

Trustees Annual Report

Mid-Antrim Riding for the Disabled, 1st January 2023-31st December 2023

Charity No. NI 103831

The Charity exists to provide Therapeutic Riding and associated activities to children with Special Needs in the Ballymena and surrounding Area.

The Principal Address of the Charity and contact for the Charity Commission is:

Mrs Jane Hanna, 8 Carclinty Road, Cullybackey BT42 1PH.

The riding year began on the 26th January and the group decided to maintain the volunteer rota on a weekly basis allowing the rotation of volunteers. There were 10 riders for the morning session who rode weekly during term time until the Easter break. 8 of the riders came from Castle Tower School, who due to the continued reduced availability of buses and bus drivers were only able to send a single class of pupils each week. The 8 pupils were split into 2 groups with each group getting both a riding session and a session in the clubroom where they worked towards the theory part of their riding experience – stable management, horse care and other riding related information. Of the class, 6 pupils completed their Grade 1 Riding and Horse care, 1 pupil Grade 2 Riding and Horse care and 1 pupil their Endeavour Award. The pupils received their certificates and badges from The County Chairperson and County Coach who had visited the group to complete coaching assessments with 2 of the group coaches. The school group were joined by 2 private riders, 1 of whom achieved Grade 2 Riding and the other Grade 1 Riding and Horse care.

Following the Easter break, a new class from Castle Tower School rode until the beginning of June, along with 2 private riders. Of the class of 9 students, 6 pupils achieved Grade 1 riding and 3 Endeavour Awards. The certificates and badges were presented at the annual countryside challenge and BBQ at Galgorm Parks Riding School.

Due to demand and the success in August 2022, the group operated a 4-week summer scheme for young people from both Castle Tower School and the local community. We had two sessions each morning, with ten riders overall who were accompanied by their parents and grandparents. This was a great opportunity for the families to see the progress their children made each week. At the end of the 4 weeks, the proud parents watched on as the riders received rosettes. The group were delighted to increase the opportunity to ride to a larger number of young people and the development of not only their riding skills, but also their confidence, self-esteem and social skills was evident. At the request of the parents for a continuation of the riding opportunity, the group decided to offer an extra session on a Thursday afternoon for a maximum of 4 riders at any one time. Our exciting new development began on 9th November at 4.30pm. Four riders benefited from this and the children's joy and parents' appreciation was very much evident.

In September, we resumed our weekly Thursday morning rides for Castle Tower School and 2 private riders who were able to continue their riding with the group. We were restricted to one class of pupils (9 pupils), who again split into 2 groups, both having the opportunity to ride and be taught stable management, horse care and other riding information mapped to the RDA Grade 1 Horse Care and Riding awards. This enhanced their understanding of their riding experience and the stable environment. At their final week, before half term, we awarded 6 Grade 1 Riding and 5 Grade 1 Horse care. Due to several cancellations by school in November, the same students attended until the Christmas party in early December, where a visit from Santa Claus and some games was a celebration for the young riders who had developed not only their riding skills

but also their confidence, communication, and social skills. It was a farewell to one of our private riders, who had been riding with the group for several years and has progressed so much that they are now able to attend riding lessons independently.

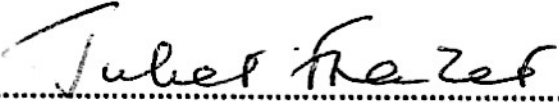
The group continue to benefit from the hiring of the excellent riding facilities and equines, from Mrs Sara Kyle at Galgorm Parks Riding School, Sand Road, Ballymena. As well as exclusive use of all of the facilities for £150-£175 per session, Sara continues to support the group with advice to help provide the most beneficial experience for the pupils. The rent of the facilities is the main annual cost for the group as all support is provided by volunteers, both Coaches, leaders and side walkers. Other operational costs included: RDA membership and insurance, and our annual BBQ/Countryside Challenge and Christmas Party.

The principal sources of income during the year included £1000 in a grant from the Education Authority. The group also received a number of generous donations: £800 from 1st Ballymena Presbyterian Church, £500 from Bann Valley Riding Club, £219.37 in lieu of flowers for J Russell, £200 from Ballymena Academy Past Pupils Association and £1500 from other supporters of the charity. We are grateful for the generous donations but will continue to actively source extra funds next year. The introduction of the evening ride has resulted in increased costs as we only charge a nominal fee of £5 per rider per session but must continue to pay a commercial rate for the hire of ponies and facilities.

The Public Benefit delivered by Mid-Antrim RDA is detailed above in terms of achievements of the riders. It is less easy to quantify but equally beneficial, is the opportunity provided by having close contact with a horse and the sense of achievement and enjoyment which can be observed in many of the young riders, especially those who were initially nervous or unwilling to take part. It is often the physical benefits of improved core strength, balance and co-ordination which are most apparent. To be able to increase the opportunity for young riders outside of school was very much appreciated by the riders' families.

As a group, we make every effort to ensure that the sessions are conducted safely by using suitably qualified Coaches and trained volunteers. Ongoing training is provided for the volunteer leaders and side walkers, both by our group and attendance at sessions organised by RDA NI. A number of the volunteers attended a regional training session in January. During the year the group continued to update Access NI checks for existing volunteers meanwhile all new volunteers will complete an Access NI check and provide 2 references. The Group's Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually along with the Health and Safety, First Aid and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. For health and safety, a qualified first aider is always in attendance, and during the year a number of volunteers renewed their first aid course and this is monitored to ensure a regular update in qualified first aiders. Equine welfare is also important to us and we are careful to ensure that the riders' weight and ability to maintain their balance is matched as closely as possible to the age and ability of the ponies to carry them comfortably and safely.

We consider that we have had regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit and have fulfilled our obligations in this respect.

Signed: 

Lady Juliet Frazer

Chairman

On behalf of the following Trustees of the Group

Lady Juliet Frazer

Mrs Patsy Morrogh

Mrs Catherine Maybin

Mrs Heather Robinson

Miss Yvonne Parker

Mrs Sheelagh Canty

Mrs Emma Wells

Mrs Sally Glass

Mrs Madeline McIlroy

Mrs Jane Hanna

Attachments

- 1. Copy of the Accounts and List of Assets**
- 2. Copy of Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees**