TheHorseCourse 'ReStart'
– *examination of an initial data set*

Presented at **The Royal College of Psychiatrists** *Faculty of General Adult Psychiatry Annual Conference 2018*

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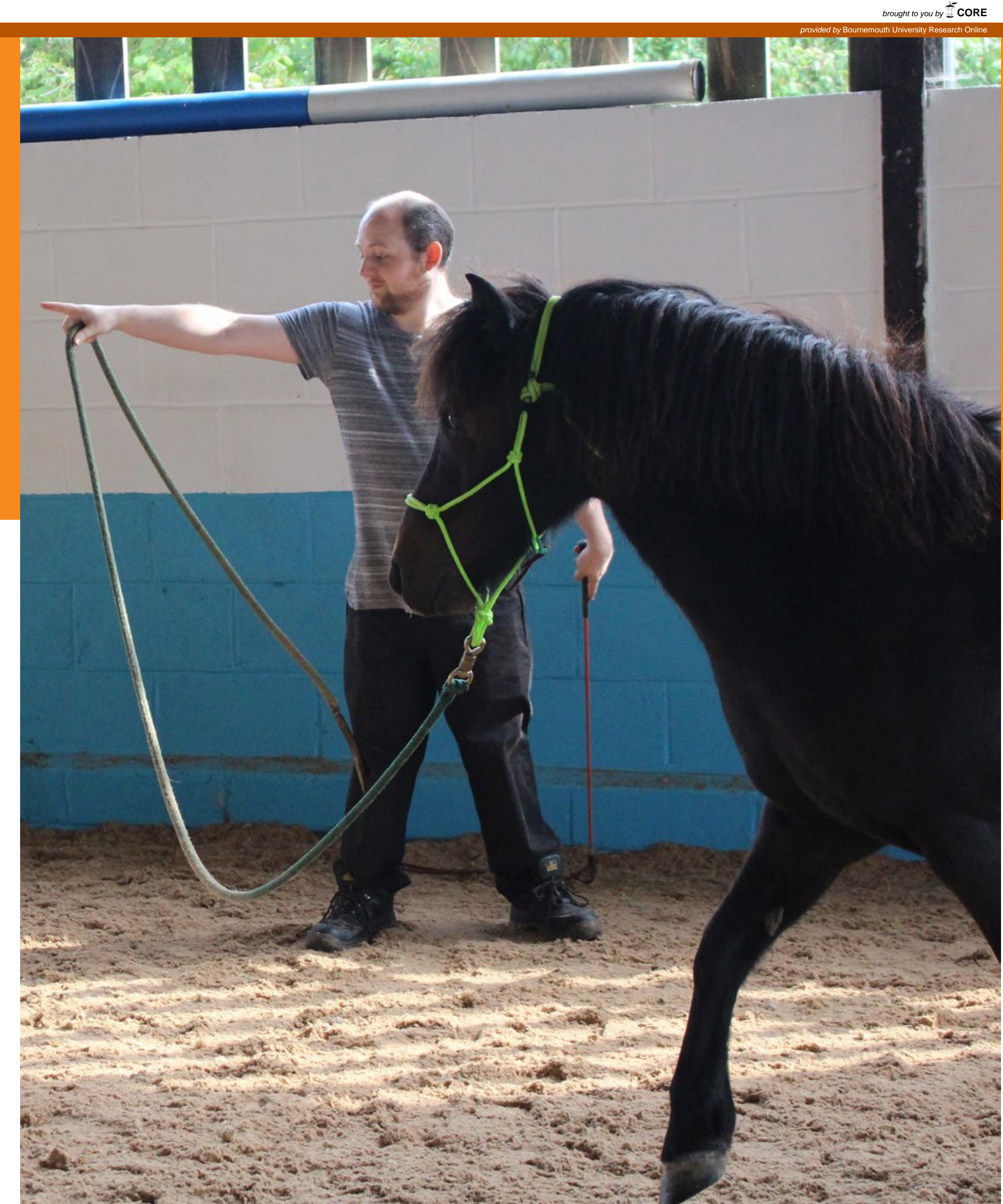
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS

Large numbers of people with non-psychotic mental health problems have little benefit from usual interventions. We present initial, uncontrolled data on the efficacy of an equine-assisted programme across a number of domains for people with a range of psychological and behavioural problems who have had no or inadequate benefit from traditional approaches.

BACKGROUND

TheHorseCourse ReStart is an equine-assisted one-to-one intensive 5-day programme aimed at improving skills related to personal functioning in hard to reach or treat individuals with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is offered by TheHorseCourse, a registered charity based in Weymouth. Referrals to the programme come from CAMHS, adult mental health services, schools & PRUs, YOTs, Children's Services (EIS to LAC), D&A treatment agencies and domestic abuse support specialists. The study group was characterised by high resistance to usual treatments, as determined by the referring agency.

METHODS

Data was collected on all 126 people referred to TheHorseCourse in 2014-2016 using TheHorseCourse Skills Star tool. This is an 8 dimensional tool measuring various aspects of self-efficacy and sense of personal agency, assessed by the referring professional. This paper presents outline analysis of data collected pre- and 2 months post- intervention. This population has a high degree of heterogeneity with regard to age (8 to adult) and identified problem. The intervention and assessment are deliberately not diagnosis focused. Analysis was carried out by Bournemouth University.

NUMBER CHANGED, 2 mths post: in 8 dimensions, how many participants improved = stayed the same = got worse = on a 0–4 scale
Paired sample sign test: n=126, Statistical significance p<0.001 (for each dimension)

AMOUNT OF CHANGE, 2 mths post
Worse n=13   Minimal n=22   Better n=91
score change (summed scores for all 8 dimensions, 0-32 scale)

TheHorseCourse
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RESULTS

Improvement was recorded in 81% of participants, deterioration in 13% and minimal change in 6%: the average positive shift was +10.4 points for those that improved, on a scale of 0-32. Results per dimension are shown in the figures above. Statistically significant results (p=0.001).

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence to date for the effectiveness of this intervention is striking and the potential benefits are so important that an RCT or other large scale controlled evaluation is clearly appropriate.

IMPACT
Positive shifters %   Average gain for positive shifters
81%   +10.4 points on 0–32 scale