



Youth Outcomes Summary 2015

This is a summary of findings from a detailed study of 20 young people attending TheHorseCourse (THC) ReStart in the Summer of 2014. Charities Evaluation Services (part of NCVO) supported us in study design, data analysis and reporting. Further context is given on page 3.

ATTENDANCE & ACHIEVEMENT

- **100% completion rate** when 35% was expected
- **100% achieved** Parelli Natural Horsemanship Level 1 or higher in 5 days

8 CORE SKILLS

- **29%** average gain across eight **core skills** (see below)
- **80%** of participants were **less anxious** 2 months post-course than they were at referral
- **33%** average improvement in managing **anxiety**, across all participants

4 INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

% OF PARTICIPANTS SHOWING PROGRESS – REFERRERS 2 MTHS POST

	SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT	SOME IMPROVEMENT	NO CHANGE	WORSE
• 80% show reduced problem behaviours such as offending, eating disorder, self harm	45%	35%	20%	0%
• 95% positive changes in identity such as improved self esteem and confidence	45%	50%	5%	0%
• 85% increased attendance or engagement with education or training	35%	50%	10%	5%
• 80% improved relationships with peers, family members and professionals	45%	35%	15%	5%

- **80% of referrers attribute** improvements to TheHorseCourse: 55% strongly, 25% partly, 20% unknown

PROCESS

REFERRALS

- Socially excluded through mental or emotional difficulties
- AND**
- Not progressing in conventional interventions

8 CORE SKILLS BUILT DURING THE RESTART COURSE

1. Engagement
2. Calmness
3. Assertiveness
4. Focus & Perseverance
5. Communication
6. Empathy
7. Responsibility
8. Realistic Planning

4 INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES FOLLOW POST COURSE

1. positive changes in identity
2. improved attendance/engagement
3. reduced problem behaviour
4. improved relationships

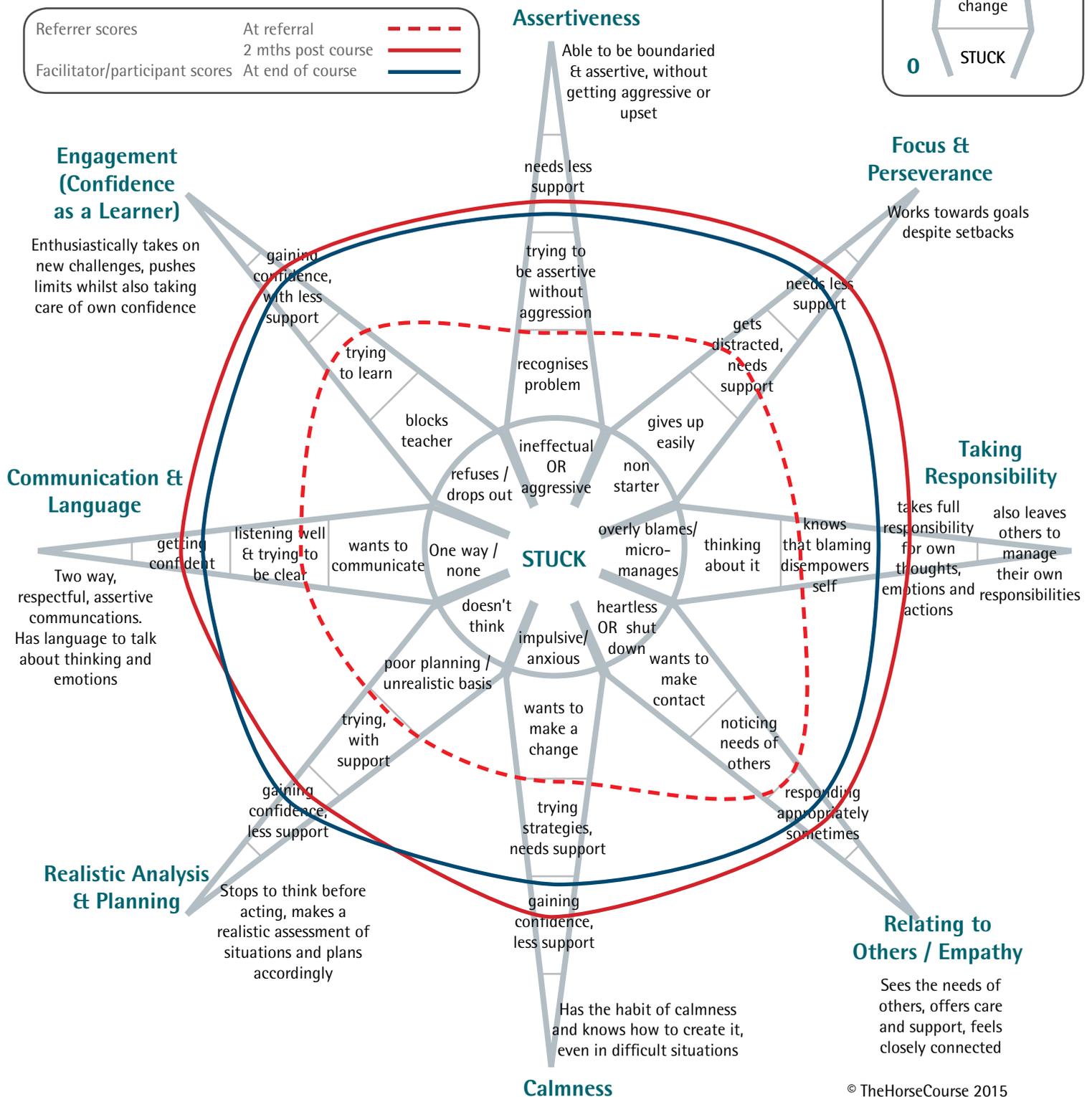
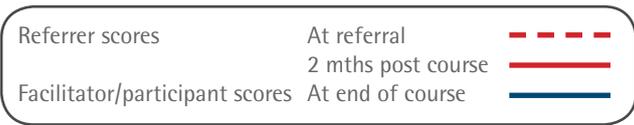
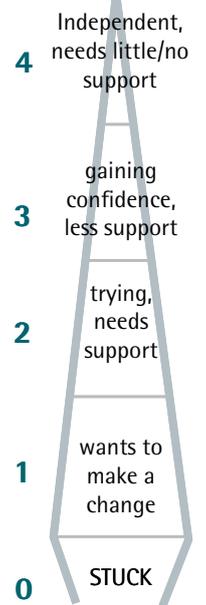
- Greater social inclusion
- Constructive, satisfying lives
- Reduced cost to public services

TheHorseCourse Star below shows that the young people made a 29% overall improvement in the 8 CORE SKILLS taught and practised on THC.

The results in this study closely reflect the results we get with other cohorts. Whatever the starting point (e.g. more challenged than this group), the improvement tends to be around 30% across all 8 skills.

The end-of-course scores, assessed by the facilitator and participant in a reflective discussion seem to be predictive of the assessments made by referrers two months later – showing that the skills have been realistically assessed *and* are holding up over time. We are doing further study of this, and validating the Star tool, over larger data sets.

SCORING



Context

The study group comprised 20 young people aged 10-17 yrs, referred by Childrens Services Early Intervention Team, in partnership with six schools and other agencies including YOT, YISP and CAMHS. Young people were targetted for exclusion or risk of exclusion from mainstream education because of problem behaviours which were not responding to existing talk-based provision. Difficulties included anxiety, depression, anger, bullying, ASD, ADHD, eating disorders and self harm, with most participants having mutiple issues and receiving support from several agencies.

The young people attended an indoor arena in pairs, where they worked with two or more horses for five consecutive half days – a total of 15 hours. In sessions they learnt to communicate with the horses on the ground, using loose ropes or at liberty, seeking to be calm and effective leaders. THC horses are chosen and trained to be highly sensitive and responsive, giving clear feedback if the handler is anxious, aggressive or chaotic. THC facilitators are trained to use innovative non-verbal techniques to shape students' behaviour and maximise the learning opportunity.

Pre and post course data overleaf comes from referrers (social workers, teachers & parents) using our THC Star and open questions before the course, and two months post-course. Findings were confirmed by further interviews with referrers and participants; the use of the THC Star as a reflection tool at the end of the course; and by session notes. This group was not “cherry-picked”, on the contrary, we asked for the most unlikely to engage to be referred.

The outcomes shown build on and agree with our theory of change, and with our success with high risk violent young offenders. See *TheHorseCourse Evidence Review, working with Offenders, 2015* – showing a 27 % point reduction in 12 month reoffending (www.thehorsecourse.org/evidence). We see similar results day to day across multiple cohorts, facilitators and venues and we are working on larger studies.

We constantly engage with academics – raw data is available for verification/study.



“Her life seems to have been kick-started again”
social worker

“He used to shout and punch walls, now he goes for a run to calm down, this is huge!”
parent



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Case Studies: young people

JIM (17 YRS)

Prior to attending TheHorseCourse Jim had been involved in theft and shoplifting and was engaged with the Youth Offending Team and Children's Services. He was stubborn and difficult with his mum, and was self harming by hitting himself. Mum was really worried about him, unable to get him motivated to set goals and go after them. His social worker found it difficult to get him to open up or to sign up for anything. She was worried about his inability to control his anger.

Jim thoroughly enjoyed THC and engaged fully. At the end he commented, "Before, I'd say I'd do something but wouldn't be bothered if I actually did it, but this I enjoyed and stuck at."

Two months post-course Jim's social worker reported that the relationship between Jim and his mum had improved with him being more helpful around the house and that things were calmer at home. Also that he was now engaged in training and in planning a career.

Jim's mum said, "Jim can now take responsibility, this is a big change, 180° turnaround. He looks to himself before blaming. He used to shout and punch walls but now he goes for a walk or a run and is calm in 10 minutes. This is huge." Jim confirmed in his interview, "this is a strategy I learnt on THC that I'm still using to stay calm" – running off adrenaline to reduce anxiety and give himself time to think clearly. He said he lies less now. He sees himself as a good person and tries to do his best.

TheHorseCourse was reported as a significant cause of progress for 55% of our participants and part of the cause for 25%.

GAIL (12 YRS)

Gail was referred to TheHorseCourse with ADHD and ASD diagnoses. She was having problems at home and at school with impulsive behaviour and argumentative, aggressive language.

After the course her social worker commented, "Mum says she's calmer at home, more able to stop and think and can be brought back quicker when she does blow up. Her anxiety is not as debilitating now as it was before. There are less conflicts. She's aware of her behaviour now where she wasn't aware of it before TheHorseCourse."

School said of Gail, "She's doing well and is more able to settle and concentrate, no behaviour incidents lately". Her own feedback was, "I put my hand up in class. That's changed a lot. I'm into things more now, helping out and stuff."

Gail wrote, "I enjoyed TheHorseCourse, that week was the most thrilling experience of my life".

JANE (14 YRS)

After the course, Jane told us she was still using techniques she learnt with the horses to help her cope with social situations, "I felt closed in so I used *approach & retreat* – going away and then coming back, staying with the group for longer each time until I felt comfortable." This was something we practised initially with worrying horsemanship tasks so that Jane could learn how to manage and build her confidence in all settings.

Her social worker told us, "Jane continues to suffer from low mood, however this has improved and she is beginning to socialise more. She has started to go out to a local youth club unaccompanied."

The young peoples' names have been changed.