

What are Equine Facilitated Interactions?

The field of Equine Facilitated Interactions (sometimes called Equine Assisted Services) has been growing significantly over the last 20 years in the UK. Equine Facilitated Interactions is an umbrella term covering more specific practices such as Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy or Equine Facilitated Learning.

The practice involves facilitated interactions between individuals (or small groups) and horses which are principally ground-based. Whereby these interactions between horse(s) and human create a degree of insight or awareness for the human, that serves as a foundation for personal healing, learning or therapeutic benefit.



The sessions are generally experiential, which places the learners at the heart of the experience. They are facilitated in such a way as to guide the interaction(s) and subsequent discussion(s) towards reflective, therapeutic or learning activities. They are led by appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners. In this way they can create personal learning or personal insight, or develop individual wellbeing, or structure a genuinely therapeutic intervention.

The Need for Regulation

The foundation of this work lies in the US as a therapeutic practice. This origin often leads to it commonly being referred to as Equine Therapy, regardless of the practitioner's professional practice, skills or training.

Like a lot of human-human practices the field of Equine Facilitated Interactions has been unregulated which means there are not commonly agreed definitions of practice, standards of practice and means of recourse for members of the public engaging the practice.

In this context, Athena Herd Foundation (Athena®) created the Accredited Practitioner Register ("APR"). The APR is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care ("PSA"), which is an independent statutory body, accountable to UK Parliament.

The APR it is the only register accredited by the PSA that involves the direct use of animals to deliver therapeutic and wellbeing services.

The PSA accreditation means that they have independently assessed these organisations against their Standards for Accredited Registers. They award a 'Quality Mark' to organisations that meet all of these standards, to show that an organisation is committed to protecting the public and is working to good practice.



Those looking to engage, or being asked to supply facilities to support, should consider the investigating the credentials of practitioners, or seeking proof of registration.

[Click here to find out more about the Accredited Practitioner Register.](#)

Or for more information, contact Athena® directly: info@athenaherd.org.



The need for Appropriate Training

A fundamental principle of the governance provided by accredited registers is ensuring that practitioners are appropriately qualified for the service. Accredited Practitioners (members of the APR) are all confirmed to have appropriate qualifications that support the practice that they are delivering.

Athena® is also a provider of equine facilitated interactions, and a leading training provider for equine practitioners in the UK, and internationally. Its externally accredited qualifications provide courses that enable existing practitioners to bring equines into their practices or to provide others with the necessary to develop a practice.

[Click here to find out more about training with Athena®](#)