



National Lottery Community Fund Project Evaluation Report

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People & Animals

Promoting Animal-Assisted therapies for mutual well-being



Executive summary

Background and Overview

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of a programme of work funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered by People and Animals, a Community Interest Company that promotes Animal-Assisted Therapies (AAT) for mutual well-being. AAT involves fostering interactions between individuals and trained animals to aid in the treatment of physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. Research on AAT has shown benefits across various populations and settings, including improved cardiovascular health, reduced pain perception, and enhanced cognitive functioning, particularly in individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. AAT has also been effective in educational settings, enhancing learning and motivation among children, particularly those with learning disabilities. In the field of mental health, AAT has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms while enhancing social interaction and reducing feelings of loneliness. In doing so it addresses a range of key agendas, including the Core20PLUS5, an approach from NHS England to address clinical need in the most 20% of the population living in areas with the highest deprivation.

People and Animals UK

People & Animals UK is a Community Interest Company (C.I.C.) established in 2015, who seek to support and enhance the physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals and the wider community, through animal-assisted therapy and nature-based provision. As part of this provision People & Animals UK has developed a successful large-scale community project, with the creation of a sustainable community farm facility known as Wisbech Community Farm.

People & Animals' mission is to enable all individuals to live healthy, independent lives, enhancing physical, emotional and social well-being to improve peoples' life chances, and offer opportunities for the wider community to reconnect, become more resilient, with a ripple effect of raised aspirations across generations.

Their educational initiatives incorporate animal interactions to enhance learning experiences for children and young people, whilst their community support programmes more widely aim to create inclusive environments benefiting everyone from the presence of animals, fostering social interaction, and providing volunteer opportunities.

National Lottery Community Fund Funding

In 2022, People and Animals UK received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to build upon their European Social Funded Community Skills Swap & Share community development programme, creating an annual timetable of events at the community farm for adults to progress beyond sharing their skills to gaining accredited vocational training opportunities as a pathway to further connectivity with their community, access to formal further education and training, and employment. The work also directly addressed the UK Government Core 20 Plus 5

Events run with the Lottery funding included engagement days, a re-wilding area development to improve biodiversity, heritage skill-sharing, a community enterprise

project, an employability programme for adult clients, emotional resilience and independent living skill development, and volunteer and peer mentor nurturing.

The successful delivery of this programme involved collaboration with many partner organisations, with an organisational 'Theory of Change' driving all activities, building on people's strengths to deliver sustainable services and community connection from idea to delivery. This is presented as in illustration later in the report.

Programme Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation uses a multi-method approach, focusing primarily on qualitative evaluation. Quantitative analysis aimed to measure the effect of the programme on outcomes highlighted in the theory of change, while qualitative analysis explored how and why changes occurred, focusing on unique components such as outdoor skills-based activities, therapeutic support from animals, and growing skills development.

The evaluation was timed to capture progress towards key milestones, with a phased delivery approach starting in September 2022 and concluding in July 2024. Data collection was supported by People and Animals UK volunteers and staff, and the evaluation captured both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic assessment of the intervention.

Formative evaluation, conducted early during programme implementation, was used to understand the design and delivery of a programme. People and Animals had already developed a high-level Theory of Change, which was expanded with detailed logic models to guide this evaluation. The models depicted the activities and outcomes of the organisation overall and specifically for the National Lottery-funded work, showing the sequence of events expected to create change.

Summative evaluation was used to measure the overall effectiveness and impact of the programme. The multi-method approach included both qualitative and quantitative components. Quantitative analysis measured outcomes identified in the logic modelling exercise, focusing on participants engaging with the organisation and using validated measures in a specially developed outcomes capture tool. The qualitative evaluation gathered detailed information from a sample of participants and stakeholders through interviews and focus groups.

Key Findings

Forty-nine service users completed the outcomes capture tool, with 22 follow-ups matched to baseline surveys. Improvements in social connectedness were observed although the most notable significant change was an increase in the frequency of contact with a doctor, highlighting the complexity of evaluating such interventions. Although changes in other outcomes such as self-esteem, and emotional resilience were measured, often the direction was not as expected and resulted in inconclusive mixed quantitative findings.

The qualitative evaluation revealed several key themes that suggest the strong impact of the Lottery funding on participants, volunteers, staff, and stakeholders including local government officials, commercial partners and health and social care professionals. These were:

Pathways to engagement: Participants often discovered People and Animals through informal recommendations from friends, family, or acquaintances. Personal networks played a significant role in engaging new members. For instance, some individuals found out about the farm through casual conversations or referrals from local community centres. Others stumbled upon the organisation serendipitously, often while driving past the farm or seeing posts on social media. These chance encounters piqued their interest, leading them to explore the farm further and ultimately become involved.

Formal referrals from institutions such as educational bodies or job centres also contributed to engagement. These pathways were particularly beneficial for individuals seeking therapeutic or rehabilitative activities or looking for vocational training opportunities. Personal motivations and interests, especially a passion for animals and a desire to contribute to the community, were strong motivators for joining. Many participants were drawn to the farm's unique combination of animal interaction and community-focused activities. The immediate sense of belonging and engagement they felt upon their first visit often reinforced their commitment to staying involved.

Supporting mental health: The farm's supportive and non-judgemental environment was found to be crucial for mental health management. Participants highlighted the relaxed atmosphere where they could be themselves without the pressures found in traditional settings. This supportive atmosphere allowed individuals to engage at their own pace, which was particularly important for those dealing with mental health issues. The empathetic and understanding nature of the staff was frequently mentioned as a key factor in making participants feel safe and supported.

The structure and routine provided by the farm's activities played a significant role in managing mental health. Regular engagement in meaningful tasks helped mitigate feelings of aimlessness and depression. Participants appreciated having a reason to get out of the house and interact with others, which provided a vital boost to their mental wellbeing. The farm's activities were designed to build confidence and self-esteem through tangible achievements and positive reinforcement. Many participants experienced a sense of accomplishment and self-worth as they completed tasks and contributed to the farm's operations.

Fostering community support: The strong sense of community and social support at the farm further enhanced mental wellbeing. The farm fostered a sense of belonging and mutual support, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. This was particularly beneficial for individuals who had previously struggled with social connections. The organisation's tailored activities addressed specific mental health needs, such as sessions designed for individuals with dementia or autism. These tailored interventions provided participants with a creative outlet and a supportive community, helping them cope with their conditions.

Flexibility and personalisation were key strengths of the programme delivered by People and Animals. The organisation allowed participants to choose activities that suited their interests and abilities, ensuring everyone could engage in a way that was beneficial for their mental health. Tailored therapeutic interventions, such as animal-assisted therapy, provided significant mental health benefits. Participants reported that interactions with animals reduced stress, improved mood, and provided comfort and companionship.

The farm acted as a hub for community engagement and support, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual assistance. Volunteering opportunities enabled individuals to contribute to the community while gaining personal benefits, such as improved self-esteem and social skills. The farm's activities promoted social cohesion, breaking down barriers between different community groups and fostering inclusive interactions. This sense of community support was particularly important for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

Developing skills and confidence: Participants gained practical skills through various farm activities, enhancing their employability and personal development. The farm offered educational initiatives, such as horticulture courses, which provided valuable learning opportunities and qualifications. These initiatives helped participants develop new skills, build confidence, and prepare for future employment. The farm's environment also encouraged personal growth, enabling individuals to overcome personal challenges and build resilience. Many participants reported significant improvements in their confidence and self-esteem as they took on new responsibilities and achieved personal milestones.

Broader impact on stakeholders and the community: The farm's programmes had a positive impact on wider stakeholders, including local businesses, educational institutions, and healthcare providers. By fostering partnerships and collaborative initiatives, People and Animals were felt to contribute to the local economy and supported local enterprises. The wider community benefited from the farm's activities through increased social interaction, improved mental health, and a stronger sense of community. The farm's role in promoting social cohesion and community support was widely recognised and appreciated by stakeholders.

People and Animals also faced several organisational challenges, including funding limitations and logistical issues. Strategic planning and resource management were essential to overcoming these challenges. Developing facilitators, such as partnerships with local organisations and continuous staff and volunteer development, helped enhance the organisation's capacity to deliver its programmes effectively. The organisation's commitment to building strong community ties and fostering collaborative relationships was also crucial in addressing these challenges and ensuring the sustainability of its programmes.

Conclusion

The evaluation findings underscore the transformative impact of People and Animals lottery funded programme on participants' mental health, wellbeing, and social connectedness. The combination of animal-assisted therapy, structured activities, and a supportive community environment was found to create a powerful framework for personal and social transformation.

Findings also suggested that the organisation's approach, integrating therapeutic and educational initiatives with community support, was a strong model for fostering resilience, reducing social isolation, and enhancing life satisfaction in vulnerable populations. The evaluation demonstrates the significant positive impacts of the programme, highlighting the importance of supportive, flexible, and personalised interventions in community settings.

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1.0 Background and overview

1.1 Evidence on the health and wellbeing benefits of animal therapy

Animal therapy, also known as Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT), involves interactions between individuals and trained animals to aid in the treatment of physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. Research on AAT has shown a variety of benefits across different populations and settings. Physical benefits include improved cardiovascular health whereby studies have shown that interacting with animals can lead to reductions in blood pressure and heart rate. For example, as long ago as 1980, Friedmann and colleagues evidence found that pet ownership was associated with improved patient survival after discharge from a coronary care unit¹. AAT has also been shown to be effective in the management of pain, reducing pain perception and the need for pain medication. For example, Sobo et al. reported that children who received AAT during their hospital stay required less pain medication and experienced a significant reduction in pain levels².

Engagement in AAT has been shown to bring a range of cognitive benefits. The therapy has been associated with improvements in cognitive functioning in individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. A systematic review found evidence that AAT activities and interventions were associated with a strong positive effect on social behaviours, physical activity, and dietary intake in dementia patients and a positive effect on agitation/aggression and quality of life³. In educational settings, AAT has also been found to enhance learning and motivation among children, particularly those with learning disabilities. For example, a review by O'Haire found consistent evidence that autistic children who took part in AAT showed improved levels of social interaction with others post-therapy⁴.

Perhaps the strongest evidence on the health benefits of AAT comes from the field of mental health. There is good data to suggest that AAT can lead to stress and anxiety reduction. This may in part be because interaction with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. A systematic review by Komioka and colleagues found that AAT significantly reduced anxiety symptoms in various populations, including individuals with psychiatric disorders⁵. Animal therapy has also been linked to improved mood and a reduction in depressive symptoms. For instance, a recent systematic review by Pandey and colleagues showed evidence that AAT programmes led to significant improvements in mood and reductions in depression

¹ Friedmann et al. (1980). Animal companions and one-year survival of patients after discharge from a coronary care unit. *American Journal of Cardiology*, 86(1), 80-83.

² Sobo et al (2006). Canine visitation (pet) therapy: Pilot data on decreases in child pain perception. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 32(3), 206-208.

³ Yakimicki et al (2019). Animal-Assisted Intervention and Dementia: A Systematic Review. *Clinical Nursing Research*, 28(1), 9-29.

⁴ O'Haire M. Research on animal-assisted intervention and autism spectrum disorder, 2012-2015 (2017). *Applied Developmental Science*, 21(3):200-216.

⁵ Kamioka et al (2014). Effectiveness of animal-assisted therapy: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *BMC Psychiatry*, 14(1), 207.

among participants⁶. AAT can also enhance social interaction and reduce feelings of loneliness, especially in younger and older populations. Banks et al. found that elderly residents in long-term care facilities who participated in AAT programmes experienced greater social interaction and reduced feelings of isolation⁷. In addition, there is evidence that animals can provide emotional support and comfort, helping individuals cope with trauma and emotional distress; a systematic review by O’Haire and colleagues showed that military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who engaged in AAT reported feeling more comfortable and supported⁸.

1.2 People and Animals UK

People & Animals UK is a Community Interest Company (C.I.C.) established in 2015, who seek to support and enhance the physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals and the wider community, through animal-assisted therapy and nature-based provision. As part of this provision People & Animals UK has developed a successful large-scale community project, with the creation of a sustainable community farm facility known as Wisbech Community Farm.

People & Animals harnesses the non-threatening appeal of animals and nature-based activities to overcome barriers faced regardless of physical or learning disability, mental health challenges, age, gender, culture, economic status, or background. Core aims include raising aspirations, increasing self-esteem, enhancing identity and opportunities for those most vulnerable, connecting community support to reduce impact on statutory services, providing life skill development for improved access to education and employment, lowering levels of social isolation and social anxiety, delivering improved community cohesion in segregated neighbourhoods, changing attitudes towards minority communities, and increasing the sense of community pride, ownership and active citizenship.

The organisation works in a collaborative way, and are dedicated to promoting therapeutic interaction between people, animals, and the natural environment. Their core values are:

- Creating opportunities for excluded and vulnerable people in the rural community to engage in and celebrate our cultural assets.
- Supporting local health and wellbeing initiatives to combat loneliness and isolation.

⁶ Pandey et al (2024). The Role of Animal-Assisted Therapy in Enhancing Patients' Well-Being: Systematic Study of the Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence. *JMIRx Med. Art.* e51787.

⁷ Banks et al (2002). The effects of animal-assisted therapy on loneliness in an elderly population in long-term care facilities. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 28(6), 36-43.

⁸ O’Haire et al (2015). Animal-assisted intervention for trauma: A systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, Art. 1121.

- Supporting coordinated community action in economically marginalised and isolated communities, driving social change through asset-based community development.

The achieve their values through a variety of programmes and activities designed to cater to different needs within the community. These programmes can be broadly categorised into:

Therapeutic programmes: Including animal-assisted therapy (AAT) sessions that are tailored to support mental health and wellbeing. These sessions are delivered for individuals suffering from various conditions, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and dementia.

Education initiatives: These incorporate animal interactions to enhance learning experiences for children and young people who may struggle in traditional educational settings. These include animal-assisted education programmes that integrate animal interactions into the learning process, making education more engaging and effective for children and young people, and adult learning programmes that are designed to provide lifelong learning opportunities using animal interactions to facilitate personal development and skill acquisition.

Community support services: These aim to create inclusive environments where everyone can benefit from the presence of animals. They provide opportunities for volunteering, social interaction, and community building, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. This sense of community is particularly beneficial for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and those experiencing social isolation.

The organisation offers various volunteer roles that allow community members to contribute to their programmes and experience the benefits of working with animals. These are centred around their Wisbech Community Farm in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The work of the organisation addresses a number of health and care agendas of national importance. These include for example the Core20PLUS5, an NHS England approach to support the reduction of health and care inequalities at both the national and system levels⁹ The approach aims to address inequalities experienced amongst adults living within the 20% most deprived areas in England, many of which fall within the populations covered by the work of People and Animals, including the organisational hometown of Wisbech. The Core20PLUS5 approach also focusses on those who are socially excluded – a core target group of the organisation and covers mental illness as one of the key health outcomes targeted.

1.3 National Lottery Community Fund funding

As a not-for-profit community organisation, fundraising events and campaigns play a crucial role in securing the necessary resources to continue the work of People and Animals UK. They rely on funding from various sources to sustain their programmes and

⁹ NHS England – Core20PLUS5 – an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities. Accessed at: [NHS England » Core20PLUS5 \(adults\) – an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities](#)

services including ESF, the National Grid, Children in Need, Clarion Futures as well as commissioned work from Norfolk and Suffolk County Council.

Activities of the National Lottery funded project include:

- Engagement days to tour the animals present on site and enjoy the surroundings amongst neighbours
- Helping to build and sustain a re-wilding area to improve biodiversity and the understanding of our natural world, and develop our approaches to conservation
- Sharing and learning heritage skills whilst enhancing an existing orchard space
- Inputting and working with local people to lead the delivery of a community enterprise project whereby the young people and adults working with the organisation would be able to plan, create, develop, and sell the products crafted in the local Community Hub, one of the many local partnering organisations
- Gaining confidence to then build upon the organisational employability programme for adult clients by developing both their vocational and functional skills in English and Maths and a practical hub for evidencing skills and gaining employment
- Developing emotional resilience and independent living skills specifically amongst their most vulnerable and hard-to-reach members of the local community
- Nurturing, developing, and retaining their volunteers and peer mentors to ensure they have a highly skilled and flexible community team to sustain and grow past project delivery

The development of the community support programme with this funding application was underpinned by evidence on the health and wellbeing benefits associated with community support activities. For example, engaging in community support activities can reduce stress and anxiety levels and there is evidence that mechanisms such as social interaction and support from community members help individuals cope better during difficult times¹⁰ whilst community volunteers and associated peer support has been associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and reduced symptoms of depression¹¹. There is also evidence that active participation in these activities strengthens bonds between individuals, enhances mutual support, and creates a sense of belonging and purpose among community members¹², giving individuals a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life, contributing to overall happiness and life satisfaction¹³.

It was recognised at an early stage that the successful delivery of the programme of work set out in the National Lottery funding application would involve collaboration with many partner organisations. Key to all the work would be the involvement of people and communities throughout and an organisational 'Theory of Change' driving all

¹⁰ Kawachi et al (2001) Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 78(3):458-67.

¹¹ Jenkinson (2013) Is volunteering a public health intervention? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the health and survival of volunteers. *BMC Public Health*, 13, 773

¹² Poortinga (2012) Community resilience and health: the role of bonding, bridging, and linking aspects of social capital. *Health & Place*, 18(2), 286-295

¹³ McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2010). *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

programmes, building on people’s strengths to deliver sustainable services and connection with the community from idea to delivery. As well as considering the impact of the activities on those working or volunteering at the farm, this evaluation also captured the role of these stakeholders in the delivery of the programme.

As of July 2024, the time this report was finalised, the Lottery funded activities had engaged over 300 local people taking part in activities and volunteering opportunities at the farm. Courses that had been put on included those covering construction, peer mentoring, gardening, animal care, land-based studies, and independent living, as well as City & Guilds (an educational institute and awarding body in the UK) courses on gardening and conservation. In addition courses covering functional skills in Maths and English were being run. People and Animals had also expanded their network of partner organisations and were working with over 30 referring local organisations across the private, statutory, and VSCE (voluntary services) sectors.

As an illustrative example, Table 1 overleaf provides an overview of the type of participants reached through the lottery funded ‘Enabling Growth Outdoors’ programme run by People and Animals. Along with the evidence of need that was used to target the different groups.

Table 1: Profile of target participants for the Enabling Growth Outdoors programme

Characteristics of people supported by the programme	Evidence of need summary
Physical disability (multiple and profound visual, hearing, mobility, life limiting illnesses)	According to the Office for National Statistics, approximately 18-20% of the population in England reports having a disability, and among these, physical disabilities typically make up around half of the total disabilities reported.
Mental ill health (inc. dementia, anxiety)	One in four adults in the UK will experience a mental health problem every year, and mental ill-health is the largest single cause of disability in the UK. Data from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insight ¹⁴ suggests that around 123,500 people living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will experience a common mental health condition in a given week.
Learning disability (huge range)	‘Learning disabilities’ (LD) is a poorly defined term. Its meaning differs depending on the context (such as in education or medical settings) and interpretations also vary between different professionals. Overall, it covers a range of neurological disorders in learning with varying degrees of severity that lead to varying degrees of impairment in social, intellectual, and practical skills. Estimates suggest that around 2.2% of adults in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a learning disability, however, just 0.5% of adults (4,686 people) are on their GP’s learning disability register ¹⁴ . The Covid-19 pandemic particularly affected people with learning disabilities with the death rate nearly 4 times higher nationally than people with no learning disability. This group were also more likely to feel even more isolated from society during the pandemic.
Autism spectrum disorder	Autism is neither a learning disability nor a mental health problem, although mental health problems can be more common among people with autism, and it is estimated that one in three adults with a learning disability also have autism. Approximately one in 100 people in the UK population are autistic ¹⁵ ,

¹⁴ <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/>

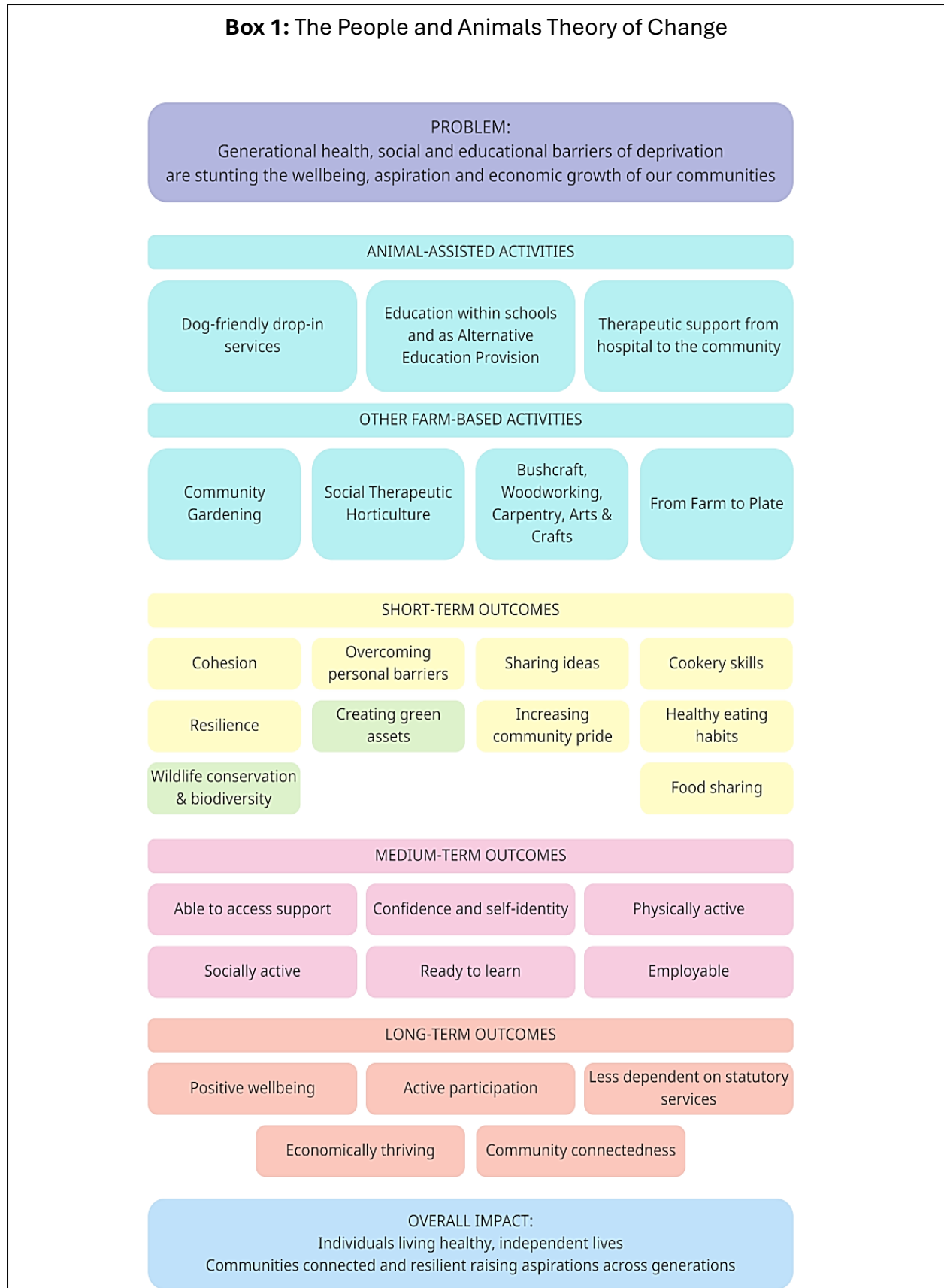
¹⁵ *NHS Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in adults: extending the 2007 adult psychiatric morbidity survey (published 2012)*

	<p>although this is likely to be an underestimate due to the lack of understanding of autism and early support. Current estimates suggest that approximately 5,000 men and 1,000 women in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have an autism spectrum disorder.</p>
<p>People with adverse childhood experiences</p>	<p>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are highly stressful, and potentially traumatic events or situations that occur during childhood and / or adolescence. They can be a single event or prolonged threats to and breaches of the young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity.</p> <p>Adverse experiences could include maltreatment (abuse or neglect), violence or coercion, adjustment (migration, ending relationships), prejudice, household or family adversity (substance misuse, deprivation), inhuman treatment, adult responsibilities (young carer), bereavement and survivorship. Data from the local Cambridge Acorn Project shows that 80% of their referrals are children and young people who have experienced historic domestic abuse, whilst about half of all adults in England have experienced at least one form of adversity in their childhood or adolescence. ¹⁶ Experiencing ACES can impact a child's development, their relationships and increases the risk of engaging in health-harming behaviours and experiencing poorer mental and physical health as adults. People with ACEs compared with people with no ACEs, are more likely to be involved in violence, use illicit drugs, binge drink, smoke and have a poor diet, be incarcerated, and have low levels of mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. ACES can also impact the ability to recognise and manage different emotions, the ability to manage behaviour in school settings and the capacity to make and keep healthy friendships and relationships.</p>
<p>People who have experienced trauma/abuse as adults</p>	<p>Data on the prevalence of trauma or abuse in adulthood is much poorer than that available for children, but there is good evidence that adults who have experienced trauma or abuse are much more susceptible to depression and mood disorders, as well as thoughts of suicide. They are also likely to abuse alcohol and other substances. Finally, they are more prone to developing chronic illnesses, like diabetes and heart disease, later in life.</p>

¹⁶ [Young Minds and NHS, 2014-2016](#)

2.0 Programme evaluation specification

This evaluation was developed based on an evaluation specification that was drawn up by the evaluator, Professor Andy Jones (hereafter referred to “the evaluator”), and the Director of Operations of People and Animals UK, Katie Bristow, staff in late 2022. People and Animals UK had already developed a Theory of Change (Box 1) which was central to



guiding the design of the evaluation approach, both in terms of the processes that were examined and the outputs and outcomes that were measured.

Whilst the evaluation specification focussed on work delivered via the National Lottery funding, it also provided a framework via which the wider range of activities and impacts associated with People and Animals UK could be assessed. A mixed method evaluation was proposed that would make use of quantitative data and qualitative data, although the primary focus would be on qualitative evaluation.

Quantitative analysis was proposed to be an appropriate approach to answer some of the primary research questions around what effect the programme funded by the Lottery and delivered by the organisation has had on outcomes highlighted within the theory. The qualitative analysis was proposed to enable an exploration of how and why any change may take place, with a particular focus on the unique components of activities delivered by People and Animals UK, including outdoor skills-based activities, therapeutic support from animals, and the development of growing skills. The qualitative analysis was proposed to focus on programme participants but would also include other stakeholders including staff from partner organisations and People and Animals. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data, via triangulation, would enable a richer understanding to be developed where the two types of data support each other; it therefore enables a holistic assessment of the intervention.

It was understood that a phased approach would be undertaken to deliver the work funded by the National Lottery grant, with several key milestones. The evaluation was be timed to capture progress towards these milestones. Delivery of the Lottery funding commenced in September 2022 with work with a steering group and focus groups to create an annual timetable of events at the farm and surrounding green spaces within the community. By July 2023, consistent and regular workshops were proposed to be timetabled, which would act to provide a base for community activity amongst those less able to access other services offered. By September 2023, the aim was that routes would be established across the programme, from engagement to volunteering within the programme, and across services. By November 2023 the community would be undertaking planning, creation, development and budgeting of produce and products in the local Community Hub, and by January 2024 the organisation would have gained confidence to build upon their employability programme for adult clients by developing both their vocational and functional skills in English and Maths and a practical hub for evidencing skills and gaining employment.

3.0 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation presented in this document largely mirrors the approach described initial plan outlined in the evaluation proposal. The work began late 2022 and the final data was collected in July 2024. AJ (the evaluator) was supported from an early stage by one of the People and Animals UK volunteers, Miss Stevie Betts, who had expressed an interest in learning the evaluation methodologies and acting as an on-location research assistant. The early stages of questionnaire collection were also supported by Claire Foley who was an employee of the organisation at the time.

3.1 The formative evaluation

Formative evaluation is generally any evaluation that takes place before or early during the implementation of a programme. Whilst an aim of a formative evaluation can be to

Box 2: The logic model template employed

1) Inputs:

Definition: Resources required for project implementation.

Examples: People: Staff hours, volunteer hours. Resources: Marketing materials, publicity, equipment, venue hire.

Purpose: Useful for understanding cost-benefit aspects, including 'free' inputs like volunteer time.

2) Activities

Definition: The different streams of activity within the project.

Linkages: Connect specific activities to intended outcomes where relevant.

3) Mechanism for Change

Definition: Explanation of why the expected outputs and outcomes should result from the activities.

4) Outputs

Definition: Quantifiable results that describe the project's progress.

Examples: People: Numbers of intended audience reached, including volunteers or professionals involved. Events: Number of sessions run, number of programmes completed. Uptake: Attendance details (who attended, where, how often).

Partnerships: Collaborations with other organisations, frequency of meetings.

5) Shorter-term Outcomes:

Definition: Immediate changes expected post-intervention.

6) Medium-term Outcomes:

Definition: Sustained changes expected in the medium term, e.g., 6-month follow-up.

7) Longer-term Outcomes (Impact):

Definition: Broader societal impacts, such as reduced health spending.

improve the design or delivery of a programme at an early stage, this does not need to be a motivation and formative evaluation is usually a precursor to any follow-up evaluation, whenever undertaken during programme delivery. The formative evaluation aims to help make implicit elements of programme delivery (i.e., those which are implied but not described in detail) explicit (i.e., written down with their role in the programme clearly elucidated and understood). Although People and Animals had produced a Theory of Change prior to the development of this evaluation, it was at a relatively high level, and it was decided that it would be helpful to guide the evaluation using more detailed logic models that described the activities of the organisation overall as well as those that were specific to the work funded by the National Lottery. Logic models, which share many similarities with a Theory of Change, are central to formative evaluation as they depict the activities and action of a programme, showing the relations between what is delivered and what the results are¹⁷. A logic model can be thought of as akin to a series of if/then statements that describe the sequence of events that are expected to create change (for example to lead to changes in health and health-related behaviours in target individuals and communities) and help resolve the problem (for example that traditional clinical therapeutic interventions are ineffective for certain population groups).

Work was undertaken with the Director of Operations of People and Animals UK to co-develop two new logic models to guide this evaluation – one described the activities of the organisation overall whilst the other focussed specifically on those components of their work that was aligned to the National Lottery funding. The models used a template detailed in Box 2 above.

3.2 The summative evaluation

In contrast to formative evaluation, which is typically undertaken at the genesis of a project, summative evaluation is an assessment conducted at the conclusion of a project (although generally using data collected during it) to determine its overall effectiveness and impact. This type of evaluation aims to measure the extent to which the project's objectives were achieved, providing a picture of the outcomes and their alignment with the anticipated goals. By focusing on the end results, summative evaluation helps provide an understanding the value and efficacy of a project. In this case a multi-method approach was taken to summative evaluation, including both qualitative and quantitative components.

3.2.1 Quantitative data collection and analysis

Quantitative analysis involves the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via numerical techniques. It emphasises the quantification of data and the application of various statistical methods to interpret this data, providing insight into patterns, relationships, and trends. Quantitative analysis brings several benefits that make it a powerful tool in research and decision-making. One key benefit is its ability to provide objective and precise measurements, which reduces the influence of personal bias and ensures that findings are based on concrete data. Further, the use of statistical

¹⁷ [W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide \(betterevaluation.org\)](https://www.betterevaluation.org/)

methods, if undertaken appropriately, enhances the rigour and validity of the conclusions drawn, making them more credible.

The quantitative undertaken for this evaluation measured several outcomes that were identified during the logic modelling exercise described in Section 3.1. An important consideration in any quantitative component of an evaluation is whether it would be possible to collect data from a control group to support the analysis. This would comprise a group of people who are similar to the clients with whom People and Animals engages with, but who do not engage with the service. Whilst the use of a control group is desirable because it allows the counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened otherwise?) to be measured, a control group adds to the complexity of the evaluation as the recruitment and data collection of this group can be burdensome. As a result of the challenges of conducting an evaluation which includes a control group, and based on prior discussions, an uncontrolled before-after comparison of people engaging with the organisation was used.

Initial data collection was undertaken by Claire Foley of People and Animals, and this was taken over by Stevie Betts early in the process of data collection. Attempts were made to obtain data from all people using People and Animals UK services within the scope of the evaluation over the period of the evaluation (allowing time for follow-up and final report writing), with baseline data being collected at the start of the first interaction with the organisation. Given the time available for the evaluation plus the nature of the service, a 3-month post-baseline timepoint was identified as the appropriate time for follow-up although, as detailed later in this report, pragmatic considerations meant this was not achieved for many participants. As with baseline data collection, the follow-ups utilised contact points between People and Animals UK and the people using their services where possible (i.e. service users were asked if they would be willing to complete a baseline or follow-up survey when they visited the farm).

Due to a lack of a control group, the quantitative analysis focussed on outcome measures that were theoretically most likely to be affected by the programme, but least affected by a change in other external factors not associated with it. In line with this, a questionnaire (referred to as an outcomes capture tool) was developed that used validated measures and drew upon the relevant outcomes identified in the logic model. The evaluator was mindful of the potential burden of tool completion of service users, some of whom had learning difficulties. As a result, a small subset of the long list of potential outcomes was chosen, and measures were selected in discussion with People and Animals staff that were relatively simple to complete. All participants completing the tool were offered support to go through it with a member of People and Animals staff or a volunteer if they wished. A copy of the tool is provided in Appendix A and the measures used to develop it are described below

3.2.1.1 The Outcomes Capture Tool

The tool, provided in full in Appendix 'A' of this document, consisted of questions taken from a range of validated instruments that covered the key outcomes identified in the

lottery logic model. Appropriate instruments were identified by the evaluator undertaking a rapid scoping review of the literature. Some minor modifications were made to the wording of some of the instruments to support comprehension and also to make them more appropriate for use in a UK context (many of the instruments had originally been published in the USA). Furthermore, some of the instruments were only used in part in order to keep the length of the tool to a manageable length so that it could be completed without being a significant distraction to the activities the service user had come to undertake. The tool was also kept simple to complete being mindful that some of the service users completing the tool would have learning difficulties. The instruments used to develop the tool were as follows:

Social connectedness (Part 1 of the tool) was captured using the “Evaluation of Social Systems” (EVOS) tool as a measure of social connectedness¹⁸. The was deemed to capture outcomes of “Participants report feeling more connected and engaged” and “Greater positive relationships” that were identified in the logic model. The designers of the tool aimed to construct a short scale to measure quality of relationships and the collective efficacy in different social systems. The tool is unusual in that it works for different systems, for example not just friends or just family, and it was felt that it would support service users to think about other people they interact with in general rather than just one group. The tool was felt to be relatively easy to use and it was noted that it had been designed to be sensitive to change for outcome measures in evaluations, which is relatively unusual.

In order to measure **self-esteem** (Part 2) a decision was made to use the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale Revised Version (SLCS-R) tool¹⁹. This was the only tool identified in the rapid literature review that attempted measure self-esteem according to both self-competence and self-liking, and this was felt to be a good fit with the “Increased positive emotions about self” (self-liking) and “Better ability to overcome personal barriers” (self-competence) outcomes in the logic model. The tool had undergone validation and, although the full version contains 16 items, it was known to be relatively quick to complete and was available in a form that was simplified from a previous longer version. Whilst validity testing had shown some correlation between the two domains (i.e. there was some overlap between self-competence and self-liking), this was not felt to be a significant disadvantage. Some of the wording of the tool was felt to be rather too formal for the context of use, and some small modifications were made accordingly.

In order to capture **social engagement in activities** (Part 3), sections of the Social Engagement & Activities questionnaire were employed²⁰. This tool was felt to be

¹⁸ Aguilar-Raab C, Grevenstein D, Schweitzer J (2015) Measuring Social Relationships in Different Social Systems: The Construction and Validation of the Evaluation of Social Systems (EVOS) Scale. PLOS ONE 10(7): e0133442.

¹⁹ Tafarodi, R. W., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (2001). Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale--Revised Version (SLCS-R) [Database record]. APA PsycTests.

²⁰ Marti CN, Choi NG. (2022) Measuring Social Engagement among Low-Income, Depressed Homebound Older Adults: Validation of the Social Engagement and Activities Questionnaire. Clinical Gerontology 45(3): 548-561.

appropriate to capture the “Increased engagement in activities” outcome in the logic model. The original questionnaire attempts to measure participation in either leisure or productive activities that would reinforce social ties and meaningful social roles. It was developed amongst older adults within the USA and some of the activities suggested in the full version were felt to be quite specific to that country, but two of the items, which were shown to be dominant in the validation study, were felt to be a good fit for this evaluation.

For the measurement of **emotional resilience** (Part 4) it was decided that the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)²¹ would be an appropriate tool to capture the “Improved emotional resilience” outcome from the logic model. In addition to being brief, the scale was felt to have the advantage that it is a direct measure of resilience. This is in contrast to many measures of resilience that tend to target the personal characteristics that may promote positive adaptation and not resilience itself. The problem with this is that these are characteristics which may not be easily changed, or at least not in the short term, and are hence unsuitable for this type of evaluation with a relatively short follow-up period. The BRS is also the only measure that was reviewed that specifically assesses resilience in its original and most basic meaning: to bounce back or recover from stress or adversity. The scale is also quite widely used. As is common with many self-report measures, a disadvantage of the tool is that its ability to detect change in an evaluation context had not been tested.

In order to capture **life satisfaction** (Part 5) (the “sustained/improved life satisfaction” outcome from the logic model) the single-item UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) question was used²². This has the advantage of being widely used in evaluations and also very simple and quick to complete, although it does not capture the complexity and multidimensionality of life satisfaction, and the fact that it is comprised of a single item may mean that it is less sensitive to change than some more complex measures. Also included in Part 5 of the tool were two questions around the use of health and social care services in the previous 4 weeks. As the rapid literature scoping review did not identify any pre-existing tools to measure service use in the way required, two bespoke questions were included.

At the end of the tool, a free-text box was included to allow participants to write anything around their experience of People and Animals or about taking part in the evaluation.

3.2.1.2 Statistical analysis

Because the ultimate sample size obtained was relatively small (see results section), the statistical tests were kept simple. Responses were coded numerically so that a higher value represented a more favourable outcome (for example, in Part 1 (Social connectedness) “Very poor” was coded with a 1, “Poor” a 2, “Good” a 3 and “Very good” a 4. For some sub-domains, reverse coding was required; for example, in Part 2 (self-

²¹ Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The brief resilience scale: assessing the ability to bounce back. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 15(3), 194-200.

²² [Measuring National Well-being: Life Satisfaction - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/measuring-national-well-being/life-satisfaction)

esteem), responses to the negative statement “I tend to devalue myself” needed to be reverse coded so that a high value would be comparable to a high value in the positive statement “I am highly effective at the things I do”.

Initially the components of the various measures described above were scored so that a composite overall score was available for each of the separate measures in the outcomes capture tool. This was computed by summing the component scores of each of the tools used. This has the advantage of being more sensitive to change than the individual items, something that is particularly important when evaluating change in a relatively small sample. Although the questions were generally well completed, there was also some missing data. So as to not lose these records entirely from the analysis, missing values were coded to the median of their respective scales.

In order to test for change in the different measures between baseline and follow-up, the non-paired sample t-test was used which helps determine whether the mean difference between paired observations is zero²³. This test is suitable for continuous data and assumes that the differences between paired observations are normally distributed. The non-paired approach was chosen because of the small follow-up sample size as it meant all the baseline data could be used rather than just the small number of baseline records that had a corresponding matched follow-up. The caveat with a non-paired approach is that the follow-up sample is a sub sample of the baseline (in this case less than 50% of those completing a baseline survey also completed a follow-up) and may not therefore be fully representative of service users completing a baseline survey. Although means values at baseline and follow are presented in table for the various sub-components of each of the parts of outcome capture tool described above, to avoid the problems of multiple testing and small numbers²⁴, statistical testing (i.e. the computation of the level of statistical significance associated with any observed changes between baseline and follow-up) was only taken for the composite measures and not for their individual sub-components which were only presented descriptively.

3.2.2 Qualitative data collection and analysis

A qualitative evaluation was undertaken to gather a deeper understanding into how the activities of People and Animals are perceived by those involved. Qualitative evaluation involves the collection of predominantly open-ended data; for example, through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In contrast to the quantitative data analysis, where attempts were made to capture information from all those using the service during the period of evaluation, the aim with the qualitative data collection was not to achieve a high level of reach (in other words, the sample did not need to include a large percentage of those receiving the service or of the stakeholders involved in the organisation) but

²³ <https://www.statology.org/paired-samples-t-test/>

²⁴ Ranganathan P, Pramesh CS, Buyse M. (2016) Common pitfalls in statistical analysis: The perils of multiple testing. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 7(2):106-7.

rather to obtain detailed information from a smaller sample of participants along with others who have been involved in the design or delivery of the intervention.

Key themes explored through the qualitative evaluation included:

- In what way does the delivery of People and Animals UK programmes that were funded via the National Lottery Community Fund match the specifications set out in the theory of change?
- What are the experiences of those receiving and delivering the National Lottery Community Fund services?
- What impact has the funding allowed the organisation to have on the wider health and social care systems?
- What structure do the funded programmes need to take to enable future sustainability?

The aim was to gather qualitative data from a range of stakeholders and ‘purposive’ sampling (a non-probabilistic sampling technique involving deliberately choosing participants based on the characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study) was used to ensure views were gathered from different individuals sitting within the system of delivery. The selection of participants was agreed with staff from People and Animals.

3.2.2.1 Data collection

Data for the qualitative evaluation was collected through group discussions and interviews (either online via Microsoft Teams or face-to-face at the farm). The method of data collection depended largely on practical issues. Where possible, face-to-face discussions were held. Events such as a day where stakeholders were invited to visit the farm were used to collect data where possible; three focus groups were run on that day with follow-up 1:1 interviews with stakeholders who had not taken part in one of the focus groups being undertaken via Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, the farm was visited to collect data during times when numbers of a particular stakeholder group were present, such as on a Wednesday for volunteers.

In addition to the discussions held with stakeholders for the purpose of thematic analysis, focussed discussion were held with a number of service users (or sometimes with those who were supporting them) and volunteers so that case studies could be produced. Case studies were felt to be an appropriate component of this evaluation as they bring to life the journey of individuals coming into contact with People and Animals in a way that a thematic analysis alone cannot. These case studies are presented throughout in boxes throughout the results section of this report. All names have been changed so the material is presented in an anonymised form.

The evaluation presented consisted of qualitative data collected via interviews and focus groups undertaken between April 2023 and July 2024. Table 1 shows the schedule of data collection. Focus groups were typically between 60 and 90 minute in length, whilst 1:1 interviews ranged from 1 hour down to approximately 10 minutes.

Table 2: Qualitative data collection schedule

Date	Format	Event
17/04/2023	Focus group, in person	Focus group held with People and Animals volunteers
27/04/2023	Focus group, in person	Focus group held with People and Animals staff
07/08/2023	Focus group x3, in person	Three focus groups held with a wide range of stakeholders present including commercial partners, those from the third sector, local government offices, and those working in health and social care provision)
23/10/2023	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Interview with Terry Jordan (Town Clerk, Wisbech Town Council)
24/10/2023	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Interview with Lisa Riddle (Service Director for Communities, Libraries and Skills, Cambridgeshire County Council)
31/10/2023	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Interview with Cllr Sue Wallwork (Councillor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority)
02/11/2023	Focus group, MS Teams	Focus group with Tom Molloy (Head of Service, Cambridgeshire Skills) and Tom Heffer (Marketing and Partnerships Lead, Cambridgeshire County Council)
15/11/2023	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Yvonne Ogden (Neighbourhood Investment Manager, Clarion Housing Group)
14/12/2023	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Tony Saunders (Occupational Therapist, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust)
18/03/2023	1:1 Interviews, in person	Short 1:1 interviews with a number of People and Animals volunteers
30/03/2024	1:1 Interviews, in person	Short 1:1 interviews with a number of People and Animals volunteers
24/07/2024	1:1 Interview, MS Teams	Katie Bristow (Director of Operations, People and Animals)
2023/2024	1:1 Interviews	Series of interviews with service users (or their carers) and volunteers throughout this period of the purposes of developing case studies.

All interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and verbatim transcribed. The interviews and focus groups were each guided by a topic guide, although the conversation was allowed to be open and themes that emerged during each conversation were appropriately explored. Table 2 lists the groups of stakeholders that were included topics that were covered in the topic guide produced for each group of stakeholders

Table 3: Topic guide themes used with the different stakeholder groups engaged

Stakeholder group	Topics included in topic guides
Volunteers	<p>Getting involved: Exploration of how participants became involved with People and Animals. Inquiry into what attracted them to volunteer and any prior expectations they had. Discussion on how their actual experience matched or differed from these expectations.</p> <p>Volunteer Activities: Description of the activities performed by volunteers, both on-site and related to training, mentoring, and development. Examination of personal benefits derived from these activities. Observation of the benefits experienced by other volunteers and service users, and how these observations impact the volunteers.</p> <p>Wider Impact: Analysis of the impact of volunteering on the participants' lives outside their volunteering role. Discussion on how their future outlook is influenced by their involvement with People and Animals.</p> <p>Conclusion: Opportunity for participants to raise any additional points not covered in the discussion.</p>
Staff	<p>Getting Involved: Exploration of how staff members became involved with the organisation. Discussion on what attracted them to their roles initially and what motivates them to stay.</p> <p>The Benefits of Their Work: Identification of community needs addressed by People and Animals and how these needs were identified. Examination of the mechanisms through which the organisation's work addresses these needs, focusing on service users, volunteers, and other stakeholders. Understanding the methods used by staff to assess the impact of their work.</p>

	<p>Challenges and Facilitators: Discussion on factors that help staff in their roles. Identification of challenges and obstacles encountered, along with potential solutions. Exploration of the role of funding, such as the Lottery Communities money, in supporting their work. Discussion on how funding opportunities are identified and their connection to the overall strategy of the organisation.</p> <p>Growth in the Future: Identification of what the organisation needs to grow as a community, including infrastructure, staff space, training, or other resources. Discussion on the strategies and steps necessary to achieve this growth.</p> <p>Conclusion: Opportunity for participants to raise any additional points not covered in the discussion.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Getting to Know People and Animals: Exploration of how participants found out about the charity. Discussion on the ways participants work with the organisation.</p> <p>Benefits of Working with the Charity: Identification of the benefits of People and Animals to the stakeholders' organisations. Discussion on the impact on the wider health and care system. Exploration of the charity's role in environmental sustainability. Examination of any challenges faced while working with the organisation and potential solutions.</p> <p>Future Evolution: Discussion on how stakeholders would like to see the relationship with their organisation evolve. Exploration of future development for People and Animals as an organisation. Consideration of the role of People and Animals in the wider health and social care system going forward.</p> <p>Conclusion: Opportunity for participants to raise any additional points not covered in the discussion.</p>

3.2.2.2 Thematic analysis

All interviews and focus groups were recorded electronically and then transferred to the Otter.ai transcription package (www.otter.ai) for verbatim transcription. This service uses artificial intelligence to extract the transcript from the recording. Where errors in the transcription were apparent, the recording was listened to and manually corrected.

Thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken using an inductive approach. Inductive thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or any set of preconceptions. Whilst the focus groups and interviews were there guided by a topic guide (and this provided a pre-determined set of issues to cover) there were no preconceptions around the nature or content of response. This inductive approach therefore allowed the findings extracted from the transcripts to more naturally reflect the views of participants than would have been the case with a deductive approach where certain themes are searched for in the data. It also provides a detailed, nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives.

After the transcription of recordings was completed, all transcripts were read through multiple times to become familiar with the content. Notes were made of any initial impressions and ideas that arise during this process. Following this a formal coding protocol was used, with codes generated as the transcript was read through and labels assigned to sections of text related to each code. Due to the use of an inductive approach, codes were allowed to emerge organically from the data.

After the process of initial coding was completed, the initial codes were reviewed and broader patterns of meaning, or proto themes, were identified. Codes were then collated into potential themes based on their relationship with each other. Themes were then refined by examining the sections of transcript associated with their component codes to ensure they formed a coherent pattern (i.e. that there was internal consistency within them). Where necessary, themes were split, merged, or discarded.

The final stage of thematic coding was the completion of a detailed analysis of each theme to understand its essence and scope. A clear understanding of each theme was developed in order to define its meaning. In this report, findings are presented according to major themes, and any secondary sub-themes, across all stakeholders rather than the use of a separate presentation of themes within each stakeholder group. This was chosen as the most natural way to present findings as many of the themes were cross-cutting across stakeholder groups, whilst at the same time there was sometimes a differing view expressed across different groups. Quotes are largely reproduced verbatim but have been edited where necessary to address issues of clarity and remove any filled pauses or discourse markers. Each theme is presented along with extensive illustrative quotes. In order to preserve confidentiality each quote is presented along with the stakeholder group with which it is associated, but no names or other identifiers are given.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Formative evaluation

In total two logic models were created, one for the organisation overall and one for the specific programme of work funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. For ease of presentation, each logic model is reproduced in full in Appendix B at the end of this report and is discussed below. A comparison short of the two models is also provided to consider the degree to which they reflect the aims of the organisation whilst also reflecting on the added value arising from the bespoke activities undertaken to address the objectives of the Lottery funding.

4.1.1 Organisational logic model

Model summary

The logic model outlines a community-focused programme that uses resources such as staff expertise, materials, farm space, and funding to deliver activities including animal-assisted therapy, educational programmes, community gardening, and healthy eating initiatives. These activities aim to create safe, inclusive, and therapeutic environments that foster engagement, skill development, and personal growth. Outputs measure engagement levels, activity delivery, and progression into education or employment. In the short term, the organisation seeks to improve personal well-being and community cohesion; medium-term goals include enhanced resilience, skills, and active participation. Long-term outcomes envision reduced dependence on services, sustained life satisfaction, and increased aspirations, contributing to economically thriving and connected communities.

Model detail

The logic model outlines a comprehensive framework for a community-focused programme designed to leverage various activities and resources to achieve a range of positive outcomes. At its core, the model begins with a robust set of inputs, which include staff and volunteer expertise, necessary materials and equipment, farm space, and animals. These resources are supported by ongoing funding, partnerships, and collaborations, alongside a commitment to continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Central to the programme are its diverse activities. These include dog-friendly drop-in sessions and community animal-assisted activities, which offer therapeutic opportunities by integrating animals into the process. Additionally, the programme provides educational initiatives within schools and alternative settings, alongside community gardening and social therapeutic horticulture aimed at improving physical and mental health. The "Farm to Fork" healthy eating initiative and various on-site therapeutic or educational activities such as bushcraft, green woodworking, and arts and crafts further enrich the programme's offerings.

The primary mechanism for change within this model is rooted in creating safe outdoor spaces and fostering secure relationships through a multidisciplinary team approach. By promoting contact with animals and nature in a therapeutic setting, the organisation delivers inclusive and intergenerational sessions designed for all ages and abilities. These activities emphasise play, cooking skills, food knowledge, and accessible learning experiences, allowing participants to realise their skills, share knowledge, and overcome challenges.

The programme's activity is measured through a range of outputs, such as the number of local participants and volunteers engaged, the extent of stakeholder involvement, the variety of activities delivered, and the progression of participants into further education, apprenticeships, employment, or other community activities.

In the shorter term, the organisation aims to achieve personal and community-level outcomes. These include increased positive emotions, greater engagement in activities, improved relationships, a sense of accomplishment, and healthier eating habits for individuals. For the community, the organisation seeks to enhance access to transport, foster improved cohesion, increase green assets, and build an environmentally aware and prideful community that shares ideas and food resources.

Moving into medium-term outcomes, the organisation aspires to bolster personal abilities to overcome barriers, enhance emotional resilience, and improve cookery skills. Participants are hoped to become more physically active, ready to learn, and socially engaged. Concurrently, it is hoped that the community will thrive economically, remain well-connected, and sustain high levels of active participation.

In the long term, it is envisioned that the work of People and Animals will led to participants becoming less dependent on statutory services, experiencing sustained or improved life satisfaction, and having increased aspirations for themselves and their families. These individuals are expected to become more employable, contributing to a broader impact of economically thriving and connected communities with high levels of participation.

CASE STUDY 1: Jenny's Journey to Recovery and Community at the Farm

Background

Jenny found sanctuary and a path to healing through her connection with the People and Animals Community Farm. Three years prior to her involvement with the farm, Jenny's life was markedly different, marred by emotional and physical abuse within her domestic environment. The turning point came when her relationship with her partner, entrenched in a toxic household, ended abruptly due to physical abuse instigated by her partner's mother. In the aftermath, Jenny sought refuge with her oldest sister, marking the beginning of her journey towards recovery.

The Turning Point

During her stay with her sister, Jenny was introduced to the farm through a staff member and relative. An invitation to lead an origami session with the farm's art group, and this became Jenny's first step to volunteering at the farm. The experience ignited a passion and a sense of belonging for her, leading Jenny to become a regular presence. Over the course of nearly two years, what started as a single visit evolved into a long-term relationship.

Experience at the Farm

Jenny's daily interactions at the farm, in the form of a volunteer, have been overwhelmingly positive. Describing the farm as her "happy, calm place," she has highlighted the profound impact it has had on her mental well-being, offering her a sense of calm and belonging. The support and camaraderie found at the farm have been instrumental in her recovery process, providing a safe space to stay active and engaged even during her most challenging days. The sense of community at the farm has not only offered Jenny a supportive network but has also taught her valuable life lessons, reinforcing her appreciation for the sanctuary the place provides. The farm's environment has also fostered a strong sense of the importance of location for Jenny, encouraging her to move to Wisbech so as to remain in close proximity.

Challenges

Despite the overwhelmingly positive experience, Jenny acknowledges minor frustrations, such as occasional interpersonal conflicts within the farm community. However, she commends the staff's responsiveness in addressing such issues, propagating a harmonious and supportive environment.

Conclusion

Jenny's journey from a place of vulnerability to one of empowerment and community involvement exemplifies the transformative impact of People and Animals. Her story underscores the importance of supportive spaces in facilitating recovery and fostering a sense of belonging.

4.1.2 Lottery funded programme logic model

Model summary

The Lottery Reaching Communities programme leverages diverse resources, including staff, volunteers, materials, farm space, and funding, to implement therapeutic animal and nature-based activities combined with learning opportunities. These activities aim to create a safe, empowering environment for skill-sharing and vocational learning, supported by regular community feedback and partnerships with local organisations. The funding is anticipated to engage numerous local participants and volunteers, resulting in improved emotional well-being, personal resilience, and community connections in the short term. In the medium term, participants are expected to gain greater self-competence, reduce reliance on healthcare services, and enhance their employability. Ultimately, the programme of work aims to build economically thriving, connected communities with sustained life satisfaction and high levels of active participation.

Model detail

The logic model for the Lottery Reaching Communities programme outlines a comprehensive plan to foster community engagement, learning, and personal development through various structured activities and support mechanisms. Starting with the inputs, the programme leverages a wide array of resources, including staff and volunteer expertise, materials, equipment, farm space, animals, funding, partnerships, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. These resources enable the implementation of on-site engagement days and courses, development of rewilding areas, sharing of heritage skills in orchard spaces, creation of craft-based community enterprises, establishment of an employability hub, and delivery of a mentoring and development programme for volunteers. Additionally, the programme aims to contribute to curriculum development at local schools.

A critical mechanism for change within this model is the combination of therapeutic animal and nature-based activities with learning opportunities. This approach aims to create an accessible and safe space where individuals can both share and acquire skills, engage in flexible vocational learning, and connect with other providers to enhance community engagement. The quantifiable outputs of this include the number of local participants and volunteers engaged, stakeholders involved, activities conducted, and training sessions delivered.

In terms of short-term outcomes, participants are expected to feel more connected and engaged, experience increased positive emotions about themselves, engage more in activities, develop greater positive relationships, and gain a sense of accomplishment as

a result of the Lottery-funded activities. Medium-term outcomes focus on personal development, where participants improve their ability to overcome personal barriers, enhance their emotional resilience, feel empowered to volunteer, and report requiring less support from healthcare professionals. Additionally, there is an improvement in engagement with vocational training and functional skills in English and maths.

Ultimately, the longer-term impacts aim to foster economically thriving and connected communities with high levels of active participation. On a personal level, participants are expected to become less dependent on statutory services, more employable, and experience sustained or improved life satisfaction. This logic model therefore effectively demonstrates a holistic approach to community development, emphasising the interconnectedness of personal growth, community engagement, and economic vitality through strategic use of resources and structured activities.

4.1.3 A comparison of the logic models and identification of added values from Lottery funded activities

As may be anticipated, the Lottery funded work and the organisation's core initiatives share a commitment to community engagement, personal development, and fostering positive relationships through therapeutic and educational activities. The National Lottery funded work adds distinctive value however through its structured approach to community enterprise and employability. Its activities, such as the craft-based community enterprise and the employability hub, provide clear and sustainable pathways to economic independence and skill development. The contribution to curriculum development in schools signifies a broader educational impact, extending beyond the immediate participants. Additionally, the focus on heritage skills and rewilding projects promotes environmental sustainability and cultural heritage, contributing to long-term community identity and ecological benefits. The tailored support and flexibility, facilitated through consultations and regular reviews, helps ensure that the activities are responsive to individual needs, enhancing their effectiveness.

In conclusion, while both models aim to create thriving, connected communities with engaged and resilient individuals, the National Lottery funded programme of work is distinctive for its comprehensive and structured approach focussing on community enterprise, employability, and educational support, offering a robust framework for sustainable community development, and providing added value to the overall impact.

4.2 Outcomes evaluation

In total, 49 service users completed the outcomes capture tool, with 49 baseline surveys being completed and 22 follow-ups that could be matched to a baseline survey being available. Time between baseline and follow-up varied between 10 months and 1 month but was typically 3 months. The surveys included a question in which each participant could state if they completed the survey themselves or with help from somebody else. At

baseline 37 out of 49 (76%) of surveys were completed by the service-user themselves, with the corresponding value at follow-up being 19 out of 22 (86%), suggesting that those who required help to complete the baseline survey were less likely to participate in the follow-up.

4.2.1 Descriptive depictions of change in the subcomponents of the composite measures (social-connectedness, self-esteem, and emotional resilience)

Table 3 shows the changes in sub-domains for social connectedness (Part 1 of the outcome capture tool). Overall, the findings show a general trend of improvement across most sub-domains of social connectedness, highlighting enhanced communication, support, emotional connection, and problem-solving abilities. The only exception is a slight decline in the consistency of the decision-making process. The overall positive changes across most sub-components suggest that participants are moving towards a more cohesive, supportive, and effective place. Improved communication, stronger emotional ties, better mutual support, and enhanced problem-solving abilities would contribute to a more robust and resilient dynamic, with only area showing a slight decline being decision-making consistency. Table 4 shows the changes in sub-components for social connectedness (Part 2 of the outcome capture tool). Note the statements associated with negative self-perception were reverse coded post-data entry so the direction of change can be interpreted the same way for all the indicators, with a positive change being desirable and a negative change undesirable. Unlike the findings for social connectedness, which showed a consistent improvement, the table shows a much more mixed pattern of change with improvements in some domains but declines in many of them. It should be noted that the magnitude of differences between baseline and follow up are relatively small, as is the case for all the domains examined by the outcomes

Table 4: Changes in sub-domains for the measure of social connectedness between baseline and follow-up

Sub domains of <i>social connectedness</i>	Baseline mean value	Follow-up mean value	Direction (+/-)
For me, the way we talk with each other is...	3.55	3.74	+
For me, the way we stick together is...	3.57	3.61	+
For me, what we do for each other is...	3.62	3.70	+
For me, the feeling between us is...	3.49	3.61	+
For me, the way we decide what needs to be done is...	3.53	3.57	+
For me, the way we agree what will help us reach our goals is....	3.51	3.64	+
For me, the way we make decisions is...	3.49	3.48	-
For me, the way we find solutions to problems is...	3.57	3.61	+
For me, how we adapt to change is...	3.32	3.43	+

capture tool and this, coupled with the small numbers of follow-up surveys completed means it is not possible to determine the degree to which variations in change observed between sub domains may be due to chance.

Table 5 shows the changes in sub-domains for social connectedness (Part 4 of the outcome capture tool). Although the magnitude of differences between baseline and follow up was again small, improvements in ratings were generally observed, with only the difficulty in making it through stressful events, and the time taken to get over setbacks showing declines.

Table 5: Changes in sub-domains for the measure of self-esteem between baseline and follow-up

Sub domains of <i>self-esteem</i>	Baseline mean value	Follow-up mean value	Direction of change (+/-)
I tend to devalue myself	1.68	1.67	-
I am highly effective at the things I do	3.62	3.92	+
I am very comfortable with myself	3.38	3.50	+
I am almost always able to accomplish what I try for	3.78	3.63	-
I am secure in my sense of self-worth	3.37	3.43	+
It is sometimes hard for me to think about myself	1.70	1.38	-
I have a negative attitude toward myself	2.11	1.92	-
At times, I find it difficult to achieve the things that are important to me	1.87	1.46	-
I feel great about who I am	3.34	2.96	-
I sometimes deal poorly with challenges	1.83	1.50	-
I never doubt my own worth	2.85	2.79	-
I perform very well at many things	3.58	3.38	-
I sometimes fail to fulfil my goals	1.78	1.63	-
I am very talented	3.17	3.04	-
I do not have enough respect for myself	2.28	2.08	-
I wish I were more skilful in my activities.	1.43	1.33	-

Table 6: Changes in sub-domains for the measure of emotional resilience between baseline and follow-up

Sub domains of <i>emotional resilience</i>	Baseline mean value	Follow-up mean value	Direction of change (+/-)
I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times	2.96	2.97	+
I have a hard time making it through stressful events	1.49	1.38	-
It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event	2.71	2.75	+
It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens	1.67	1.68	+
I usually come through difficult times with little trouble	2.63	2.75	+
I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life	1.83	1.58	-

4.2.2 Tests for change between baseline and follow up.

Table 6 shows the differences between baseline and follow-up measures for the composite domains of social connectedness, self-esteem and emotional resilience captured using the outcomes capture tool, along with the two measures of social engagement, the single item measure of life satisfaction, and the frequency of use of a doctor or other health or social care professional in the previous 4 weeks. The p-values computed from the test of change are provided for each.

With the exception of the frequency of contact with a doctor in the previous 12 months, which saw a statistically significant doubling between baseline and follow-up, differences observed in the outcomes between baseline and follow-up did not reach statistical significance. Social connectedness showed a notable increase, but this did not reach statistical significance. There were slight declines in self-esteem, emotional resilience and life satisfaction although these did not reach statistical significance. There were increases in frequency of participation in social engagement activities, including contact with family and friends, as well as participation in recreational activities, though these changes were also not statistically significant. In contrast to frequency of contact with a doctor, frequency of contact with other health or social care professionals increased modestly without statistical significance.

Table 7: Changes between baseline and follow-up in the primary outcome domains measured using the outcomes capture tool

Domain	Baseline mean value	Follow-up mean value	P-value for difference
<i>Social connectedness</i> (Potential range of scores from 9 to 36)	31.6	38.6	0.23
<i>Self-esteem</i> (Potential range of scores from 16 to 80)	41.7	39.7	0.23
<i>Social engagement in activities</i>			
Contact with family, friends or relatives in the previous month (Potential range of scores from 1 to 6)	4.1	4.3	0.33
Frequency of recreational activities for fun and relaxation in the previous month (Potential range of scores from 1 to 6)	4.8	5.1	0.15
<i>Emotional resilience</i> (Potential range of scores from 6 to 36)	13.2	13.1	0.45
<i>Life satisfaction</i> (Potential range of scores from 0 to 10)	6.8	6.3	0.25
<i>Health and social care use</i>			
Frequency of contact with doctor in previous 4 weeks (continuous self-report measure)	0.88	1.78	0.04*
Frequency of contact with other health or social care professional in previous 4 weeks (continuous self-report measure)	1.00	1.31	0.27

* Indicates statistical significance at p<0.05

CASE STUDY 2: Gilbert's growth with People and Animals

Backstory

Gilbert described himself as being stuck in rut with his mental health for long time. His mum helped him to find the Farm to help him get out of his shell.

Challenges

Gilbert was dealing with his depression, his stutter when he spoke, as well as his disability. This made his confidence and self-esteem very low, resulting in loneliness and feeling stuck in old bad habits. Gilbert was described as shy and reserved initially, and just felt very stressed out with himself. He felt a negative cloud above himself. He doubted that it was possible for himself to get better.

Experience at the farm

Gilbert has overcome a lot of his struggles being at the Farm, describing himself now as being more positive, happier and even charismatic. Gilbert believes his confidence has grown from working with a staff member, as well as the other volunteers, and picking up new skills, which he finds fulfilling. Gilbert has found friends at the Farm, who he also chats to outside of volunteering, and finds that his friends accepting him has also made him accept himself. Gilbert finds the Farm to be a very calm, relaxing, welcoming and positive place, and he also sees the change the Farm has made in other people and how it has helped them.

Conclusion

Gilbert continues to enjoy volunteering at the Farm, hoping to join a Maths and English course. He believes he has gone above and beyond what he expected of himself and is proud. The Farm has been nothing but a positive place for him, helping him progress as a better person.

4.2.3 Feedback from free-text comments.

Box 3 presents the responses written in the free text section of the tool, with those provided on baseline surveys written in green and those at follow up in blue. The responses highlight the positive reported impact of the community farm on participants' well-being. Many individuals express feelings of relaxation, support, and improved mood, attributing these benefits to the farm's activities and the supportive environment provided by staff and volunteers. Participants reported valuing the opportunity to engage with animals, learn new skills, and be part of a welcoming community, which enhanced their mental health and social interactions. Despite a few suggestions for improvement, such as the need for anger management resources, the overall sentiment is one of appreciation for the therapeutic and inclusive nature of the services provided.

**Box 3: Responses written in the free text section of the outcomes capture tool
(Responses in baseline surveys are green, follow-up blue)**

“Coming here helps me feel more relaxed and gives me goals to work towards. The people are very supportive”

“I really enjoy it here. Being with the animals is really fun. I enjoy every moment with them even if it isn't for long. I love all the activities we do here.”
“Felt ok found things easy”

“I have enjoyed my time at the farm. It has helped with my confidence and gave me the chance to work with animals”
“I love the community farm art group but have been unable to come due to scheduling problems”
“Thank you for the time for the course. I love coming down to the farm”

“A smiling face!”

“I thoroughly enjoy coming to the farm on Mondays and Wednesdays. I enjoy the staff and other volunteers' company and feel much better when I get home because I have achieved a lot in the day”

“My time here has been amazing. If I feel sad when getting here my mood changes very quickly and I'm always glad to get here”

“We need anger management area”

“Every staff member will listen and help”

“I love the farm it really helps me, and it is so calm and relaxing down here”

“It is the only place that I feel I can be what I am without masking”

“The farm is an excellent way for me to socialise and do something constructive with my time. Everyone is so welcoming and inclusive. I feel better for coming and being part of it”

“The farm is a high-value therapeutic activity for attendees. Camaraderie thrives amongst participants”

“The people here are very compassionate and kind, they help whenever they can”

“Love it!”

“A happy place to be and learn about the benefits of teamwork and outdoor activity”

“I enjoy coming to the farm Monday and Wednesday as a volunteer and I find the people and staff very nice and friendly there is a lot of new projects coming up next year and I hope to be involved with them”

“This farm has been a great part of life. I am grateful to be here. Thank you!”

“I have enjoyed my time at the community farm”

“I love coming here, helps me cope with my stressful times that are going on at the moment”

“The farm is the place I go to help my mental health. It helps me think but also not get stuck on bad things. The staff always support me”

4.3 Qualitative evaluation

This section presents the findings of the inductive analysis of the interviews and focus groups organised according to the main and sub themes identified via the inductive thematic analysis. The analysis shows several prominent themes related to the experiences and impacts of the organisation on its volunteers, staff, and stakeholders. The key themes identified were “Pathways to engagement and change”, “Boosting mental health and wellbeing”, “Driving community support”, “Developing skills and building confidence”, “Impacting stakeholders and the wider community”, and “Addressing organisational challenges and developing facilitators”. For each main theme, a range of sub-themes were identified. These are discussed in detail, with the addition of illustrative quotes, in the sections below.

4.3.1 Main theme 1: Pathways to engagement and change

The "Pathways to engagement and change" theme uncovers the diverse and often personal journeys that led participants to become part of the People and Animals family. This theme captures the initial motivations, circumstances, and influences that prompted individuals to engage, and provides insight into the various factors that attract volunteers and stakeholders, as well as the unique and sometimes serendipitous nature of their involvement.

CASE STUDY 3: Hilda and Rose’s Journey with People and Animals

Backstory

Hilda joined the Farm when she accompanied her mum, Rose, to the arts and crafts group, as Rose has Alzheimer’s. The arts and crafts group originally was a dementia art group but has expanded for anyone to join. Hilda noticed that Rose needed to get out and socialise with people so she wouldn’t be stuck in the house, and also hoped it would bring Rose out of her shell more. Rose has some amazing art skills that are really astounding and would be wasted had she not joined the Farm. Hilda also realised that she needed that time away from the house as well. Hilda has some health issues that result in her being stuck at home quite often too.

Experience at the Farm

Hilda said that everyone at the farm is so friendly, and she looks forward to every visit, feeling relaxed whilst at the Farm. Rose has gone on to join another art club outside of the farm, showing her growth in self-confidence.

Challenges

Hilda does have some challenges with Rose’s Alzheimer’s, although she may not admit it. However, People and Animals have supported her as much as they can and are always around for support. Another challenge is when the Farm would flood which was difficult for Rose, but this problem has been addressed by the installation of new drainage

Conclusion

Hilda found the art and crafts group did more than just help Rose, but also herself. Rose is more confident in herself now, as well as in her art.

4.3.1.1 Sub theme: Informal recommendations and personal networks

A prominent pathway to involvement highlighted in the discussions is through informal recommendations and personal networks. Many participants found their way to People and Animals through word-of-mouth referrals from friends, family, or acquaintances who were already familiar with the organisation.

One volunteer described their journey as follows: **"I found out through the Jobcentre because I wanted to work somewhere where they had animals and an environment where I'm out in the open and take my mind off things for my mental health. And that recommendation was from one of the Jobcentre interviewers who used to drive past every morning to work and knew about the farm"**. This illustrates how a casual recommendation from a job centre contact played a crucial role in introducing the volunteer to the organisation.

Another volunteer shared a similar experience: **"I started by finding out from 'toast' which was the down the Queen Mary Centre and Ben said one day come up and have a look around and see if you like it. Gave me the address and the directions. And I came up and I liked it"**. In this instance, the volunteer learned about the organisation through an earlier community-based initiative run by the People and Animals Director of Operations and was encouraged to visit the site. The informal and friendly nature of this introduction reflects the community-oriented and approachable image of People and Animals.

4.3.1.2 Sub theme: Serendipitous discoveries

In addition to recommendations from personal networks, some participants discovered People and Animals serendipitously. These unplanned encounters often occurred during routine activities, such as driving past the organisation's location or attending unrelated events.

One volunteer recounted their unexpected discovery of the organisation: **"The (person that introduced me) drove past this place. He had an interest in animals and he recommended it"**. Similarly, one of the members of staff recounted: **"So I saw the farm, I didn't even know this existed. I've driven past it like a million times. And then I saw something pop up on Facebook, saying People and Animals and I was like, Oh, what's that?"**. This quote highlights how a simple act of driving by the farm's location piqued the interest of individuals. These chance observations led to further exploration and eventual involvement with the organisation.

4.3.1.3 Sub theme: Formal referrals and institutional pathways

In some cases, participants were introduced to People and Animals through more formal channels, such as referrals from institutions like educational bodies. These institutional pathways often catered to individuals seeking therapeutic or rehabilitative activities, as well as those looking to gain work experience or vocational training.

CASE STUDY 4: Alice's Journey with People and Animals

Backstory

Alice is currently working for a food bank, but decided she wanted to pick up some extra work, so she had applied for a voluntary job at a Night Shelter. She found they were treating her badly during the process and so a friend advised Alice to join the farm as a volunteer instead, as she would benefit better and in return People and Animals would benefit too. Alice also works as a cleaner on her days off from the Farm and food bank.

Challenges

Previous to starting volunteer work, Alice was a carer. Alice initially cared for her husband, who sadly died of cancer, and went on to care for her grandson who again, sadly died from his various health issues. She has fibromyalgia which makes her struggle with pain, and so opted to stay within volunteering as it can be at her own pace. Alice's only struggles at the farm are people she doesn't get along, but she stays away from them, with and if her pain is particularly bad on that day.

Experience at the farm

Despite all of Alice's previous challenges, she stays positive. Alice has become a "Mum" to other volunteers at the farm, looking out for people and taking them under her wing if anyone new is anxious or if anyone has a struggle during their time at the Farm. Alice loves her time on-site, doing arts and crafts and other physical jobs through the week. She makes lots of things at home for the Farm that she brings in, such as crafts to for the Farm to sell and donated items for use around the Farm.

Conclusion

Alice is a positive and supportive person at the Farm, giving it her all.

A volunteer described their referral process: ***"It think my experience is really different to everyone else's only because mine was referred through school. By year 10 I had dropped out. The County Council and Norfolk had both forgotten about me. Neither knew where I was. In an educational way, I didn't exist for a while"***. Their referral aimed to re-engage them after a period of disengagement from the educational system, emphasising the role of the community farm in providing a supportive environment for those who had been overlooked or marginalised by traditional institutions.

Another participant explained the role of the Job Centre in their journey: ***"At the Job Centre if they find out that you're volunteering here, they seem to not be trying to push you into a full-time job. Because I think probably like me a lot others here are the same and find it hard to hold down a paid full-time job because you're always under pressure"***. This underscores the supportive and accommodating nature of the organisation, which contrasts with the pressures often experienced in conventional employment settings. The role of teamwork and close collaboration in this type of process was illustrated by this reflection from a stakeholder: ***"That work was a result of collaboration between People and Animals and the early help managers around***

interventions, alternative education, and services that could be offered to young people who weren't currently in mainstream education”.

In addition to the role of institutional pathways, the importance of professional networks was also illustrated by the comment of this stakeholder: ***“In my job role I refer people through. One of my main cases that I referred over; I had a girl I say she was like 13/14 she had gone through so many secondary schools she wasn't naughty she was highly strung.... we got her into the People and Animals community farm that kid flourished for the first ever time in her entire life! She was good at something.”***

CASE STUDY 5: Baxter's teaching with People and Animals

Backstory

Baxter is a part-time staff member at the farm. Baxter comes to the farm to teach other people skills within horticulture. Previous to this, Baxter was a community tutor for Cambridgeshire Skills, which led him to the Farm. He had a look around the Farm to see what he could do, and he saw potential straight away. Baxter knew what People and Animals were doing was important for his community and saw not only how his work at the Farm could benefit others but also himself.

Experience at the Farm

Baxter reports having all positive experiences at the Farm. Within his lessons he finds it useful to teach mindfulness alongside the core material as he has seen results in people by making them become more confident, happier and come out of their shell. People and Animals' staff also have seen the same results and without People and Animals, Baxter says, none of it would be possible. Baxter enjoys teaching and watching people evolve in themselves, as it is a sort of therapy to himself and has taught him how to support people better.

Challenges

Baxter has only had a challenge or two but both of which have been address and solved. One of these challenges was a worry about other behaviours while on his course, worrying that someone could “kick off”. However, that was solved by DBS checks that People and Animals carry out before people can enrol and are given extra support if they need it while at the Farm. Baxter praised People and Animals for being strong enough to turn people away if they will disrupt the serenity of the farm. The other concern was about safety but once again, Baxter said that this has been addressed with staff caring radios and getting advice from a safety expert and training staff and volunteers about safety.

Conclusion

Baxter described the farm as an “island of wellbeing” citing that the Farm is important for mental health and wellbeing. He continues to teach at the Farm and strengthen his bond further with People and Animals and hopes to keep a permanent place for himself there. Baxter is very happy to live close to the Farm and support People and Animals and the community.

4.3.1.4 Sub theme: Personal motivations and interests

Underlying many pathways to involvement are personal motivations and interests, particularly a passion for animals and a desire to contribute to the community. One volunteer succinctly captured this sentiment: ***"I was just happy to chip in rather than lead anything because with having my previous job as a supervisor and been pumped down to the ground over it. It sorts of made me think I don't want to be in charge of anything. Not because I can't because I know I can. It was just that I didn't want to do it"***. Their motivation was rooted in a desire to engage in meaningful work without the pressures of leadership, reflecting a search for a fulfilling yet manageable role.

Another volunteer expressed their initial attraction to the organisation: ***"Well it's the opportunity to either do stuff or not do stuff depending on how you feel. But when you've got a mental health problem you need distraction, and this is ideal for that"***. The decision to "give it a go" was driven by their need for social interaction and a structured activity to combat isolation, highlighting the perceived therapeutic and social benefits.

A member of staff summarised it like this: ***"We aren't clinicians, we aren't educators, we are just real people that have come together. We're a team of people that really want to do our best for a community. We just so happen to have a good background in education, in youth work, in family work, in interventions of various kinds, whether it's animal assisted interventions or green care provision. We just happen to have that background. But we are just real people trying to come together and create something exciting"***.

4.3.1.5 Sub theme: Integration and immediate engagement

A recurring theme among participants was the immediate sense of belonging and engagement they felt upon engaging with the organisation. Many volunteers and stakeholders noted that they quickly felt at home and integrated into the farm community, which reinforced their commitment to staying involved.

A People and Animals staff member reflected how the Lottery Funding had allowed the organisation to expand their reach, with over 300 new people walking through the door. The environment of the farm was an instant pull for many: ***"Another community organisation might say (to them) "Why don't you come and see the ponies?" You see people very shut down when they first come, not really wanting to engage, not even wanting to leave the well-being walk for fear of having to do something they're not sure of, not able to make eye contact, not able to talk directly to the staff members and that's the vulnerability that we've got of people coming through the door to begin with. And you notice the change really within a relatively short space of time where you know, four to six weeks later even you feel them starting to make eye contact with others"***. One volunteer observed: ***"Everyone that's come to visit the place to have a look round has not gone away. Everyone seems to (stay). You see them wandering***

around and then the next week or whenever they start... they turn up". This highlights a magnetic appeal of the organisation, where initial visits often result in long-term involvement. The welcoming atmosphere and the positive experiences of early visits was often seen to play a crucial role in this process.

Another volunteer shared their view of rapid integration: **"The positive energy and immediate connection you feel here make it a place where people want to stay and get involved. Everyone who comes here seems to find their niche and really integrates quickly"**. This immediate connection and sense of purpose foster a strong bond, enhancing both individual satisfaction and organisational stability. A stakeholder was direct in their praise for ease by which the organisation welcomed new people: **"Her (the Director of Operations Katie) and her team are bloody lovely and that counts. I don't care how good you are if you're not a nice person. I would not refer anybody else's children for service that I wouldn't want my own children to go to"**.

A number of the volunteers commented how the flexible nature of the farm environment really helped support their integration. For example, this person reflected: **"And then I was just out of work for about two years. And yeah, since I've been volunteering here, it's like having flexibility and structure at the same time. Like, even if I do want to stay here for the day, if I'm not feeling at the greatest, they don't push you. You do the best you can like, if your effort today is 50%. Then, that's what they're happy with"** whilst another said: **"If you've come in and said I'm not feeling too great but I'll see how long I can stay for or anything like that. It's just "Go with the flow". There is nothing to say do it or if you want to do is that instead of what you were doing, change around a bit. Just feel at ease"**.

4.3.1.6 Summary of theme

The pathways to involvement with People and Animals are diverse and multifaceted, encompassing informal recommendations, serendipitous discoveries, formal referrals, and deeply personal motivations. These varied routes highlight the inclusive and accessible nature of the organisation, which caters to a wide range of individuals seeking meaningful engagement, social support, and mental well-being. The immediate sense of belonging and the strong community spirit were seen to further cement participants' commitment, making People and Animals an important part of their lives.

4.3.2 Main theme 2: Boosting mental health and wellbeing

The theme of "Boosting mental health and wellbeing" emerged prominently in the focus group discussions, highlighting the strong impact of the community farm on the mental health of its volunteers, staff, and stakeholders. This theme explores how the organisation's environment, activities, and community support were seen to contribute to improved mental health and well-being for those involved.

4.3.2.1 Sub theme: Creating a supportive environment

The People and Animals community farm was widely recognised for providing a relaxed and accepting environment where individuals could be themselves without the pressures

and judgments often found in traditional settings. This supportive atmosphere was seen to be crucial for those dealing with mental health issues, offering them a sanctuary where they could find solace and understanding.

One volunteer succinctly expressed this sentiment: ***"There is no pressure.. they give you the options of what you want to do"***. This lack of pressure allowed individuals to engage at their own pace, which was felt to be vital for those who may feel overwhelmed by rigid expectations.

Another volunteer highlighted the understanding nature of the staff and other volunteers: ***"I think part of it, for me, it's routine. But it's also, just knowing I'll have a good day, at the end of it. There's always something to do. If you're having a hard time, you can talk to your friends here or you can talk to a staff member. And I think a big part of it now is that I feel as part of a community and I don't feel alone anymore"***. This reflection underscores the importance of having empathetic and supportive staff who are attuned to the needs of individuals with mental health challenges. As one stakeholder

CASE STUDY 6: Sebastian's confidence boost with People and Animals

Backstory

Sebastian initially joined the farm with a mental health support worker, as they thought it would be a good idea to give it a try. Before joining the farm, Sebastian would not leave the house and lacked social skills and confidence. Sebastian thought the next step to improve his mental and physical health would be to work outside in the fresh air, doing physical work.

Experience at the farm

Since being with People and Animals, Sebastian has gained a lot of confidence. He gained the confidence to volunteer without his support worker, to learn to drive, and will now speak in a group. Sebastian has gained a lot of skill experience as well, working along a staff member who has taught him many skills in woodworking and using tools. Sebastian is confident in many tasks around the Farm now.

Challenges

Sebastian initially struggled with social interaction due to his disability but has overcome that struggle by practising socialising in a place that has no judgement. Sebastian also faced a fear of horses, which he fought head-on by doing an animal course in which he interacted with the horses.

Conclusion

Sebastian has enjoyed every day that he has come to volunteer at the farm. Sebastian is grateful for the many qualifications and success he has gained from being with People and Animals. Sebastian hopes, long term, to be able to find the right working environment to fit his needs and encourages People and Animals to keep doing what they're doing as he believes in their work.

put it: **“People and Animals give people the chance to find that there's so much more than just their illness”**.

One of the stakeholders reflected on the relaxed environment of the farm and how this acted as a support: **“But actually, this little bit of heaven is really safe. Within this little bit of heaven, you forget your problems for a few hours, or you find solutions to your problems for a few hours. You get inspired to look for proper solutions to your problems. So, it's not necessarily even about taking away their problems. We can't do, that no one can. But just for a few hours you get to be inspired by something else, be influenced by something different”**.

4.3.2.2 Sub theme: Providing structure and routine

For many participants, the structure and routine provided by the organisation played a significant role in managing their mental health. Engaging in regular activities and having a sense of purpose could help mitigate feelings of aimlessness and depression.

One volunteer shared their experience: **“It's doing something where I can get out and see other people. And it's something I enjoy doing”**. Here, the act of getting out of the house and interacting with others provides an important boost to mental well-being.

Another volunteer noted the benefits of structured activities: **“Just give it a go. Ben says it's a community farm and I thought yeah, I'll give it a go. It was to get me out of the house. Get me seeing and meeting people! Getting on with my life!”**. One of the staff reflected how the wide variety of offerings the organisation could provide helped provide a structured range of offers which would allow service users to see tangible progression: **“We've also, through Katie's work with CAMB skills. We've now got a horticultural specialist who's working with adults on Wednesday, delivering community qualification-based horticulture sessions. And again, like the people Kev has worked with and Gail has worked with, it's a range of neurodiversity, mental and emotional health challenges, learning difficulties, physical disabilities. And again, you can see with them, the confidence is growing, the self-esteem is growing, their skill level is growing. And by the time they've done with different courses with Kev, or they did land-based, or animal care or the horticulture course, you can just see that self-belief and that self-confidence is growing”**.

4.3.2.3 Sub theme: Building confidence and self-esteem

The activities and projects at People and Animals are designed to build confidence and self-esteem by providing tangible achievements and positive reinforcement. This is particularly important for individuals who have struggled with low self-esteem or negative self-perceptions.

One staff member reflected on the impact of their work: **“You see the results you see them shine through to be quite honest especially with the children and adults. Today was a really good giggly laughy session. And you can see that they've really taken**

onboard the things that we've done". Such positive experiences contribute to a sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

Another staff member observed the broader impact: **"I think another impact is that because a lot of them are living with mental and emotional health challenges and personal challenges. This is a place which they will say themselves that when they walk through the door they walk into another world. And for the time that they are here they feel that they can, for that short space of time, park the difficulties that they're living with".** The ability of service users and volunteers to "park the difficulties" and get immersed in meaningful activities was seen to provide a significant mental health benefit. One stakeholder reflected on this role of the farm: **"It's about providing roles and achievements. I think it leaves people feeling valued and useful".**

A staff member reflected how the significant growth in self-esteem of one of the volunteers had allowed her to become a real asset to the organisation: **"She's gaining confidence. She has completed her gardening projects with us, thanks to the Lottery funding. But at the same time, we're asking for her help. Could you pop over to Wisbech and help the museum team there set up their garden? Could you pop over to The Secret Garden Touring Park? And it's just expanding her horizons and getting her name out there for achieving what she needs to be achieving. That's because of the partnership working, and because of those connections".**

This volunteer summarised the profound impact working at the farm has had on their own self-esteem: **"Well, I think six months I've been here. Well, even today, I'll be like teaching a whole group how to do something. And I'll just think in my mind, like, "This is crazy!". A year ago, I wouldn't have even had the confidence to go into the room, let alone be teaching and stuff. And, yeah, it's really put my confidence back".**

4.3.2.4 Sub theme: Social connections and community

The sense of community and social support at People and Animals is another critical factor in enhancing mental well-being. The organisation fosters a strong sense of belonging and mutual support, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.

A member of staff reflected: **"With our Lottery funding we've been able to deliver programmes where you're noticing that participants are starting to build friendships in the community. And I love it when people then start to bring their own things into the farm. So, we have someone who was very, very withdrawn and still has quite a few barriers up, but was actually able to attend a community led steering group meeting this this morning, sitting at a big table, and asking us, "How are you going to exhibit my artwork?" They don't even come to do art; they've just slowly engaged. They're now in a place where they're actually proud to give us their pictures for us to frame them and put them in a local exhibition with Beach Gallery. It's having a huge impact on them".** They also reflected how the expansion into adult education provision facilitated by the Lottery funding allowed People and Animals to work across generations for the first time: **"As a result of this funding, we've been able to learn how we can**

adapt our sessions and lesson plans for older people and people with different backgrounds, and just become more of a community asset across generations. We can work with whole families, so we may already be working with the children for alternative education and our youth work, but we are now able to also support their parents on a Wednesday, for example, and really enter the heart of the more vulnerable, hard to reach groups”.

A stakeholder emphasised the importance of social connections: ***“For me I mean although our services targeted on sort of getting people into work and having a progression pathway. Sometimes even if someone doesn't progress after this and they simply just come and enjoy the personal benefits they get from the farm you know. I've often had just wellbeing benefits that's been massive, even if they decide that actually 'I don't want to do anything on a regular basis.' I've had people that have just come and join two or three sessions that they've done. And they've just simply said 'That was what I needed for now. That's great. I feel better. I'm gonna come back to you when I'm ready to go again.’”.*** This highlights the farm's perceived role in providing a flexible and supportive environment where individuals can connect with others and experience well-being improvements.

4.3.2.5 Sub theme: Addressing specific mental health needs

People and Animals also addresses specific mental health needs through targeted activities and interventions. For example, the organisation runs sessions for individuals with dementia, autism, and other mental health conditions, providing tailored support that meets their unique needs.

One staff member described a session designed for individuals with mental health challenges: ***“We have other people here that have struggled with their mental health who are wheelchair bound or who have got a terminal illnesses. And the group itself is so lovely and they've created so much beautiful work”.*** These sessions offer participants a creative outlet and a supportive community. Providing a space for social interaction helps mitigate the negative effects of social isolation on mental health.

4.3.2.6 Sub theme: Flexibility and personalisation

A key strength of People and Animals is its flexibility and personalisation in addressing the mental health needs of its participants. The organisation allows individuals to engage at their own pace and choose activities that suit their interests and abilities.

A volunteer highlighted what the flexibility offered: ***“You know it gives them a reason to get out of bed for a day. Something positive to do even if they just come and do work for 10 minutes. It's just giving them a real sense of purpose which I think not a lot of places cater to that type of volunteering”.*** This flexibility ensures that everyone can participate in a way that is beneficial for their mental health. One of the staff reflected on the way the organisation worked that supported a flexible yet structured way of working: ***“And I think with that autonomy, there's also a degree of flexibility...It's almost ‘who's up for?’ or ‘who can?’ or ‘who would like to?’, and then as far as we possibly***

can, we try and make sure that everybody's doing the job, most of the time, that they'll enjoy doing. They do understand that there's some weeks that they will have to pitch in, and maybe do something that they don't enjoy as much, they know that, but most of the time, I think they're doing things that they enjoy doing, which also helps as well".

4.3.2.7 Sub theme: Delivering tailored therapeutic interventions

The organisation also incorporates tailored therapeutic interventions, such as animal-assisted therapy, which have been shown to provide significant mental health benefits. Interaction with animals can reduce stress, improve mood, and provide a sense of comfort and companionship. One staff member shared the therapeutic impact of the organisation: ***"The highlight of the session was seeing them talking to the horses and the sheep because everybody smiled. Everybody thought it was amazing!"***

One of the stakeholders also reflected how the environment of the farm provided a therapeutic setting that was non-clinical, something that was important for many clients: ***"I refer people in and take them down there for look around. Some of them are elderly, and some of them go to dementia groups, some of them have addictions and we take them down there to have a little look. Some of them actually just say "Okay, can I just wander around your farm a little bit? I need this person to talk where it's not in a doctor's surgery." Another stakeholder also reflected: "People and Animals give people the chance to find that there's so much more than just their illness. And I think it's so much more than just a distraction. It's about providing roles and achievements. I think, people feeling valued and useful".***

One participant shared the impact of these interventions: ***"I do a mixture of different things you know quite like it "***. The variety of sessions, including those involving animals, caters to different therapeutic needs and preferences. A stakeholder reflected at the skills of the organisation in tailoring the delivery of their programmes to the specific needs of their clients: ***"What Katie's been really skilled at is getting those people off and out to the farm and being able to see different opportunities and horizons".*** Later in the discussion they added: ***"So what I tend to find with the farm is that although ostensibly everybody's going to the farm, (but) I think they're quite good at actually looking at people as individuals and tailoring (what they deliver) somewhat to the individual".***

4.3.2.8 Summary of theme

The discussions showed how People and Animals was seen to play a key role in enhancing the mental health and well-being of its participants. Through a supportive environment, structured activities, confidence-building projects, social connections, and personalised interventions, the organisation provides a holistic approach to mental health care. The flexibility and understanding shown by the staff further ensured that all could benefit from the services in a way that suits their individual needs.

CASE STUDY 7: Arthur's rehabilitation with People and Animals

Backstory

Now as an older gentleman who had been living with a mental and physical condition for 12 years, Arthur was coming to end of his working life. Arthur is a veteran, is proud to share that. When Arthur's mental health condition had declined, he sought out medication but knew he needed a place to keep his mind busy and pass on what he had learned in his life to the next generation. He had heard that People and Animals work with adults with mental health and disability needs and wanted to join in.

Experience at the farm

At the farm, as soon as Arthur walks in he already has a smile on his face. He is joyful from the therapy animals greeting him and hearing the laughter of others. No matter what, People and Animals is always a place that makes Arthur cheerful and delighted. Arthur believes that the enthusiasm of the farm stems from us all giving and believes that is why people love it so much, as well as how relaxing it feels. Arthur said that the farm also has the best camaraderie he has found outside of the military.

Challenges

Arthur has stated that the only downside to the farm is a few of the people who come try to change the farm to fit them, rather than the other way around. But it is the only negative he could say.

Conclusion

Arthur is always happy to share his knowledge and keep everyone safe. He always feels welcomed by People and Animals.

4.3.3 Main theme 3: Driving community support

The theme of "Driving community support" emerged strongly in the discussions, showing how People and Animals was seen to foster a sense of belonging and mutual aid among its community of participants as well as their links with the wider community. This narrative explores the various dimensions of community and social support, including the creation of inclusive spaces, the development of supportive relationships, and the broader impact on the community.

4.3.3.1 Sub theme: Creating inclusive spaces

People and Animals was recognised for its inclusive and welcoming environment, which encourages people from diverse backgrounds to participate and feel valued. This inclusivity was seen to be crucial for fostering a sense of community and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can benefit from the organisation.

One staff member highlighted the importance of inclusivity: ***"I think everybody treats everybody as an equal. You talk to everybody, you listen to everybody that you take on board and if there's something you could help them with you just do it, you know, and you offer that help don't you"***. This underscores a commitment to treating all participants with respect and dignity, creating a space where everyone feels valued and included.

One of the volunteers reflected on their approach to new people: ***"Just be a friend. Another friendly face...Just say hello. And just be polite to them. Treat them as human beings. And hopefully they will become part of the team"***. A staff member also reflected how inclusivity was about accepting the current emotional state of people at the farm: ***"The fact that even if they come here and they're having a really bad day, they don't particularly to talk to anybody, and they don't really want to get involved in anything. They know that they can come they can sit they can go to a part of the farm and sit on the grass if they want to with a cup of tea. And that's absolutely fine"***.

4.3.3.2 Sub theme: Developing supportive relationships

The relationships developed within People and Animals were a cornerstone of the organisation's impact, providing emotional support, fostering social connections, and helping participants build a network of mutual aid.

A staff member described the supportive nature of colleagues: ***"And can I also say that I've noticed with Kev that quite a few of the volunteers that really bonded with him. I think some almost look at him like a father figure in some ways. And when he's not here they really miss him. Because I think it's not only that they're learning skills from Kev, but they can actually open up to him. And they can talk to him."*** This availability and attentiveness of the staff was seen to create a reliable support system for service users and volunteers, helping them feel secure and cared for.

The importance of peer support was also emphasised in discussions: ***"But you've also got us to come and ask for help. And oh yeah, that works both ways; we've all got that ability to ask for help but also give help to people. Whether it be volunteers, staff, whatever"***. This reciprocity was seen to foster a strong sense of community, where participants could both give and receive help as needed. And this was recognised by professional partners. A number of stakeholders also commented on how the work of People and Animals supported their own organisations. For example: ***"Gail's Wednesday afternoon group we have professional psychological practitioners who will come with a couple of people as their support worker. And I think the professional organisations will often comment on the growth that they're seeing in the person"***.

A staff member reflected how the Lottery funding had opened up new ways of support by expanding the network within which People and Animals operated: ***"There's multiple ways we're supporting each other, really. It may be that with this new building we're having put in place as we've established this relationship, we've been thinking, OK, Cambridgeshire Skills (an adult learning organisation), we could share the love and***

they can work there too, and that means our volunteers can create an allotment over on their site as well as maintain an allotment on our site, and that means we can build a flint wall and that flint wall can go across both sides. You know, there's no reason why skills can't be shared in that way".

4.3.3.3 Sub theme: Driving impact on the farm community and wider community

The benefits of People and Animals were seen to extend beyond individual participants to the broader community. Throughout discussions, many participants described how the organisation serves as a hub for community engagement, offering various programmes and activities that promoted social cohesion and community well-being.

One stakeholder described the impact on the farm community: **"The volunteering opportunities as well as, you know, just the interaction between people of different age ranges and backgrounds. It's very important for building a cohesive community".** Interaction such as this across diverse groups was seen to help break down social barriers and fosters a more inclusive and supportive community environment.

Another stakeholder noted the importance of these community connections: **"And I think, you know, personally every time that you call, everybody here is enjoying themselves whether it's the kids that are in a classroom, you know, you can just feel the energy and you can just see the like the positive impact that it has on the people in here and talking to the volunteers".**

This stakeholder reflected on the importance of the positioning of the farm in the local area: **"I think the farms position and location within Wisbech is really interesting. I think it's one of its crown jewels because it's just on the outskirts (of the town). Wisbech and the surrounding areas are awash with children's homes and alternative provision education facilities, and it (the farm) just does seem like a bit of a respite. The whole vibe on the farm is different to those that the young people, or the volunteers that we met and the learners that we work with there. They see a bit of a holiday feel to it or a bit of just a home away from home sort of sense and, and I think that's really important".**

One of the stakeholders also spoke about how they felt the work of People and Animals had also encouraged other organisational change in the community: **"So I honestly don't think the Baby Bank CIC would have set up if it wasn't for People & Animals, because they (the Baby Bank) watched it and they realised they could also do it. And they've come from like, a shipping container in the back garden to a shop. Now they're operating like seven days a week and they're doing Christmas stuff and other bits and bobs...Katie's (model will be) used a little bit, but not just by them, but by other organisations that want to climb".**

4.3.3.4 Sub theme: Providing varied opportunities for engagement

People and Animals offers a variety of programmes and activities that engage participants and provide opportunities for personal and social development. These

activities range from practical skills training to therapeutic interventions, all designed to foster community and social support. The Lottery funding had helped People and Animals grow and expand their offering, as discussed by this staff member: ***“If you think back in 2015, it was just a dog and a van going to outreach centres. But this Lottery funding has really supported us to get moving. We always have the animals as a form of engagement, but thanks to the Lottery we now have green woodworking, we have the bushcraft, we have outdoor cookery, we have horticulture, we've got the crafting, you know it's no end. And then it also doesn't just attract different people, but it brings in different people who actually have their own skills”***.

Many stakeholders commented on the positive implications of the wide variety of activities offered. One staff member discussed this range of activities: ***“We benefit them by offering them a variety of different sessions to do different activities. Jess and I work in a programme to deliver to them”***. During discussions, this variety was seen to ensure that there is something for everyone, catering to different interests and needs, and promoting broader participation.

The role of the animals in the mix of opportunities providing a mechanism for engagement was widely commented on. For example, this stakeholder reflected: ***“The animals are a big draw. I know for one client, they have schizoaffective disorder, and the thing that engaged them from the beginning was actually mucking out the horses. They loved it. They felt it wasn't overstimulating, but they were also achieving, doing something, helping the animals. The animals I think certainly for mental health clients, are a big hook”***.

A volunteer emphasised the impact of these activities on the personal development of service users: ***“I think as their skills have picked up, their confidence levels, they have confidence because they can do stuff!”***. The development of skills and confidence through these activities was seen to not only benefit the individuals but also contribute to the strength and resilience of the community as a whole. One of the stakeholders reflected how open discussion with wider networks helped drive these opportunities: ***“Katie even now will often ring me and go “I've just got this idea, what do you think?” So sometimes it's that sounding board sometimes it's that “Yeah that will work!””***.

4.3.3.5 Sub theme: Addressing social isolation

One of the significant social support functions of People and Animals is addressing social isolation. By providing a space where people can connect with others and engage in meaningful activities, the organisation helps reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

One staff member reflected how the network People and Animals had built up with the Lottery funding meant they were now able to engage with ever more socially isolated people: ***“Yes, Agenoria House (an NHS support service for adults with moderate to severe mental illness in Wisbech) has people coming out of more intensive support and they are now being told to come to us. So, they're not really sure what they're coming into. They may be doing it because they have to do it or it might be they have***

not left their bedrooms before, but now they come to us to start gaining confidence". Another staff member noted the role of the organisation in reducing isolation: **"Because some of the people are living on their own. And in the winter, some of them don't see anybody for seven days after four o'clock in the afternoon. So, it's the fact that they've got this time here".**

One of the stakeholders further emphasised how the joined-up nature of the work of People and Animals helped support the needs of their organisation to better integrate individuals into the wider world: **"We believe that (working with) residents in isolation isn't going to work. They're part of a larger community and therefore we want those communities to thrive".**

4.3.3.6 Summary of theme

During the discussions, People and Animals was seen to play a vital role in fostering community and social support. Through the creation of inclusive spaces, the development of supportive relationships, and the provision of diverse engagement opportunities, the organisation was widely credited with enhancing the wellbeing of its participants and the broader community.

4.3.4 Main theme 4: Developing skills and building confidence

The theme of "Developing skills and building confidence" emerged prominently in the focus group discussions, highlighting how People and Animals has been seen to have facilitated personal growth and empowerment among its participants. This narrative explores the various ways in which the organisation fosters skill development and boosts confidence through its programmes and activities.

4.3.4.1 Sub theme: Practical skills development

People and Animals offers a wide range of activities that help participants develop practical skills. These include woodwork, horticulture, animal care, and various arts and crafts projects. Engaging in these activities was seen to provide participants with hands-on experience and tangible outcomes, which were viewed as significantly contributing to their sense of achievement.

One volunteer shared their experience with woodwork: **"I've learned quite a lot of skills here. I think because I'm quite young. So, I've got a lot to learn. Like some of the I guess more 'man' jobs would be that I've built a shed with the boys. I've learned to use a chisel".** This quote highlights the practical skills gained through participation, emphasising how these activities cater to a range of interests and skill levels.

Another volunteer described their involvement in painting and construction projects: **"When I first started, I was painting the fences green. Yeah. And the sheds I've painted them a few times. And I helped build the carport as well!".** These activities not only provide practical skills but also foster a sense of accomplishment and contribution to the farm community. One of the stakeholders described the impact they had seen on

one of their clients who had taken part in activities at the farm: ***“She was (finally) seen to be good at something. And not only that, she’s now has gone off to horse college”.***

4.3.4.2 Sub theme: Building confidence through achievement

The process of learning new skills and completing projects contributes significantly to building confidence. The programme was seen to ensure that participants have the opportunity to see the results of their efforts, which reinforces their sense of competence and self-worth.

A staff member reflected on this impact: ***“For a lot of them (service users) it’s the first time in a long time that they can see that they’ve achieved. So, they’ve been involved in different practices... the fact that they get a tangible certificate at the end of it as well as tangible portfolio of evidence of photographs and statements of what they’ve done for a lot. And that’s the first time that they’ve actually seen a tangible achievement in quite a few years for some of them ”.***

A volunteer reflected: ***“I get a sense of achievement out of everything I do at the farm. It feels like I’m making a difference in my own life and the farm itself. It feels like that’ll make a lasting impact”*** whilst another felt: ***“Well I know I’ve gained quite a lot of confidence through like doing all sorts of different things here. Things that you’re***

CASE STUDY 8: Lennon’s love of animals

Backstory

Lennon has always loved animals, although initially he used to hunt birds and described himself as “on the wrong tracks” but he had a sudden change of heart and turned his life around complete with animals. He even became vegetarian due to his love of animals.

Challenges

Lennon has Parkinson’s Disease, and he struggled in his last job due to his shaking hands and memory issues but did not know it was Parkinson’s Disease at the time. This led to his last employer retiring Lennon due to ill health. Lennon became suspicious and reclusive. An occupational therapist introduced Lennon to the Farm. Lennon saw the horses and was in love. Lennon has been at the farm ever since. Although Lennon manages his mental health every day, he continues to always give his support to others at the farm.

Experience at the farm

Lennon loves the Farm as there is always something to keep him busy, and he found good friendship with other volunteers at the farm, as well as support. Lennon find his work rewarding and appreciates the pace at which he can work. Lennon loves the horses and is not afraid to get up close and feed them.

Conclusion

Lennon finds the Farm supportive and productive for him, he says all the staff and volunteers and friendly. Lennon said that joining the Farm was the best move he has ever made for himself.

very nervous to start. I think confidence has been quite a big emotion that's come up”.

4.3.4.3 Sub theme: Promoting personal and social empowerment

Beyond practical skills, People and Animals was seen to play a crucial role in enhancing personal and social skills. Both service users and volunteers often started with low confidence and might be hesitant to engage with others. However, through their involvement, they were seen to develop better communication skills, social confidence, and a sense of autonomy.

One volunteer shared their journey: ***“Confidence in being with people. When I first started here, I was all shy I didn't know anyone. Now look at me. I'm talking to everyone!”***. This transformation illustrates the organisation's impact on social empowerment, helping participants become more comfortable and confident in social settings. The same volunteer reflected: ***“It's like a little thing, but ... I'm quite short anyway.... but I would always think of myself as small. But now being here I feel taller”***.

CASE STUDY 9: Winnie's green fingers

Backstory

Winnie has had a very difficult life leading up to joining People and Animals, with lots of mental health struggles that she still manages today. Winnie came to hear about the Farm through a learning and recovery group, where a course was offered at People and Animals.

Experience at the Farm

Initially, Winnie joined the farm for a gardening course but has stayed for the animals and even arts and crafts occasionally. Winnie has stated that she loves People and Animals and doesn't want to leave, even saying the tutor of the gardening course, Baxter, added another course on for them to continue their gardening course as no-one in the group wanted to leave. Winnie enjoys the flexible and informal style of learning in the courses at the Farm, so much so that she has signed up for a course with animals in the summer but will be joining another gardening course.

Challenges

Winnie has few challenges at the farm still, with managing her emotionally unstable personality disorder. Another slight issue Winnie has is with the weather, but she appreciates nothing can be done about it!

Conclusion

Overall, Winnie finds People and Animals to have a nice atmosphere where everyone is friendly within the calming space, whilst the Farm is a convenient and user-friendly space. Winnie also has truly noticed the experience People and Animals has given her and is truly grateful for it. Winnie is also grateful for the Farm being available to people who may have mental health issues or going through times of mental health crises, or just need something more to fill their time.

Another volunteer echoed this sentiment, noting the welcoming environment for new volunteers: ***"We just need to build their confidence up. I try to make them feel as welcome as everyone else"***. This supportive atmosphere fosters mutual respect and encourages participants to step out of their comfort zones. One stakeholder reflected how they had seen the impact of this in a service user they had spoken to ***"And she came along to one of these events and explained about how being involved with People and Animals, I think she's a volunteer now, it had changed her life. I think she was saying she didn't go out; she was even thinking about suicide. But since she'd been involved with People and Animals, her life has been transformed. She got a purpose. Not only had she helped herself, but she was then helping other people and giving back"***. As one volunteer put it: ***"When I'm here, I'm not nanny, I'm not mum, and I'm not the daughter. I'm just me!"***.

4.3.4.4 Sub theme: Providing formal training and qualifications

In addition to informal skill development, People and Animals also provides opportunities for formal training and qualifications which have been supported by the Lottery funding. These include courses in first aid, health and safety, food hygiene, and functional skills like maths and English.

One volunteer highlighted the importance of these opportunities: ***"Well I am doing a maths course for my level one maths here. I do it on a Monday. So that will then help me get into more care jobs. Or well anywhere I want to go. I need a level one math"***. The provision of formal qualifications enhances employability and provides participants with credentials that can aid in their personal and professional development.

Another volunteer mentioned the benefits of small class sizes for personalised learning: ***"It's also good that it's only a maximum of three people in the maths class. Because I really need that one-to-one support"***. This individualised approach was seen to help ensure that participants receive the attention and support they need to succeed. Indeed, one of the stakeholders reflected on how a number of their more troubled clients had gone on to study to obtain formal qualifications from the farm: ***"I had two or three young people on my caseload when I was at my previous role, whose outcomes were looking terrible, and they've been through some real awful experiences. Some of them now volunteer at the farm and are doing their ASDAN qualifications"***.

4.3.4.5 Sub theme: Creating a mutually supportive learning and development environment

The staff at People and Animals were seen to play a crucial role in creating a mutually supportive and encouraging learning environment. They provided guidance, mentorship, and emotional support as well as formal teaching skills, which are essential for fostering a positive and empowering experience.

A volunteer described their approach: ***"If any of us have got a problem or we need to talk to somebody about it. There is always somebody we can. Staff are always here. They're always in there, they're keeping an eye out. Yeah, they are always willing to***

help as much as they can. Which if you've got mental health problems which I think majority of us have somewhere along the line. You know they really helped us". This availability and attentiveness create a reliable support system for participants, helping them feel secure and cared for.

Another staff member emphasised the collaborative nature of the environment: **"I think we all need each other to work together"**. This sense of teamwork and mutual support further enhanced the learning experience, making it a positive and rewarding process for everyone involved. One stakeholder reflected on the positive role that the learning environment played in this way: **"A lot of the volunteers have had quite challenging lives and continue to have so and that sort of continuous approach (to learning and development) that People and Animals are doing with them it's really impressive"**.

4.3.4.6 Summary of theme

The discussions show how People and Animals was seen to play a vital role in skill development and confidence building. Through a combination of practical activities, formal training, and a supportive learning environment, the organisation helps participants gain valuable skills and boost their confidence. The organisation's commitment to fostering a sense of achievement, empowerment, and mutual support was also widely seen to underscore its importance as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of its participants.

CASE STUDY 10: Ezra gets back into work

Backstory

Ezra had taken the year off from his job due to mental health struggles, he was using the time off to improve himself. He felt bored of his current job and was looking for a new direction of work. A friend of his who also happened to volunteer at People and Animals, Violet, had told him about the Farm and he thought it would be nice to help people.

Experience at the farm

Ezra uses his time at farm well. He enjoys socialising with others, always making others laugh. He has learned a lot whilst spending his time with People and Animals, things he didn't think about learning before. Ezra has even gained the confidence to learn how to drive.

Challenges

Ezra's only challenge has been noted as a person or two at the farm that he doesn't get along with but tries his best to avoid them!

Conclusion

Ezra finds being at People and Animals relaxing, he enjoys the arts and crafts and doing work with the animals.

4.3.5 Main theme 5: Impacting stakeholders and the wider community

The "Impacting stakeholders and the wider community" theme illustrates how People and Animals extends its influence beyond individual participants to affect a broader range of stakeholders and the community at large. This narrative explores the diverse ways in which the organisation makes a difference.

4.3.5.1 Sub theme: Enhancing community well-being via partnership

People and Animals was seen as playing a key role in enhancing the well-being of the local community by offering a variety of programmes and activities that promote social cohesion and personal growth and are developing via partnership approaches with external organisations. As previous reflections show, these programmes cater to individuals from different backgrounds, including those with mental health challenges, disabilities, and social isolation.

One stakeholder from a commercial partner highlighted the organisation's role in community learning: **"Our association with People and Animals has been invaluable in bridging that gap for people that aren't quite ready for work but want to do something with their lives"**. This underscores their view of the organisation's capacity to provide meaningful activities that help individuals transition into more active and engaged roles. Another stakeholder also reflected how important these partnerships were in developing the farm from small beginnings to the place it is currently in: **"Katie and People and Animals started off small with just the land and lease and then they've gone through the planning process and worked with Anglian Water in terms of getting some of the infrastructure done."** And one stakeholder discussed on how the professional partnership they had developed with People and Animals benefitted their own wellbeing: **"For us they're a truly valued and trusted partner and you know, as well as what they do for our learners, we quite like going there just for our sanity. Let's go and see the rabbits. Yeah!"**.

4.3.5.2 Sub theme: Developing sustained collaboration with other organisations

People and Animals actively collaborates with other local organisations, amplifying its impact through partnerships. Many participants described how these collaborations help extend the reach of the community farm, bringing its benefits to a wider audience. A member of staff commented: **"With the help of Lottery funding, we've run programmes that mean that it's become a bit more of a self-sustaining project; it's run by local people for local people, and it's been driven by local people as well. The staff are realising they can actually step back from some of these projects a little bit more."**

One of the stakeholders reflected on how quickly People and Animals had become embedded into the local area: **"Katie and her team have done amazingly well. Because when they first came on the scene as much as we were all like, "Oh hey!", none of us expected her to stick around"**. One stakeholder also described the collaborative efforts: **"We have the Fenland Orchard next door. And we're on a similar**

journey as People and Animals in the sense of how does the community orchard sit within its community? How do we support people to have that private place?". These partnerships foster a network of support and resource sharing, enhancing community resilience and well-being. Another stakeholder reflected how the presence of this orchard helped improve the accessibility of the farm to the general community: ***"The only thing I'd like it to do, is to allow walk-in people. Like once a week or so. However, that's now been sorted out because we've been given land to the orchard next door, and they've created the walkway around the farm. Which has literally worked"***.

4.3.5.3 Sub theme: Identifying local priorities

People and Animals acts as a hub for community engagement, bringing together people of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities. This engagement fosters a sense of community spirit and collective responsibility.

One of the stakeholders reflected how skilled People and Animals were at identifying local priorities without the need for intervention: ***"I think their (the local council) view is that Katie will identify what the community need is, and she will look at ways to try to address it"***. A volunteer described the positive community impact: ***"I think another impact is that because a lot of them are living with mental and emotional health challenges and personal challenges. This is a place which they will say themselves that when they walk through the door, they walk into another world"***. Indeed, one of the staff members reflected how the Lottery funding had allowed the organisation to engage with some local population groups that they hadn't originally planned to: ***"We now run a veteran's project offering therapeutic work. We've ended up working with veterans coming through this project just as much as we're working with those with learning disabilities, mental health difficulties, those that aren't seeking work but are engaged through nature and then realise that they could work later"***.

4.3.5.4 Sub theme: Achieving long-term community benefits

The long-term benefits of People and Animals include the development of a more cohesive and supportive community. Participants discussed how the skills and confidence gained by people using the farm enable them to contribute more actively to society, while the organisation's inclusive and supportive ethos promotes social harmony. A member of People and Animals staff reflected how the skills gained by programme participants help drive the organisation sustainability: ***"And it's all that confidence, all those soft skills that have been growing through the Lottery funded sessions that are actually not only enabling that individual to progress and move past those barriers, but it's also enabling the organisation to become again embedded in the community and protected by the community with this sustainability plan now taking place"***.

A stakeholder highlighted the organisation's unique value: ***"It's just giving them a real sense of purpose which I think not a lot of places cater to that type of volunteering. So, it's quite unique in that sense"***. This sense of purpose was seen to not only benefit

the individuals but also strengthen the social fabric of the community. One of the staff reflected on how important the funding was from organisations such as the National Lottery Community Fund in locking in long-term provision: **“So the funding helps us evolve really so, with sort of being able to be self-sufficient in terms of the core costs, salaries, through commission services, but we wouldn't be able to say, "Oh, hey, let's take all of this that we're doing for young people and give it to adults", if you didn't have the funding. We need that to be able to progress onto the projects”**. They further reflected: **“Similarly, we need an extra toilet now, because of the additional people that are coming to the farm. That wouldn't be able to be covered under just core running costs. So, we need that funding to be able to evolve and keep growing at the speed that the community is wanting us to grow”**.

4.3.5.5 Summary of theme

Participants discussed how the impact of People and Animals on stakeholders and the community is profound and multifaceted. Through its inclusive programmes, therapeutic activities, and collaborative efforts, the organisation was seen to enhance community well-being, promote social inclusion, and provide valuable educational opportunities.

4.3.6 Main theme 6: Addressing organisational challenges and developing facilitators

The "Addressing organisational challenges and developing facilitators" theme captures the various challenges and enablers that were reported as shaping the functioning and growth of People and Animals.

4.3.6.1 Sub theme: Challenges in organisational management

Managing an organisation like People and Animals involves numerous challenges, ranging from daily operational issues to strategic planning and funding. One significant challenge that was discussed is managing the balance between the needs of participants and the operational demands of the organisation.

A staff member noted the unpredictability and intensity of the work: **“You can't plan too much. No. You can't plan! And it's a good thing. It's also a challenge in the sense that you have to be present every single day”**. This highlights the need for constant adaptability, which could be both a strength and a challenge for the staff. Another challenge mentioned was the emotional toll of the work. One staff member commented: **“Some of the stories people do share with you, I think that can take us further than we'd like. We'd be not human if it didn't you know. I've certainly gone home sometimes and had to really reflect on what people have shared with me and really need to process it”**. Staff more generally spoke about how emotional labour involved in supporting participants could be taxing, requiring them to manage their own well-being carefully.

Another difficulty that was discussed in a number of the conversations concerned the location of the farm which was outside the accessible urban core of Wisbech and not on

a regular bus route. One stakeholder commented: **“Certainly the transport has been an issue. I've got several people who do drive to access the farm. The FACT bus (a community transport service) is helpful in getting others there, and I'm pleased to see that there's now a bus stop, even if it's not quite in use yet”**. Nevertheless, this stakeholder discussed how the benefits of the location, and the facilities of the farm, acted as a relative counterbalance to the potential inaccessibility of the location: **“I think the location is perfect. Obviously, I'd like a bus route to everything but that's not going to happen. I think it's outside of town enough to not to have any anti-social behaviour. But I think it's close enough that people can bike to it if they can't drive. Yeah, and it's got a big old car park!”**

4.3.6.2 Sub theme: Funding and resource constraints

Securing adequate funding is a recurring challenge for People and Animals. The organisation relies on various funding sources to sustain its activities and expand its services. However, obtaining and managing these funds was seen to take significant effort and strategic planning.

One stakeholder reflected how important the financial support from external organisations was in keeping the farm running: **“So we've been alongside that growth and supported it in a myriad of different ways but financially as much as anything over the course of that time”**. The lottery fund had been critical to allowing the organisation to take their next significant step. As a staff member said: **“OK, so the lottery funding has enabled us to work without the barriers that we've previously faced with some more, more structured. funding such as European social funding to reach those that don't have their own personal budgets, those that don't come with their own funds. So that we've been able to replicate our skills and learning programmes that we have historically offered young people and children that are out**

CASE STUDY 11: Scott's Journey to volunteering

Backstory

Scott joined People and Animals through the Jobcentre. The Jobcentre staff helped Scott get onto a course with Baxter. After the course had ended, Scott enjoyed his time so much at the farm, he asked a staff member if he could be a full-time volunteer and that is what he has been doing ever since.

Experience at the farm

Scott helps out with many tasks at the Farm. He likes to arrive early, before any of the other volunteers, and help the staff set up for the day ahead with putting out refreshments. Scott is always a friendly face to greet you, and easy to get along with. He has a great connection with the horses at the farm and loves the dogs too.

Conclusion

Scott loves his time at the Farm, finding friendship and a fulfilling way to fill his time.

of mainstream education. We've been able to offer that to adults. We've been able to respond to the demand of the community because the lottery funding has allowed us to do that more freely, whether we're reaching”.

The lottery funding was seen to be key to widening the range of options offered by People and Animals, and that was seen to have led to the development of new partnerships that would lead to sustainable funding streams in the long term. For example, a staff member discussed how the manifested in a number of ways: ***“So, in developing our adult programme we’ve gained these contracts with Norfolk County Council Day Opportunities and now Cambridgeshire County Council, with Cambridge’s skills. It’s that reputation in the community. So now when other organisations talk about doing something and they’d like to learn a bit more about this we seem to be the ‘go to’ the other organisation that you need to go and speak to”.***

One of the mechanisms of widening the range of opportunities provided was the provision of new facilities and infrastructure on the farm. For example, this member of staff commented: ***“It’s put us in a position where, as of today, we’ve now been able to accept commissioned work as a in the form of a contract with Cambridge County Council through Cambridges skills. We wouldn’t have been able to do that if it wasn’t for the National Lottery allowing us to purchase a new key to greenhouse, which has attracted a horticulture tutor, which has then shown the outcomes that can be reached and the people that we can engage”.***

4.3.6.3 Sub theme: Driving forward collaboration

Collaboration with other organisations and community partners was widely seen to be essential for overcoming some of the challenges faced by People and Animals. Partnerships can provide additional resources, expertise, and support, helping the organisation achieve its goals more effectively. Yet at the same time, developing collaborations was seen to take energy.

One stakeholder emphasised the value of collaboration: ***“There are other groups that we haven’t yet reached that we need to reach. But we also need to recognise that we can’t do everything. So that’s where collaborating with others, sharing what we’re learning with others and supporting others in developing their own green spaces, community farms, and things like that”.*** The skill of People and Animals in collaborating with stakeholders was reflected on by this stakeholder: ***“They’re good at joint working as well. You know it genuinely just feel like we’re joint working”.***

4.3.6.4 Sub theme: Facilitators of success

A wide range of factors were seen to facilitate the success and effectiveness of People and Animals, and these are discussed throughout this report. These facilitators include a strong team dynamic, effective use of space, and the adaptability of the organisation's activities.

CASE STUDY 12: Archie's Journey with People and Animals

Backstory

Archie was actively looking for voluntary work as an older gentleman who didn't want to be stuck at home doing nothing, as he felt no other work would be suitable for him now. Archie used to go down to a community space once a week and they suggested to have a look at People and Animals. And so, 3-4 years on, Archie is still volunteering with People and Animals.

Experience at the farm

Archie finds his time at the Farm extremely fulfilling, especially since he has watched it grow over the many years of him volunteering with People and Animals. It gives him something to do and he has gained experiences with the many courses he has participated in. Archie is currently proud to be working with another staff member and group of volunteers on building a heritage barn. Archie has made brilliant friends and enjoys chatting to them.

Conclusion

Archie has enjoyed his many years with People and Animals and will continue to come along every week. Archie is always happy to help out.

A staff member highlighted the importance of teamwork: ***"I think we all need everybody's different type of skills to make it work"***. This sense of mutual support and collaboration among staff members was seen to be crucial for managing the daily demands of the organisation and providing a high level of care and support to participants.

The effective use of space also played a significant role in facilitating the organisation's activities. One staff member noted: ***"The space is a mechanism in itself of being here supports that change"***. The environment provided by People and Animals, including its physical spaces, was widely regarded as integral to creating a supportive and therapeutic setting for participants. Indeed, one of the stakeholders reflected on the environment ***"The way that there's something just so calming about the way that they've designed and delivered it and the welcome that we get every time we go is phenomenal. And that in itself is something that I think if a lot of places could bottle just that feeling they would go a long way"***.

One of the stakeholders also commented on the critical importance of the "can do" attitude of the Director of Operations: ***"People like Katie are rare, and they certainly do facilitate change at a more rapid pace, and they are able to facilitate things happening at scale.... I think what Katie's enabled is that to happen rapidly during the growth and she's able to bring together various different partners together into one space, delivering on a single goal"***.

4.3.6.5 Sub theme: Strategic planning and growth

Strategic planning was seen to be essential for the long-term sustainability and growth of People and Animals. This involved setting clear goals, securing necessary resources, and continuously adapting to meet emerging needs.

A staff member discussed the need for strategic planning: ***"We've got to be able to sustain the projects that we're doing so there will come a point fairly soon we're going to have to look for succession funding to keep current projects running"***. Another staff member emphasised the importance of balancing strategic planning with daily operations: ***"It's always going to be a challenge. By the operational side of things and then looking to the future, I think. I think it's the same with all community groups"***. This balance was seen to be crucial for ensuring that the organisation can continue to provide effective services while also planning for future growth.

The perceived ambition of People and Animals was reflected by this quote from one of the stakeholders: ***"The current is a 30-year lease so that just demonstrates how positive they are about what's being achieved and (how they) want to see the future secured"***. (Note, in October 2023 the farm was subsequently offered a 99-year lease). Another stakeholder reflected: ***"We went up the farm a couple of weeks ago and Katie was showing us the plans and talking about how the funding, the development and all these bits and how, you know, whether it's getting the solar power in, all the different sources of income. And I think all of these little bits together are just creating such a powerful whole"***.

Going forward, one stakeholder reflected how strongly they felt the organisation had a positive sense of direction and how this would be key to future success: ***"I think probably just how impressed I have been along this journey in terms of clarity of purpose, their willingness, openness and transparency and their ability to deliver what they say they're going to deliver, whilst also having one eye on the future and looking at other opportunities and where that can be"***.

4.3.6.6 Sub theme: Addressing evolving community needs

People and Animals was universally regarded as committed to addressing the diverse and evolving needs of the community it serves. This involves tailoring programmes and services to meet specific requirements and continuously assessing and responding to emerging needs.

One staff member discussed the challenge of meeting diverse needs: ***"Are we under-representing certain groups in our community? You know yes, we've got adult volunteers, and we've got the dementia group. But are there other pockets of our communities?"***. This ongoing assessment and adaptation were seen to be essential for ensuring that the organisation remains relevant and effective in addressing community needs. The reflections of this stakeholder however illustrate how well places like People and Animals are to continue to meet community needs because of the relationships they have built: ***"(In Wisbech we) get a lot of national providers coming ... and they plonk"***

CASE STUDY 13: Silas, an ever-present helper

Backstory

Silas was with People and Animals from the beginning, before the Farm was established. Silas started off at the Oasis Centre doing TOAST sessions, which he enjoyed so much he continued on to the Farm once it was established.

Experience at the Farm

Silas works a regular job but will use his days off and any time off work to come back and volunteer for People and Animals. He is a friendly face to everyone and will do whatever task needs doing. Silas really enjoys his time at the Farm.

Conclusion

Silas is drawn to the farm to support People and Animals whenever he is needed and still loves his time there.

themselves down and just expect things to happen, but it's about building a relationship and trust with the community. And that's something that People and Animals have got in spades; they've got relationships. They've got that trust. You know, I think that's why people are just willing to engage with them and turn up”.

The importance of staying focussed into the future was reflected by this quote from one of the stakeholders: ***“I think the risk with anything is if they get diverted from the original direction, which they're achieving well. But obviously there's still an awful lot of need out there which can be met. And it's kind of remaining focused on those things they do incredibly well. You know, because they are operating something which is niche. But it's much needed. I wouldn't want them to become too generic because, if they became too generic, the risk is that it would kind of water down some of that appeal and effectiveness it has”.***

4.6.6.7 Summary of theme

The discussions show how People and Animals was seen to be facing several organisational challenges, including managing daily operations, securing funding, and strategic planning. However, the organisation also benefits from strong teamwork, effective use of space, and collaborative efforts with other entities. By effectively addressing these challenges and leveraging these facilitators, People and Animals was viewed as having high potential to continue to grow and make a significant positive impact on its community.

CASE STUDY 14: Cole's growth in confidence

Backstory

Cole believes he had low confidence in himself. He knew he was 'lazy' and needed to get out of the house. Although Cole did get occasional work with his brother, it was not enough to keep himself busy. Cole and his mum believed that the Farm would be a good place for him.

Experience at the Farm

Cole has learned many skills being at the Farm within the discipline of woodwork and learning about tools and the importance of safety. Cole enjoys the Farm as he finds it very relaxing, but also enjoys the other volunteers too. Cole has made friendships at the Farm and chats and plays games with them outside of the Farm.

Challenges

Cole has conquered his challenge with his confidence and is indeed confident, and now feels much less lazy!

Conclusion

Cole loves the Farm as it keeps him productive, and builds his confidence

5.0 Discussion of findings

5.1 Summary of key findings

This evaluation of the People and Animals UK programme, supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively assess the programme's impact.

The quantitative analysis in the report primarily focused on assessing changes in specific outcomes related to social connectedness, self-esteem, emotional resilience, social engagement, life satisfaction, and the use of health and social care services. Data was collected through an outcomes capture tool, which participants completed at baseline and at a follow-up interval. The eventual sample size was small which limited the ability of the analysis to identify statistically significant changes in outcomes. With the exception of the frequency of contact with a doctor in the previous 12 months, which saw a statistically significant doubling between baseline and follow-up, differences observed in the outcomes between baseline and follow-up did not reach statistical significance.

Social connectedness showed a notable increase, and it is noteworthy that the measure used of this construct had been specifically validated to detect change in an evaluation context, something which is relatively rare. The improvement in connectedness did not reach statistical significance although the magnitude of effect suggested it may have done if the sample size had been greater.

The finding of a statistically significant increase in frequency of contact with a doctor, which could superficially be seen to be counterintuitive, might be explained by the role of the farm in accessing the most isolated individuals in the community and advocating for them to get the support they need. In discussions held with the People and Animals Director of Operations to inform this evaluation for example, she spoke about service users who came to them with a range of unmet care needs which were addressed by the organisation making calls and booking appointments on their behalf. Further work is needed to understand the drivers of this association, which may have important implications for reducing healthcare costs if People and Animals is diverting individuals into primary care and in doing so avoiding higher treatment costs associated with secondary or tertiary care. Recent data collated by the Kings Fund suggests that the cost of an individual being treated in an accident and emergency department averages £91 but can be as high as £445, whilst the average cost of a 10-minute GP consultation is nearer to £56²⁵.

Nevertheless, the largely null findings from the quantitative analysis do not necessarily suggest that the work of People and Animals is not having a positive impact on the outcomes studied, and indeed triangulation with the findings from the qualitative analysis suggest that this is unlikely to be so. However, from the data collected thus far it

²⁵ The Kings Fund (2024) Key facts and Figures about the NHS. Accessed at: [NHS: Key Facts And Figures | The King's Fund \(kingsfund.org.uk\)](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/nhs-key-facts-and-figures)

not possible to quantify the change in outcomes amongst participants. Some potential reasons for this are discussed in the following section of this report.

In terms of *organisational impact*, the qualitative evaluation showed how the Lottery funding has significantly transformed the operations and impact of People and Animals, enabling them to overcome previous barriers and expand their services. The funding allowed the organisation to reach a broader demographic, including adults, veterans, and the most isolated in society. It facilitated the purchase of new equipment, such as a greenhouse, which attracted skilled tutors and demonstrated successful outcomes, leading to formal partnerships with organisations like Cambridge County Council. As a result, the organisation has further evolved into a community asset, offering diverse activities like horticulture, bushcraft, and green woodworking, which in turn attract and empower new local volunteers. The funding has also enhanced community integration, fostering partnerships with various organisations and further supporting vulnerable individuals by providing a welcoming and supportive environment. This more holistic approach has led to notable improvements in participants' social skills, confidence, and overall well-being.

In terms of *community impact*, many participants learned about People and Animals through informal recommendations from friends, family, or acquaintances. Personal networks played a significant role in attracting volunteers and participants, emphasising the community-based nature of the organisation. Some participants discovered the organisation serendipitously, while others were referred through formal channels such as job centres or educational institutions. These varied pathways to engagement highlight the inclusive and accessible nature of the work of People and Animals. Participants often reported feeling an immediate sense of belonging and engagement upon joining the team, and this quick integration into the community fostered a strong commitment to continued involvement.

The supportive environment of the community farm was consistently highlighted as a key factor in enhancing mental health and well-being of its users. Participants appreciated the non-judgmental, relaxed atmosphere that allowed them to engage at their own pace. The structured activities provided in the setting helped participants manage their mental health by offering a sense of purpose and routine. This was particularly beneficial for those dealing with depression and anxiety. Activities at the farm were seen as clearly designed to build confidence and self-esteem, providing participants with tangible achievements and positive reinforcement. This was particularly important for individuals who had struggled with low self-esteem or negative self-perceptions.

The work of People and Animals was seen to foster strong social connections and a sense of community, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. This was particularly beneficial for vulnerable populations such as older adults and those with mental health challenges. The organisation tailored activities to address specific mental health needs, offering sessions for individuals with dementia, autism, and other conditions. These

targeted interventions were seen to provide significant benefits for these groups of participants, enhancing their mental well-being and social engagement. The flexibility of the approach was seen to allow participants to engage in activities that suited their interests and abilities, ensuring that everyone could participate in a way that was beneficial for their mental health. The use of animal-assisted therapy and nature-based activities was widely reported as offering significant therapeutic benefits, reducing stress and improving mood among participants, whilst these programmes were particularly effective in providing emotional support and comfort.

The community farm was seen as successfully fostering community engagement and inclusion, offering a range of activities that catered to diverse community needs. This created a sense of belonging and mutual support among participants. Through initiatives like the community enterprise project and employability programme, the organisation helped participants develop vocational and functional skills. This not only enhanced individual self-esteem but also improved employability and economic independence. The emphasis on building emotional resilience and personal growth was evident in the positive feedback from participants, whilst the supportive environment and structured activities were reported as enabling individuals to overcome personal barriers and enhance their emotional well-being.

In terms of challenges, some participants highlighted challenges in decision-making processes and the difficulties of maintaining consistency and clarity in how decisions are made within a rapidly growing organisation attempting to meet a wide variety of community needs. Resource constraints, including funding and staffing, were noted as ongoing challenges, and, whilst the location of the farm on the outskirts of Wisbech was seen to bring many benefits, access to the site for those with poor personal mobility was an-ongoing challenge.

5.2 A comparison of findings with those from elsewhere

It is perhaps of benefit to compare the findings presented in this report with those from an evaluation of the Hereford Community Farm (HCF), with whom People and Animals have developed a close relationship²⁶. An evaluation report produced for HCF in 2022 shares several similarities in findings. That report demonstrates a substantial positive impact on the mental health, well-being, and social connectedness of its participants. Many individuals in that evaluation reported significant improvements in their ability to manage daily life challenges, with 85% noting enhanced health and well-being, and 92% making new friends through their involvement in the farm's programmes. The activities provided at HCF, including horticulture, woodworking, and animal care, were found to be particularly effective in fostering new skills, increasing confidence, and promoting independence. The farm's inclusive approach, similar to that of the Wisbech community farm, was also found to ensure that activities were accessible to a diverse group of participants, including those with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, dementia,

²⁶ Spinks, M (2022) Evaluating the Impact of the Hereford Community Farm. Data Orchard Ltd. Accessed at [Microsoft Word - Evidencing the impact of HCF 2021 v 1.3.docx \(herefordcommunityfarm.co.uk\)](#)

and young people at risk of school exclusion. This inclusivity was found to have been key to the success of HCF's programs, allowing participants to engage meaningfully and achieve personal growth.

In addition to its direct impact on individuals, HCF was found to play a crucial role in the local community through its strong partnerships with other organisations, schools, and health services. This community level impact mirrors the findings presented here for People and Animals. These collaborations were found to have enabled the farm to address local needs effectively and sustainably. However, the evaluation also highlighted some challenges, particularly the need for more systematic data collection to better demonstrate the farm's impact and the necessity for stable, long-term funding to secure the future of the farm. Similar problems were identified in this evaluation and in particular the challenges with use of the outcomes capture tool presented in this report reflect the need to embed data capture into the day-to-day activities of the organisation rather than it being a separate activity associated with discrete evaluation.

5.3 Strengths and limitations of this evaluation

A strength of the evaluation methodology is its multi-method approach. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data allows for a holistic understanding of a programme's impact. Quantitative data provides measurable outcomes and allows for statistical analysis, which can lend credibility to findings through objectivity and precision, whilst the qualitative component offers deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants, capturing nuances that numeric outputs cannot convey.

The development of a logic model to inform the evaluation protocol offered significant benefits by providing a clear and structured framework that delineates the delivery of the programme of works supported by the National Lottery Community Fund. This visual representation aided the clarification of the programme's objectives and the necessary steps to achieve them, ensuring all involved in the evaluation shared a common understanding of the goals and processes. This then informed the development of topics guides for the programme of focus groups and interviews, facilitating the alignment of evaluation questions with programme components. By making the programme's theory of change explicit, it is hoped the logic model also aids in communicating the value of the work People and Animals have undertaken to funders, partners, and other stakeholders.

Another strength is the phased approach to data collection, which aligned with the rollout of project delivery with the Lottery funding. This timing allowed for the capture of progress at critical junctures, providing a view of the development of impact over time. The use of a programme of interviews and focus groups also drove a participatory approach, ensuring that the evaluation was grounded in the actual experiences and needs of stakeholders and that all who wanted to do so had the opportunity to be involved. This was further enhanced by the significant involvement of one of the volunteers, Stevie Betts, as a research assistant to support the evaluation. Her work brought fresh insights and a passion for the cause, which enhanced the quality and depth

of the evaluation, and it is hoped this helped further a sense of ownership and engagement among those at the farm. Her deep understanding of the work of the farm also strongly supported the interpretation of findings.

In terms of limitations, one significant consideration is the absence of a control group in the quantitative analysis. The uncontrolled before-after comparison can be vulnerable to external factors influencing the outcomes, making it challenging to attribute changes solely to the intervention. Although unavoidable, the reliance on participants' self-reported data for both baseline and follow-up measurements introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias, which can affect the validity of the findings.

The sample size for the quantitative component was relatively small, with only 49 baseline surveys and 22 follow-up surveys being completed. This limited sample size can reduce the power of statistical tests, making it harder to detect significant changes and increasing the margin of error. Furthermore, the follow-up rate was less than 50%, which might result in follow-up participants not being fully representative of the baseline group. This attrition could influence the results if those who dropped out differ systematically from those who remained. This difficulty was potentially compounded by the substantial variability in the length of time separating baseline and follow-up measurements, particularly for those surveys completed early in the evaluation process. A consequence of this may have been that participants were at different stages in any process of change, further making it difficult to positive improvements in outcome.

A potentially significant problem with the outcome capture tool was that many participants completing the tool at baseline appeared to have significant prior experience of the farm, as evidenced by the free-text responses provided in Box 3. A consequence of this is that these people might have already achieved an improvement in the outcomes captured by the tool by the time they had completed the baseline survey, and this may explain the lack of further improvement apparent when baseline and follow-up values were compared. Furthermore, although the target follow-up time was 3 months, the range of follow-ups intervals was between 1 and 10 months, and this variability may lead to the introduction of error which could contribute to null or counterintuitive findings. To overcome these difficulties going forward, it is recommended that the contents of the tool and the method of data collection are revisited and reassessed with a view to integrating some form of routine outcomes capture into the sign up of new service users and volunteers.

In terms of qualitative data collection, while the use of thematic analysis and the inclusion of various stakeholder perspectives are strengths, the potential for researcher bias in coding and interpreting qualitative data is always present. The inductive approach, while allowing for themes to emerge naturally, can also lead to subjective interpretations that may not be fully replicable by other researchers. Additionally, the evaluation's focus on a broad range of outcomes might dilute the specificity and depth of the findings related to each outcome. While the evaluation aimed to be comprehensive,

this breadth inevitably meant it was not possible to fully capture all the processes that may drive mechanisms behind reported outcomes.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings presented in this evaluation report suggest the work People and Animals has demonstrably improved the physical, emotional, and social well-being of its volunteers and service users through a variety of practical, therapeutic and educational activities. The organisation has shown success in engaging a diverse range of participants, including those with complex needs, and this underscores its importance and effectiveness in fostering community cohesion and personal development.

The work of the organisation speaks to a range of national initiatives. The findings presented in this report align closely with the objectives of the Community Matron initiative, particularly in addressing complex health and social care needs through holistic, person-centred approaches. Community matrons are highly experienced, senior nurses who work closely with patients (mainly those with a serious long-term condition or complex range of conditions) in a community setting to directly provide, plan and organise their care²⁷. The work of People and Animals, through its animal-assisted therapies and community-based approach, focusses on achieving improvements in mental health, social engagement, and the development of vocational skills among its participants. These outcomes mirror the goals of the Community Matron initiative, which aims to manage chronic conditions and prevent hospital admissions by providing tailored support and care in community settings. The success of People and Animals in fostering social connections and reducing isolation can directly complement the work of Community Matrons, who often encounter patients with similar needs for enhanced social support and engagement. Indeed, the findings presented here suggest that integrating animal-assisted therapy into the Community Matron framework might offer additional therapeutic benefits, particularly for individuals with mental health issues or those experiencing social isolation.

As touched upon earlier in this report, this evaluation illustrates how the work of People and Animals aligns closely with the Core20PLUS5 approach in England, which aims to reduce health inequalities by targeting the most deprived populations and addressing five clinical areas of focus. The Core20PLUS5 strategy emphasises the need to reach the most underserved and vulnerable groups, ensuring they receive equitable access to healthcare services. People and Animals similarly targets individuals who are often marginalised, such as those facing social isolation, mental health challenges, and educational disadvantages, thereby supporting the goals of the strategy. In particular, the organisation contributes to the mental health focus of Core20PLUS5 by providing therapeutic interventions that have been shown to significantly improve participants' mental well-being and social connectedness. The programme's success in reducing social isolation and supporting the mental health of participants is particularly relevant

²⁷ The Nursing Times. Community Matrons: A Guide. Accessed at [Community Matron - A Guide \(nursingtimesjobs.com\)](https://www.nursingtimesjobs.com)

to Core20PLUS5's objective of addressing mental health inequalities among deprived and underserved populations. Additionally, by engaging with communities in areas of deprivation, People and Animals helps to bridge gaps in service provision, ensuring that individuals who might otherwise be excluded from traditional healthcare pathways receive the support they need. This alignment with the Core20PLUS5 approach demonstrates the organisation's effectiveness in contributing to broader public health goals in England, particularly in reducing disparities in health outcomes for vulnerable populations.

By delivering programmes of work supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, the team has also built a robust framework for community enterprise and employability, contributing to long-term sustainable development, and in doing so creating a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers individuals and strengthens community ties, hopefully paving the way for future growth and continued success.

6.0 Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Stevie Betts, a volunteer at People and Animals, for offering to work alongside me as a research assistant on this evaluation. Her input and insight have been vital and the excellent job she did of helping collect data, building a library of personal stories, and making sense of transcripts have considerably strengthened this report. I would also like to thank Katie Bristow, the Director of Operations of People and Animals, for her support and flexibility through this evaluation, in addition to the staff and volunteers who gave their time to provide insights for this report, and the former employee Clare Foley who helped with early stages quantitative data collection. You have all been a joy to work with! Finally, I would like to thank the various stakeholders who kindly put time aside to speak with me and whose insights, external to the organisation, have added valuable context to the findings presented here.

APPENDIX A: The Data Capture Tool

People & Animals

Promoting Animal-Assisted therapies for mutual well-being

Welcome to Wisbech Community Farm! We support people in our community with a range of animal and horticultural activities and we're very happy you have joined us.

We have a number of staff and volunteers working at the farm, alongside a host of farm animals.



We are hoping to make a positive difference to all who access the farm and are undertaking a project to evaluate our services. We'd be delighted if you would be happy to answer some questions about your experiences so we can gather further information on how we can make an even better positive impact supporting people in our community. We might ask you some of these questions again in the future, to see if things have changed.

The questionnaire is entirely optional, and all your information will be kept confidential Your responses will be held by People and Animals and shared only with Professor Andy Jones who is helping with our evaluation. Feel free to take your time when answering the questions and ask a member of the team if you need any further help. Thank you so much!

People & Animals

Promoting Animal-Assisted therapies for mutual well-being

People and Animals Outcomes Capture Tool

Part 1

Please think about the last two weeks when answering these questions, which are about how you feel in general about all the people that you are in contact with, including family, friends, or people you study or work with or meet at the farm. For every statement, mark the answer that comes closest to your experience. If in doubt, follow your first impulse. Please take a moment at the end to **make sure you have ticked a box in every line.**

	Very poor 😞	Poor 😞	Good 😊	Very good 😊
For me, the way we talk with each other is...				
For me, the way we stick together is...				
For me, what we do for each other is...				
For me, the feeling between us is...				
For me, the way we decide what needs to be done is...				
For me, the way we agree what will help us reach our goals is....				
For me, the way we make decisions is...				
For me, the way we find solutions to problems is...				
For me, how we adapt to change is...				
I think the people I am in contact with would give similar answers to me to these questions	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 2

This part contains a set of statements that describe how you might feel about yourself. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement by ticking the relevant box.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I tend to devalue myself					
I am highly effective at the things I do					
I am very comfortable with myself					
I am almost always able to accomplish what I try for					
I am secure in my sense of self-worth					
It is sometimes hard for me to think about myself					
I have a negative attitude toward myself					
At times, I find it difficult to achieve the things that are important to me					
I feel great about who I am					
I sometimes deal poorly with challenges					
I never doubt my own worth					
I perform very well at many things					
I sometimes fail to fulfil my goals					
I am very talented					
I do not have enough respect for myself					
I wish I were more skilful in my activities.					

Part 3

This part contains just two questions that ask how often you meet up with other people and how often you do things for fun and relaxation. For each, tick the box that corresponds with your answer

Q: In the past month, how often did you get together socially with family, friends, or relatives?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Just one time</i>	<i>2-3 times</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>More than once a week</i>	<i>Every day</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q: In the past month, how often did you engage in any recreational activities for fun and relaxation? (Examples include: watching movies or DVDs, playing or listening to music, dancing, going to a park, going for a walk, playing board, card or video games, doing arts and crafts, playing with a pet or other animal, reading or writing)

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Just one time</i>	<i>2-3 times</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>More than once a week</i>	<i>Every day</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 4

This part contains a set of statements that describe how you might feel you cope with challenges. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement by ticking the relevant box.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times					
I have a hard time making it through stressful events					
It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event					
It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens					
I usually come through difficult times with little trouble					
I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life					

Part 5

This part has a question how satisfied you are with your life and two on how much you make use of health and social services.

Q: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”, overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Your score is: _____ out of 10

Q. In the last 4 weeks, how many times have you contacted your doctor to ask them to help you with your health or wellbeing?

_____ (write zero if not at all)

Q. In the last 4 weeks, how many times have you contacted another health or social care professional (for example a nurse or social worker) to ask them to help you with your health or wellbeing?

_____ (write zero if not at all)

If you have any comments about your time with People and Animals at the farm or about completing this questionnaire, then please write them in the box below. It's fine to leave the box empty if you don't want to add anything.

Finally, it helps us to know if somebody helped you answer these questions or if you answered them yourself. Please tick the relevant box below.

I answered the questions myself

Somebody helped me answer the questions

Many thanks for taking the time to answer all these questions. All your answers will help us better understand the impact we are having on people's lives

APPENDIX B: The logic models

Logic model template: People and Animals UK

Inputs	Activity	Mechanism for change	Output	Shorter term outcomes	Medium term outcomes	Longer-term outcomes (impact)
Staff Volunteers Staff and Volunteer expertise Materials Equipment Farm space/land Animals Investment/funding Partnerships and collaborations Time Ongoing monitoring and evaluation	<i>Dog friendly drop-in sessions and events. Animal-Assisted Activities in the community</i> <i>Animal-Assisted Therapeutic opportunities (using goal directed interventions with animals as an integral part of the therapeutic process)</i> <i>Animal-Assisted</i>	<i>Safe outdoor spaces</i> <i>Safe relationships Multidisciplinary team</i> <i>Contact with animals and nature in a therapeutic setting</i> <i>Intergenerational and inclusive sessions for all</i> <i>Play work for all age and ability</i> <i>Cooking skills</i>	Number of local people engaged with (participants) Number of local people engaged with and recruited, developed, trained (volunteers) Number of stakeholders engaged with Number of activities delivered Number of adults learning training (sessions delivered) Number of participants returning to the classroom, further education,	Personal: <i>Increased positive emotions about self</i> <i>Increased engagement in activities</i> <i>Greater positive relationships</i> <i>Sense of accomplishment</i> <i>Healthier eating habits</i>	Community: <i>Better access to transport</i> <i>Improved cohesion</i> <i>More green assets</i> <i>Environmentally aware community</i> <i>Enhanced community pride</i> <i>Shared ideas</i> <i>Shared food resources</i>	Community: <i>Economically thriving communities</i> <i>Connected communities</i> <i>High levels of active participation</i> Personal: <i>Less dependent on statutory services</i> <i>Sustained/improved life satisfaction</i> <i>Increased aspirations for themselves and</i>

	<p><i>Learning. Education in schools and alternative provision</i></p> <p><i>Community Gardening Social therapeutic horticulture by means of the use of goal directed interventions to improve physical and mental health</i></p> <p><i>Farm to Fork, Healthy Eating Community Crop Share activities</i></p> <p><i>Therapeutic and/or educational activities</i></p>	<p><i>and food knowledge</i></p> <p><i>Accessible interventions</i></p> <p><i>Accessible learning: realising own skills, sharing skills, learning new skills</i></p> <p><i>Experience of overcoming challenges</i></p>	<p>apprentices, employment</p> <p>Number of participants engaging with stakeholder/signposted community activities outside of sessions</p>		<p>Personal:</p> <p><i>Better ability to overcome personal barriers</i></p> <p><i>Improved emotional resilience</i></p> <p><i>Improved cookery skills</i></p> <p>Personal:</p> <p><i>Improved confidence and self-identity</i></p> <p><i>More physically active</i></p>	<p><i>families</i></p> <p><i>More employable</i></p>
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	<p><i>extended on site. Bushcraft, green woodworking carpentry and arts and crafts</i></p>				<p><i>More ready to learn</i></p> <p><i>More socially active</i></p>	
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Logic model template: National Lottery Community Fund Programme

Inputs	Activity	Mechanism for change	Output	Shorter term outcomes	Medium term outcomes	Longer-term outcomes (impact)
Staff Volunteers Staff and Volunteer expertise Materials Equipment Farm space/land Animals Investment/funding Partnerships and collaborations Time Ongoing monitoring and evaluation	On-site engagement days and courses with collaborative partners undertaking planned animal/farm activities and development projects Development of a rewilding area Sharing and learning heritage skills in orchard space	<i>Combining therapeutic animal and nature-based activities with learning</i> <i>Accessible safe space to learn</i> <i>Empowered to share skills as well as learn</i> <i>Flexible vocational learning</i> <i>Linking to other providers to</i>	Number of local people engaged with (participants) Number of local people engaged with and recruited, developed, trained (volunteers) Number of stakeholders engaged with Number of activities delivered Number of adults learning training sessions delivered	<i>Personal:</i> <i>Participants report feeling more connected and engaged</i> <i>Increased positive emotions about self</i> <i>Increased engagement in activities</i> <i>Greater positive relationships</i> <i>Sense of accomplishment</i>	<i>Personal:</i> <i>Better ability to overcome personal barriers</i> <i>Improved emotional resilience</i> <i>Beneficiaries report feeling empowered to volunteer their time</i> <i>Participants report requiring less support from their GP and other health and social</i>	<i>Community:</i> <i>Economically thriving communities</i> <i>Connected communities</i> <i>High levels of active participation</i> <i>Personal:</i> <i>Less dependent on statutory services</i> <i>Participants are more employable</i> <i>Sustained/improved life satisfaction</i>

	<p><i>Craft based community enterprise developed</i></p> <p><i>Employability hub created</i></p> <p><i>Mentoring and development programme for volunteers delivered</i></p> <p><i>Contribute to curriculum development at schools</i></p> <p>SUPPORTED BY <i>Social media posts for engagement</i></p>	<p><i>open doors across the community</i></p>			<p><i>care professionals each month</i></p> <p><i>Improved engagement to vocational training and functional skills in English and maths.</i></p>	
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	<p><i>Regular community feedback meetings to steer project</i></p> <p><i>Regular review meetings with volunteers and steering group</i></p> <p><i>Consultation with partners</i></p> <p><i>Provision tailoring activities based on TAP and EHCP reviews</i></p> <p><i>Work with local DWP and SEND coaches, etc. Private, voluntary and statutory services.</i></p>					
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