



**The Hugs Foundation
Youth Well-Being Impact Report
Charity Year 1st June 2021 to 31st May 2022**



The Hugs Foundation. Registered Charity Number: 1175633

Tel: 07539 916048 www.hugsfoundation.org.uk

Company Registered Address: Higher Whitley Farm, Helland Road, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 2NT



The Report

This report summarises the impact of the Youth Well-Being project, Hugs Helping Hands, for the charity year 1st June 2021 to 31st May 2022. Due to the impact on staffing and restrictions from the coronavirus pandemic, interventions have been at a reduced capacity from 150 (our usual annual capacity) to 89. However, after such huge demand, we are now in the process of recruiting another staff member to reach more children and young people in need.

Introduction

The Hugs Foundation is a horse rescue centre that also provides well-being support to children and young people, the elderly, military personnel and veterans. We provide a safe space for respite and healing to help service users to lead positive fulfilling lives through a range of holistic nature-based interventions at our horse rescue centre and farm. Our unique mix of support includes animal assisted services, therapeutic outdoor learning, ecotherapy, teambuilding, arts and crafts, nature walks, horticulture and practical skills.

Our animal rescues each have their own rehabilitation plan and many work alongside our service users. This creates a circular relationship where they both benefit from spending time together and caring for each other, generating opportunities for healing and growth, making a positive difference to both lives. Our registered charity (1175633) was founded in 2017. We cater for a huge range of complex 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, life's challenges, transitions from military to civilian life, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), trauma, adverse childhood experiences, self-harm, bereavements and those at risk of suicide.

We are one of the first organisations to be accepted onto the Human Equine Interaction Register UK (HEIR). There have been no regulations in the UK to protect both the service users that access organisations for support and the equines that work in therapeutic sessions, leaving both at risk of further harm. The register has been created to ensure all people involved in the field of human equine interactions operate credible, high quality, safe and ethical practice standards for their service provision. This is something we are incredibly proud to be part of.



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The Need

There has been a huge increase in children aged 5 to 16 being identified as having mental ill health, from 1 in 9 children in 2017 to 1 in 6 in 2020 and Accident and Emergency attendances by young people aged 18 or under, with a diagnosis of mental ill health, has more than tripled between 2010 and 2019 (NHS Digital, 2020). Mental health referrals for children aged 11 and under have increased by nearly 50% (BBC, July 2019). In a survey through Young Minds (2020) 80% of respondents said the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse. 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental ill health have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age. Hugs recognises the importance of early intervention and the urgency of reaching children to offer respite and put in place coping mechanisms and reduce their present and future distress.

In addition to these national statistics, our local community has a multitude of social and economic challenges and barriers due to being in one of the 10% most deprived areas in England (IoMD, 2019). This means there is very little support for young people in our community. Our demand for referrals has increased by over 50%. We even had a referral that stated there was a 36 month (3 years!) wait for a child in Cornwall to be assessed by a mental health professional. There is so little support for our young people and where there is help, it is either inaccessible, due to costs, ineffective or has overwhelming demand causing unreasonable waiting times, hence the need for alternative provisions, like Hugs.

Many of our young people find traditional talk therapy ineffective or difficult to access and worry about the possible stigma of needing this help. NHS CAMHS refers young people to Hugs's services as an additional support to their therapy, due to the positive impact it has. Hugs provides an alternative to talking therapy, enabling young people to begin to open up, process their challenges and start to discover coping mechanisms for a more positive future.



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The Project – Hugs Helping Hands

Our Hugs Helping Hands project supports an average of 150 young people each year (the last couple of years have been less due to coronavirus restrictions). The project has been developed and shaped over the last 5 years by our young people with lived experiences and experts in well-being, learning and development. This has provided a really effective, unique provision to continue delivering.

We aim to support recovery from trauma, improve resilience, teach coping mechanisms and build family bonds for lifelong impact. Working in a person led holistic way ensures our young people are the centre of their own recovery, allowing us to support the individual to find their own answers, giving them tools and mechanisms to keep the positive changes going once they have finished their time with us. It also enables different personalities and perspectives to be acknowledged and worked with, creating more sustainable results.

With overwhelming pressure on mental health services and many traditional talk therapies being ineffective or inappropriate for young people, our charity is helping fill a vital gap to support those in need. Our referrals evidence a huge range of needs including mental ill health, SEND, domestic abuse, substance abuse, self-harm, attempted suicide, bereavements, sexual exploitation and physical and emotional neglect. Our support is delivered as a course of 6 x 1 hour weekly sessions, with the option to extend if needed.



Partnership Working

The team has built up many partnerships over the years with organisations including schools, social workers, NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Cornwall Council, care homes (to help the senior citizens well-being and increase social inclusion), hospices (e.g., Little Harbour) and other charities (e.g., Cornwall One Parent Support). Working with other professionals and experts in the field creates a support network for service users, improving the outcomes achieved and positive long term impact on lives.

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Staff

The majority of the sessions are facilitated by our Youth Well-Being Manager, Hazel Ashman, with a TA, parent or carer also present. On occasions, she will work alongside an equine staff member for health and safety reasons. This means that there is another expert in the equine's behaviour and body language to ensure the equine is happy participating in the session and that the sessions remains as safe as possible for both the participant and the animals. Our equine staff all have years of experience working with equines and are all qualified in equine behaviour e.g., degree in Animal/Equine Science, Behaviour and Welfare. All our team hold Mental Health First Aid, First Aid and Safeguarding qualifications and all receive regular training to ensure they keep up to date with relevant legislation and best practice. Hazel herself has years of experience working with children and young people with additional needs and holds qualifications including a BTEC Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development, First Aid and Mental Health First Aid, Forest Based Activities, Trauma Informed Practice, Safeguarding Level 3 and she is our Designated Safeguarding Lead.



How Our Impact is Measured

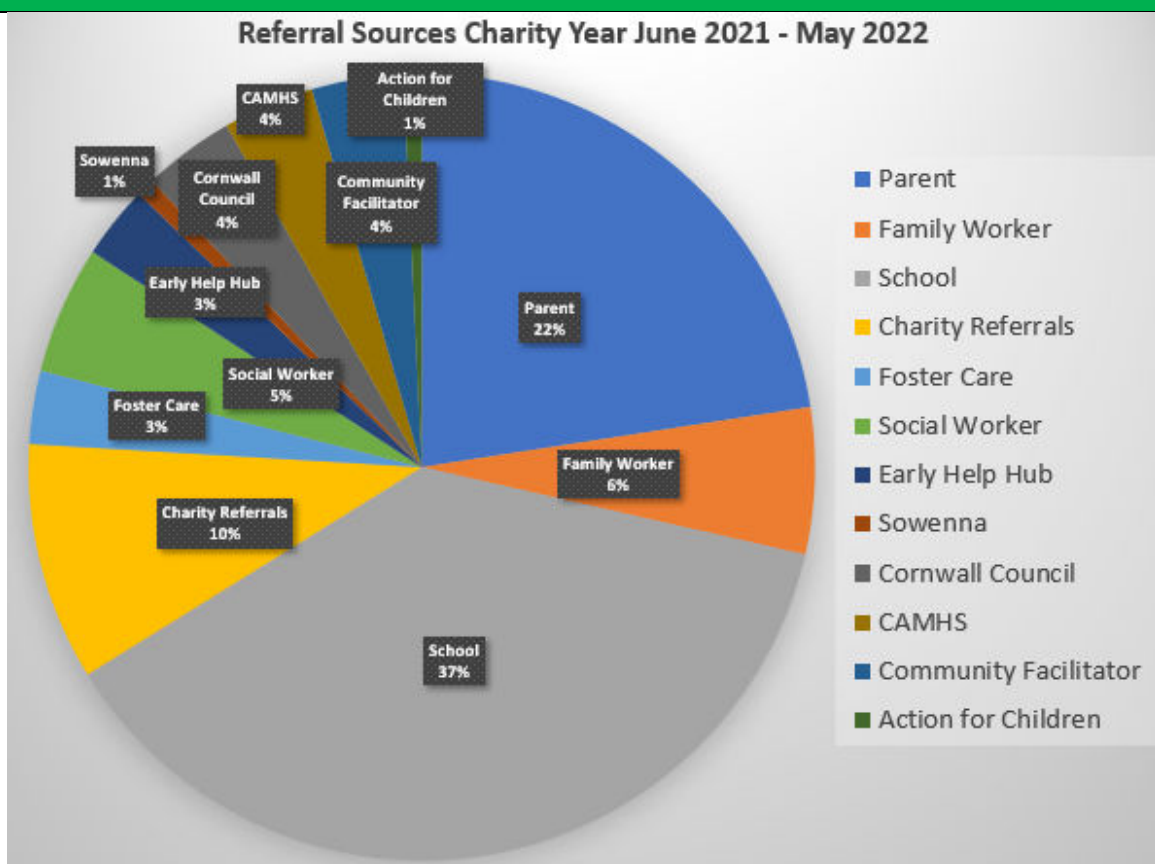
Every young person that attends Hugs is an individual, so recording outcomes through benchmarking is not appropriate as it can dishearten, and one person's achievement level can be hugely different to another. What we do is establish where the individual has progressed on their own journey at the beginning, end and throughout their course. We use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), a widely used scientific measurement for well-being, designed to record if there have been significant improvements in the individual's well-being. For younger children, we use age-appropriate scales, such as traffic light systems, to discover if a meaningful positive change has occurred over their course of well-being sessions. These methods provide us with quantitative data. We also use open questions through session feedback forms, interviews and questionnaires to allow us to delve further into each individual's experiences and to provide further insight into how our sessions have helped and how we can improve what we offer. This produces qualitative evidence and when paired with our quantitative data, ensures that our project is truly making a difference to lives. In addition, we go out into our local community and visit other service providers and professionals to research and compare our services and ensure what we offer is both needed and as effective as possible to help those in need.

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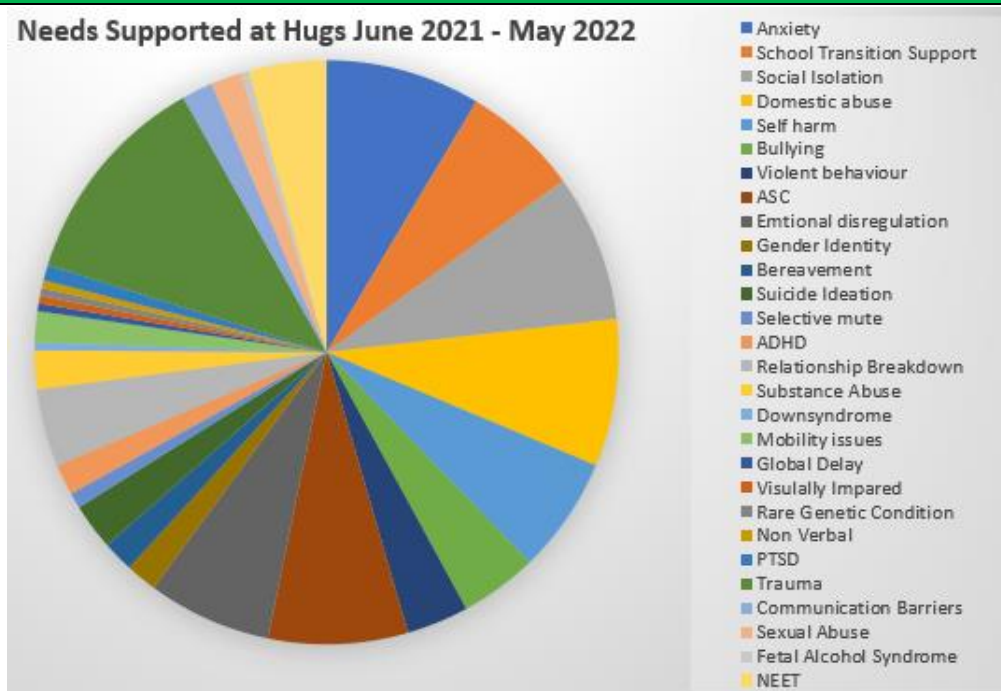
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Referrals



Needs Supported





The Impact

From 2017 to May 2021, the team has helped over 488 individuals and conducted over 5228 hours of sessions. In this charity year, we have reached **89** children and young people through **595** hours of sessions. This brings our total number of individual children and young people supported to **577**. This doesn't include the educational animal care and human well-being visits undertaken in schools.

Our project is evidencing a positive increase in health and well-being, social inclusion, life skills and optimism for our young people. The long term impact of this project is contributing to more successful futures, including reintegration and accomplishment in education, leading to employment and positive community values. The project is enabling service users to access help and support in a timely manner, instead of waiting months for help or treatment.

Beneficiary Details for Charity Year June 2021 to May 2022					
Male	Female	Non Binary	Transgender	Aged 4 - 11	Aged 12 - 18
47 (53%)	37 (42%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	52 (58%)	37 (42%)
Total 89 Children and Young People					

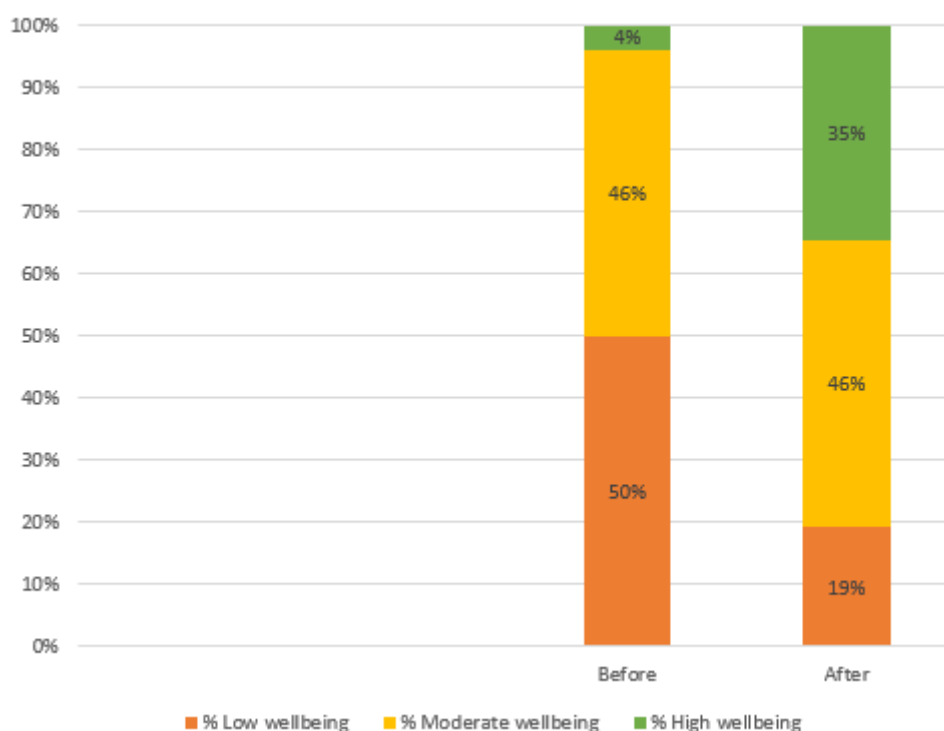
Our feedback forms are completed on a voluntary basis as for some service users compulsory completion may expose them to additional pressure and we have found that this can be a barrier and cause a service user to shut down. In addition, some service users have such complex needs that completing the form is impossible or their needs are such that the form would not provide for accurate data. Some service users just do not wish to complete the form and we respect their wishes. We do try to encourage a verbal quote at least, to see if we have made a positive difference to them and gather feedback from the parent or carer that attends sessions with them. Of the 89 service users, 37 (42%) completed a feedback form.

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

Twenty six individuals completed the 7 item Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) with **85%** recording a positive change in their well-being. Across the six questions there is an average improvement score of 0.90. When using the Wilcoxon Sum Ranking test this produces a p value of **<0.05** which supports our hypothesis that significant positive change is attributable to our AAS intervention. Of the three individuals that showed a slight decrease, there were known external variables that the service users/carers/parent stated contributed to these scores.



Proportions of wellbeing before & after intervention



Individual WEMWBS Statements (n = 26)	% Reporting Improvement
Feeling Optimistic About the Future	66%
Feeling Useful	73%
Feeling Relaxed	65%
Able to Deal with Problems Well	62%
Able to Think Clearly	73%
Feeling Close to People (Improved Social Inclusion & Relationships)	58%
Able to Make Mind Up About Things (Make Decisions Clearly)	65%

Traffic Light Feedback Form

Eleven service users completed the traffic light feedback form. **91%** reported an increase in their well-being with one service user scoring the same before and after their Hugs sessions.

Theme Identified Through Feedback (n = 11)	% Reporting Improvement
Felt Calmer	100%
Increased Confidence	73%
Reduced Anxiety	55%
Increased Happiness	91%
Better Communication	55%
Increased Social Inclusion	91%
Improved Focus	82%

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From additional analysis we found trends in:

- Reduced suicide ideation and self-harm
- Improved physical, emotional, social and mental well-being
- Improved confidence and knowledge for parents/carers to recognise mental health issues in young people and knowing how/where to access additional support
- Improved access and work between professionals to support young people e.g., Hugs support created more positive treatment developments with services such as NHS CAMHS
- Improved ability to control, cope with and grow from life's challenges

Case Studies

"My daughter Penny attended The Hugs Foundations recently and she absolutely loved it there. Hazel the Youth Well-Being Manager was wonderful with her. Penny is non-verbal, visually impaired and unable to stand independently. Hazel adapted the sessions to suit Penny perfectly offering time with the various animals and sensory sessions too. Our sessions at Hugs were definitely the highlight of our week. Seeing Penny laughing, dancing and even making animal sounds to express her enjoyment was just incredible. Thank you to Hazel and everyone at Hugs for making this possible." From Penny's mum.



"Daisy completed her 6-week course with Hugs and what a difference it made! Daisy had a very difficult year last year, the one thing that she loves in life the most (horses), was taken away from her very abruptly. She was on an equine diploma course and doing really well, but sadly her neck condition deteriorated very quickly resulting in major spinal surgery, numerous hospital stays and life for Daisy coming to a standstill. Daisy's wellbeing changed dramatically, her mood was very low, she didn't want to go out and she became very quiet, which concerned me greatly. She lost interest in everything.

Then I discovered The Hugs Foundation and after just one session there Daisy blossomed, she started to smile again, chatting about the ponies and the wonderful staff. Each week she came

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home, I could see that I was getting the old Daisy back. All the hard work the staff and the animals put in at the Hugs (or Huggles as Daisy calls it) has made a real difference and I can't thank you all enough. You do an amazing job and long may this continue so that other young people can benefit like Daisy has, thank you again." From Daisy's mum.



Video Case Studies

Here's some behind the scenes footage of the well-being work that goes on here at Hugs. Meet our amazing Youth Well-Being Manager Hazel and one of our service users and his mum describing their experience here and the difference Hugs has made.

<https://youtu.be/A6noyft-fM>

One of our service user's parents has created a short video documenting some of their sessions that have taken place at Hugs. <https://youtu.be/wUk5JCRj1BY>

Feedback from Service Users

"I feel calm with the animals. Animals need me to be calm so they are calm."

"I feel more confident."

"I have learnt how to keep animals safe."

"My feelings have changed since coming here, I feel calmer because of the animals."

"Hugs has helped me feel more confident and has helped me to work as part of a team and communicate with more than one person."

Feedback from Parents

"We have had an awesome time at Hugs and Hazel is amazing, we've loved every minute."

"I think it has been brilliant, he has opened up each time. He has been relaxed more confident and is more willing to help out at home."

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★★★★★ 11 hours ago

My Son attended hugs and I have to say it was amazing. I saw my son grow and become more confident with each session he attended. Hazel the Youth Services Manager is such a wonderful person she was so good with my son and knew exactly how to communicate with him and encourage him to carry out the activities. I thoroughly recommend Hugs Foundation, they are doing a fantastic job for the well-being of children, adults and the welfare of animals.

Thank you Hugs

Feedback from Professionals

"Having just finished six sessions at Hugs, I wanted to let you know what a profound difference I witnessed in the two young people who attended. Both young people had been struggling with their social interactions and the demands of the curriculum at school. This behaviour showed itself in a number of ways including: shouting out; being unable to sit still in class long enough to engage in learning; fighting with peers and being very negative about themselves.

On arriving at Hugs, the young people met Hazel and her quiet but confident and informative manner had them both quickly engaging with her. Not only did she have fun with them, but she was very considerate of their personal life experiences and she made sure she took the time not to pressure them into situations they were unsure of, encouraging them to take things at their own pace. I was truly dumbstruck how both the young people's behaviour and demeanour changed when around the animals (particularly Igor the pony who was so gentle with them both.) I have never seen the young people so calm and engaged as when they were allowed to groom and care for this sweet pony. A particular favourite activity the young people did enjoy was to go "Newt Hunting". One young person spent over 10 minutes trying to count as many newts as he could see. I have never before seen them so concentrated on any task. Hazel gave the young person the nickname of "Newt Hunter"- a name he is still very proud of and still uses.

For the young people to have learnt so many new things that their peers at school have not, has given their confidence a huge boost and the experience has given them something to talk about with others. This has allowed the young people a stronger relationship with their peers back at school. Hugs yard itself is spotlessly clean and the animals are without exception beautifully cared for. Thank you for giving the young people this opportunity." Feedback from the Progress and Engagement Guide (Thrive) and Deputy Safeguarding Lead at Hillfort School.

"It was obvious to myself and mum that after my young person's first sessions at Hugs he gained significant benefit, presenting calmer and more regulated. After the sessions at Hugs my young person has decided he would now like to explore post 16 education in animal care." Feedback from a CAMHS Professional.

"Hazel has a real natural ability with young people to make them feel at ease and supported, I know that the child has gained so much from her time here as have the support staff." Feedback from a Support Worker.

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Other Services Provided

School Visits

In addition to the Hugs Helping Hands project, the team also do school visits to educate in animal welfare and human well-being. We have supported over 150 school children in this charity year.



Care Home Well-Being Visits

We have undertaken 12 care home visits in the local community (we usually do 1-2 visits per month) with our therapeutic rescue ponies. The project is a huge success with lovely feedback including “our resident began to eat again after meeting Dude” and many return visits booked. Our visits incorporate animal interactions which include talking about well-being for both animals and humans. These visits lower blood pressure, increase ‘feel good’ endorphins, reducing stress and anxiety.



Military Personnel & Veterans Well-Being – Pilot Project

Our Herds Ahead Veteran’s Well-Being Pilot Project ran this year in partnership with Veterans Outdoors. The project delivered monthly programmes of equine assisted services and outdoor activities with 5 veterans who were experiencing mental ill health, PTSD, social isolation and problems transitioning to civilian life, all of which, were exacerbated due to the pandemic. Sessions took place in small groups, led by a Hugs project manager, equine specialist and civilian mentor and supported by Veterans Outdoors welfare staff. The programme was designed with tasks/obstacles for the veterans to overcome so they could share their experiences with each other and the professional team. Wrapped around these sessions, veterans also took part in other outdoor activities including developing a sensory garden, helping to paint or maintain areas of the yard and stables and assisting in the preparation of the site ahead of open days and events, which also helped disadvantaged children in the community who attend Hugs well-being interventions. This created a sense of purpose and community for the veterans and helped promote positive teamwork. We had incredibly positive feedback and are looking into developing this into a full project.



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Animal Rescue

We have rescued 41 horses and ponies (and a donkey), a number of chickens and a pig who is now fondly named Piglet and is a hugely popular with our service users. We have rehomed 33 horses and ponies. This now brings the total amount of equines rescued since Hugs opened in 2017 to 162 and 108 rehomed.



HUGS FIGURES FOR
CHARITY YEAR
1ST JUNE 2021
TO
31ST MAY 2022

41 HORSES & PONIES
RESCUED & 33
REHOMED

A TOTAL OF OVER 200
ANIMALS RESCUED &
110 REHOMED SINCE
OPENING IN 2017



595 HOURS OF
WELL-BEING
INTERVENTIONS, HELPING
89 CHILDREN/YOUNG
PEOPLE

A TOTAL OF 5823 HOURS &
577 CHILDREN/YOUNG
PEOPLE SUPPORTED SINCE
OPENING IN 2017



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Thank You to These Amazing Funders Who Have Supported Our Youth Well-Being Project



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