

Trustees' Annual Report for the financial year September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024
Lurgan Riding for the Disabled Group

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

Purpose: Lurgan RDA, a Group of the UK National Riding for the Disabled Association, 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: The Autumn term started on 19th September 2023, with the St Anthony's group including three new riders.

The Ceara School group included two new riders. This was the more challenging class with at least one child who often just stayed on the bus. Another usually came into the riding school, but sat and watched and was encouraged to just take in the atmosphere and enjoy the view of the others riding and taking part in the activities. One of the children had ridden before, however, but would never get on the horse of her own accord and had to be lifted on, once aboard however, was reasonably confident.

The Group provided 11 sessions this term with a regular attendance of 7 to 8 riders from each school in the two lessons each session. Amongst other things, we were teaching the more capable St Anthony's pupils to rise to the trot. In addition some of them were entered in a UK wide RDA Countryside Challenge competition and practised their manoeuvres for the Virtual National Championships which was entered by submitting videos of their performances. We were delighted to discover that, out of a class of 20, our riders were placed 7th 9th, 10th and 11th. A very good result for the riders and thanks are due to the Coach and two others who did the filming and entry submission. The term finished on 5th December with the traditional visit of Father Christmas, with the stable's tractor and trailer suitably bedecked for his transport along with his sack of presents. Two of the volunteers had gone the 'extra mile' and knitted horses which were greatly appreciated by the children. The spare woolly horses were sold to volunteers, to raise funds for the Group. We finished with Christmas Dinner in the Halfway House, Banbridge.

The first RDA lesson in the New Year was on 23 January 2024 for St Anthony's only in the first instance, as Ceara School couldn't get transport that day. There were 3 new 'recruits' although one was too timid to attempt to ride, but did get on the barrel, an artificial "horse" designed to encourage reluctant riders to have a go and take part in the activities.

Ceara School children were able to return on 30th January 2024. These children included a wheelchair bound pupil whom the teachers were very keen should take part in the riding. With assessment of the situation and agreement including with the pupil, the child was lifted out of the wheelchair and placed on the horse and with suitable support and tuition from a

physiotherapy qualified volunteer, enjoyed the experience and gained physical benefit and improvement from the riding. One of the pupils was a very reluctant starter and it was an achievement to get the riding hat on, but did eventually ride on 12th March near the end of term.

A Parents' Day for the Ceara riders was held at the end of the Spring term (19th March). Nearly all the riders had a parent (or another supporter) and it was a huge success. The children behaved brilliantly and the parents were extremely proud of their children. All the children received rosettes and lots of photographs were taken. Meantime, St Anthony's marked the end of term with an Easter Egg hunt after their session.

The summer term started on Tuesday 16th April. St Anthony's brought 2 new riders, who both rode on their first occasion.

A Ceara teacher attended some sessions with a therapy dog called Sargent Pepper. It has a rigorous training regime so behaves well with everyone at school and was good in the presence of the horses. When it is in school it is considered to be working, but is homed with the teacher's family. The riders from Ceara presented various problems including again, a child who could not be persuaded to get on a horse, but eventually got on the barrel. Coping with the different behaviours of some of the children is both challenging and interesting with the teachers able to assist in decisions as to whether or not to proceed with attempts to get the children on a horse, or, as is often the case, it is sufficient merely to be in the presence of the horses and activities.

The Northern Ireland RDA Regional Qualifier Competition for the National event was held on Wed 8th May at the Laurelvie Equestrian Centre. We did not send a rider from our Group, but the St Anthony's children took part in the RDA Art Competition. On 14th May Celia McMorran (RDA NI Chairman) came to the Group to present Art Prizes to two of the children who had achieved second and third places in the competition.

The ninth lesson & the last day of the Summer term was on 11th June. This was a very happy occasion as the parents of both schools were invited to come and watch their children ride during their session. The Principal of Ceara also attended and was suitably impressed. St Anthony's riders put on a good demonstration of the Countryside Challenge. Thanks again to one of our coaches who had made most of the props. Thanks are also due to the extremely talented bakers in the Group who provided delicious goodies for everyone to enjoy – some even RDA themed!

Planning: Planning included assessment of the children's fitness to ride based on parents' completed agreement forms and teachers' advice, decisions regarding suitability and choice of the horses, preparation for activities, continuation of safeguarding requirements for volunteers, discussions and decisions on fundraising

Training and Volunteers: On a freezing January day three of the volunteers set out for a Regional RDA Training Day at Laurelvie riding establishment, near Antrim. After a difficult frozen-road journey the day went well with activities and specific training divided around the indoor school, with volunteers working in small groups to both learn and revise

techniques in tacking up, mounting, other routines and RDA techniques and requirements involved in the provision of riding for a wide range of riders' abilities.

Our Coaches maintain their competence as required and tested by the RDA organisation, on-line and in person.

Two of the volunteers attended the RDA Regional Qualifier session at Laurelview Wednesday 8 May as judges and markers for the Countryside Challenge competition.

Achievements: We had our main Fundraiser at Tesco in Lurgan on 8th February 2024. £834.18 was a most satisfactory result. We are grateful to Edel Foy, Community Champion, who is so welcoming and makes it easy for us to collect at Tesco. In addition we received assistance from within the Group in the provision of display material and donation stickers.

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. In addition we supported and encouraged participation and gained success in National and Regional competitions as appropriate for the two groups of riders.

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.

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 regulations 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 2024. The purchase of a credit card reader and setting up of the associated account provided a valuable asset in the cashless collection of donations.

As recorded in the accompanying end of year financial statement, the Group's expenditure was £2,368 including hire of ponies, RDA membership, insurances and subscription fees. Total income of £1,793 was made up of donations, for which we are extremely grateful and amounts from fund raising activities. This resulted in a loss for the year of £575. A closing credit balance of £1,733 was only assisted by a good balance at the end of the previous

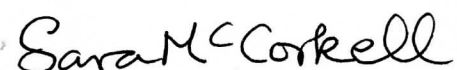
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financial year and whilst ensuring immediate continuation of service, will require the Group to endeavour to fundraise to a greater extent in order to continue its activities over the forthcoming year.

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, 2023 to August 31, 2024

Sara McCorkell, Group Chairperson



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