



Summary of Business plan

11th November 2023

The following is a summary of my intent to deliver equine assisted therapy services and activities as a new not-for-profit entity, Christopher's Choice, across the South of the UK to support children and families with additional needs and mental health issues.

Goals & Objectives:

We intend to progress to opening a Children's outdoor therapy centre over the next 12 months focused on delivering;

- Equine assisted therapy
- Forest school activities
- Animal Assisted therapy
- Family centred support

Who is this for?

At present I am voluntarily supporting close to 100 families, on a one to one basis on rented equestrian facilities.

I will be supporting children, young people and all members of their families with additional needs and mental health challenges

These are families who have children and/or young people that have additional needs through behaviour, learning, neurological disorders, mental health and any neurodivergent issues. We also support families who are coping with grief, childhood bullying, self-harm and many more mental health issues.

The term "neurodivergent" describes people whose brain differences affect how their brain works. That means they have different strengths and challenges from people whose brains don't have those differences. The possible differences include medical disorders, learning disabilities and other conditions. It is not uncommon for us to be supporting families who have more than one child and even their caregiver having either a diagnosis or displaying symptoms of being neurodivergent.



Why am I doing this?

At present I am voluntarily supporting close to 100 families, on a one to one basis on rented equestrian facilities. I own and currently care for, single-handedly 7 ponies that I use, all with different benefits. I use a public woodland and common for all families on a one to one basis and I am only allowed to use the occasional stable yard facilities for those with very high needs that are sometime unable to use the common.

I provide individual one to one support to each family. I have families that have weekly sessions, fortnightly sessions and then a long list of people who I send out ad hoc dates to and contact should there be a cancellation. I want to increase this amount of support as I have families who would like to come more regularly but are unable to due to me not being able to provide enough sessions. The only way I can increase this is by having my own property with my own staff members.

A lot of families are 'stuck in the system' sometimes waiting years for an NHS diagnosis and support for their family. Even then, they are limited to a set number of sessions that are not often family centred. I work on the ethos that families can use this service for as long as they need. I do not give them a limited number of sessions. Taking away support can often make their wellbeing more difficult and challenging.

This is why I would like to have the ability to also provide support with family support therapists and councillors on site if needed. I want to make use of outside buildings on the property that can be used for family accommodation if a family would benefit from a short stay by staying together in one place yet being able to access support on different levels when and if needed.

Equine assisted therapy is a recognised subject that supports a person's psychological and physical wellbeing in a number of ways. Research shows that people experience many physiological and psychological benefits by interacting with horses, including lower blood pressure and heart rate, higher beta-endorphins (neurotransmitters acting as pain suppressors), decreased stress levels, decreased feelings of anger, hostility, tension and anxiety, better social working; and greater feelings of empowerment, confidence, patience and self-efficacy.



Forest school activities

Research shows that children and young people are stimulated by the outdoors and typically experience, over time, an increase in their self-belief, confidence, learning capacity, enthusiasm, communication and problem-solving skills and emotional well-being. Forest School allows children to experience the emotions that go with challenging oneself, taking risks, achieving something and perhaps even failing at something. By providing a safe environment in which to experience these emotions, children can better learn how to manage them successfully. Spending time in natural environments has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety levels in both children and adults. Exposure to natural light, fresh air and peaceful surroundings can help children feel calm and relaxed.

End summary

After 3 years of searching, I have found the most ideal land with property currently on the market at £2,950,000 and I need to raise approximately an extra £500,000 on top of that to enable me to run the first year successfully with paid staff and upkeep of the animals and land.

During the past 8 months I have had close to 400 enquiries and now work on a word of mouth basis, as I do not have the ability to take on too many new families. I currently voluntarily run 10-12 sessions per week which are 1-2 hours per session. The pressure is huge and I cannot continue this voluntarily and single-handedly on the facilities that I have.

Please let us know if you would like a full business plan as I really believe in and are passionate about what I am doing and have many supporters. There are so many children and families that need the support.

Contact details

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Please see below a link to my current video that some of the families I work with have helped create.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSSo5cxZvh4>