

# RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2022



## Proud and grateful



Ride High has been supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Milton Keynes for over 13 years. We couldn't be prouder of the

role we play within the community, helping children who in many cases were merely surviving, to the point where they are now thriving.

In October we organised our very first Golf Day at Woburn and I was delighted that Shannon, an ex-member from 2014 was able to attend, and bravely tell her story to our guests. Shannon told us about how Ride High helped her to overcome her anxieties and lack of confidence, and to discover her own identity, and be proud of it. Shannon is now studying Advanced Equine Management at Shuttleworth College and volunteers at Ride High as often as she can.

Shannon is one of over 1,800 children, whom with your help, we have supported over the years, and we're continuously striving to develop our service to help thousands more. We're operating in extremely challenging times so you can only imagine how excited we are to have recently secured a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. As you'll read, this funding will allow us to work with more children, but very importantly, will also help to provide some security amongst all the uncertainty.

Despite our good news there is still much work to be done, so before I wish you all the very best as the year nears its close, I'd like to invite you to read our newsletter to consider how you may like to get involved... perhaps you'll enter the 'swing of things' by joining us for our Ride High Roaring Twenties Ball in the New Year?!

With very best wishes,



**Olivia Sugdon**  
CEO, Ride High

## From strength to strength

**Cameron is 13. From a young age his home life has been challenging. In the last couple of years school has also become an unhappy place as he's been bullied and at times, has just wanted to give up.**

CAMHS referred Cameron to Ride High and since starting on our programme Ride High has become a very important part of Cameron's life.

"Ride High is amazing. It's an escape from school and the highlight of my week". Before Ride High Cameron felt isolated and like no one understood him, meeting new people who are experiencing their own challenges has helped him to realise that he's not alone. "People at school say horrible things, but here I can be myself without any judgement and I've made some great friends".

Cameron had never ridden a horse before Ride High so was naturally nervous, but with support and encouragement from our team, he's overcome his fears and says that being around the horses now makes him feel a sense of confidence and calm which is helping him to open-up more and talk about his feelings – something he's never been able to do before.

Cameron said, "I'm forever grateful to everyone at Ride High" and in turn we'd like to thank Cameron for sharing his story so far. He's doing amazingly and we can't wait to see him go from strength-to-strength.



## Celebration time



**On Wednesday 9th November we celebrated securing a grant of over £385,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund which will enable us to increase the number of children we support to over 300 each year, an increase of over 30%!**

It was wonderful to have Milton Keynes Mayor Amanda Marlow and Deputy Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire Mrs Mary Tuckett, friends and supporters of Ride High and members of the Milton Keynes community with us to share in our good news.

Ride High will receive the grant over a period of three years from the National Lottery Community Fund. The grant will also allow us introduce additional wellbeing elements and optional counselling to our programme with YIS Milton Keynes.

**Thank you to the National Lottery Community Fund and to everyone who plays the Lottery!**

*"Ride High literally saved my life. I was in a very dark place and Ride High became a safe haven. Just what I needed". Ride High leaver.*

# Charity Challenges support 31 children in need



Back in August, 52 amazing individuals jumped in the saddle and collectively cycled 2,000 miles in a heatwave for Ride High. It was our second Cycle Challenge and included a 100 and 50 mile route and new for 2023, a 25 mile route.

Despite the heat all participants were smiling as they crossed the finish line, and they were rewarded with a special medal, hand-decorated by the Ride High children, and a celebratory barbecue.

Thank you to all who participated, to our volunteers who supported on the day and to our event sponsors: All Things Business, Bailey MK, Cawleys, EMW Law, Resolution Homes, SIS and WSA Communications, and medal sponsors MK Gateway.

On Wednesday 19th October we held our first Ride High Charity Golf Day at the prestigious Woburn Golf Club. The championship Marquess Course didn't disappoint, and our golfers enjoyed 18 holes in the glorious Autumn sunshine. On course games including Beat The Pro 'Tom Newton' added to the fun! A drinks reception and meal followed with talks about the charity, including one from our ex member Shannon. We also ran a 'lively' Live Auction and the long awaited prize giving.

Thank you to all our participating teams and to our title sponsor Cawleys and sponsors of our oncourse competitions: Bedford Battery, Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors and 3rd Avenue Autos, and to all our prize donors. We can't wait to see you all again in 2023!

**Our events combined raised over £43,000. A fantastic amount of money that will support 31 children through the Ride High programme.**



## Corporate champions

We enjoy working with our corporate partners and appreciate their support which comes in a variety of ways.



Congratulations and thank you to Team Tritax Symmetry who recently completed the huge challenge that is the Yorkshire Three Peaks. 24 miles, 5,200ft ascent and all within 10h58! The team raised over £5,800 to be shared between Ride High and Ronald McDonald House Charities.



In October half-term a team of witches (volunteers from EMW) put on a wonderful hallowe'en special for our members! They used their volunteer day carving pumpkins, decorating biscuits and enjoying lots of spooky treats with the children.

The children also recently enjoyed a very interesting visit to Ken Hall, a shoe manufacturing factory in Kettering. The team their took time out to give the children a tour of the factory and were shown every part of the shoe making process – from design to production.

## Volunteer in the Spotlight

**Hannah has been volunteering at Ride High for almost six months now, but her family have supported us for many years, attending our annual ball and taking on challenges to raise money for Ride High. Her dad climbed Kilimanjaro, and last year Hannah ran the London Marathon.**

Now Hannah's returned from London and is living locally she's decided to put her experience with horses to good use and to help support the children in their weekly sessions.

"I volunteer every Monday and help to support the children with their riding and groundwork activities. In the clubroom sessions we get creative – think glitter pens and glue! It's wonderful to see the children have the opportunity to learn to ride and then relax as they get creative in their weekly projects.

I can't believe how quickly the children progress – not just with their riding, but how their confidence grows, and the friendships they build. I love to see the joy and the feeling of escapism that children experience through their interactions with the Ride High team and horses. Often when they arrive the children are feeling low after a challenging day – by the end of the session they have big smiles on their faces, and they speak enthusiastically about what they've learnt and achieved.

Volunteering at Ride High has been the most rewarding experience for me, and I would recommend everyone to try it! You don't need experience with horses, just a desire to want to help, and you get so much support from the team. But if you don't have time to volunteer each week I'd still urge you investigate other ways you can get involved and support this amazing charity.



Running the London Marathon for Ride High was definitely one of the best experiences of my life and now I get to see first hand the impact the money that I raised has on children in need".

# Home from Home



Anastasia, 11 and Victoria, 16 are sisters. They left Ukraine in March when the city they lived in was bombed and it was too dangerous to stay. After stays in Poland, Germany and France they are now living with their mum and host family in Milton Keynes. Their dad remains in Ukraine under martial law.



The girls have undergone an extremely traumatic time and find themselves in a new country with new rules, new people and a new language. They were referred to Ride High by a Ukraine Aid Charity to provide some support and stability to help them feel more settled. They joined us in September.

Two months into their membership the girls couldn't speak more enthusiastically about Ride High. They miss the familiarity of home, family and friends, but in Ukraine, they'd spend a lot of time around animals, so spending time with the horses gives them comfort. "I love to feel the horses next to me. They are huge and powerful animals and I feel safe and protected around them". Anastasia told us how she loves to speak to horses. They're both very proud of how Anastasia is now trotting, and Victoria can canter.

The girls have recently started school and although they're settling in, they have challenging days. They tell us that Ride High is something they look forward to – a place they can relax, be themselves and feel happier and stronger.

They've also made new friends and are enjoy participating in group activities in the clubroom. They are especially grateful for the friendships they've built with their Club Leader Mark and the volunteers.

Anastasia and Victoria are a long way from Ukraine and it could be some time before they're able to return and be reunited with family and friends. Right now, we're happy that Ride High is providing them with a little piece of home when they need it most.

During the summer we delivered a special six-week programme for Ukrainian children who had recently settled in Milton Keynes.



After everything they've been through we were pleased to be able to provide them with something positive to focus on and to look forward to. The children had a fantastic time making new friends, building new skills and finding their confidence. Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who supported this project and to the Milton Keynes Community Foundation for helping to fund it.

# Magic of the horses

Leo is 10 and is full of negativity, caused by what he calls a 'bully brain' constantly telling him that he's not good enough. Coupled with this, his parents' separation has had a huge emotional impact on him, so he struggles at home as well as at school, where he's very quiet and finds it hard to make friends.

Leo's school referred him to Ride High in the hope that we can help him to become more confident and to believe in himself.

Two months into his programme and Leo entered the room eyes down. He'd not had a good day at school, but when I asked him what he'd done in his Ride High session, he immediately raised his head and with an enormous smile he said, "We stuck a thermometer up a horse's bum to take its temperature"! He continued by telling me that Trellis is his favourite pony because he likes her panda eyes, and how horses' ears tell you what mood they are in. This was the first time Leo and I had met, but the magic of the horses prevailed, and Leo came alive.

Leo told me how each week he feels a little nervous to start, but once he's with the horses how much fun he has. "Amazing, interesting and fun" are the words he used to describe Ride High. Most importantly, Leo said that he doesn't hear the voice in his head talking to him as



much when he's with us, and how much happier and confident he feels in himself. Leo has also built a very strong bond with his Club Leader Mark and is making strides in talking about his feelings and emotions and takes great comfort from knowing he's not alone.

Leo has come along away during his time at Ride High and we're now helping him to manage his inner thoughts when he's away from Ride High and to take the positivity he feels around the horses to other areas of his life. Well done Leo!

# Ride High Reunions

In the summer we organised reunion events for former Ride High members. The events enabled us to connect with children and young people; to see how they've progressed since having left Ride High, to assist with further signposting if necessary and to gather feedback to inform continuous improvement of our programme. The events also allowed ex members to reconnect with each other, the Ride High team, and the horses.

Young people travelled as far as Lancashire to share their memories of Ride High, what they're doing now and their aspirations for the future. It was wonderful to hear how they feel coming to Ride High positively influenced their lives.

*"I felt accepted at Ride High and although life continues to be challenging, I remember the 'I did it' feeling I got at Ride High and this still gives me courage and strength to carry on. I loved every minute at Ride High".*



# Learning & Development Programmes



Aim High is your new one-stop partner to support, develop, and grow your strongest asset in your business, your people.

Aim High will work with you to plan, deliver execute and evaluate on all Management Training needs you may have. It's a unique business, providing a world class training experience for companies, and all profits raised will go to the Ride High charity. Face-to-face group workshops, group virtual training and one-to-one coaching are available.

For more information: W: [aimhighuk.com](http://aimhighuk.com) E: [hello@aimhighuk.com](mailto:hello@aimhighuk.com)

## A BIG thank you to all our supporters:

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### Private Donors:

We would like to thank our private donors – it would be impossible to do as much as we do without you.

## Events



### Ride High Roaring Twenties Ball (Kindly sponsored by Sysmex)

Saturday 21st January | Jurys Inn, Milton Keynes

Join us for an extraordinary evening of entertainment! Let us transport you back to the glamorous 1920's where we'll dine, drink and dance the night away.

Performing on stage this year we have a 1920's inspired eight-piece band guaranteed to have you shaking your tassels and sequins. Also included is a four-course meal, Live and Silent Auctions with super money-can't-buy items, photobooth and disco.

Tickets: £100pp (standard) £130pp (VIP). Tables of 10 and individual tickets available.

### Milton Keynes Marathon

Monday 1st May | Campbell Park, Milton Keynes

Run for Ride High in the Milton Keynes Marathon Weekend 2023.

With a new venue, new routes and lots of exciting new additions, we cannot wait to take part in this event again next May Bank Holiday! We have charity places available for the Marathon and Half-Marathon so if you'd like to take on this amazing challenge and support Ride High at the same time please get in touch. We'll support you all the way and provide you with a Ride High running vest or t-shirt. There is also the Turing 10K, Rocket 5K and Superhero Fun Run to enter!!

### Ride High Charity Golf Day

Wednesday 27th September | Woburn Golf Club

After the success of our first Golf Day in October we're back at Woburn in 2023 – this time on their original championship 'Dukes Course'.

Join us for a day of golf at a truly magnificent venue. Team entry includes breakfast, on-course competitions and refreshments, drinks reception and three course meal with wine, prize giving and goody bags.

Visit: [www.ridehigh.org/events](http://www.ridehigh.org/events)

## Contact us:

Office: 01908 696169

Mobile: 07507 308943

Email: [info@ridehigh.org](mailto:info@ridehigh.org)

Website: [www.ridehigh.org](http://www.ridehigh.org)

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