procedures

The interview and focus group data (from both phases) were transcribed verbatim and analysed using content analysis following the procedure described by Guerin and Hennessy (2002). This involved identifying key sections in the data (which related to the different topics examined in the interview or focus group) and then inductively identifying key themes that emerged within each section. From Phase two, the Facilitator notes and worksheets were also analysed using thematic analysis on the already distinct sections, and then the key themes were identified in each section. In addition to this descriptive analysis, the themes emerging from the different data sources in each phase were compared in order to identify higher level themes that emerged. With all data the themes and sub-themes that emerged were refined through a process of distilment with a second coder, to ensure clarity and coherence throughout the coding frames. These coding frames were then applied to the data.

In reporting the findings below, each phase is reported in a separate section. Following this, the integration of the findings is described. Within each section, the findings from each data source are reported, with quotes used to provide further insight into the themes. The names of participants and other trainees/staff have been excluded from the quotes; however the names of horses have remained.

4.3 Phase One: Research Findings

The qualitative data gathered through the focus groups with trainees and interviews with the Equestrian Coaches (staff) is described below, using the section headings as outlined in the final coding frame for each source, which are included in Appendix K.

4.3.1 Trainee Focus Group Findings

Given the timing of the focus group, the findings presented here represent participants' experiences mid-module, by which stage they had completed approximately 28 weeks of EAPD.

Previous experience of EAL

The first section identified in the Trainee focus group explored participants' previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning. Over half of the participants (n = 3) had participated in EAL in *Festina Lente*, prior to the new EAPD module; and the same number had some experience with horses before they came to the Training Programme. Those who had already experienced EAL, reported that they had done it as part of one large group and some remembered particular experiences that stayed with them, such as one female who told of how they "*did a bit where we were blindfolded and we had to lead a horse and the other person had to tell you where to go*".

Expectations of the EAPD module

In terms of participants' recollections of their expectations about the module before it began, there were **mixed feelings**, with a general leaning towards **negative expectations**: some participants' reported feeling **hesitant** about participating (*"I thought I didn't want to do it at first..."*), while others **liked** the sound of it (*"I thought it was good"*). One trainee reported that they liked the original EAL sessions and **disliked** the idea of working in smaller groups, as there would be **less people** to work together on tasks (*"I liked the old EAL...now there's only four people in a group and there used to be seventeen...so you have an awful lot of brain power to think of what to do"*).

Views and evaluations of the EAPD module

The third section considered in the focus group was participants' perceptions of the module from their experience of it so far. The theme that emerged was **mixed views** of EAPD. **Negative views** were evidenced by the following quote: *"...when you're in a group...one person takes over talking...so it's not giving me a chance to express myself..."*. However, participants also reported **positive evaluations** of EAPD, for example, that it would be a **good experience** for people with no knowledge of horses (*"I'd just say it's a good experience, like for a person who hasn't got a breeze about horses, he'd enjoy it"*); that it could help people with **fears** (*"... if they're terrified or something, it can help them"*).

In describing their general views of the module, it was interesting to note that there appeared to be some **dissatisfaction** with way the **discussion** was facilitated. For example, feelings such as being **ignored** while the Coaches talked to others, not receiving as much attention and not having the opportunity to ask **questions** (*"You're trying to say*

a question and you're getting told hold on for two minutes, two minutes goes by and you're getting asked nothing...") were some of the issues expressed by the group. The participants reported that they had made complaints but had not observed any changes to date. They emphasised that it discouraged people from participating (*"...it stops people from talking in the group..."*). From the discussion, it appeared that participants saw differences between how Coaches engaged with trainees with ID and trainees without ID.

Impact of the module

Participants were also asked for their views in relation to the impact of the programme, and a number of themes were revealed by the participants. This included an impact on **communication**, both in terms of **encouraging** them to speak out (*"I thought it was good 'cause I'm talking...I'm a bit more chatty than when I came here"*) and an **awareness** of how horses communicate emotions (*"... they talk with their body, but if the horse gets angry with another horse it can't curse or anything"*). Some participants focused on the **bond and trust** they had developed with the horses and how this helped them to **work better** with horses in general, outside of the EAPD sessions, in their yard work and in lessons etc. (*"[horse] is like that too with me, he works better with me and he jumps over poles I have to make him go over"*); and the **calming effect** of the **human/horse connection** (*"When I get stressed over something like...before the lesson and I have the tack on and the bridle on...[the horse] follows me along to the stables and he puts his head down and relaxes..."*).

Some activities had the impact of facilitating the trainees' **social learning**, in that they learned to **recognise** personality traits or behaviours in the horses and **reflect** on how this reminded them of people they knew, as evidenced by the following quote: *"I think every*

single person is like the horse...and you're looking at the horse and the horse could be shy...the horse could just be quiet and the horse might not change, but the person can".

Key elements of the module

The Researcher then explored specific elements of the module that were considered central to the module and were seen as positive and negative aspects by the trainees. In describing **positive** elements, several themes were apparent, such as the **break from traditional horse-riding**, which is part of their overall training programme. Participants gave numerous responses indicating that the EAPD was a welcome addition to the programme, with **benefits** such as, *"That one hour you have off the yard...that special time"* (referring to their daily work routine in the stable yard), a chance to *"chill out"* and *"to relax"*; learning about how horses interact with each other (*"I didn't know Ginger liked Plum, but Ginger started chasing around after Plum...I actually just stood there watching..."*); and recognising human **characteristics** in the horses (*"Tico is like the perfect grandfather, the grandfather you never had... he's very down to earth; whereas horses like Jumanji they don't respect you..."*).

The **human/horse interaction** was another very positive element of the module for the trainees. This included several aspects, such as the **bond developed with the horse** (*"That's what I have with Tico...I've been bonding with him for the past three years, so if somebody else touches him or rubs him he just turns away ...like I'd walk up to him and he'll stand there and I'd massage his neck..."*); **understanding of the horse**, of physical aspects of the horse, for example, the sensitive points on horse's body and how to help the horse to relax (*"...when you're grooming that's when you really get to know a horse... that's when you get reactions, you find their sore spots or spots they don't want to be*

touched, for instance under their belly”). Other examples included **the horse’s comforting presence** (“*You feel a lot more comfortable, like the horse just stands there listening to you and [the Facilitator]’s listening to you*”); the **enjoyment** of working with horses and people in a group; and the **physical contact** with the animal (“*Same with ****, she loves attention...she keeps following you, when you give her a pat she drops her head on your shoulder...* ”).

Negative aspects of the programme identified included **group discussion**, in that some trainees had experienced their peers **talking over each other** in the sessions, which made it difficult to voice opinions etc. (“*...when you’re in a group...that one person takes over talking...so it’s not giving me a chance to express myself...* ”); **worksheets**, were highlighted, in a negative light, as some found the **reflective** questions **difficult** (“*To write about yourself sometimes is a bit hard*”), as well as **too personal** in many cases (“*I find the questions in the book are too personal... I just have the fear that someone’s going to look in the book and see them...* ”). Finally, **horses** emerged as a negative element also, as some participants felt that sometimes they “*find it a bit frustrating with the horse...that’s an odd occasion,*” while others felt that they needed a **break** from horses (“*...you get bored being around the horses 24/5...with just one hour’s gap in between and the rest you’re working with horses...* ”).

Suggestions for change

Participants made suggestions for concrete changes in several areas of the module. The first was to change the **worksheets**, as some found the questions too easy (“*I’d rather them, myself, to be a bit more challenging, they’re too easy for me...I don’t want questions that just put words onto the tip of my tongue...* ”). Participants also suggested

that the **groups** should be changed. Another suggestion was made for the trainees to **demonstrate** other horse yards how EAPD works, as described in the following quote:

“I’d like if we could go to another yard to show another yard what we do like. A yard that hasn’t heard about EAPD...so then you’re basically bringing a trade out to other people then so they can relate with the horses...spending that one hour just doing that class”

Others suggestions made related to how the **sessions** are conducted, in particular to using a greater **variety** of horses, rather than just the same ones every week (*“Different horses...instead of ***** all the time...”*); to having a **discussion** rather than written task at end (*“I’d like to change the worksheets and to talk to the instructors instead of writing down stuff”*) and to have more time for **group discussion** and sharing **without** the horse present (*“I just like...yourself, a few of your group members and an instructor and you are all just relating to each other...like a big counselling session”*).

Reflections on the nature of EAPD

In order to tap into participants’ perceptions of the nature of EAPD in general, they were asked how they would describe it to someone with no previous knowledge of the area. The themes that emerged covered numerous subjects and are summarised in Table 2. Most of the themes related to the horses, which stresses the importance of their contribution to the EAPD experience. Other themes which emerged were of developing new skills in the areas of non-verbal communication and teamwork.

Table 2: Themes relating to the nature of EAPD

Theme	Sample Quote
Communication with horses	<i>"it helps you communicate with the horse"</i>
Learning about the " inner horse "	<i>"...find the person in the horse...sometimes there are some horses like people...when their characters show"</i>
Learning about body language	<i>"he reads your body language...[the horse] reads you the minute he sees you"</i>
Learning how to handle and work around horses	<i>"when I was putting the rug on ***** I got told to put it half on and fold it up 'cause otherwise she puts her ears back at you"</i>
Learning how to work as a team	<i>"we had to get every single person that was in the yard and form a line cross the field holding hands, all to catch one horse"</i>
Building a connection with the horse	<i>"Horses that you have a strong bond with will let you open their mouth and put your hand in to feel their back teeth and I can do that with *****"</i>

Summary

The key pattern which emerged in this group was the mixed views of the module. The trainees each expressed both positive and negative opinions of the programme elements and how it was conducted etc. They reported several positive impacts of the module and also made several suggestions for areas that could be changed or improved.

4.3.2 Coaches' Interviews Findings

The findings presented here represent the Coaches' experiences mid-module, by which stage they had facilitated between sixteen and twenty-four weeks of EAPD.

Previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning

The first section in the Coaches' interviews explored their previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning. Prior to facilitating the current EAPD module, one Coach had experience of natural horsemanship, but not specifically of EAL, only becoming involved in the EAPD module when they started working in the Foundation; and one had

previously facilitated EAL sessions, both with outside groups and Equestrian Trainees, while the other Coach had.

Previous experience of Personal Development

The Coaches were then asked if they had any previous experience in facilitating personal development and what their opinions were. One Coach had done some EAL activities with the trainees and would discuss issues arising, and saw this as experience **relevant to personal development**. They clarified that these sessions were aimed at addressing a need expressed by the trainees, as can be seen from the following quote: “...trainees for the last year or so had been looking for something more...we had been doing Equine Assisted Learning...on a bi-weekly basis...informally working with the EAGALA model of personal development...” The Coach emphasised how they are not therapists, so the sessions were about building trust within the groups. The other Coach had **experience of mentoring** young people and believed that they appreciated having someone outside of their family who listened and gave advice.

Expectations of the module

One Coach had expectations regarding **benefits** for the trainees; as it would be a chance for them to learn about **communicating** with horses (“part of it is learning how to communicate with the horse and recognising what the horse is trying to say to you”). An over-arching theme which emerged, however, was a **lack of confidence** among the Coaches interviewed about facilitating EAPD. This related to a range of aspects, from **training needs** to **inadequate skills** in the area of counselling.

Development of the EAPD module

The process involved to develop the module, both initially and ongoing, was examined in the Coaches' interviews. The themes identified were that the **Coaches and Training Manager** were involved in identifying the need for the EAPD module on the programme, and the manager was involved in **developing the module components**, such as the worksheets, the Facilitator notes and the exercise suggestions. The worksheets were designed **based on the Personal Effectiveness FETAC module** and “...they're all self awareness related so they will ask questions: What activity did you do? What worked well? What didn't work well? How can you link this to life?” However, it was emphasised that the worksheets are a good idea but the questions need to be **tailored for the ID population** on the programme, as their literacy and self-awareness ability etc. need to be considered.

Views and evaluations of the EAPD module

The Coaches were then asked to comment on their views of the EAPD module so far. The **potential for impact** was one theme which was apparent. In discussing the impact, Coaches were of the opinion that the module was good for **team-building** and **building relationships** (“...I think for team building activities it's very good... some of the EAGALA type of stuff where they have to learn how to communicate effectively in a group helps builds relationships...”); as well as encouraging the trainees to **communicate** with each other (“...get them talking to each other without nearly realising that they were having to talk to each other...”).

Other themes touched upon, were that the sessions can be **flexible** (“...as long as everyone agrees that that flexibility is there...you know that it doesn’t have to be strictly by the work book then”); that the trainees seem to **enjoy** several aspects of the module, as detailed in the following quote:

“they enjoy the focus on a small number...they enjoy the fact that it is not riding...not stable management, it’s getting an opportunity to work with the horse in a different way and they enjoy the worksheets, they enjoy the discussion if it is well facilitated...and it’s something different...and I think it enhances the relationship with the horse...”

EAPD was also seen as being **suitable for all ages** (“I think it’s a very good idea for all types of students, and adults as well, not just youngsters”). Interestingly, it was considered that there is a need for formal **evaluation** of the module, in order to ascertain the **extent** of the impact of EAPD on participants.

Key elements of the module

In addressing the question of what the key elements of the module are, both positive and negative elements were identified from the interviews.

The first positive element that emerged was **the role of the Facilitator**. The Facilitator was considered to be very important to the learning process in EAPD, with one participant stressing that they need:

“to be tuned in...to being able to ask the questions that will help them...so you can link the activity that they are doing with horses to some difficulty they may or may not have in their life, it’s making that transference that makes sense to them...”

Sensitivity was also deemed a key quality in a Facilitator (“if you were lacking a bit of sensitivity you could push and poke somebody... but they’re not really designed to go deep into somebody’s comfort zone...”).

Flexibility was also described as a positive element of EAPD, with one participant describing a situation where “...*I changed it [the programme] and then did something a little bit different along the same lines but maybe not as formal as what was in the work book...which then worked at that time to try and help develop their relationship and get them talking to each*”). The theme of developing **observation** skills and particularly, encouraging the trainees to **tune into** the horses, were also flagged as positives. One of the Coaches considered the **chance to self-reflect** to be a major positive element of the programme, saying “*some of the questions... makes them reflect a little bit on how things are going for them, ‘cause...every body in their daily lives never really gets that chance to sit down and think well...how am I as a person?*”

The **nature of the activities** was also noted as a positive element, since it means “*giving them that focus of attention on a horse, horse language and association and communication*”. One Coach believed **goal setting in groups** to be another positive element (“*Working on goals, working with them as a group rather than individuals is definitely easier...I think they can feed off each other...* ”). Finally, further positives which emerged included **specific activities**, such as **team-building** tasks and other **elements** of the module, such as the **workbook**.

However, in contrast to these positive views, the two participants also identified **negative elements** of the programme that can have an effect on the success of EAPD. One clear theme was that individuals with **higher support needs** may not benefit from participation. As one Coach reported, “*I have some people that I work with that are high support needs that are not as tuned in to horse behaviour... and how the horse is feeling... I think with some people it’s an inability to tune in... and with others it’s a level*

of cognitive ability...” Another potentially negative factor described was **challenging group dynamics**, because as one Coach pointed out, *“you need to be careful about the mix in the group because if you find that there is somebody that has a massive amount of issues coming up and they are getting very upset”*

Impact of the EAPD module

With regards to the impact of the module, the themes can be broken down into two main sub-groups: **group impact** and **individual impact**.

Under group impact, themes emerged such as **communication**, which included **verbal** (for example, *“Try and encourage those that don’t talk to talk up and give their opinion...”*), as well as **non-verbal** (for example, increased knowledge of horse language, handling and communication) and an awareness of human body language and how it affects the horses. The importance of communication with the horses is evidenced in the following quote where one participant described trainees learning about *“...how the horse communicates ... and how we can work around the horse you know or communicate with it and the awareness, self-awareness around the horse as well like what you do with your body and so on”*.

The other theme in this sub-group was **relationships**. Discussions around this theme included how EAPD can aid groups to build relationships, repair relationships (*“...the next thing they’re doing a task together and I think that’s really helped their relationships because there hasn’t been any of the same kind of anger against each other since...”*) and to improve **team-work** and **co-operation** (*“...I think yeah it does help particularly in those team...building environments...”*)

Under individual impact of the module, four major themes emerged. The first was **individual experience**, that something different could happen for each person in the group (“...in that session...there could be three people...and something different could happen for each of those three people...”). The second theme identified was **problem-solving**, with one participant commenting that “I think they may be slightly more aware of how to tackle some problems...to know what to do when there’s a problem, you can see that it’s a pattern”. The third theme which emerged was that the EAPD had an impact on their **confidence**; both by encouraging shy participants to give their input (“...if it’s a student that’s afraid of talking up or talking at all you know trying to get that out of them...in the EAPD...”), and by giving participants an opportunity to express their opinions, without the pressure of being wrong (“They’re getting more confident about expressing themselves, about offering an opinion...how they present their persona...”). Finally, the fourth theme to emerge was defined as **maturity**. This was observed in several ways by the Coaches: in the trainees’ maturing responses (“...because they love the horse so much, it’s like okay I can’t do that on the horse I’ll get up and get on with it [the task]...I think it does give them a chance to grow a little bit”); in developing persistence at tasks (“...work on their persistence and sticking to something they have to finish...”); and in their growing sense of responsibility for their role and actions as part of the group (“...giving them a sense of ownership or responsibility of what they’re doing”).

The role of horses in EAPD

The reason for the use of horses as part of the PD process in EAPD was another area explored with the Coach participants. A few key themes emerged, such as the ways in which a horse **communicates** as being important for the success of the learning process;

for example, horses are **honest** and give **instant feedback** on people's actions and approaches to tasks etc., as evidenced by this quote from one Coach:

"...horses are honest, you know if they don't want to be led they'll plant themselves or if they...get angry at something that you're doing they'll let you know by kicking out or turning on you or whatever so...I think the students appreciate that that's how it is..."

Another theme identified was the role played by the **physical aspects of the horse**, including the size of the horse and its natural way of interacting. Coaches commented that as horses are aesthetically pleasing creatures to work with, the trainees feel good around them (*"...I think the students naturally feel good around the horses and like working with them, some of them said that kind of tactile sense as well..."*). Developing the idea of the size of the animal, one participant stressed that trainees also gain **respect**, as they are achieving co-operation from such a large and powerful animal (*"...at the end of the day they are wild animals that have been tamed by us but if they wanted to kill you they could kick or run over you or whatever"*).

Interestingly, a final theme identified the **horse as a potential barrier**, depending on ability of the individual to self-reflect etc. According to one Coach, some higher support individuals are unable to tune into the horse: *"...it really depends on the individual...I have some people that I work with that are high support needs that are not as tuned into horse behaviour or tuned into the horse and how the horse's feeling..."*

Suggestions for change

The Coaches were also asked to give their suggestions for changes to the module. In addition to the need for **evaluation**, several changes were suggested. The need to identify **methods to assess impact** for participants without literacy being an issue was stressed. For example, it was suggested that groups do more than just fill in the workbook

(“...something else beyond the workbook maybe...if it’s about taking photographs and making like a collage... so it’s not just about a result where you write down your answer in a book...”). Another suggestion was about the **potential applications of the current module** in the future; for instance, to make the module available for others to use (*“No point in making a module just for the sake of it. It would be good if others could use the module too”*) and to accredit the natural horsemanship components and include additional elements (*“...certainly the natural horsemanship parts would be accessible, maybe at a very foundational level, with photographs and asked to identify which [horse] looks angry, bored, happy etc...”*) as well as to accredit the facilitation of the module.

Some more **practical changes** suggested included having somewhere to hold the sessions without other lessons in the arena causing a distraction, so they can run more smoothly (*“I think if we were allotted you know a particular space, a fixed space to work on all the time that would probably help...”*). Also, a number of **revisions to the existing worksheets** were identified, for example, making the questions less prescriptive and having fewer sections to fill in, including questions to link into something that’s going on in the session and keeping the worksheets very simple with more appropriate vocabulary for the population on the training programme. These themes are reflected in the following quotes; *“...some parts of the workbook are quite wordy... some of the words they didn’t know and some of them have reading difficulties and...for some of them now I would have scribed for them as well because their writing wouldn’t be great...”*, *“I think they [worksheets] probably need to be tailored a little more for that population”*.

Monitoring the **mix in the groups**, to balance the dynamic was also flagged as a need for review, as this can impact on the trainees’ experience of EAPD (*“...I know...the other*

groups that [Coach] and [second Coach] are running have had issues around group dynamic because they've had to introduce a third person with the potential of provoking...discussion..."). Finally, **external variables** affecting how the EAPD sessions were conducted, reported by the participants, included the weather, arena space and time (*"...I also believe that the sessions need to be possibly longer, an hour is not long enough, they're in the middle of a very full timetable"*); and staff training. This final quote highlights the variety of skills that Coaches perceived as necessary in EAPD:

"I'm not a Psychologist, so I'm not used to dealing with the people side of things... I think for me it was difficult to see where's the balance here, I don't want to make it totally natural horsemanship; I'm not a counsellor either...so how much can we get out of it for them?"

Reflections on the nature of EAPD

The Coaches were asked to reflect on the **nature** of the EAPD module and numerous themes emerged; these are summarised in Table 3. Several themes refer to the development of communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, in teams with other trainees and with the horses; which emphasises one of the areas developed by EAPD; namely, communication skills. Other themes referred to the valuable opportunities provided by EAPD, to sit and reflect on life, yourself and other people.

Table 3: Reflections on the nature of EAPD

Theme	Sample Quote
Communicating with horses	<i>"...how the horse communicates with us and how we can work around the horse, you know, or communicate with it..."</i>
Communicating with each other as a team	<i>"...team building skills...getting them to work in groups..."</i>
Working with horses in a different way	<i>"...it is not riding it is not stable management it's getting an opportunity to work with the horse in a different way..."</i>
Self-awareness and an awareness of body language	<i>"...self-awareness around the horse as well like what you do with your body and so on..."</i>
Relating things seen in the horse	<i>"...see things in the horses and then try and pick that up in your own life or others around you..."</i>
A good opportunity to sit and reflect	<i>"It gives you a chance to self-reflect and have an awareness of how you are as a person..."</i>

Issues in EAL with People with ID (issues unique to EAL for ID)

As the focus of the present study was on EAPD for people with ID, the Coaches were asked to comment on any issues they thought were unique to conducting EAPD with this population on the programme. A number of themes were identified from the interviews.

The first theme in this section was that EAPD is not a formal therapeutic **intervention** from the Facilitators; this was alluded to by the need to be sensitive in dealing with issues that arise and the fact that they are not Psychologists so are not trained to deal with serious issues. One Coach raised the issue of the **level of self-awareness** among the group with ID, as they had observed that relating the activities in EAPD to their own life seemed beyond the capabilities of many of the trainees with ID they had worked with saying, "... [when bringing] the horse through a labyrinth...how you relate this to what is going on in your life is well beyond the capabilities of the majority of the population that we work with..."). In contrast, another Coach observed that almost all the trainees with ID

had shown some **evidence of self-reflection**, but there were differences in **time** taken to do so (“...have all been able to a certain extent...that self-reflection...the only difference might have been in the time taken to make that realisation.”).

Both Coaches highlighted the crucial **role of the Facilitator** in helping the activities to make sense for the trainees with ID involved, with one Coach stressing, “...you need a Facilitator who is able to... ask the key questions that link the horse activity to something that may or may not be going on for them...”). One Coach also believed that **working on goals with people with ID in a group** is easier than individually (“...I think they can feed off each other and I think they’re more comfortable working in a group...”). Finally, three criteria were identified as necessary to consider when deciding if a person with ID would be able to fully engage in the current EAPD module; they were: adequate **literacy levels** for the written course components, adequate **self-expression ability** for participation in discussion, and a sufficient **level of self-awareness** (ability to self-reflect) to enable them to make the transference between the activities and themselves, their own life and the people in it. These issues are highlighted in the following quote, which outlines the way in which the activities with the horse prompt reflection on their own lives:

“...[the trainees] can link the activity that they are doing with horses to some difficulty they may or may not have in their life, it’s making that transference that makes sense to them because they might say what the hell is putting a horse through a labyrinth got to do with what’s going on in my life?”

Summary

The Coaches found the module to be a positive experience for the trainees and noted numerous positive impacts, as well as some negative elements of the programme. They

also drew attention to several issues they felt needed addressing for future groups and made suggestions for changes to and development of the module.

4.3.3 Integration of themes

In integrating the two sets of findings in the following section, key similarities and differences were identified. These are examined briefly in order to clarify the themes which emerged and how they relate to the rest of the findings in Phase one.

Similarities

The similarities noted between the themes that emerged from the trainee focus group and the Coaches interviews highlight a number of dominant themes from Phase one. Firstly, both the trainees and the Coaches were somewhat hesitant about the current EAPD module when they first heard about it; however, they believed it would be a chance to learn more about working with the horses. The trainee focus group had a very mixed view of the EAPD module and similarly, the Coaches expressed mixed to negative views of the module. With regards to the impact of the module, both groups believed that the EAPD had helped to improve communication. In suggesting changes for the improvement of the module, both thought that the worksheets and group mix need some revision. It is important to note that both groups expressed challenges and concerns in relation to the specific issue of ID in EAPD.

Differences

There were several significant differences between the findings from the two groups. In reflections on the nature of EAPD, the trainees described it as communicating with horses, learning about them, and working on handling horses, bonding with them, learning about body language and how to work as a team. In contrast, the Coaches

believed that EAPD is also about interpersonal communication, not just with horses; and it is an opportunity to self-reflect, develop self-awareness around the horse and to work with horses in a different way. There were no similarities between groups with regards their beliefs about positive and negative elements of the module. There were also very few similarities between the groups in what they thought the impact had been; as well as in their suggestions for change; the two groups came up some different themes.

4.3.4 Interim Discussion

The findings from Phase one suggest that the current EAPD module has the potential for positive effects in some areas of personal development for the trainees with ID. However, there were a number of issues around the delivery of the module which need to be addressed, including for example, the way in which the discussion is facilitated and the completion of the worksheets. The findings regarding the nature of the programme, positive and negative elements identified, suggestions for change, the role of the horse in the PD process and issues specific to EAPD for people with ID all combine to contribute knowledge and practical considerations for the development of EAPD for people with ID; as well as concrete suggestions for the organisation to further improve the current EAPD module. The implications of these findings will be considered later in the Discussion, in conjunction with the findings of Phase two.

4.4 Phase Two: Module Development & Research Findings

The following will describe two main sections involved in Phase two; namely, the development of the pilot module and then the themes which were identified from the data analysed from both the people who participated in the pilot module and those who facilitated it.

4.4.1 Development of Phase Two Pilot Module

The module was designed in response to a perceived need in the organisation to pilot EAPD for service-users with mild/ moderate ID who were not already accessing EAPD classes. Thus, the module was developed by the two staff members (the Researcher and the Co-Facilitator) who both had an interest in EAPD and a background in Psychology, as well as experience working with that specific population. In developing the module, they drew on previous experience of Natural Horsemanship (from their personal backgrounds) and their knowledge of the apparent needs and abilities of the service-users who would be taking part (from their professional experience working in the Foundation).

Development of the Pilot EAPD Module

The pilot EAPD module was developed and shaped by the two Facilitators, one of whom was the Researcher, both in developing the structure of the module initially, and tailoring the sessions week by week, informed by experience as it was conducted. The EAL model is a very flexible framework, enabling sessions, and the activities and discussions within each session to be altered and tailored to meet the needs of the individuals participating. Thus, while there was organic development and alteration of the module over the course of delivery, a framework was designed at the outset of the study.

The process began with a meeting between the two Facilitators and the Training and Day Service Manager in the organisation, to design an action plan around how the pilot would be structured and run. This was followed by a number of meetings between the Facilitators to finalise dates and the programme schedule details; and then a final meeting with the Manager to assess the progress of the development before the pilot commenced. The Facilitators decided to deliver six sessions for two reasons; firstly to ensure that the

service-users involved would get a chance to benefit from participation, without becoming bored with the module in its pilot stage, and also to ensure that the module would be completed before the Co-Facilitator went on leave in March 2009.

At the initial development meetings, the Facilitators reviewed a range of exercises and suggestions for discussion points and they decided on a schedule for the sessions. The Researcher consulted the staff on the EAL Service in Festina Lente Foundation to determine which horses would be most suitable for each of the sessions planned and to get some insight and advice as to what exercises work best. Then the Researcher consulted the Riding School Manager to book the use of the horses and ponies for the six sessions. There were also some other considerations, such as the availability of the arena space, the availability of the various horses and ponies, the equipment available to the Facilitators (such as ground poles, cones and other props needed for the exercises) and time constraints. The module was designed with the potential for continuation for those interested, following completion of the pilot module.

4.4.2 Description of Pilot EAPD Module

This sub-section describes the structure and delivery method of the pilot EAPD module.

Pilot Module Structure

The module consisted of six one-hour sessions, which were conducted at one end of an indoor arena, with a curtain dividing the area from the riding lessons taking place at the other end of the arena. Each session was conducted by two Facilitators (the Researcher and a colleague) and sometimes a third staff member assisted (also experienced in equestrianism). The six sessions were designed to give the participants an introduction to

EAPD and to begin to work towards some goals of self-awareness and reflection in areas such as communication, problem-solving and team-work. Following completion of the six weeks, each participant received a Certificate of Participation (see Appendix M).

Exercises chosen (& basis for decisions)

The schedule of module sessions (see Appendix N), including the exercise(s) and horse(s) chosen for each, as well as a broad outline of potential discussion points was drawn up by the Facilitators. The exercises and topics for discussions were chosen based on the module descriptor of the EAPD module being conducted on the Equestrian Training Programme; along with some consultation of additional resources available to the Facilitators, such as Natural Horsemanship manuals and the expertise of the staff in the EAL service. The Facilitators decided to include activities which focused on team-work (creating and leading horse through obstacle courses), communication (observing loose horses interacting in the arena) and working on one-to-one contact with the horse (e.g. leading, grooming and massage and riding bareback).

Sessions typically started with a group discussion as to what people remembered about the session from the previous week, followed by an agreement about what activities would take place, participation in activities with the horse(s) and discussion and reflection as events unfolded. Then each participant completed a worksheet back in their own programme rooms, as the arena was needed after each session. The Facilitators discussed the sessions amongst themselves afterwards and made notes on their observations and experiences and the input from each participant, as well as on their own reflections and ideas for future sessions. The Researcher also filled out a journal after each session with more in-depth reflections on how it was delivered and any noteworthy events etc.

4.4.3 Research Findings

As there were a range of data sources in the present phase, each one will be presented separately. However, rather than reporting on issues highlighted in the research journal maintained by the Researcher, this was used to assist with the interpretation of the worksheets and Facilitator notes. The qualitative data gathered through from the various sources are described below, using the section headings as outlined in the final coding frame for each source, which are included in Appendix O.

4.4.3.1 Worksheets

The participants of the pilot module were asked to complete a short worksheet at the end of each session. The worksheets were structured with a number of sections and the key themes from each section are outlined below.

Aspects liked and disliked

The first section on the worksheets asked what aspects participants liked in the session. However, there were some aspects of the sessions that they disliked, which were noted in the second section on the sheets. The themes identified in the two sections are summarised in Table 4. Aspects liked by the participants included several themes about the **horses**, both the benefits of interacting with them, like learning by playing games with the horses and the feeling of achievement when successful at a task; and the enjoyment of being with them, such as when one horse, Plum, came over to investigate the group sitting down and they were very amused by the fact that she attempted to come behind the barrier to join them. They also reported enjoying **working with the other participants** in the group as a team and this was particularly evident when they were building the obstacle course together and realised that working as a team was more efficient and made

instructions easier to follow than working as individuals. In comparison, they reported disliking some of the **reactions of the other participants** in the group, for example when another participant was distracting them by shouting during an exercise. They also reported disliking some of the **exercises** as they found them difficult and thus were disappointed when they failed to achieve success in them.

Table 4: Service-users’ likes Vs dislikes of the EAPD module

Theme - Likes	Theme - Dislikes
Working as a team	Human reactions
The horse’s engagement with them	Nothing
The horse enjoyed being groomed	
Learning	
Observing loose horses in action in the arena and observing horses interacting non-verbally with each other	
The interaction with horse e.g. the sensation of riding bareback on the horse	The activities
Achieving success in a task by changing tactics	Failure to achieve success, for example when the pony would not co-operate at first in Week 2

Interesting aspects

Another section on the worksheets asked participants to note one thing they found interesting. One theme identified was the **horse’s reaction**, for example, that the horse backed off when asked to move, that grooming relaxed the horse (“*[horse] was sleepy while they grooming him*”), and that the horse was well-behaved while participants were riding bareback. Another theme was the various **horses’ interactions**, as they were loose in the arena; for example in Week 4, when two horses were loose in the arena and the participants found it interesting to observe how well the two got on, keeping in close proximity to each other and following each other around. Finally, the theme of **human/horse interaction** emerged in participants’ comments on interesting aspects of

the session, for example that the participants were able to move the pony without touching it and the **unexpected comfort** of sitting on the horse's back without a saddle.

Surprising aspects and memorable aspects

The worksheets also contained a section for noting things they found surprising and again, several themes emerged. The final section on the worksheet asked participants to comment on one thing they would remember from the session. The themes from both of these sections are compared in Table 5. Several themes which emerged in the two sections overlapped. The themes which stand out are that the participants were surprised by the **novel human/horse interaction** of riding bareback and the behaviour of the horses, which they also found memorable, especially when one horse, Akela, fell asleep standing in the arena. Interestingly, **the sense of achievement** seems to have stood out in their mind, as it again appeared as a theme in this section. Finally, the theme of **communication** was also identified in this section and this was indeed evident during the sessions when the discussion highlighted their realisation of the effectiveness of various styles of giving instructions to the group.

Table 5: Surprising Vs memorable aspects of the EAPD module

Theme – Surprising aspect	Theme – Memorable aspect
Nothing	Nothing
Positives e.g. pleasant sensation of riding bareback	Communication, i.e. how to communicate instructions effectively to a group
Horse's reaction or non-reaction e.g. when the pony was stubborn and refused to move through the obstacle course	Horse's reaction
	Learning - by succeeding in a task
Horses' interaction with each other e.g. when one of the mares started to follow another mare around the arena.	Human/horse interaction

Summary

The worksheets provided brief but interesting insights into the experiences and views of the service-users directly following each session that they attended. The themes which emerged suggested a generally positive view of the module, with a few aspects that were less enjoyed than others; as well as some unexpected opportunities to learn from experience, such as tolerance and respect as a result of the resolution of conflict between the two males.

4.4.3.2 Facilitator notes

The Facilitators filled out notes after each session, documenting their observations and experiences of them. The notes sheet was broken down into several sections, similar to the worksheets. Numerous themes identified in each section are summarised in Table 6 below. As with the worksheets, the Researcher drew on her research diary in analysing this data.

Table 6: Facilitator notes – themes of discussion among participants

Section 1: Discussion among the group	Section 2: Issues/ events to note among group	Section 3: Plans for next week/ follow up required
Observation of the horse's body language and behaviour	Enjoyment of certain activities	Practical plans
Effects of different grooming techniques	Reflection on the horse	To promote learning
Interactions between horses	Interest and enthusiasm	More reflection
Intention of horse's behaviours towards others	Conflict and reactions to others	
Human/ horse interactions	Teamwork and leadership	
Problem-solving	Confidence	
Team-work and leadership	Success and failure	
What worked and what didn't	Learning	
Communication		
Reflection		
Resolution of tensions		
Observation of the horse's body language and behaviour		
Effects of different grooming techniques		

Discussion among participants during sessions

The first section to be analysed for themes was the content of the discussion during the session. Some of the themes focused exclusively on **the horse**, like observation of the horse's body language and behaviour e.g. why Akela stood on his own away from the other horses; and the effects of different grooming techniques on the horse (e.g. what helped the horse to relax and how to identify this; as illustrated by the following quote: "*He's putting his head down; that means he's relaxed*"). Other themes focused on the **interactions between horses** e.g. Akela, Plum and Meg's movements while loose in the arena; and reflection on intention of horse's behaviours towards others, e.g. why Akela and Caesar were grooming each other. Finally, other themes were identified around the

interaction between horses and humans. These included the identification and interpretation of the reactions of the horses to the actions of the participants, (e.g. during the ‘Approach and Connect’ exercise, when the horses either stood or evaded the attempts of the participants to put a head-collar on them); and reflections on similarities of horse’s behaviour to people’s behaviour;

Another theme evident in the notes was **problem-solving**, referring to the various strategies adopted by individuals and the group and how effective they were, for example how to get the pony through the obstacle course. The next theme that emerged was **team-work** and **leadership**, how to work well as a team and the learning involved; this was seen in the way that they all worked together to get the pony through the obstacle course, with one participant showing great leadership skills in directing the group. Another theme was examining **what worked and what did not work** in situations, such as discussion around the use of a rope to herd the pony over the jump in Week 3. **Communication** was another theme, including both the **effectiveness** of communication **styles** within the **group** and the effectiveness of communication styles with **horses** (e.g. the challenge of trying to communicate to the pony about their desire to get him to jump over the small fence in the obstacle course). Some evidence of **reflection** among the group (e.g. of applying horse behaviour to people etc.) was another theme, as was the **resolution** of **tensions** between two participants (i.e. following a conflict based around leadership, which resulted in shouting between two male participants).

Issues/ events to note among participants

The Facilitators also noted any issues or significant events which occurred among the participants in each session. These included themes such as **enjoyment of certain**

activities. For example, one participant reported enjoying the Approach & Connect session very much and all the participants seemed to enjoy observing the horses loose in the arena. Another theme which emerged was the participants' **reflection on the horse**, for example, one male drew a comparison between the horse's behaviour and his own desire to be on his own sometimes.

The **interest** and **enthusiasm** shown by participants was another theme; which was evident when one particular male participated well in the discussion in the observation exercise. There was also **conflict** and **reactions to others** noted, particularly when some conflict arose between two male participants. One was leading the group, while the other started shouting at him. The leading male appeased the other, but later reported finding him difficult to work with; but this was resolved by the Facilitators and he accepted that different people react in different ways etc. Good **teamwork** and **leadership** were also demonstrated, such as when another male participant did well at the obstacles course, keeping calm and demonstrating good problem-solving skills, as well as proving himself to be a good leader and communicator.

Confidence was also noted among the group, for example when one participant was feeling unwell in one session but was confident in approaching the horse and then contributed well to the discussion. **Success** and **failure** was another theme among the participants; like when one participant showed enthusiasm but was unsuccessful at first at approaching a horse; however, when he was prompted, he tried another horse and then succeeded in catching the first. Finally, **learning** was noted among the group, for example one of them demonstrated a good interpretation of the horse's body language as he was groomed.

Plan for next session (including changes/follow-up required)

The final section on the notes sheets was for the Facilitators to jot down plans for the next session: what they would include more of, do differently or change etc. **Practical plans** included: to do **particular exercises**, including “Billiards” (which involved team work); a “Trust Ride”, where participants ride bareback with a leader or to try the “**Brain**” exercise (more team work) and to do more **obstacles**. These practical plans also included **engaging with participants in a different way**, such as getting **feedback** from the participants or to include **discussion** around ways to approach the horse and their **reactions** etc. This engagement was also evident on an individual level in situations such as encouraging a very shy participant to give more input to the discussion.

Plans to **promote learning** were also noted, such as to include more **discussion** around **relating** their **experiences** in the session to their own life and to focus on what **impact** their **behaviour** has on other people’s **reactions**. Other plans were to include more **reflection** on the sessions. An example of this was noted in Week 2, where one of the Facilitators referred to the need to review Week 2 with her co-Facilitator, discussing why the last exercise did not work well and what could have been done differently. This was to lead to an action plan on how to address it for future modules; and to have a meeting before Week 5 to discuss the plan for the final two sessions.

Summary

There were a number of key points to note from the Facilitator sheets. Firstly, the Facilitators both observed that the module had a positive impact on the adults participating, particularly on their communication, leadership, team work, confidence and problem-solving. They noted several changes to the sessions from week to week,

indicating that the development process was organic in nature. Finally, the discussions among the group suggested a certain level of self-reflection and self-awareness beginning to be exercised by the participants as the weeks went by.

4.4.4 Day Service User and Rehabilitative Trainee Interviews Findings

In addition to the documents analysed above, interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders. The two participants with ID on the pilot EAPD module were interviewed and the sections and respective themes are described in this section. The discussions regarding some sections were less developed than others and this is reflected in the depth of the findings below.

Previous relevant experience and expectations (of the new EAPD module)

As background, the participants were asked about their previous experience with horses and both of them reported having **riding experience**. The interviewer also asked about their previous experience of EAL. One participant had no previous experience; while the other had participated in EAL sessions in the Foundation a number of years ago. Finally, previous experience of personal development classes was also explored. Both individuals had completed **FETAC modules** and one had found that they had helped him to learn “*how to stay healthy*”. The interview also examined expectations of the EAPD module. Key themes included doing games and **tasks with the horses** and **learning** more about horses, such as how to react to them and gaining knowledge from the Facilitators (“*I was excited and em...wanted to learn about horses and learn from horsey people*”). In addition, an interesting theme was that having **previous experience of EAL** reduced any worries about doing the programme

Current impressions of the EAPD

When asked about their current impressions of the module, the responses were very **mixed**. On one hand participants reported the programme was good, the exercises were easy and they found some events interesting/ surprising (“...*the most interesting? ...probably the time I did horse riding bareback*”). In contrast, however, it was also noted that **nothing** was particularly **memorable** and in the words of one participant, the exercises were “...*good...a little bit hard, but good fun*”.-

Module Elements

The interview also explored the participants’ beliefs about the positive and negative elements of EAPD. **Positive** elements included being with the **horses** (“...*with the horses...being together and seeing what they do*”), **games** and **activities**; **observing** the horses; and **support** for people if nervous or need assistance in the sessions (“*Don’t be nervous and there’ll always be someone there to help you*”). However, in the participants’ opinion, there were no negative elements in the module (“*I liked it all*”).

Suggestions for change

Another section explored participants’ suggestions for changes to the module. The most common finding was that participants identified **no changes**, but did talk about wanting to “...*just ride more horses*”; and to “*see what they think of horses and see if they have a favourite...*” Interestingly, both adults reported that they liked all the horses in the yard and had no favourites.

Impact

The impact of the EAPD, from the participants' perspective was explored and three major themes emerged. The first of these was **learning**, as they learned how to react to the horses (*"looking where they're going and do what they do and we follow them"*). The second theme was labelled as **focus**, as they realised the importance of keeping focused on the horses in human/horse interactions (for example, as soon as the participants lost focus, or were uncertain about what they wanted the horse to do, the horse became confused, backing away or refusing to move etc. The final theme related to **confidence**, as they got more confidence in working with the horses, as illustrated by the following quote which tells of one male's success in applying a strategy he had designed himself: *"I put my hand up and put my shoulder down a bit, then they jumped over the pole"*.

Human/ horse interaction

The theme which emerged in the section looking at the human/horse interaction was that both participants get on very well with the horses in the yard, as they reported that they **liked all the horses** and had no favourites.

Nature of the EAPD module

Finally, the nature of the module was explored by asking the participants to reflect on how they would describe the module to someone who had no previous experience of horses. Three major themes emerged from the interviews. Firstly, that EAPD was **difficult to explain** and that it is easier to explain what you do in the sessions by demonstrating to someone (*"...just show them...you show what they do but then they followed what we do"*). Secondly, **learning new things about horses** (*"...people get to*

meet the horses, how to react when they're around horses..."). And thirdly, it is a **chance to be near the horses**; this was particularly evident by the way the whole group seemed to really enjoy the physical contact with the horse both in grooming them and in riding without a saddle.

Summary

The key findings from the interviews with the day service-user and rehabilitative trainee were that there was mixed views of the pilot module, with beliefs that it was good, but with nothing memorable and that the exercises were hard but fun. The positive elements of the module were seen as the horses, the games and activities and there were no negative elements reported. There were no changes suggested by one interviewee, whereas the other suggested that participants get to ride more horses and be asked to choose their favourite. The impact of the module was reported as an effect on learning, learning about how to react to the horses, the importance of keeping focused and an improvement in their confidence around working with the horses. Finally, the nature of the module was described by the interviewees as difficult to explain; learning new things about horses and a chance to be near the horses.

4.4.5 Facilitator Interview Findings

The Facilitator interview was divided into the following sections, with key themes identified in each.

Background in EAPD

First, the Facilitator was asked how she became involved in the pilot EAPD module. She explained that she had a background in **Psychology**, was experienced with **horses**, but that she had had her **first experience of EAL** in the Foundation.

Nature of EAL

Next, the Facilitator's reflections on the nature of EAL were explored. She provided a very comprehensive description of what she believes EAL to be about. Themes which emerged from the interview included that EAL is a workshop for developing **self-awareness** and **exploring your relationships** to others, which is illustrated by the following quote: "*a workshop to find out more about yourself or about relationships to others... about relationships to family and friends or even to people in general*". She believed it is also an **experiential** way to problem-solve ("*...finding out...solutions to some kind of challenges or problems that one might have*"); and it is a chance to play out real-life situations with the horse and learn from what happens ("*...you can actually...experience your way of reacting, or your way of acting and it's not only talking about your behaviour, or your feelings, but it's actually to...behave and to feel in the session....*").

Impressions of the EAPD module

The Facilitator's overall impressions of the module, was another section identified. Several themes emerged, including the importance of **tailoring** the module to meet the needs of the specific group; the **importance** of **reviewing** after each session to identify what worked well, what held interest and any problems encountered etc.; the fact that the focus was mostly on **communication**, **inter-group activities** and **team work**; and that

the Facilitators worked with whatever **topics the situations presented** (“*those were the topics that came up and so we worked more around those topics*”), e.g. tolerance, respect and communication in a conflict situation.

The Role of Horses

Another section of the interview explored the Facilitator’s view of the role and importance of horses in EAL. A number of themes were identified which attempt to explain the way in which the horses contribute to the learning process in EAPD. She believed their value lies in **the natural way they react** in the immediate (“*It just really reacts to what you’re actually doing, and what...kind of signals you’re sending*”); they do not have **presumptions** or **judgments** about people they encounter (“*the horse doesn’t have any... pre-assumptions...what kind of a person you are or why...you are there and what you’re about to do*”).

She also emphasised that since horses play such a key role in the process, horse **welfare** is important to consider in sessions (not just with ID group), as evidenced by this example:

“we had some situations during the sessions where we had the impression that we had to stop now because that was too much for the horse, so I think the horse’s welfare is something that should be...paid attention to as well”

Key Module Elements

In order to get an idea of the key elements in the pilot EAPD module, the Facilitator’s responses about positive and negative elements were examined and a number of themes for both were identified.

In terms of the **positive** elements, these included setting and atmosphere, as the **setting of EAL is unique**, because “...it’s outside...it’s with a horse and it’s not...stereotype setting in an office...where you’re just talking to a consultant or...a social worker or a psychologist”. She described it as a more **relaxed, open, exciting** and refreshing environment to be in, different from all previous experiences of therapy. Another positive highlighted was that there was tangible **excitement** about exercises, participants responded well to the activities and according to the Facilitator, “...all the clients that we had in this group responded very well...to what we were doing and they were quite excited about...the whole thing that we were offering to them”. The **body contact** was another positive she observed about the module, as she stated “...we did a lot of body contact with the horse and gave the clients more of a ...quiet time with the horse...like one to one...one client with one horse...and...they really appreciated that as well”. Finally, the **flexibility** of the Facilitators was identified as an important element in the positive experience of EAPD, in order to “...be able to address specifically the interests that the group have”.

Negative elements identified by the Facilitator referred to both the trainees and some practical issues. In relation to trainees with ID, the issues identified are described in the separate section below. **Practical issues** included the **time** restraints of the arena availability, which the Facilitator felt was a disadvantage to the module, as she believed “it would have been nicer...to stay in the setting and to end the whole session with filling in the worksheets”, and the **need** for more **interaction** within the group during sessions.

Issues in EAL with People with ID

Another section of the interview explored issues that are specific to conducting EAL with people with ID. The first theme noted was the **challenge** in facilitating a group with mixed abilities to **self-reflect** on their own behaviour (“*what I found was...challenging at times was if there were people in the group that had very different abilities in reflecting on their own behaviour...*”). The Facilitator noted that even though the potential is there for people with ID to benefit from EAPD, it would be **easier** to work with a group who were more **homogenous** in self-reflective ability (“*...the part of reflecting about themselves...didn't have such a strong emphasis...*”).

The second theme noted was the need to recognise the additional **challenge of clarifying the expectations** of the module with participants. The following quote illustrates her belief about the importance of explaining the nature of EAPD to prospective participants, because:

“...it's quite important to...make it clear that it's not about horse-riding, obviously. But that it's about personal development and also to make sure that the clients really...want to take part...I think it's very important that you have people who are really interested and who really want to...learn something about themselves”

Therefore, she concluded that EAPD should not be just included as part of a timetable for service-users regardless of their interest in learning about themselves.

Impact of EAPD

The impact of EAPD on the participants, as observed by the Facilitator, was also explored. The first was in the area of **relationships**, with the Facilitator noting improvements specifically in team-work, team-building and good reflection on teamwork activities. For example, she reported that “*...we did I think two or even three sessions*

with lots of teamwork involved in it and...they really responded very well to that and reflected very much on what was going on in those sessions...”.

The second theme was an impact on **problem-solving** (“...they learned a lot about...how to solve problems that arise in a team...”). Another impact described was **communication**, with reports of trainees learning “...to communicate in a positive manner...without escalating the situations and without starting to argue...” **Tolerance** and **respect** were also highlighted as an impact for two of the participants in particular, as can be seen in the following anecdote;

“...one of the clients...he learned how to...give other people more space and the other client learned how to...accept other people even if they are different and even if he thinks in the beginning that he wouldn't get along with them...”

Finally, **flexibility** in the Facilitators was reported to be an important factor for the potential for impact, as it enables the sessions to change to address the issues that arise unique to the individuals participating in EAPD (“it really just allows the Facilitators to respond more to the needs of the group”).

Suggestions for changes to and development of the EAPD module

Finally, a number of suggestions for changes and potential enhancements of the module were made in the interview. They included the idea for the participants to remain as a group in the **setting** and fill out the **worksheets** together at the end of each session (which could not be done due to time constraints). This was seen as important as it would have meant that the group could have filled in the sheets together and while still in the unique setting with the horses, rather than as two separate groups in their own classrooms after the session.

The second suggestion was in relation to the Facilitators of the module. She emphasised the importance of having **two** Facilitators in the sessions and of one being a **horse expert**; she also believed that both Facilitators knowing about **horses**, having a background in **social studies** and an **interest** in the area of EAL, is an advantage. This was important to the interviewee as she believed that this would give both the participants and the Facilitators the best chance for a positive experience of EAL, if both Facilitators were properly equipped with the necessary skills and experience.

Summary

The Facilitator identified the key elements of the module as the horses, because of the natural way they react; the unique setting of EAL; and tailoring the module to meet the needs of the specific group. The positive elements of EAPD were the participants' excitement about the exercises; the body contact with the horse in a one-to-one setting and the flexibility of the Facilitators. The Facilitator's impressions of the pilot were of the importance of reviewing after each session; that the focus was mostly on communication, inter-group activities and team work; and that they worked with whatever topics the situations presented. The changes suggested were to remain as a group in the setting and fill out the worksheets together and she recommended that there should be two Facilitators in the sessions and of one should be a horse expert; she also believed that both Facilitators knowing about horses, having a background in social studies and an interest in the area of EAL would be an advantage. The impact of the module was reported as improved relationships, in team-work, team-building and good reflection on teamwork activities; better problem-solving; improved communication skills among the group and with the horses; and the development of tolerance and respect. Finally, the nature of the module was described by the Facilitator as a workshop for developing self-awareness and

exploring your relationships to others; an experiential way to problem-solve; and a chance to play out real-life situations with the horse and learn from what happens.

4.4.6 Integration of Findings

The findings from all the different data sources in Phase 2 will be integrated in the following section, with a discussion on the breakdown of the main similarities and differences between the themes identified. The various sources in Phase two provided data covering a broad range of themes. A few of these themes overlapped, but there was quite a low level of consistency between the impact, nature and suggestions for change to the EAPD module between the staff and service-users.

Similarities

There was however a lot of overlap between the findings from the worksheets and the service-user interviews, as well as between the Facilitator notes and the Facilitator interview. This consistency adds strength to the findings. Similar themes emerged in the area of impact among the pairs of data sources, such as improved communication; learning about the horse, for example how to react to the horse; an understanding of the importance of focus on tasks; better problem-solving, relationship skills and tolerance and respect. Other similarities to note between the themes that emerged from the service-user/trainee interviews and the Facilitator interview were as follow: firstly, both were not worried when they initially heard about the module, as they had experience of EAL before, or had previous experience with horses. They believed it would be a chance to learn more about working with the horses. Both groups have a generally positive view of

the current EAPD module and both believed it was a chance to relate things seen in the horse to things in your own life.

Differences

There were several significant differences between the findings from the two groups. One of the participants had previous experience of EAL; whereas the Facilitator had not. In reflections on the nature of EAPD, the participants described it as difficult to explain; learning about horses; and the chance to be with horse; while the Facilitator saw it as workshop-based; focused on self- awareness and problem-solving; experiential; and she had expected more focus on individual reflection. Like Phase one, there were again no similarities between groups with regards their beliefs about positive and negative elements of the module. There were also very few similarities between the groups in what they thought the impact had been; as well as in their suggestions for change, as the two groups came up some different themes. In suggesting changes for the improvement of the module, the Facilitator made a number of recommendations about the background, experience and interests of future Facilitators, as well as that the group should remain together to fill out the worksheets at the end of each session. In contrast, the participants made suggestions such as to ride more horses and to choose a favourite, as well as reporting no changes being necessary.

4.4.7 Interim Discussion

The integration section shows the similarities and differences between the themes that emerged across the two phases. It enables comparisons and contrasts to be drawn in the Discussion. In summary, there were quite marked differences between the themes identified in the Facilitator's interview and those found in the service-user's/ trainee's

interviews. The findings from Phase two suggest that the service-users with mild/moderate ID both enjoyed and benefited from the experience of EAPD, even after a relatively short module. From the Facilitators' perspective, the module was a success with the sample population; however there were various challenges associated with conducting the module with people with ID, such as the mix of ability to self-reflect among the group; and a number of issues which would need to be addressed for future EAPD with this population, for example, the incorporation of more discussion around reflection on the meaning of events in the session for real life.

4.5 Conclusion

A large variety of themes emerged from across the different data sources. These ranged from positive and negative elements of the module identified, as well as numerous suggestions for concrete and higher level changes. Other themes covered areas such as the nature of EAPD, the impact of the modules on participants, previous experience of EAL and personal development and expectations of the modules prior to participation/facilitation. Differences and similarities on many levels were observed across the themes which emerged from the various sources; these included differences both in how the modules were experienced and the impact they had on participants; as well as differences in opinion as to what constituted the key elements of EAPD and the changes needed to improve the modules. Similarities were also seen in themes on the impact of EAPD on participants, which indicates that the different groups involved reported different experiences from their perspectives, which at times overlapped, but also provided unique insights into how the various sources experienced EAPD.

The findings from the data provide great insight into the experiences of both the adults participating in and the staff conducting the EAPD modules and the contribution of these findings will be discussed in the Discussion. The Discussion will also consider the findings of the whole study (i.e. across the two phases) and then consider the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss interpret the findings as described in the Results section. Firstly, the aim of the present study will be restated; followed by a summary and interpretation of the findings, with reference to previous literature. The two phases will be examined separately and then the integrated findings will be examined to draw meaning and implications for future research, theory and practice of EAPD for adults with mild/moderate ID.

5.2. Aims of the present study

The overall aim of the present study was to explore the potential of Equine-Assisted Learning in supporting and promoting personal development for adults with Intellectual Disability, using an action research design. Phase one of the study aimed to explore the experiences of adults with ID on an existing Equine-assisted Personal Development module in a vocational training programme; and the experiences of their Coaches to ascertain what works and what could work better etc. In addition, Phase two aimed to pilot a six-week EAPD Module for use with adults with mild/moderate Intellectual Disability on the Day Service and Rehabilitation Training Programmes at *Festina Lente* Foundation, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

5.3 Summary & Interpretation of Findings

This section will identify the main findings from across the two phases and taking each one, will show how it links to the literature considered earlier. The overall aim of the present study was to explore the potential of EAL in supporting and promoting personal development for adults with Intellectual Disability in an Irish service provider context.

This was achieved through the collection, analysis and interpretation of the interviews, focus group and other data sources used for the purpose of exploring the current EAPD module and the pilot module; the final stage of which is discussed as follows.

Phase One

In Phase one, the first and second objectives to gather information on the experiences of those involved in the current EAPD module were achieved through the collection of data from interviews and a focus group with Coaches and trainees. The impact of the current module was explored with the Coaches and the trainees, and the main findings were an improvement in communication, both verbal and non-verbal, relationship building and social learning. These findings are in line with the findings of Bowers and MacDonald (2001) and Vidrine *et al.* (2002) who found improvements in interpersonal communication skills, sensitivity towards others and relationship building. In terms of skills in working with the horses, the trainees were reported to have an increased knowledge of horse language, handling and communication; however, none of the previous studies discussed focused on this outcome of EAL.

Teamwork and co-operation were another impact reported by the Coaches; which supports the findings of Myers (2004) who found that working through tasks helped young people to work as a team. Moreover, improvements in problem-solving skills were a definite impact observed by one of the Coaches in particular, which was also found by Myers (2004), who reported that EAL helps people to think creatively, take risks and to break down tasks into manageable steps.

Confidence in working with the horses was another area that was found to be positively impacted on by EAPD, which confirms the findings of Levinson (2004) who found that children with ADHD's self-esteem increased once they learned how to elicit the desired responses from the horse; and of Schultz *et al.* (2007), who stated that overcoming the obstacle of working successfully with a large horse promotes confidence. Moreover, EAPD was also found to encourage assertiveness and expression of opinion from the trainees. This was not reported in the previous literature. However, it was a significant finding in the present study, with two of the five trainees self-reporting this impact.

Development was also found in several other areas. These included maturing responses, developing persistence at tasks and a sense of responsibility for role and actions as part of a group. These improvements were particularly relevant for the trainees, as they are preparing for work in the equine industry and therefore need to develop these skills. MacDonald and Cappo (2003) and MacKinnon *et al.* (1995) reported similar findings, in that the groups they were working with were observed to have an increase in self-esteem, internal locus of control, improved attention span, concentration, self-confidence and motivation.

In terms of the nature of EAPD, the Coaches asserted that it is a good opportunity to sit and reflect on life and relationships; this is reflected in the literature, especially by Zugich *et al.* (2002) who identified that part of the mechanism of action of EAL is the unique opportunity to raise awareness and to practice congruence between your feelings and behaviours. The Coaches also believed that the nature of EAPD involves an increase in awareness of communication, specifically an awareness of how horses communicate emotions e.g. anger, which in turn elicit reflection on human emotional responses. This

was supported by Schultz *et al.* (2007) who also stated that horses have similar behavioural responses to humans and thus provide a mirror for the person to gain insight in a non-threatening environment. The calming effect of the bond with the horse was reported as another aspect of the nature of EAPD and this follows McCormick and McCormick (1997) who asserted that EAL promotes an understanding that an open and vulnerable attitude is more likely to elicit positive reactions than an approach of defiance and aggression. Finally, another aspect of the nature of EAPD identified by the Coaches was social learning and using the bond and trust with the horse to work better with it overall; again, Schultz *et al.* (2007) reported that working with a large horse and building a relationship with it promotes relationship skills and problem-solving skills.

In conclusion, Phase one was an exploration of the experiences of the adults with ID on the existing EAPD module and the experiences of their Coaches. The findings provided the Researcher with data on what works and what could work better on the module and insights which contributed to the development of a model for EAPD for people with ID.

Phase Two

In Phase two, the three main objectives to gather information on the experiences of those involved in the pilot EAPD module were achieved with the interviews with service-users and the co-Facilitator and the Researcher's Facilitator notes, journal and observations. The impact of the pilot module was explored with the Facilitators and the service-users. The key findings were that the Facilitators believed the horse to be a key element of EAPD; this is in line with the beliefs asserted by other Researchers in EAL (e.g. Vidrine *et al.*, 2002). The unique setting of EAL was also considered a key element and this was

asserted by Moreau (2005) who worked with young people who had not responded well to traditional forms of therapy.

The positive elements of EAPD were found to be the participants' excitement about the exercises, which was not a feature identified explicitly in the previous literature; however, the novel nature of the activities are another advantage of EAL in comparison to traditional classroom based PD programmes, such as that reported by Sheppard (2006). Likewise, the physical contact with the horse in a one-to-one setting was not found highlighted as an important element in previous studies; yet it was identified as a key element in the findings in Phase two. Similarly the flexibility of the Facilitators was also not identified by other studies looked at, but was emphasised as a necessary feature of successful EAPD by the Facilitators in Phase two.

The impact of the module was reported by the Facilitator as improved relationships in team-work, team-building and reflection on teamwork activities; better problem-solving; and improved communication skills among the group and with the horses; all of which again support the findings of Myers (2004), Vidrine *et al.* (2002) and Bowers and MacDonald (2001). The Facilitators also reported that the EAPD helped with the development of tolerance and respect, which supports Melson's (2001) findings that EAL helps to elicit respect. The impact of the module was reported by the service-users as a positive effect on their learning about how to react to the horses, which is in line with the findings of Moreau (2005); and the importance of keeping focused, which supports Levinson (2004), who reported that EAL was effective in helping children with disabilities focus for long periods of time when grooming or leading the horse. Finally, they believed that the EAPD had also improved their confidence around working with the

horses; which is again in line with the findings of Schultz *et al.* (2007), who found that working with horses promotes confidence.

The nature of the module was described by the Facilitator as a workshop for developing self-awareness and exploring your relationships to others; an experiential way to problem-solve (similar to that described by Ewing *et al.*, 2007); and a chance to play out real-life situations with the horse and learn from what happens, as was noted by Klontz *et al.* (2007). In comparison, the nature of the module was described by the service-users as difficult to explain; learning new things about horses and a chance to be near the horses. This finding was unique in that no other previous study was found to report the perceptions of participants with ID about the nature of EAL.

In conclusion, Phase two demonstrated the successful pilot of a six-week module of EAPD with a group of adults with mild/moderate Intellectual Disability; and again, it was an exploration of the experiences of these adults with ID and those of the Facilitator involved. The findings provided the Researcher with data which provides useful considerations for the wider rolling out of EAPD in the organisation; as well as contributes to the development of a model for EAPD for people with ID in the wider service context.

Overall Interpretation

The implications of the overall findings are that EAL can be used successfully for personal development for people with mild/ moderate ID in Irish vocational training, day service and rehabilitative training settings.

There are however, several issues specific to ID that must be considered when using this approach. Firstly, the group mix is important, because if their ability to self-reflect is too varied, it can pose a challenge to the facilitation of reflective discussion and sharing among the group. This issue was not addressed specifically in the previous literature, but it is an important point to note when working with people with ID. Secondly, any written materials used must be appropriate to the literacy and comprehension levels of the participants; and where possible, alternative methods of recording their experiences and reflections should be employed to ensure that literacy barriers are overcome. Thirdly, the module outline and exercises used etc. should be flexible so that sessions can be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the group, especially to address issues as they arise, e.g. conflict between individuals. Finally, there should be two Facilitators in each session and they need to have adequate training to be equipped to deal with issues that may arise for individuals during, or as a result of, the EAPD process. This issue is reflected in the literature on Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy, which emphasises that both a “*licensed mental health care worker and a credentialed equine professional*” (Ewing *et al.*, 2007, p. 60) carry out the activities.

In considering all the issues specific to EAPD for ID, it is important to recognise the many positives of the approach for this population. Firstly, the opportunity to reflect on life and relationships etc. is rare for most people and EAPD affords people with ID the chance to self-reflect in a guided, safe and secure environment, under the direction of the Facilitators, who can help, or refer them on to someone who can, if any issues arise for them. Secondly, interacting with a large, powerful animal provides a sense of pride and achievement when they are successful in completing tasks with the horse. Thirdly, the body contact, as well as the calming influence of the horse, can help individuals who have

a short attention span to focus on the task at hand, such as grooming or riding bareback. In addition, the more far-reaching effect of this focus on the horse and away from feelings of self-consciousness at being involved in a learning situation can be the development of skills which would not otherwise have been affected by traditional PD programmes. For example, people with ID often have poor verbal communication skills; therefore the human/ horse interactions can stimulate input and elicit responses to questions etc., which other approaches to PD fail to achieve. Finally, the fact that communication with horses is based on body language means that people with ID who have poor written and verbal communication skills, can find that they can communicate effectively with the horse, which can promote their self-esteem and improve their communication with their peers through the medium of the horse.

5.4 Methodological Issues

In interpreting the findings it is important to consider the impact of aspects of the research methodology on confidence in the findings. As such it is necessary to consider strengths and limitations of the study.

Strengths

Firstly, the present study used an action research design, which meant that those involved directly in the EAPD were also involved directly in the research on it. The model of action research was particularly suitable for the aims of the present study, as it was intended to collect data on the experiences and views of those directly involved in both the current module and the pilot module, in order to inform the development of a model for EAPD for people with mild/ moderate ID, by exploring the challenges and issues unique to EAPD conducted with adults with ID.

Secondly, given the mix of participants (both trainees and staff) across both phases, the Researcher is confident that the findings are generalisable in the context of theoretical generalisability (Sim, 1998).

Thirdly, in Phase one, participants' views and experiences were explored after the trainees had experienced several months of EAPD sessions. This meant they were likely to have a good understanding of EAPD and well-formed opinions on it when they participated in the study. This means that the Researcher can have confidence in the validity of findings from this group.

Fourthly, the focus group and interviews were conducted using semi-structured schedules, which allowed for the same questions to be explored with each of the groups, while still enabling exploration of other ideas expressed. In addition, a good rapport was evident within the focus group and between the group and the Researcher, which meant that everyone seemed to be comfortable expressing themselves with openness and honesty, which in turn added strength to the internal validity of the findings.

The use of multiple data sources, including module materials and interviews, was another strength of the present study, as it provided more in-depth insight and a more rounded view of the experiences and opinions of the research participants; and the use of the Researcher's own recorded reflections also added to this. Finally, the use of a second person in the analysis process ensured that the findings were not misinterpreted; and an independent interviewer in Phase 2 meant that the participants' responses were not affected by experimenter bias.

Limitations

However, the study is not without its limitations. As the study was conducted in one organisation in Ireland, this limits the generalisability of the findings beyond that organisation. Moreover, the unique nature of the equine vocational training programme in Phase one may further limit the generalisability, as participants are already working with horses on a daily basis, even before participation in EAPD.

Other limitations of the study relate to challenges specific to the sample population with ID. Some of the individuals with more moderate ID were not as articulate in the focus group and interviews and they tended to give very brief answers to the questions asked. This was likely due in part to anxiety at being in the interview process and also to poor verbal communication skills. It meant that those with better verbal abilities dominated the focus group. Furthermore, the necessity for an independent third party to conduct the service-user interviews meant that the interviewer could have unintentionally influenced their responses, since she was both unfamiliar to them and so would not have known how to fully engage with them or put them at ease; as well as the fact that she was not familiar with EAPD and so was unable to explore responses more deeply with them.

The Researcher was also very aware of the potential negative influence of research bias, considering the fact that she was directly involved with the pilot and was familiar with the research participants on a professional level, which limited her objective perspective on the data sources etc. In light of this, she made several efforts to control the influence of her expectations. These included the use of a second coder in the analysis process (with whom a good level of agreement was reached on the coding frames); the use of an independent person for the interviews in Phase two; and a full reporting of her personal

background and theoretical orientation, so as to identify potential biases and negative influences on her interpretations etc. In taking these measures to limit the negative influence, the Researcher is confident that her expectations were adequately controlled.

In conclusion, the Researcher believes that she can have confidence in the findings, as despite the limitations of the study, there were numerous strengths to the study also and the measures taken to control for research bias further contribute to the reliability and validity of the findings.

5.5 Implications for practice

This section will discuss the implications of the findings for practice in EAPD. The suggestions made by the research participants across the groups were both practical and more far-reaching. They reflected changes identified as necessary on a local level in the organisation, as well as changes to the overall model of EAPD.

The suggestions for changes on a local level have implications for the running of the current EAPD module with future groups of Equestrian trainees in the organisation and will be provided as recommendations to them in a report on the findings of the present study. The implementation of the changes suggested, would improve the potential for positive impact of EAPD on the trainees with ID, as they would address the issues which have arisen as the module was conducted for the first time with this population. It would also provide a sense of empowerment to the trainees who will be continuing on the programme next year, as they will observe the consideration of their input to the development process. Furthermore, the changes will help the Coaches in their facilitation of the module, as they will address some of the challenges and concerns expressed by the

staff involved, thus making the sessions more effective for PD with the groups.

In relation to a wider roll out of EAPD in Festina Lente, the findings suggested that participation in the pilot module was beneficial to other groups of service-users; however, there are several issues that need to be addressed before the module is conducted again with this population. These include the allocation of more time in the arena in order to facilitate the completion of the worksheets at the end of sessions; ensuring, prior to participation, that the service-users who wish to get involved fully understand the nature of what is involved in EAPD; and the integration of more reflection on the meaning to be transferred from what happens with the horses in the sessions to real life etc.

In terms of the implications for conducting EAPD in a wider service context, the findings suggest that EAPD is a viable approach to PD for adults with mild/ moderate ID in similar service settings. This means that EAPD has the potential to be an effective alternative approach, or compliment to, the PD programmes already in place for people with ID in Ireland, across a variety of service settings. Despite the unique setting required and the specific skills etc. needed to facilitate EAPD, the recommendations made regarding the characteristics, background and experience of the Facilitators mean that potential providers can be aware of the specification of the people needed. Moreover, the exercises used and reported in Phase two provide an insight into the kind of target areas of impact of the approach, such as communication, problem-solving, team work and focus. Therefore, ID service providers can use the information to make informed decisions about the suitability of EAPD for their client population's needs.

The recommendations for the improvement of the current EAPD module were as follows: several changes are necessary to the worksheets, including making optional questions more challenging, using more appropriate vocabulary, making the sheets simpler and easier to link to the exercises used, and securing the location where the worksheets are stored as they contain very personal data. Changes to the groups were also recommended, to ensure the dynamic works well between everyone. Others suggestions made related to how the sessions are conducted: to use a greater variety of horses; to having a discussion rather than written task at end of the sessions; to have more time for group discussion and sharing without the horse present; and the suggestion that the groups should go out and show others horse yards how EAPD works, in order to educate others about the approach.

The Coaches also suggested the need to come up with a method to show the end result without literacy being such an issue e.g. a photograph collage, instead of just a written sheet. Another suggestion was about the potential applications of the current module in the future; for instance, to make the module available for others to use; to accredit the natural horsemanship components and include additional elements; as well as accredit the facilitation of the module. Some more practical changes suggested included having somewhere to hold the sessions without other lessons in the arena causing a distraction, so they can run more smoothly. A number of revisions to the existing worksheets were identified, for example, making the questions a bit less prescriptive and having fewer sections to fill in; including questions to link into something that's going on in the session and keeping the worksheets very simple, with more appropriate vocabulary for the population on the training programme.

In relation to the wider use of EAPD, the Coaches gave insight into the development of the current EAPD module, which could prove useful for the development of future modules; these were:

- Worksheets designed based on Personal Effectiveness FETAC module
- Worksheets need to be tailored for ID population
- Questions based on self-awareness asking about activities and how can be linked to life

In terms of issues highlighted by the trainees, the facilitation of the discussion in the EAPD sessions was identified as needing attention. This will need to be reviewed in order to determine the best approach for resolving the issue. Also, adequate staff training was highlighted as a concern by the Coaches involved, in order for them to feel best equipped to handle any situations or issues which arise in a group or with individuals.

In summary, the findings from both phases provide great insight into the experiences of both the adults participating in and the staff conducting the EAPD modules. The findings regarding the nature of the programme, positive and negative elements identified, suggestions for change, the role of the horse in the PD process and issues specific to EAPD for people with ID, all combine to contribute knowledge and practical considerations for the development of EAPD for people with ID; as well as concrete suggestions for the organisation to further improve the current EAPD module.

5.6 Implications for Theory and Research

The theoretical and research implications of the findings include the development of a model for EAPD for use with adults with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. The present study findings provide further support to the existing body of literature on both the potential for EAL in Personal Development and the potential for EAL in the Intellectual Disability field. With specific reference to EAPD for use with adults with mild to moderate ID, the findings provide insight and support for the development of a model for EAPD for this population, as they are in line with the beliefs of previous research that this population can benefit from this approach.

The themes that emerged from the sections examining the positive and negative elements of the module give support to the theory of the mechanism of EAL and provide further insight into how the approach is effective. In particular, the horse emerged as a key element of the process, which is supported by the theories provided by previous Researchers, such as Schultz *et al.* (2007). Other positive elements of the programmes identified included the role of the Facilitators in the EAPD process; they are very important, as they can ask questions that link the tasks to real life; and flexibility of the Facilitators also means that the sessions can be tailored to meet the immediate needs of the group being worked with. The previous literature alludes to the importance of the therapist in EAL, such as Vidrine *et al.* (2002) who acknowledge that EAL gives them a chance to role-model safe and respectful limit-setting with the horse; but none of the studies emphasised the specific role they play in the process as identified by the present study. The nature of the activities, such as horse language, observation and tuning into horses, was found to be another key element, similar to Limond *et al.* (1997) who found that dogs helped children with ID to sustain their focus for positive and co-operative

human interactions. This implies that it is important to incorporate more Natural Horsemanship into the EAPD process in order to enhance the positive impact. The opportunity to (self)-reflect was also identified as a key feature of the process, as it provides participants with a unique setting in which to develop their awareness; this reflects the findings by Katcher and Wilkins (1997) who noted that animals captured and held children's attention and directed it outwards. Specific activities or elements, such as goal setting are also an important aspect of the sessions, as they provide direction and focus for the group and facilitate the learning of skills such as problem-solving and teamwork etc. This was observed by Moreau (2005) who reported that EAL involves teaching people how to work with and relate to horses by getting them to perform developmental tasks, e.g. trust is developed by getting to know and accept the horse, and in turn, being accepted by it.

Negative elements identified provide information on potential challenges and issues of conducting EAPD with people with ID. These included higher support needs among the group, which means that the Facilitators' attention is divided. This also provides support for the recommendation that there are two Facilitators present. The group dynamics have to be right in any group, in order to ensure people are comfortable enough to share their views and feelings and to avoid conflict arising between parties. Group discussion and the worksheets are potentially negative elements if not conducted correctly or if the sheets are too complex for the group ability. This is also reflected in the group's ability to self-reflect mix, which provides an additional challenge to the Facilitators trying to ensure a productive discussion and can negatively affect the group's interaction; thus the Facilitators need to be flexible to adjust the session content and discussion to meet the varied needs of the group. Finally, time restraints are a potential negative influence on the

success of the process, as adequate time is needed to facilitate the exercises and then conduct a meaningful discussion and help the group to complete the reflection necessary for the worksheets.

On a local level, future research needs to conduct a longer module with the service-users with mild/ moderate ID in order to gain more insight into the impact of the module on this population. Lentini & Knox (2008) suggested that in order to address the inconsistencies in the field in general, a large, longitudinal, multi-centre, standardised and controlled study is needed, using reliable and valid measures of the outcomes. In addition, there is a need to pilot EAPD in particular with samples from other Irish ID service providers and among ID services internationally, to enable comparisons to be drawn and to further inform the development and improvement of this approach to personal development. Future research also needs to address a number of questions, such as: what duration of a module is needed to provide the most benefit in terms of personal development for people with mild/ moderate ID on day service and rehabilitative training programmes? What impact does EAPD have on people with ID in Irish ID services who have no previous experience with horses? What alternative methods of recording their experiences and reflections on EAPD work best for people with ID? Finally, what exercises and tasks work best for promoting PD in EAL for people with intellectual disabilities?

5.7 Conclusions

The present study provided multiple perspectives on the use of Equine-Assisted Personal Development for people with intellectual disabilities. It provided useful information on the potential for using Equine-Assisted Learning in personal development for people, especially those with intellectual disabilities, including a tangible model around which to

design and delivery an Equine-Assisted Personal Development programme in similar service settings. Despite the limitations of the present study, the action research design proved a very successful approach to the study, as it not only empowered the organisation to improve their own programme, but it also provided the service users with intellectual disabilities, who are a vulnerable population in society, with an opportunity to express their views. Thus the study supports the potential of Equine-Assisted Learning as a valid model for personal development for people with mild/ moderate intellectual disabilities, but highlights the need for further development of the Equine-Assisted Personal Development model, both at a local and a national level. Furthermore, the issues specific to EAL for people with ID that were identified in the present study contribute to the existing body of research, practice and theory on EAL.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Interview Schedule for Equestrian Programme Coaches

Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are very welcome today, thank for taking the time to talk to me. As you know, my name is Marian, and I would like to talk with you today about your thoughts on the new module you are facilitating in Equine Assisted Personal Development.
Study aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of this interview is to find out how the module is going so far and what impact it is having on the trainees I will be recording our talk today so that I can listen to you and not be distracted by taking notes. Only my supervisor in UCD and I will hear these tapes, and when I type them out, I will take your name and other information out of them. Try your best to speak clearly.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are here so that you can tell me what you think. You are welcome to say whatever you like on the topic. If you decide not to answer a question, that is also fine You are free to withdraw from the interview at any stage.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL; however, an independent third party, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be assisting me with the transcription.
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is that okay with you? Do you understand that? Any questions before we start?
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okay, so to start off, will you say your name and tell me how you came to be involved initially in the EAPD programme?
Previous experience with horses/ EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you had any previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)? If so, what did that involve?
Previous experience with personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had you facilitated any form of personal development classes before this? If so, what was your impression of or success with them? What do you think students gained, if anything, from doing them?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you think of the new EAPD module when you first heard you'd be facilitating it? What did you think you would do in it? Were you excited/worried about anything in particular? What did you think you would learn/ gain from doing it?
Current impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So you've been facilitating the module for about 12 weeks already, what do you think about it now? The horse seems to be a key element in the module, but what is their contribution to the process, what is it that they bring to it? What do you think about how the sessions are running so far? (e.g. have you found the exercises you are using effective/ successful in achieving their desired goal? etc.)
The EAL model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think the trainees have changed since they've been doing the sessions? If yes, in what way? (Without mentioning any names) Can you give me some examples? What is it about the EAPD module that has an effect on people? If you had to define what the module tries to do, what would it be in a broad sense? If you were to change one thing about the module, what would it be?
Questions and thanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's all the questions I wanted to ask, do you have any questions for me? Thanks so much for talking with me today. By doing this, we can help one another to improve the module for trainees in the future.

Appendix B: Focus Group Schedule for Equestrian Programme Trainees

Sample Focus Group Schedule for Equestrian Programme Trainees

Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are all very welcome today, thank for taking the time to talk to me. My name is Marian, in case you don't know me, and I would like to talk with you today about your thoughts on the new module you are doing in Equine Assisted Personal Development.
Study aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of this group is to find out more about the module ("module" is just a name for a group of sessions). I hope that this focus group will help me understand what you all like/dislike about module and what you got from doing it so far. I will be tape recording our talk today so that I can listen to each of you and not be distracted by taking notes. Don't worry only I will hear these tapes, and when I type them out I will take your name and other information out of them. Try your best to speak clearly and try not to cut across each other; you'll all get a chance to speak.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are here so that you can tell me what you think. You are welcome to say whatever you like on the topic. If you decide not to say anything, that is also fine If you would like to leave the group and not take part, that is fine also. You may withdraw from the discussion at any stage.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just so that everyone feels comfortable sharing their views, can we agree that we will respect that people may not want to talk about the things they say in the group after we have finished? I will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL or with your parents, however, however, an independent person, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be helping me to type up the recordings.
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is that okay with everyone? Everyone understand that? Any questions before we start?
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okay, so to start off, will everyone say their name and tell the group something interesting about you. I'll start!
Previous experience with horses/ EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you had any previous experience with horses before you came to FL? If so what did that involve? What did you think about horses before you came here? Have you had any previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)? If so, what did that involve?
Previous experience with personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you do any personal development classes before? If so, what kind of things did you do in them? How did you find them? Did you like/ dislike them? Do you think you gain anything from doing them?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you think of the new EAPD module when you first heard you'd be doing it? What did you think you would do in it? Were you excited/ worried about anything in particular?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you think you would learn/ gain from doing it?
Current impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So you've been doing the module for about 12 weeks already, what do you think about it now? • What do you think about the horses themselves (do you have a favourite)? • What do you like most about the sessions? • What do you like least about the sessions? • What do you think about how the sessions are run? (i.e. opinion of the exercises used etc.)
The EAL model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think you have changed since you've been doing the sessions? If yes how? • Why do you think doing the sessions has changed you? • What is it about the EAPD module that has an effect on people? • If you have to describe Equine Assisted Personal Development to someone, what would you say? • If you could change one thing about the module what would it be?
Questions and thanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That's all the questions I wanted to ask, do you have any questions for me? • Thanks so much for talking with me today. By doing this, you are helping me to help FL to improve the module for trainees in the future.

Appendix C: Invitation to Information Meeting for Equestrian Trainees



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YOU ARE INVITED TO A MEETING...

Where? In the first chalet (in the Gardens)

When? On _____ at __:__

Why? To talk about a study being done on the new Equine Assisted Personal Development module

Who? With Marian (Day Service team)

Appendix D: Information Sheet & Consent Form for Equestrian Trainees



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INFORMATION SHEET FOR TRAINEES

Research Study: Evaluation of the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Supervisor: Dr Suzanne Guerin, School of Psychology, UCD Ph: 01-7168490

Background: As part of my studies at UCD I am doing a piece of work that will explore the views and opinions of a variety of the people who have taken part in the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module. This study will start in December and will run for eight months. *Festina Lente* have given me permission to invite you to take part in this study.

What happens if I take part? We are inviting you to take part.

- *If you decide to take part*, you will be invited to take part in a group interview with some of the other trainees currently on the Equestrian programme, which will explore what you think of the module. However it is up to you to decide to take part in these interviews.
- These interviews will take place at the beginning of December, so we can find out your views of the module. They will take place at *Festina Lente* and will last around 40 minutes. The sessions will be conducted by me, and no member of staff involved in delivering the module will be present.
- I will be tape-recording the meeting to ensure that I don’t miss anything but no one from *Festina Lente* will hear the tapes. My report will include quotes from people in the study but I will take out anything that might identify you.
- There is only a small chance that you might find some of the questions a little difficult and if you are worried about this, you should not take part. .
- *If you decide not to take part*, you will not be contacted about this study again.
- Whether you take part or not there will be no effect on your involvement with *Festina Lente*.

How will you protect my information? As the interviews will be conducted in groups, other people will hear what you have to say so confidentiality or privacy cannot be guaranteed. However at the beginning of the interviews, everyone will be encouraged to respect the group setting and not to discuss things said once it is completed. Once the information has been collected, all individuals' contributions will remain confidential to the research unless there is a concern for an individual's safety. All individuals will be reminded of this at the outset of the group. Some quotes from the groups may be used in reporting the research but the identity of the individual in question will not be reported. Finally, an independent person will be helping me to type up the recordings; however, they have agreed to keep all information confidential.

Voluntary Participation: It is up to you to decide whether you are going to take part or not. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and I will remind you of this at the start of the group. However, if after taking part in the focus group you decide to withdraw, it will not be possible to remove your information, as it is not always possible to know who is speaking in the recorded interviews.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information will be collected by me (Marian) and the staff at *Festina Lente* will not have access to information on individuals who participate in the research. The information will be used in my studies at UCD and a report will be compiled for *Festina Lente*. However no individual will be identified in these or any other reports. The study's results will be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Recordings of the interviews will be destroyed as soon as my studies are finished. The information collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in UCD and in password protected computer files. The data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Important: The consent form! There is a consent form attached to this information sheet. Every young person participating must have a consent form, signed by themselves. It is important to remember to return the signed form to *Festina Lente*, as without it you will not be allowed to take part.

Thank you very much for supporting this study. Please keep this information for your records.



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CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Evaluation of the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Name: _____

I have read and understood the Information Leaflet for Trainees for this study and I understand what taking part in this study will involve.

I have had time to think about whether I want to take part in this study. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions I have asked have been answered clearly.

I understand that I have a choice as to whether I participate and that I am free to withdraw at any time if I choose to do so.

I understand that the focus group sessions will be tape recorded, that the tapes will be destroyed once Marian’s studies are finished. I know that quotes might be used in reports but that all identifying information will be removed

I understand that the information collected may be presented and/or published in academic journals and at conferences, but that no individual will be identifiable from the information.

I understand that privacy cannot be guaranteed in the focus group, but Marian will not discuss anything I say with anyone in *Festina Lente*, and that nobody will be able to identify me from any information used in presentations and/or publications.

I agree to take part in this study

Sign this form if you agree to take part

.....
Name (in block letters)

.....
Date

.....
Signature

Please be sure to return the consent sheet to Marian in the envelope provided!

Appendix E: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Equestrian Coaches



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INFORMATION SHEET FOR COACHES

Research Study: Evaluation of the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at Festina Lente Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Supervisor: Dr Suzanne Guerin, School of Psychology, UCD Ph: 01-7168490

Background and Purpose: As part of my studies at UCD I am doing a piece of research that will explore the views and opinions of a variety of the people who have taken part in the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module. This study will start in December and will run for eight months. Festina Lente have given me permission to invite you to take part in this study. While there is no direct benefit or reward to you, the Equestrian Training Programme will benefit from understanding trainees’ and Coaches’ views of the module. If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact me at the number above.

What happens if I take part? We are inviting you to take part.

- *If you decide to take part*, you will be invited to take part in an interview, which will explore your views of the impact of the EAPD module. These interviews will take place at the beginning of December, so I can find out your views of the module.
- The session will take place at Festina Lente and will last around 40 minutes. The session will be conducted by me, and no other people associated with the Equestrian Programme will be present. Each session will be tape-recorded to ensure that all relevant information is collected. There are no known risks associated with taking part.
- *If you decide not to take part*, you will not be contacted about this study again.
- Your decision to take part or not will not effect your work with Festina Lente in any way.

How will my information be protected? I will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL, however, an independent person, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be assisting me with transcribing the recordings. Once the information has been collected, your contributions will remain confidential to the

research unless there is a concern for an individual's safety. All individuals will be reminded of this at the outset of the interview. Finally, some quotes from the interviews may be used in reporting the research but the identity of the individual in question will not be reported.

Voluntary Participation: It is up to you to decide whether you are going to take part or not. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and I will remind you of this at the start of the group. However, if after taking part in the interview you decide to withdraw, it will not be possible to remove your data, as it is not always possible to identify and isolate individual contributions from the recorded interviews.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information will be used in my studies at UCD and a report will be compiled for Festina Lente. However no individual will be identified in these or any other reports. The study's results will be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Recordings of the interviews will be destroyed as soon as my studies are finished. The information collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in UCD and in password protected computer files. The data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Important: The consent form! There is a consent form attached to this information sheet. Everyone participating must have a consent form, signed by themselves. It is important to remember to return the signed form to Festina Lente, as without it you will not be allowed to take part.

Thank you very much for supporting this study. Please keep this information for your records.



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CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Evaluation of the Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Name: _____

I have read and understood the Information Leaflet for Coaches for this study and I understand what taking part in this study will involve.

I have had time to consider whether I want to take part in this study. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions I have asked have been answered clearly.

I understand that my participation is voluntary (that I have a choice as to whether I participate) and that I am free to withdraw at any time if I choose to do so.

I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded, that the tapes will be destroyed once they have been typed, and that all identifying information will be removed

I understand that the information collected may be presented and/or published in academic journals and at conferences, but that no individual will be identifiable from the information.

I understand that nothing I say in the interviews will be discussed with anyone in *Festina Lente* and that any information used in presentations and/or publications will not be identifiable to any individual.

I agree to take part in this study

Please sign this form if you agree to take part

.....
Name (in block letters)

.....
Date

.....
Signature

Please be sure to return the consent sheet to Marian in the envelope provided!

Appendix F: Sample Interview Schedule for Day Service/Rehabilitation Trainees

Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are all very welcome today, thank for taking the time to talk to me. My name is _____, and I would like to talk with you today about what you thought about the new module you did with Marian and **** over the last few weeks in Equine Assisted Personal Development.
Study aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of this interview is to find out more about how you found the module (“module” is just a name for a group of sessions). I hope that this chat will help Marian understand what you liked/disliked about module and what you got from doing it, so she can see how it could be made better for people doing it in the future. • I will be tape recording our talk today so that I can listen to you and not be distracted by taking notes. • Don’t worry, only Marian and her Supervisor in UCD will hear these tapes, and when she types them out, she will take your name and other information out of them. • Try your best to speak clearly.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are here so that you can tell me what you think. You are welcome to say whatever you like on the topic. If you decide not to say anything, that is also fine • If you would like to leave and not take part, that is fine also. You may withdraw from the discussion at any stage.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL, except for Marian, or with your parents or families, however, an independent person, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be helping Marian to type up the recordings.
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is that okay with you? • Do you understand all of that? • Any questions before we start?
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay, so to start off, will everyone say their name and tell the group something interesting about you. I’ll start!
Previous experience with horses/ EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have any previous experience with horses before you came to Festina? If so what did that involve? • What did you think about horses before you came here? • Have you ever done any Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) before this course? • If so, what did that involve?
Previous experience with personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you do any personal development classes before in your programme? (e.g. FETAC Personal Interpersonal Skills: Level 3) • If so, what kind of things did you do in them? • How did you find them? Did you like/ dislike them? • Do you think you gained anything from doing them?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you think of the EAPD module when you first heard you’d be doing it? • What did you think you would do in it? • Were you excited/ worried about anything in particular? • What did you think you would learn/ gain from doing it?

Current impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So you did the course for 6 weeks, what do you think about it now? • What do you think about the horses themselves (do you have a favourite)? • What do you like most about the sessions? • What do you like least about the sessions? • What do you think about how the sessions are run? (i.e. what did you think of the tasks and exercises used etc.) • What was one thing you found interesting? • Can you describe one thing that surprised you? • What is the one main thing you will remember from the 6 sessions?
The EAL model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think you have changed since you've been doing the sessions? If yes how? • Why do you think doing the sessions has changed you? • What is it about the EAPD module that has an effect on people? • If you have to describe Equine Assisted Personal Development to someone who has never done it, what would you say? • If you could change one thing about the module, what would it be?
Questions and thanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That's all the questions I wanted to ask, do you have any questions for me? • Thanks so much for talking with me today. By doing this, you are helping Marian to help Festina to develop this module to work better for people in the future.

Appendix G: Sample Focus Group Schedule for Pilot EAPD module Facilitator

Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are very welcome today, thank for taking the time to talk to me. As you know, my name is *****, and I would like to talk with you today about your thoughts on the brief pilot module you co-facilitated in Equine Assisted Personal Development.
Study aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of this interview is to find out how the module went and what impact it had on the participants. I will be recording our talk today so that I can listen to you and not be distracted by taking notes. Only Marian and her supervisor in UCD and I will hear these tapes, and when she types them out, she will take your name and other information out of them. Try your best to speak clearly.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are here so that you can tell me what you think. You are welcome to say whatever you like on the topic. If you decide not to answer a question, that is also fine You are free to withdraw from the interview at any stage.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marian will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL; however, an independent third party, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be assisting her with the transcription.
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is that okay with you? Do you understand that? Any questions before we start?
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okay, so to start off, will you say your name and tell me how you came to be involved initially in the pilot EAPD programme?
Previous experience with horses/ EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you had any previous experience of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)? If so, what did that involve?
Previous experience with personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had you facilitated any form of personal development classes before this? If so, what was your impression of or success with them? What do you think students gained, if anything, from doing them?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you think of the new EAPD module when you first heard you'd be facilitating it? What did you think you would do in it? Were you excited/ worried about anything in particular? What did you think you would learn/ gain from doing it?
Current impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So you've been facilitating the module for about 12 weeks already, what do you think about it now? The horse seems to be a key element in the module, but what is their contribution to the process, what is it that they bring to it? What do you think about how the sessions are running so far? (e.g. have you found the exercises you are using effective/ successful in achieving their desired goal? etc.) What do you think about the Facilitator Notes? What do you think about the Worksheets?
The EAL model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think the participants have gotten, if anything, from doing the sessions? Do you think they have changed since they've been doing the sessions? If yes, in what way? (Without mentioning any names) Can you give me some examples?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it about the EAPD module that has an effect on people? • If you had to define what the module tries to do, what would it be in a broad sense? • If you were to change one thing about the module, what would it be?
Questions and thanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That's all the questions I wanted to ask, do you have any questions for me? • Thanks so much for talking with me today. By doing this, we can help one another to improve the module for people in the future.

Appendix H: EAPD Participant Worksheet

Trainees should complete notes for each session carried out.

Date:		
Session Number:		Worksheet Number:
Exercise:		
Horse(s):		
What we did:		
I liked...		
I didn't like:		
One thing that I found interesting was...		
One thing that surprised me was...		
One thing I will remember from today:		

Appendix I: EAPD Facilitator Notes

Facilitators should complete notes for each session carried out.

Date & Time:			
Location:			
Session Number:		Worksheet Number:	
Participants: <small>(please use initials to protect confidentiality)</small>			
Horses:			
Exercise/s:			
Discussion: <small>(please use initials to protect confidentiality)</small>			
Issues/events to note among participants:			
Issues/events to note among horses:			
Plan for next session (including changes/follow up required)			

Appendix J: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Day Service Users/ Rehabilitative Trainees



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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Research Study: Development and evaluation of a brief pilot of an Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Supervisor: Dr Suzanne Guerin, School of Psychology, UCD Ph: 01-7168490

Background: As part of my studies at UCD I am doing a piece of work that will explore the views and opinions of some of the people who have taken part in a short pilot Equine Assisted Personal Development Module. This study started in December and will run for eight months. *Festina Lente* has given me permission to invite you to take part in this study.

What happens if I take part? We are inviting you to take part.

- *If you decide to take part*, you will be invited to take part in an interview, which will talk about what you thought of the module. However, it is up to you to decide to take part in this interview.
- The interview will take place at the end of the module, so we can find out your views of it and what you liked or disliked about the sessions. They will take place at *Festina Lente* and will last around 30 minutes. The interviews will be conducted by a person (“The interviewer”) who is not connected to *Festina* in any way, and **no** member of staff involved in delivering the module will be present, so you are free to say whatever you want.
- The interviewer will be tape-recording the meeting to ensure that nothing is missed, but no one from *Festina Lente* will hear the tapes. Marian’s report at the end will include quotes from people in the study, but she will take out anything that might identify you.
- There is only a small chance that you might find some of the questions a little difficult and if you are worried about this, you should not take part. .
- *If you decide not to take part*, you will **not** be contacted about this study again.

- Whether you take part or not there will be no effect on your involvement with *Festina Lente*.

How will you protect my information? The Interviewer will not be discussing what you say with anyone in Festina, and an independent person, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be helping Marian to type out the recordings. Once the information has been collected, what you have said will remain confidential to the research, unless there is a concern for somebody's safety. Everyone will be reminded of this at the outset of the interview. Finally, some quotes from the interviews may be used in reporting the research but the identity of the individual in question will not be reported.

Voluntary Participation: It is up to you to decide whether you are going to take part or not. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and I will remind you of this at the start of the group. However, if after taking part in the focus group you decide to withdraw, it will not be possible to remove your information, as it is not always possible to know who is speaking in the recorded interviews.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information will be collected by a person from outside of Festina, and only Marian will be using the information collected for her report; the rest of the staff and trainees at *Festina Lente* will not have access to your information from the research. The information will be used in Marian's studies at UCD and a report will be put together for *Festina Lente*. However, no one will be identified in these or any other reports. The study's results will be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Recordings of the interviews will be destroyed as soon as Marian's studies are finished. The information collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in UCD and in password protected computer files. The data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Important: The consent form! There is a consent form attached to this information sheet. Everyone who wants to take part in the study must have a consent form, signed by themselves. A person from outside Festina will be coming in to answer any questions you have, as well as to collect the signed forms if you wish to take part, as without one, you will not be allowed to take part.

Thank you very much for supporting this study. Please keep this information for your records.



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CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Development and evaluation of a brief pilot Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Name: _____

I have read and understood the Information Leaflet for Participants for this study and I understand what taking part in this study will involve.

I have had time to think about whether I want to take part in this study. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions I have asked have been answered clearly.

I understand that I have a choice as to whether I participate and that I am free to withdraw at any time if I choose to do so.

I understand that the interview will be tape recorded, and that the tape will be destroyed once Marian’s studies are finished. I know that quotes might be used in reports but **that all information identifying me will be removed**

I understand that the information collected may be presented and/or published in academic journals and at conferences, but that no individual will be identifiable from the information.

I understand that nothing I say in the interview will be discussed with anyone in *Festina Lente*, but, for her study, Marian and her Supervisor and typing assistant will hear the recordings. However, I understand that nobody will be able to identify me from any information used in presentations and/or publications.

I agree to take part in this study

Sign this form if you agree to take part

.....
Name (in block letters)

.....
Date

.....
Signature

Please be sure to return the consent sheet in the envelope provided!

Appendix K: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Pilot module Facilitator



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INFORMATION SHEET FOR FACILITATORS

Research Study: Development and Evaluation of a brief pilot Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Supervisor: Dr Suzanne Guerin, School of Psychology, UCD Ph: 01-7168490

Background and Purpose: As part of my studies at UCD I am doing a piece of research that will explore the views and opinions of some of the people who have taken part in a brief pilot Equine Assisted Personal Development Module, developed for use with adults with Intellectual Disability on the Day Service and Rehabilitation Training Programme in *Festina Lente* Foundation. This study started in December and will run for eight months. *Festina Lente* has given me permission to invite you to take part in this study. While there is no direct benefit or reward to you, the Foundation will benefit from understanding participants’ and Facilitators’ views of the pilot module. If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact me.

What happens if I take part? We are inviting you to take part.

- *If you decide to take part*, you will be invited to take part in an interview, which will explore your views of the impact of the pilot EAPD module. The interview will take place at the end of the module.
- The session will take place at *Festina Lente* and will last around 40 minutes. The session will be conducted by me, and no other staff from *Festina Lente* will be present. Each session will be tape-recorded to ensure that all relevant information is collected. There are no known risks associated with taking part.
- *If you decide not to take part*, you will not be contacted about this study again.
- Your decision to take part or not will not effect your work with *Festina Lente* in any way.

How will my information be protected? I will not be discussing what you say with anyone in FL, however, an independent person, who has agreed to confidentiality, will be assisting me with transcribing the recordings. Once the information has been collected, your contributions will remain confidential to the

research unless there is a concern for an individual's safety. All individuals will be reminded of this at the outset of the interview. Finally, some quotes from the interviews may be used in reporting the research but the identity of the individual in question will not be reported.

Voluntary Participation: It is up to you to decide whether you are going to take part or not. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and I will remind you of this at the start of the group. However, if after taking part in the interview you decide to withdraw, it will not be possible to remove your data, as it is not always possible to identify and isolate individual contributions from the recorded interviews.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information will be used in my studies at UCD and a report will be compiled for *Festina Lente*. However no individual will be identified in these or any other reports. The study's results will be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Recordings of the interviews will be destroyed as soon as my studies are finished. The information collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in UCD and in password protected computer files. The data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Important: The consent form! There is a consent form attached to this information sheet. Everyone participating must have a consent form, signed by themselves. It is important to remember to return the signed form to *Festina Lente*, as without it you will not be allowed to take part.

Thank you very much for supporting this study. Please keep this information for your records.



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CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Development and Evaluation of a brief pilot Equine Assisted Personal Development Module at *Festina Lente* Foundation

Researcher: Marian O’Gorman, School of Psychology, UCD.

Name: _____

I have read and understood the Information Leaflet for Facilitators for this study and I understand what taking part in this study will involve.

I have had time to consider whether I want to take part in this study. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions I have asked have been answered clearly.

I understand that my participation is voluntary (that I have a choice as to whether I participate) and that I am free to withdraw at any time if I choose to do so.

I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded, that the tapes will be destroyed once they have been typed, and that all identifying information will be removed

I understand that the information collected may be presented and/or published in academic journals and at conferences, but that no individual will be identifiable from the information.

I understand that nothing I say in the interviews will be discussed with anyone in *Festina Lente* and that any information used in presentations and/or publications will not be identifiable to any individual.

I agree to take part in this study.

Please sign this form if you agree to take part

.....
Name (in block letters)

.....
Date

.....
Signature

Please be sure to return the consent sheet to Marian in the envelope provided!

Appendix L: Final Coding Frame – Phase 1

Phase 1 Coding Frame: Equestrian Coaches

Section	Theme(s)
Background in EAPD Module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since working in FL • Expectations regarding benefits
1. Previous experience of EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some experience of horsemanship • Facilitated EAL with outside groups • Conducted EAL informally with trainees
2. Previous experience of PD - including other models (e.g. EAGALA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did EAL activities with trainees and would discuss issues arising • Not therapists – building trust within groups • Experience of mentoring • Believed the students appreciate having someone who listened and gave advice
3. Expectations of the new EAPD module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking in confidence re delivering the module • Would be a chance to learn about communicating with horses
4. Development of the EAPD module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheets designed based on Personal Effectiveness FETAC module • Worksheets need to be tailored for ID population • Questions based on self-awareness asking about activities and how can be linked to life
5. Current impressions of the EAPD module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for team-building/ building relationships - Encourages communication with each other • Flexibility - a benefit • Staff views on what the trainees enjoy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoy focus on small numbers - Learn how horses interact (away from riding school setting)/ - Different activity/ break from routine • Suitable for all ages • Need for evaluation
6. Programme Elements: a. Positives b. Negative elements that can have an effect c. Nature of EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Fac. In EAPD process: Facilitator can ask questions that link tasks to real life • Flexibility • Observation and tuning into horses • Chance to (self)-reflect • Nature of activities (e.g. horse language) • Goal setting • Specific activities or elements • Higher support needs among group • The group dynamics have to be right • Communication • Work with horses in a different way • Chance to self-reflect • Self-awareness around the horse • Awareness of body language

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Self-awareness • Group work • Role of Facilitator • Literacy levels need to be adequate • Self-expression ability needs to be a certain level to for participation • Level of self-awareness (ability to self-reflect)
10. Horses (why used?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways in which horse communicates • Size of horse/ natural interaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aesthetically pleasing creatures to work with - Trainees feel good around them - Gain respect as wild animals tamed - Tactile sense - The size of them takes focus away from task - More natural way of doing things - as just do tasks without focusing on fact that doing it • Horse can be a barrier – depending on ability of the person

Phase 1 Coding Frame: Equestrian Trainees

Section	Theme(s)
1. Initial involvement in EAPD Module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAL with whole group together • Group exercises
2. Previous experience of EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/ 5 Trainees: yes
3. Previous experience with horses (how many have?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of 5 trainees, 3 had significant experience prior to attending the ETP
4. Expectations (of the new EAPD module)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed expectations, with a general leaning towards negative – hesitant about participating
5. Views and evaluations of EAPD Programme elements: a. Positive b. Negative c. Issue of ID and EAL/EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed views positive and negative from each participant in the focus <p>Views of EAPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good experience for people with no knowledge of horses • Enjoyable experience • Can help with fears • Change from traditional horse-riding • Horses • Worksheets (assist reflection) • Group discussion • Worksheets • Horses • Some dissatisfaction with way discussion facilitated
5. Suggestions for change (concrete)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheets • Groups • Show other yards • Session structure
6. Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication - Awareness of how horses communicate emotions e.g. anger • Calming effect of the bond with the horse • Social learning • Using the bond & trust with the horse to work better with it overall

Appendix M: EAPD Pilot Module Participation Certificate



This is to certify that

Has successfully completed a 6 week course in

EQUINE-ASSISTED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

[Facilitator 1]

[Facilitator 2]

Content: Ask trainees to identify the communication style used by each trainee. Looking at this and the last session, can trainees identify a communication style they often use? How effective is it? Are trainees happy with it? How does it make them and others feel?

Session 4: Exercise: *Approach & Connect*
Aim: Identify personal qualities (Unit 1.1) and characteristics (Unit 1.2); and encourage consideration of cause and effect
Setup: Two horses in the arena. Head collar and lead rope.
Horses: Caesar & Splash
Content: Ask individuals to approach one horse (NB one at a time) and be aware of the horse's reactions etc. Then observe them putting a head collar onto a horse and seek other's feedback on their approach etc. Explore what feels comfortable and uncomfortable distances from the horse with each trainee; and link this with why the horse behaves the way they he/ she does.

Session 5: Exercise: *The Brain*
Aim: Reflect on the impact behaviour has in everyday life (Unit 1.3) and importance of good, clear communication and team-work.
Setup: One horse in the arena with head collar and lead rope.
Horses: Tico/ Akela/ Caesar/ Clyde
Content: One trainee stands at each side of the horse, as left and right limb, then the third trainee stands in front, acting as the "Brain". The "Brain" gives instructions to the "Limbs" to carry out a task, e.g. put on a head collar. Limbs can only move when told by Brain. Trainees come up with a consequence for whoever breaks the rules.

Session 6: Exercise: *Trust Ride*
Aim: Closing session, recap on learning
Setup: 2 Horses in the arena, with no saddles. Lead ropes and head collars for leaders.
Horses: Tico & Akela
Content: Each trainee has a go of being led on the horse, riding bareback. One leader or two, depending on rider's confidence/ ability

Appendix O: Final Coding Frame – Phase 2

Phase 2 Coding Frame: Facilitator Interview

Section	Theme(s)
11. Background in EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background in Psychology • Experienced with horses • First experience of EAL in FL
12. Nature of EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop based • Focuses on self-awareness and problem-solving • Experiential • Had expected more focus on individual reflection
13. Horses (why use them?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural reactions • No presumptions
14. Programme Elements: d. Positives e. Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting & atmosphere • Excited about exercises • Body contact • Flexibility in the Facilitators important • Group ability mix • Need to adjust • Time • Need more interaction
15. Issues in EAL with People with ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge in mixed abilities to self-reflect on own behaviour among the group – but potential for people with ID to benefit • Recognise additional challenge of clarifying expectations of the programme with participants
16. Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Problem-solving • Communication • Tolerance & respect • Flexibility in the Facilitators important – potential for impact
17. Suggestions for changes to and development of the EAPD module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remain as a group in the setting and fill out the worksheets at the end of each session (time constraints) • Important to have 2 Facilitators in the sessions • Important to have a horse expert as one F. • Both F's knowing about horses is an advantage • A background in social studies an advantage • F's should have an interest in the area of EAL
18. Current impressions of the EAPD module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to tailor programme to meet the needs of the specific group • Flexibility important • Important to review after each session to identify what worked well and held interest and any problems etc. • Focus was more on communication, inter-group activities and team work • Worked with what topics the situations presented

Phase 2 Coding Frame: Day Service & Rehabilitative Training Service Users

Section	Theme(s)
1. Background (Previous experience with horses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riding experience (both)
2. Previous experience of EAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience of EAL in FL before pilot EAPD module • No previous experience of EAL
3. Previous experience of PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FETAC modules (both) • Learned how to stay healthy
4. Expectations (of the new EAPD module)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not worried - Previous experience so not worried • To do games and tasks with the horses • To learn more about horses/ how to react to them • To gain knowledge from experienced horse people
5. Current impressions of the EAPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was good • The exercises were easy • Found some events interesting/ surprising • Nothing found memorable • Exercises were a bit hard, but fun • Trust ride was interesting & memorable
6. Programme Elements: d. Positive e. Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horses • Games & activities • Support for people if nervous or need assistance in the sessions • Nothing was disliked
7. Suggestions for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes • Ride more horses • Be asked to choose a favourite
8. Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Confidence • Focus
9. Human/ horse interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like all the horses; no favourites
10. Nature of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to explain • Learning about horses • Being with horses