

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

by

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## **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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