

## CASE STUDY

Equine Facilitated Learning Team Development Day

for

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

ADAPT East Community Mental Healthcare Team

delivered by

Impact Coaching and Horse4Thought

at Honeydale Farm, Sidcup, Kent

on

16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## What is Equine Facilitated Learning?

Equine Facilitated Learning is an experiential form of learning and development involving horses. Participants do not ride the horses, they observe and interact with them.

No previous knowledge of horses is required. However, the experience does require participants to be observant and curious about themselves, others and the horses, and give meaning to what they notice.

In a Team Development programme, participants take part in a series of exercises with the horses designed to uncover the unconscious, psychological forces that are influencing their team's behaviour and performance.

The exercises reveal how they work as a team, how they communicate with each other (both verbally and non-verbally) and what is potentially blocking the team from being a cohesive unit.

Working with the horses will also reveal the participants individual strengths, attributes, and values to each other as well as what might be holding them back and any assumptions they hold about themselves and others in their team.





## Why Horses?

Horses are prey animals that have lived on earth for over 50 million years.

They rely on energetic presence and non-verbal clues to sense danger and communicate with each other.

This means they are constantly and acutely aware of the emotional state, energy and intentions of other beings.

This hypersensitivity is what makes horses amazing facilitators for learning and development.

They are so highly tuned, that regardless of what you say, what your job title is or how you WANT to come across, they react only to your energy, gut feelings and real emotions.

By watching their behaviour around you as you interact with them, you get a pure, unfiltered, non-judgmental read on how you really come across, what it's like to be in your presence and the impact you are having on yourself and others in your team.



## Programme Coaches

### Jane Oakley, Founder of Horse 4 Thought

Jane has 20 years' experience working in the public sector in Probation, Youth Offending Service and Social Care and other organisations with families and young people experiencing interpersonal and relationship issues. As well as her work as an Adult Psychotherapist in an NHS ADAPT Team, she also offers Equine Assisted Psychotherapy working with mind and body, using horses as an addition to the therapeutic environment, putting people in touch with nature and providing an opportunity for therapeutic work outside of the therapy room.

### Helen Philip, Founder of [Impact Coaching](#)

Helen is a fully certified Equine Facilitated Coach and is also trained in Transactional Analysis and Transformational Coaching. She works with individuals, leaders and teams from a variety of organisations from her base in Oxfordshire and co-facilitates programmes around the UK. Her focus is on helping participants increase their self-awareness, authenticity, empathy, resilience and confidence using the power of interactions with horses.



## The Challenge

Participants were from an NHS Community Mental Health Team – a diverse mix of consultant psychiatrists, psychotherapists, social workers, mental health nurses, admin and reception staff.

The team had been without a manager for an extended period, decisions were being made by various individuals and the team were feeling overwhelmed.

Red tape and politics and a fear of getting it wrong was causing high anxiety about effectively managing risk in terms of patient and public safety.

A lot of the inexperienced younger team members often became hysterical and were operating in crisis mode. Anxiety and tension between medics and care coordinators was rife.

Much of the older team members were suffering from burnout, and transparency and collaboration among team members was lacking

A Team Development day with the horses was arranged to address and overcome these problems



*Facilitating personal and professional growth through interactions with horses*

## Pre-Programme planning

2 weeks before the programme, participants are asked to answer the questions below. These are designed to help the facilitators understand the participants in terms of their individual challenges, and tailor the programme accordingly. Common themes that emerged are listed

\*What fears and emotions do you have on a daily basis?

*Overwhelm - Burnout – Stress – Anxiety -Frustration*

\*What are your wishes for your team?

*More collaboration - Honest communication - Empathy and understanding for each other –Transparency -Time for reflection*

*More open discussions*

\*What would be your ideal outcomes from the day?

*Understand self and team better -Feel more connected to colleagues -Learn where strengths and weaknesses lie*



*Facilitating personal and professional growth through interactions with horses*

## Defining Programme Objectives

Having assessed the questionnaire responses, the key objectives for the programme were defined as;

- \*An opportunity to de-stress, connect to self and be heard and understood
- \*To increase awareness of self, others and environment through self-regulation and body-based awareness
- \*To empathise, understand and connect with your team members
- \*To improve listening, communication and relationship skills in the team
- \*To practice collaboration and communicating authentically in a team
- \*To explore ways to deal with conflict and build resilience



*Facilitating personal and professional growth through interactions with horses*

## On the day

During the programme, participants are led through a series of exercises which involve observing and interacting with the horses.

The exercises are designed specifically to reflect the challenges of the team and the pre-defined programme objectives.

Time is set aside for feedback and reflection throughout the day.



## Programme Itinerary

**9am** Meet & Greet

**930am** Introductions and Safety briefing

**945am** Breathing and body-based grounding exercise

**10am** “Meet the Herd” and Group Reflections

**1045am** “The Patient Journey” exercise

**1230am** Lunch

**130pm** “The Patient Journey” exercise continued

**3pm** “Team Herding” exercise

**4pm** Group Reflections & Feedback

**430pm** Finish





## Quantitative Evaluation

At the end of the day, participants were asked to what extent they felt their Programme Objectives had been achieved

# To what extent do you feel the Programme Objectives were achieved?

Average score out of ten for each objective.

Sorted in descending order.



# To what extent do you feel the Programme Objectives were achieved?

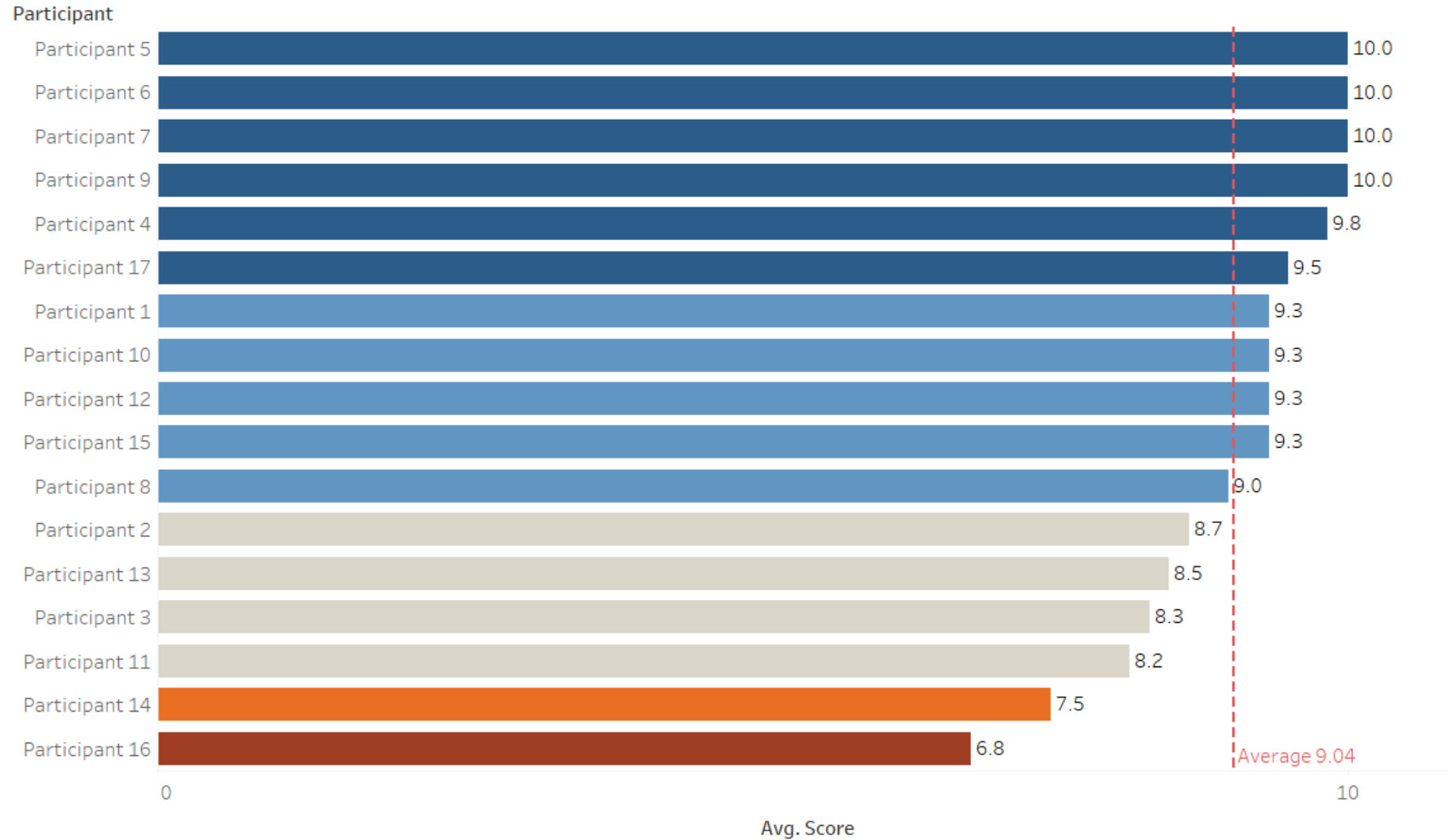
Average score by participant for all objectives.

Overall average score is 9.04.

24% participants scored straight tens.

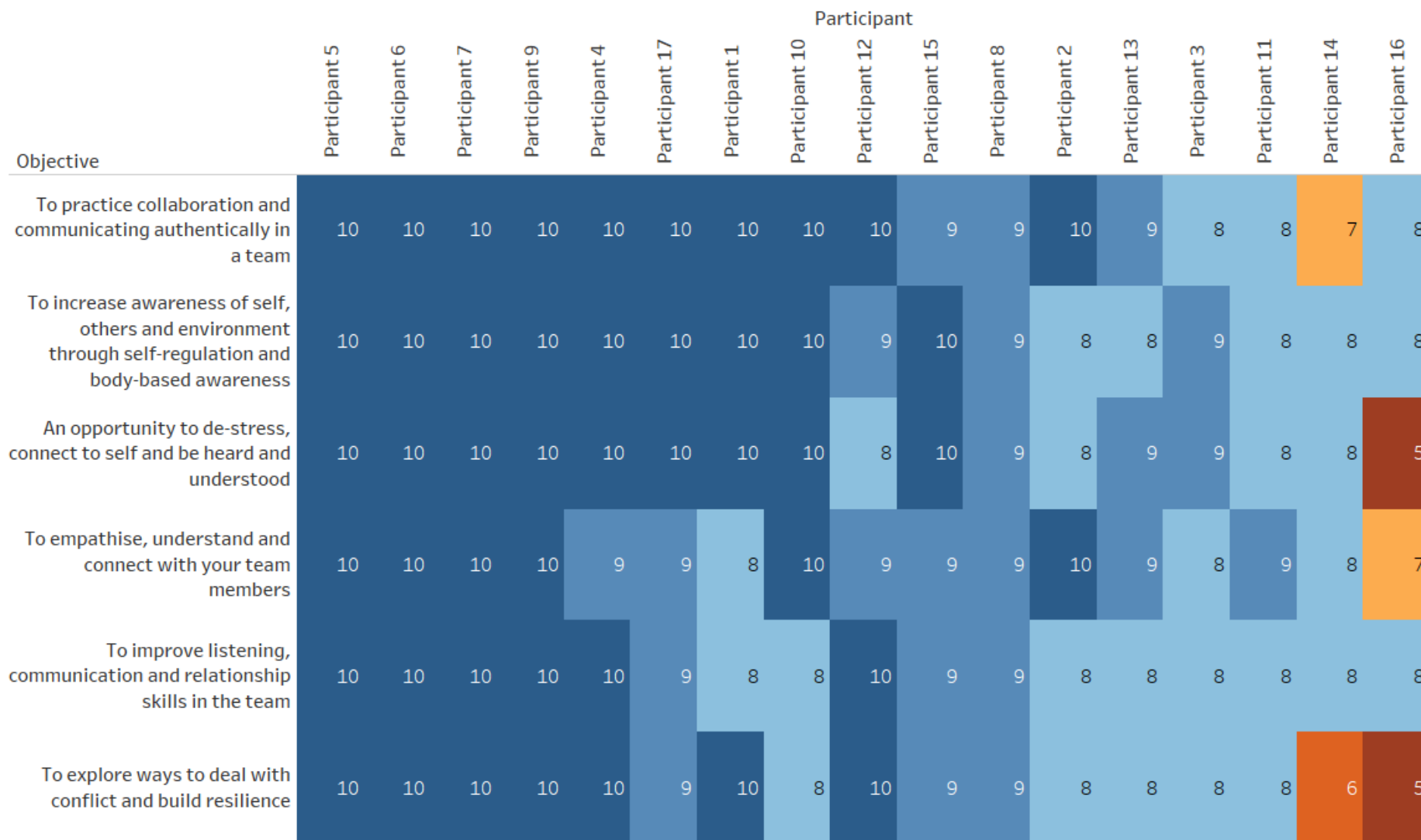
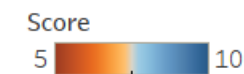
65% participants scored 9 out of ten or more.

Avg. Score



## To what extent do you feel the Programme Objectives were achieved?

Heatmap showing individual scores for each objective by participant - sorted in descending order of objective and participant. Colour shows score.



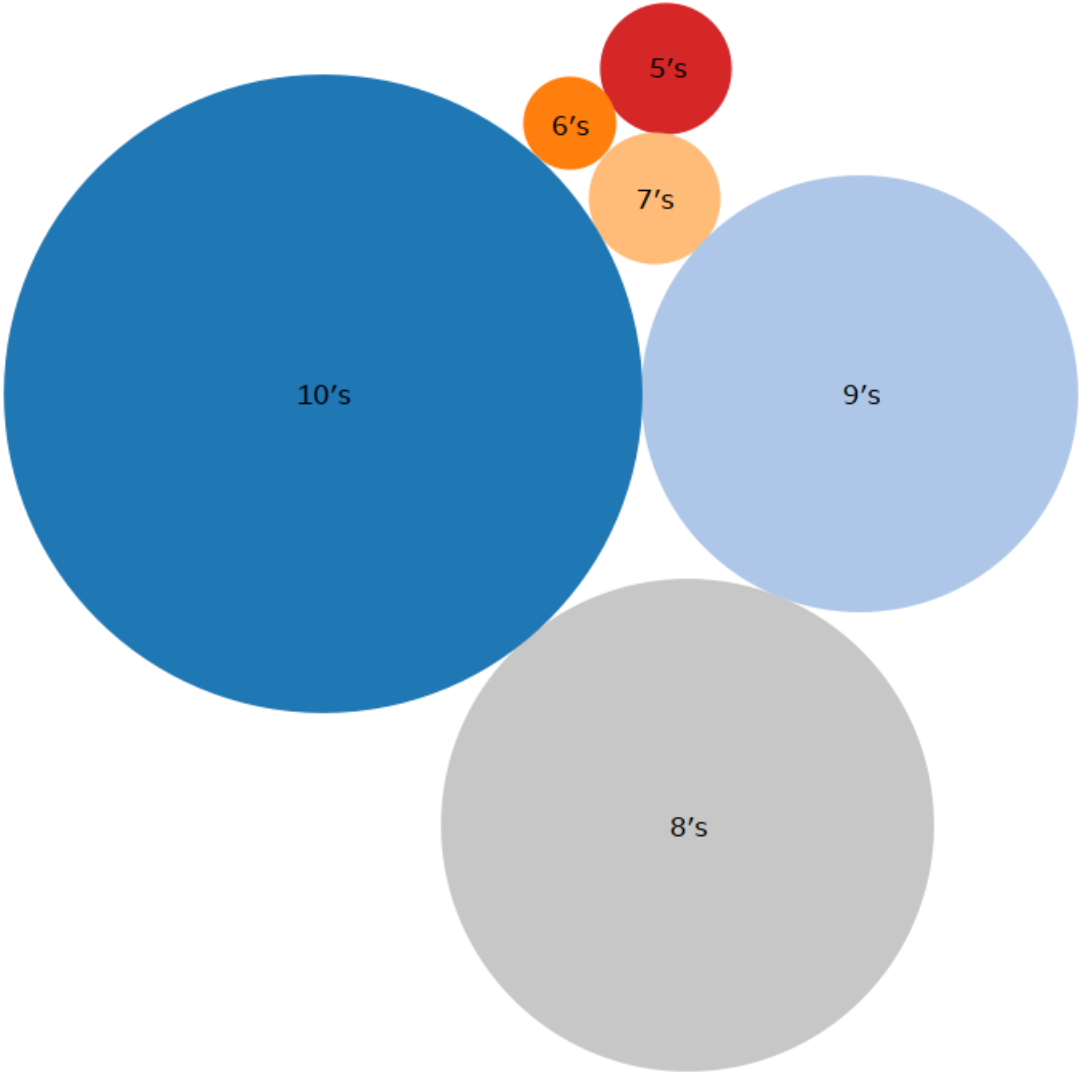
# To what extent do you feel the Programme Objectives were achieved?

Bubble chart showing proportion of scores across the cohort.

Colour shows score ie 10, 9, 8 etc.

Size shows proportion.

95% of scores were 8 or above.



## Qualitative Evaluation

At the end of the day, the participants were asked to provide their written feedback, giving their personal thoughts and feedback about the programme



“It was such a unique experience and a privilege to spend the day with the horses. The live feedback it gave was amazing and really made me and the team reflect on ourselves and how we work as a team. It was memorable, informative and reflective experience of huge relevance to our work with patients and as a team. Thank you” **Roman Czornyj, Senior Clinical Psychologist Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**

“Wonderful, thought provoking and challenging in a good way. The presence of horses brings an emphasis on authenticity which is disarming and grounding, making you go back to the point of the day; self and other awareness. Loved it! Thank you very much” **Maria-Ines Mota, Art Psychotherapist The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust**

“Really good to spend time with the team. Very illuminating about process -helpful to highlight self-reflection. Really useful to hear other’s reflections and work more as a team. Lots of parallels to the real world” **Dr Jenny McConnell, Clinical Psychologist ADAPT Therapies EAST**

“Working with the horses was an interesting way of having a living, communicative yet non-judgmental canvas from which to reflect on our own thoughts, emotions and reactions” **Dr Jagdev Thukral, Consultant Psychiatrist Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**





“Really excellent. The experiences with the horses were great. These were personal but also gave insights to team dynamics. I think there was a lot of value in the day, individually and as a team member. The facilitation was sensitive and skilled” **David Fisher, Senior Social Worker Bromley East CMHT**

“Today has been a good day to reflect on my personal values and the way I express them. I have been able to recognise things I need to improve on when working with patients and team members” **Toluwanimi Onamusi, Social Worker Bromley East ADAPT Team**

“To be honest I was not very keen about this away day, but to my surprise I have enjoyed every moment of it. I just want to say thank you. I have learnt a lot and look forward to putting to practice what I have learnt” **Corina Masters, Social Worker Mental Health Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**

“This was a very good and unexpectedly fun experience. I came here very apprehensive but I didn’t want to leave! I have felt a connection with the horses and my team mates. I would do this again and recommend it to others” **Naomi Foard, Community Psychiatric Nurse Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**



“This has been the most beautiful experience in terms of team away days! Thank you for the opportunity. The horses were incredible. Jane and Helen, you have been amazing in making everyone feel comfortable with themselves and I have learnt so much about myself and my colleagues!” **Matthew Cohen, Junior Doctor / Psychiatry Trainee , Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**

“I had a wonderful, brilliant day. Sharing thoughts, feelings, emotions amongst a great team. I felt authentic connections with the horses, had an amazing experience and really felt overwhelmed and humbled! I experienced my own self-awareness and rapport with my colleagues. I will never forget the day we all had. I feel it will lead me on a new journey in life. **Caroline Ridley, Community Mental Health Team Bromley East Adapt**

“This experience I think helped the team to be more authentic and work more compassionately with each other” **Aditi Sharma, Clinical Psychologist Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust**

“Excellent day, uplifting and invigorating. A fascinating experience, felt very unique to me. The best team away day I’ve ever taken part in” **Nicola Wakefield, Bromley East ADAPT Team Manager**

To book a programme for your team, please contact;

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