

Trustees' Annual Report for the financial year September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023  
**Lurgan Riding for the Disabled Group**

Registered with the Charity Commission Northern Ireland as Lurgan RDA  
NIC number 104201

**Purpose:** Lurgan RDA works with young people with a range of disabilities and reasons for taking part in therapeutic riding sessions. The Group provides specialist tuition, training and support for people with disabilities, to ride and take part in equestrian vaulting.

**Beneficiaries:** The main beneficiaries of the Group during the year were school pupils with a range of special needs from Ceara School Lurgan and St Anthony's School Craigavon.

**Activities:** After the suspension of all RDA Group riding sessions because of Covid restrictions and re-commencement in the last financial year of closely controlled classes with the necessary Covid 19 precautions and mitigations, full sessions without these additional precautions commenced for the two schools 27 September 2022.

Full sessions continued until half term 1 November, with the group from St Anthony's developing good basic riding skills and the Ceara School group requiring more attention, but gaining valuable benefit from a simpler riding experience.

At the end of term session, the Christmas visit of Santa Claus took place 6 December 2022, with the children being given gifts of woolly hats, knitted by two of the volunteers and then given rides with Santa in his "sleigh" (enclosed trailer!) around the arena.

The sessions re-commenced in the New Year on 17 January with both schools. The Ceara group included some challenging pupils, which required a different approach to ensure individuals were able, at a minimum, to get on a horse in a calm and quiet environment, which led to continuing this approach with the group. For a couple of children in this group, use was made of "Bluey" an artificial horse based on an oil drum on a stand, on which budding, but fearful riders could be introduced and persuaded to go through the motions of mounting, sitting and dismounting, before attempting the real thing. The school's teachers accompanying the children were of great assistance in planning and developing different tactics with children for whom in some cases, just approaching and sitting on a horse was a major accomplishment.

A Parents' Day was held for the Ceara School Group on the last day of the term on 28 March, at which their headmaster attended in addition to parents and family members of the pupils.

The Summer sessions commenced 18 April 2023 and the St Anthony's class continued to improve their riding abilities, while the Ceara class, although more challenging, also showed the value of "equine therapy". Some children, although proving very difficult to get into riding helmets and then mounted on a horse, became much calmer once the horse was walking. This enabled them to take part in mounted activities, with some showing good dexterity, interest and pleasure in the simple task of collecting balls and bean bags from

saucers on poles and putting them in a bucket, while maintaining balance and position on their horse, aided by the volunteer side-walkers.

Parents' Days for the schools were scheduled for the end of the term in June, but St Anthony's was cancelled due to problems with their bus. Ceara School however, went ahead on 13 June with parents able to take part in photo sessions after the presentation of rosettes to the children.

The National Riding for the Disabled organisation devised a Virtual Championship including a Countryside Challenge competition designed to include participants unable to travel to a National event. Groups were offered the opportunity to film entrants at their own establishments tackling a standard cross country challenge course layout. Volunteers from the Lurgan Group, with great ingenuity and skill, produced the elements of the course as required for the competition, including bushes, sheep, gates, archways and bridges. Riders in the St Anthony's School class, then had to complete the challenge unaided while being filmed, with the leader loosely holding the lead rope, but not otherwise controlling the horse, with a single side walker alongside. Other volunteers in the Group assisted in editing the videos and deciding on a selection to enter for the competition, which will be live-streamed on-line in November 2023.

**Planning:** In addition to the Virtual Countryside Challenge competition and renewing of First Aid certificates, the major planning involved ensuring the continuation of normal services to the two schools after the necessary and restricting precautions involved in mitigating the problems of providing services in the presence of the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic. This included ensuring the continuing financing of the Group after the inability to hold public collection sessions for the donation of funds.

**Training and Volunteers:** Lurgan RDA Committee meetings continued as required. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was planned for 12 September 2023 at which our achievements in continuing riding sessions for the schools in 2022-23 are reported and recorded.

Refresher sessions were held regularly at routine classes to ensure continuation of good practice and the completion of required RDA certificates of competence for new volunteers, two of whom joined the Lurgan Group at the beginning of the Summer Term.

The Safeguarding Officer for the Group with others, ensured the required safeguarding requirements were completed and updated for each volunteer. A First Aid at Work course was organised for 25 October 2022 at which 14 participants from the Lurgan Group and others gained their three year certificates, ensuring the presence of a qualified first-aider at all our sessions.

**Achievements:** The Group considers it a major achievement to be able to report continuation of normal activities with the two schools and the Ballyknock Riding School. A public donation session within the Tesco Supermarket in Lurgan was re-established in February 2023, with the kind permission of the Company's management, enabling the Group to again take advantage of the local public's generosity in donating funds towards the continuation of our service to the two schools, well known in the area.

The Group's delivery of service to the standards required is a credit to the volunteers and an overall benefit to the children of both schools, now routinely attending and enjoying weekly riding classes during term time as before.

**Mitigation of Harm:** In providing the voluntary service to our beneficiaries, the Group continued to ensure that its volunteers received the necessary training and awareness of their responsibilities under safeguarding and health and safety requirements of the RDA. To carry out our activities, coaches and office bearers are in possession of the required qualifications.

Risk assessments were carried out and will be reviewed in order to ensure the safe delivery of the activities provided. A number of Group volunteers have current certification in First Aid at Work training, which will be renewed as necessary to ensure that at least one volunteer is designated to act as First Aider at each session.

**Private Benefit:** No private benefit has been derived by anyone in connection with the Group. Ballyknock riding establishment continued to provide the Group with facilities at very favourable rates, much less than the usual commercial cost, for which the Group is very grateful.

**Financial position:** As reported, the traditional Lurgan RDA Collection Day at Lurgan Tesco took place again in 2023. This with other generous donations and a grant from the National RDA fund has brought the Group back into a positive financial situation with the ever present caution of unexpected costs.

As recorded in the accompanying end of year financial statement, the Group's expenditure was £2,697 including hire of ponies, RDA membership, insurances and subscription fees. Total income of £3,225 was made up of donations, for which we are extremely grateful and amounts from fund raising activities. This resulted in a surplus for the year of £528. A closing credit balance of £2,264 whilst ensuring immediate continuation of service, will require the Group to endeavour to fundraise in order to continue its activities over the forthcoming year.

In setting our objectives, planning and carrying out our activities for the year, the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have continued to achieve the charity's purposes.

Signed for the Trustees of Lurgan RDA, NIC no: 104201, for the financial year, September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023

Sara McCorkell, Group Chairperson



Terry Ingles, Group Charity contact: 98 Kilntown Road. Dromore. Co Down, BT25 1HS  
Anne Cochrane  
Anne Elise Coburn  
Sheelagh McAfee  
Hilary Idzikowska  
Patricia McLean