



Youth Well-Being Impact Report - Charity Year 1st June 2020 to 31st May 2021

Introduction

The Hugs Foundation is a registered charity (1175633) that provides well-being support for children, young people, the elderly and military veterans. Founded in 2017, we cater for a range of needs including; social, emotional, physical and mental health support, low self-esteem, social isolation, learning and developmental needs e.g. poor communication skills, school transitions, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), trauma, self-harm and those at risk of suicide.

From 2017 to May 2020, the team has helped over 450 individuals and conducted over 5000 hours of sessions. The team are seeing a growing number of referrals year on year. Outcomes have included:

- 100% felt calmer, happier and more confident
- 100% had more effective communication
- 67% had improved focus and perseverance
- 67% learnt new skills
- 100% had more awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others



The Need

The community Hugs provide services for is one of the 10% most deprived areas in England (IoMD, 2019). There is severe poverty, problems with school attendance, behavioural issues and isolation. There are little in the way of facilities and support for the ever growing number of young people experiencing mental ill health and inequalities and where there is help, it is either inaccessible, due to costs or has long waiting times. Therefore there is increasing demand for alternative interventions, such as The Hugs Foundation.

Since the pandemic began, mental ill health has increased, hugely affecting those in deprived areas. Having no school or social time has caused anxiety and left young people isolated. In

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extreme cases, our beneficiaries have been forced to stay in isolation or violent situations. Some have been hospitalised due to attempted suicides. This is why our interventions are so vital, they are lifesaving. The team have identified three main needs in the local community, through working with them over the past 4 years. These are:

- Unreasonable timescales (6 months+) to access statutory services, compounded by the area of deprivation and social/economic challenges facing those in need.
- Traditional therapies alone, do not always have a positive impact or tackle issues effectively. Many young people also find traditional talk therapies difficult to access, therefore, alternative/additional services are needed and essential.
- The pandemic has exacerbated mental health and social inclusion issues in our community, due to the underlying problems associated with multiple deprivation.



Delivery

The team aim to meet these needs by:

- Improving access to interventions in a timely manner to reduce the lifelong impact of mental and physical health issues, helping beneficiaries reach their full potential whilst reducing financial pressure on families within the community.
- Providing an alternative to traditional therapies, which combines outdoor spaces and ecotherapy with animal therapies, both of which are growing and achieving results in line with traditional psychotherapies. The unique setting also reduces anxiety and stress, which can be associated with attending counselling establishments and reduces any stigma attached to accessing these services in traditional settings.
- Providing support and access to mental well-being initiatives to help young people re-adjust to their worlds post pandemic, improving re-integration and reducing the opportunity for isolation and the social difficulties this can have.

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About The Interventions and How They Work

- Type of services and activities

The team offer a diverse range of therapeutic activities and mentoring, tailored to suit the needs of each individual or family. Activities can include; animal assisted interventions, nature activities, ecotherapy, teambuilding, arts and crafts, forest based activities and practical skills such as horticulture.



- Who delivers the services?

Two highly qualified members of staff with a combined 25 years of experience working with children, young people, their families and the additional needs our beneficiaries have, such as learning difficulties, ASD and mental ill health.

- Average length of time you work with individuals

Each beneficiary receives a programme of six, one hour sessions delivered over a six week period, with the option to extend, if required.

- Where the service is delivered

Sessions are delivered on-site in our unique, natural environment that consists of a purpose built learning and sensory building, nature walk, sensory garden, horticulture and vegetable area, equine rescue yard and farmyard area.



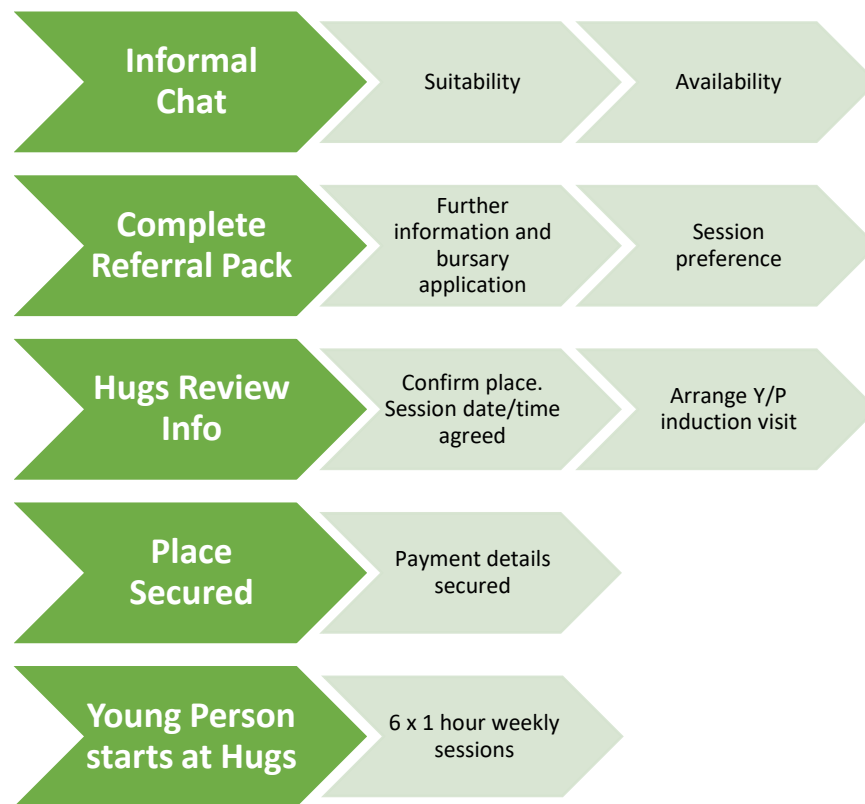
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- The referral process and how it works



An example of how sessions work for a beneficiary whose goal may be to reintegrate back into education after Covid-19 causing anxiety and social isolation:

- Animal assisted interventions – start to build relationships with animals and horses e.g. through horsemanship skills and comparing behaviours to allow metaphors and mirroring of their own behaviours.
- Social skills – relationship and teambuilding activities such as orienteering to achieve goals that can only be accomplished by working together. This will help with self-esteem and social inclusion.
- Numeracy and literacy – working to build a scrap book by taking photos and writing about their day, helping build confidence in skills that will be used at school. For instance, constructing sentences with capital letters and full stops. The team also create memory boards with beneficiaries to help create positive memories and coping mechanisms for long term solutions.

The end goal would be reached by reintegrating slowly back into school and adjusting the plan to the needs of the individual, reviewing as and when necessary. A vital part of the process includes evaluating outcomes by recording feedback using feedback forms and questionnaires to ensure progress is monitored for the beneficiary and to help the team improve the services offered.

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Partnership working

The team operate in partnership with a number of organisations including; schools, social workers, CAMHS, Cornwall Council, care homes (to help the senior citizens well-being and increase social inclusion), hospices (e.g. Little Harbour) and other charities including The Farm-Able Foundation and Cornwall One Parent Support.

The Report

This report summarises the impact of the Youth Well-Being team for the charity year 1st June 2020 to 31st May 2021. During this year, we suffered the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in a loss of staff members from 3.5 full time equivalent to 2FTE. This meant that for the majority of the year, the team were unable to undertake the on-site well-being interventions and so their role diversified to support the running of the equine rescue and reaching beneficiaries virtually through a project called A Daily Hug.

A Daily Hug

During lockdowns, to keep our beneficiaries engaged and bring some hope, purpose and routine to their day, the team launched a Facebook Live project called A Daily Hug. The project involved going live or posting a pre-recorded video daily on Facebook. Services included activities and talks to help mental well-being including; how to spread kindness and how nature can help well-being, practical activities to do at home and craft ideas e.g. making snow globes and Christmas cards, with the help of our rescue animals. In one month, the project reached over 84,900 people with over 11,900 engagements. The project was so successful the team were supported by the charity, Mind and Cornwall Community Foundations grants and had four rounds of funding for the project. Here are some of the outcomes:

A DAILY HUG PROJECT OUTCOMES

Survey Monkey outcomes:

- **100%** of posts were found to be interesting and engaging.
- **78%** said the posts helped them feel less lonely during lockdown.
- **78%** feel the posts helped relieve their anxiety or depression symptoms.

REGISTERED CHARITY 1175633

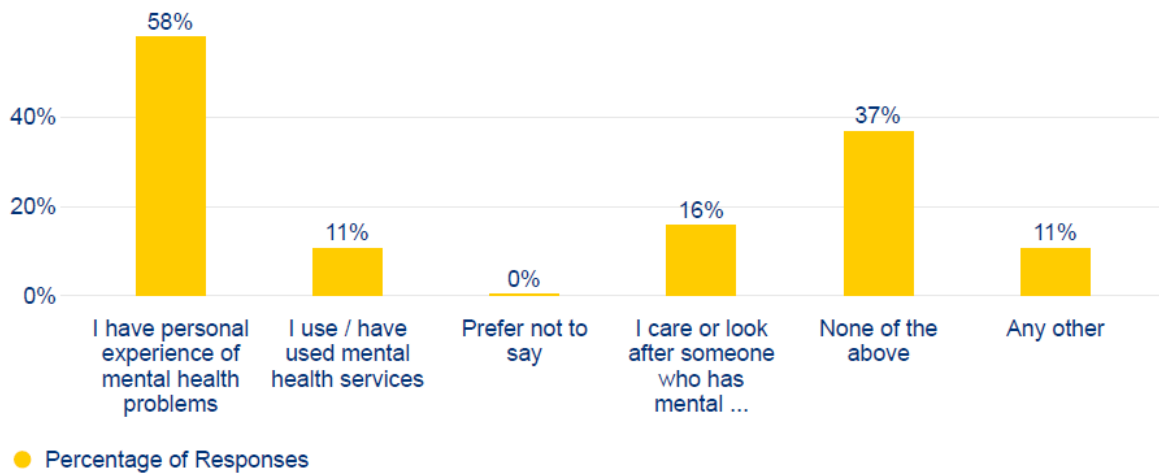
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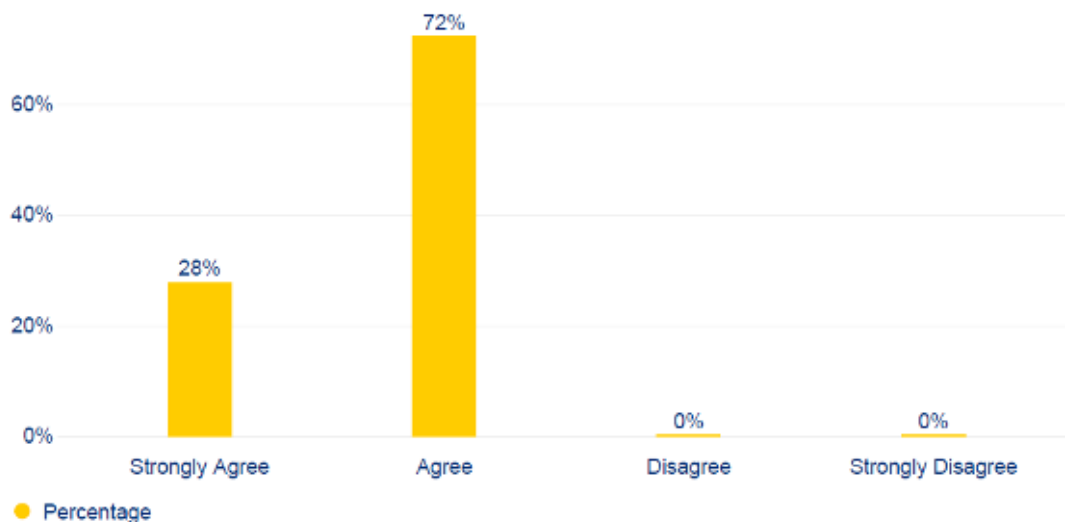
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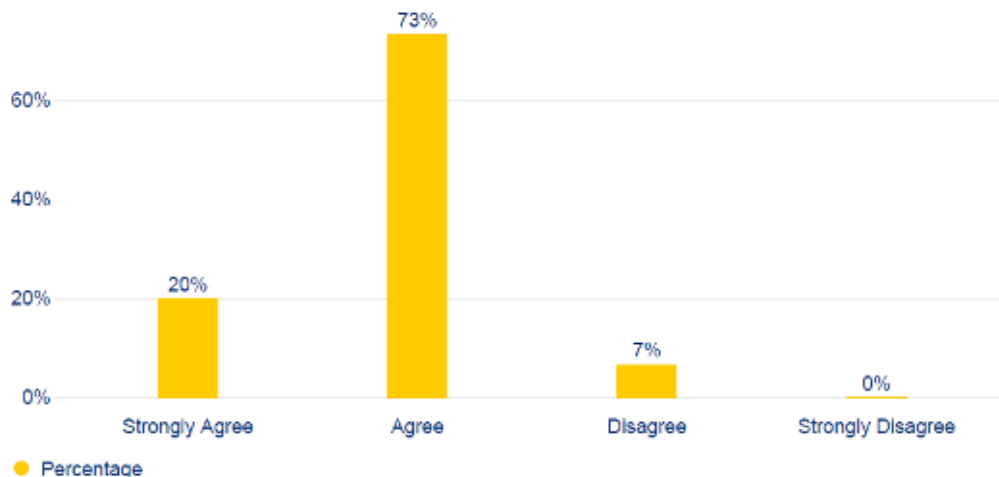
Which of the following best represents your experience of mental health problems?*



I feel my wellbeing has improved

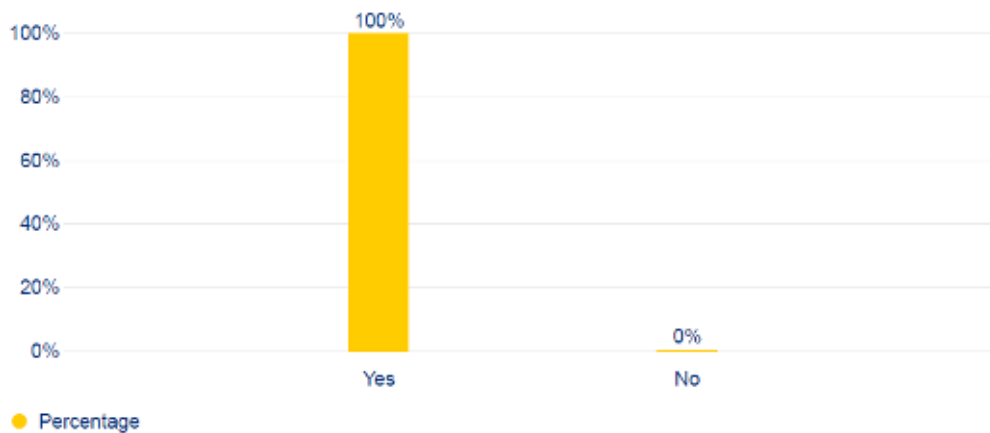


I feel my mood has improved





Would you recommend this service to a friend or family member experiencing problems with their mental health and wellbeing?



Well-Being Interventions (On-site)

The team had to stop all on-site interventions from March 2020, due to lockdown restrictions. When lockdown restrictions eased, the team were able to re-open for interventions, from November 2020 to December 2020 but sadly another lockdown occurred. Consequently, the team had to close to the public once more. Interventions re-opened again from mid-April 2021 at a reduced capacity.

With the majority of the charity year being in lockdown, the team have managed to support a total of 38 children and young people, delivering 228 hours of well-being interventions.

Beneficiary Details for Charity Year June 2020 to May 2021				
Male	Female	Non Binary	Aged 4 - 11	Aged 12 - 18
18 (47%)	19 (50%)	1 (3%)	25 (66%)	13 (34%)
Total 38 Children and Young People				



Needs Supported By Hugs Since 2017



The team are seeing increasing numbers of children and young people experiencing anxiety and trauma. Due to the pandemic, these individuals have been unable to access mainstream education, which has in turn, caused more issues with social isolation and attachment disorders. Referrals from multi agencies have significantly increased, which reflects the Governments added focus on the importance of mental health and well-being of children and young people. The referrals received are more complex including young people with a multitude of needs. For example, a young person who has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and has experienced trauma, which has led to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), attachment disorder and anxiety.

Eight individuals completed the 7 item Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) with 88% recording a meaningful positive change on their well-being.

Theme Identified Through Feedback	% Reporting Improvement
Felt calmer	90%
More confident	80%
Felt happier	90%
Better communication	80%
Improved focus	65%
Improved perseverance	65%
Learnt new skills	70%
Aware of emotions and able to regulate them better	70%

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Case Studies – names changed to protect our beneficiaries

James (13 years old)

After years of struggling with chronic anxiety, being unable to attend mainstream school and being failed by traditional strategies, James found Hugs. James has complex emotional difficulties. He is probably autistic, although is still awaiting a diagnosis. He struggles with social interactions and everyday activities and, following failed interventions by various agencies, he has serious trust issues with people, especially adults. He is also exploring his gender. He discovered a love of horses several years ago whilst on holiday on Exmoor. Shortly afterwards James deteriorated and entered a period where he was unable to leave the house, becoming isolated and fearful. In a bid to coax him out, he began having riding lessons, which he continues to do. Being around the horses is beneficial for him, but he still struggles with the busy environment of the stables and the expectations of formal lessons. He doesn't always feel able to attend. He is still unable to attend school. Hugs is different. His mum has noted that she can see positive changes in him following every session.

James struggles with communication and they generally travel to the sessions in silence, as he prefers this. When he comes out from his sessions he is always beaming. He'll get into the car and after a few moments he'll begin to tell his mum what he's been doing, what antics the animals have been up to (he loves Piglet as well as the horses), and what he's looking forward to next time. His mum struggles to get a word in edgewise! He is also beginning to open up about other things at home which is a huge leap forward for him.

His mum has commented "The sessions at Hugs are run by amazing staff who genuinely put the children at the heart of everything they do. There is no hidden agenda and no pressure on James. He is treated with respect and included in all decision making, allowing him to feel in control of the sessions. He trusts Nicki and Hazel and they are restoring his trust in adults. He is turning a corner, and even making tentative steps towards a return to school. Sadly, his initial sessions have come to an end, but he cannot wait to return later in the year. Thank you Hugs. Having tried every other avenue over the last four years, you were my last hope and you haven't disappointed. We still have a long road to travel, but I can finally see my son making progress."

Saskia (7 years old)

Saskia was referred to Hugs with Autism Spectrum Disorder and English as an additional language. She was finding it difficult in an educational setting and needed some support to improve her communication skills, lower anxiety, increase her independence and improve her confidence in different situations. Transitioning from different year groups was a trigger for Saskia, as her sensory needs created a barrier to accessing the additional support needed. Through attending Hugs provision, Saskia's speech and language improved and developed so that she was able to construct full sentences. The unique environment at Hugs, enabled her to find a sense of calm, allowing her to be able to think for herself more, rather than be in fight or flight mode (her usual state of mind when in school). Saskia's independence and confidence in different situations grew significantly, in particular, her trust with adults. Her

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listening skills improved and she was able to follow instructions to achieve tasks set. She always commented that she looked forward to coming to Hugs for every session and the team noted the joy on her face when here.

Ben (10 years old)

Ben tragically lost his brother to cancer. He has since struggled with school, stopped all hobbies and lost his enthusiasm and zest for life telling his parents that he wants to end his life. He was referred to Hugs with the aims of improving his mental well-being, finding some hope and happiness in life again and decreasing negative thoughts. The plan was to engage with the rescue animals as this was something that Ben had shown interest in. He also showed an interest in arts and crafts, making a Christmas present for his parents. The Hugs team worked to create a purpose in life and improve general well-being through feeling accomplished and self-satisfaction in completion of activities. Ben started to build more positive relationships with his family and friends through his interactions with animals. After his course of six sessions, he started to learn to acknowledge and cope with his emotions, reported feeling more confident and wanted to go to school. The anniversary of his brother's death was an especially hard time for Ben and so Hugs offered additional sessions to help continue this positive change, to build resilience and improve his mental health further. He is now engaged in full time education, gone back to his hobbies and is even entering his first skateboarding competition since his sibling's death.

