Referrer & Clinician Information Pack

Program Overview

Gallop to Greatness is a semi-structured, trauma-informed equine-assisted learning program designed to support adults experiencing PTSD and trauma-related stress. The program is delivered as a **complementary wellbeing intervention** and is not a substitute for psychological or psychiatric treatment.

The pilot program is funded to provide **free participation** for a small cohort of police officers, veterans, and first responders referred by external agencies.

All sessions are: - Individual (1:1) - Ground-based (no riding) - Approximately 60 minutes in duration - Delivered across three sessions.

Intended Participant Group

This pilot program is designed for: - Police officers (current or former) - Veterans - First responders.

Participants may present with: - PTSD or CPTSD - Chronic stress injuries - Hyperarousal, emotional dysregulation, or avoidance - Difficulty with trust, boundaries, or emotional control.

Participants are typically already engaged in psychological treatment or mental health support.

Referral Pathway

Participants are referred by an external agency or treating clinician.

Referrers are asked to: - Assess suitability for participation - Confirm participant stability for experiential, non-clinical intervention - Provide initial referral information.

Gallop to Greatness does not independently diagnose or assess PTSD.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion:

- Adult participants (18+)
- Stable engagement with mental health support
- Capacity to engage in experiential learning
- Informed consent

Exclusion:

- Acute psychiatric crisis
- Active suicidality
- Unmanaged psychosis
- Severe dissociation without clinical support

Participants deemed unsuitable are referred back to appropriate services.

What the Program IS

- A trauma-informed, regulation-focused experiential program
- Grounded in nervous system regulation, agency, and boundaries
- Delivered by facilitators with equine and psychological expertise
- Designed to complement existing therapy

What the Program IS NOT

- Not psychotherapy
- Not trauma processing or exposure therapy
- Not a counselling service
- Not a recreational or riding-based activity

Participants are never asked to disclose traumatic experiences.

Therapeutic Rationale (Evidence-Informed Summary)

Peer-reviewed research supports the use of structured, ground-based equine-assisted interventions as a complementary approach for individuals with PTSD and trauma-related stress, particularly within veteran, first responder, and high-stress occupational populations.

Key findings from the literature indicate that equine-assisted learning and therapy may: - Support **autonomic nervous system regulation** and reduction in physiological arousal (Malinowski et al., 2018; Payne et al., 2015) - Improve **emotional regulation and self-control** through real-time biofeedback and co-regulation (Lentini & Knox, 2015) - Increase **self-efficacy, confidence, and perceived agency**, particularly in trauma-exposed adults (Johnson et al., 2018) - Enhance **present-moment awareness and body-based awareness**, which are often disrupted in PTSD (Bachi et al., 2019)

Studies involving veterans and trauma-affected populations have reported reductions in PTSD symptom severity, anxiety, and hyperarousal, alongside improvements in emotional awareness and interpersonal functioning following equine-assisted interventions (Bachi et al., 2012; Romaniuk et al., 2018).

Importantly, research highlights that **ground-based, non-riding formats** and **individualised delivery** reduce the risk of overstimulation, loss of control, or dissociation, making this approach more suitable for trauma-affected participants (Lentini & Knox, 2015; Bachi et al., 2019).

Gallop to Greatness has been deliberately designed to align with these evidence-informed principles while maintaining clear boundaries from psychotherapy.

Session Focus (At a Glance)

Session 1 – Regulation and Grounding Focus: Physiological calm, safety, and awareness

Session 2 – Agency and Emotional Control Focus: Intentional action, confidence, and self-correction

Session 3 – Boundaries and Trust Focus: Assertive boundaries, trust without force

Risk Management and Safeguards

- Trauma-informed delivery
- Predictable session structure
- Continuous monitoring of participant regulation
- Clear escalation and referral pathways
- Strict animal welfare protocols

An Ethics & Safeguards Framework governs program delivery.

Outcome Measurement and Reporting

Participant outcomes are measured through: - Pre- and post-program self-report scales - Session feedback surveys - Qualitative participant reflections - Observational data

De-identified outcomes are reported to the funding body.

Collaboration and Feedback

Gallop to Greatness values collaboration with referrers.

With participant consent, referrers may receive: - Confirmation of attendance - General progress feedback - Notification of any concerns.

Contact and Further Information

For referrals, partnership discussions, or further information please contact:

Gallop to Greatness Program Coordinator: Robyn Cottman

Summary

Gallop to Greatness offers a structured, ethical, and evidence-aligned complementary program for trauma-affected professionals. Clear boundaries, referral safeguards, and outcome reporting ensure confidence for clinicians, participants, and funders alike.