

RIDING for the DISABLED ASSOCIATION (ARMAGH) LIMITED

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2019

Objectives

At Longstone we aim to enrich the lives of disabled people through horses, in a safe and welcoming environment.

Riding Activities

Riding sessions were held each week during school term on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Riders came from Christian Brothers PS, Armstrong PS, Lisanally Special School and Appleby Adults Centre. A community ride took place each Wednesday evening for both adults and children.

Many riders took part in end of term exams and proficiency tests and it is always with great delight that they receive their certificates and endeavour awards.

The group attended Armagh County Show in June and Markethill Community Festival in August. These local events are an opportunity for us to showcase to the community all that we do and this in turn undoubtedly raises public awareness of our work.

As with all riding sessions, continued emphasis was placed on the need to operate fully in accordance with RDA Health and Safety Rules.

Membership and Insurance

Active membership total is around 40. Our administration system requires all new members to complete a Volunteer Application Form, Green card and apply for an Access NI check. This ensures that operating activities are covered by RDA insurance. As in previous years, the insurance premium makes up for a large proportion of our running costs.

Staffing and Volunteers

Debbie McKenna is yard manager and also cares for ponies throughout the year. On occasion we have to cancel riding sessions due to limited availability of coaches and helpers. There is significant demand for additional riding sessions and the group is continually striving to recruit coaches and helpers. This is done primarily through social media and local advertising. Some sessions are however boosted by the attendance of young people on work experience or who might be working towards an award through their school/college. It is the group's aim, where possible, to allow past riders to be a part of the volunteer team.

RDA UK has implemented the new "coaching pathway", a new qualification process whereby everyone is assessed and reviewed against a set criteria. This is a more consistent approach which offers training and various e learning courses, enabling volunteers to know which standards need to be met when delivering sessions. Various training days have been attended by volunteers, including aspects of leading and side walking, first aid training and child protection training. We have 5 instructors at present and another 2 volunteers under the title of coach in training.

Fundraising

Trustees have worked relentlessly to raise funds and have organised various activities including a very successful quiz night held in local rugby club. We have had significant donations from individuals, clubs, organisations and businesses. Many of these donations have been initiated by our members or by friends of committee members. We appreciate the continued support from community, schools and parents. Fundraising is an on-going matter and our trustee committee is tireless in its attempt to come up with novel ideas and activities.

Pony Welfare

We have been working with approximately 6 ponies, cared for by Debbie McKenna and ably assisted by a team of helpers who turn up during school holidays and weekends to feed and check on animals. Due to the fact that some of our ponies are older, we tend to need more veterinary attention which inevitably leads to higher costs. Other pony expenses include farrier and winter feeding.

Maintenance

Maintenance expenditure included painting and repairs to stable doors, power washing and general tidying up. It has to be said that the arena, yard and stable block look immaculate and well maintained due in part to the diligent work of volunteers.