

RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Summer 2022



RIDE HIGH

Summer successes



The year is whizzing by and we're busier than ever before. Referrals from children and young people

who need our support continue to rise, and with your help we're doing all we can to bring children off our waiting list and onto the Ride High programme as quickly as possible.

What we offer in Milton Keynes is totally unique, and although the horses are a vital ingredient, we provide so much more – including weekly educational and creative courses, transport to and from Ride High, nutritious lunches and holiday activities. And of course, we support children for up to a whole year so we can have a long-lasting impact on their lives.

Within this summer newsletter I'm pleased to share some of our successes, and to acknowledge just a few individuals and companies who have helped to make them possible. We are all facing challenging times, so your support is more critical and appreciated than ever.

I'd like to wish you an enjoyable summer. I'm looking forward to cheering on our Cyclists in August in our Cycle Challenge and hope you'll be able to join us for our future fundraising events – including our Charity Golf Day in October... we even have a date for our Ball in 2023!

Olivia Sugdon

Olivia Sugdon
CEO, Ride High

Life after lockdown

Amelia is 16. She suffers with severe anxiety which has prevented her from fully participating in life - including school, for some years.

Like many young people, Amelia struggled during lockdown. Whilst it did give her some temporary respite from things that trigger her anxiety, returning to life after lockdown has been a huge challenge for Amelia, and she's not yet been able to go back to school. Amelia is very quiet and talking makes her feel anxious. So, when she was offered counselling, unsurprisingly it made her feel worse, and a different approach was required.

Amelia was referred to Ride High by her doctor. She has been with us for seven weeks now and sitting chatting with her in the Clubroom you can already see a positive change. "I don't go out very often. Ride High has become my reason to get out of bed and leave the house". Amelia enjoys spending time with the horses - "There's something very different about interacting with horses rather than humans. It's easier. And I'm in a small group where I feel safe and am starting to talk to people, as opposed to school where there are lots of people and I feel very anxious".

Coming to Ride High has given Amelia the confidence to try other activities. More recently she's started going for walks and to the library. She's even visited school to sit her GCSE exams - this is a huge achievement and so important for the future. And Amelia is now looking towards a much brighter future as she hopes to be able to go to college to study textiles.

Ride High is helping Amelia to find to find her voice and to learn to manage her anxieties. She has a quiet determination and we are confident she'll succeed.



"Amelia has been suffering with severe anxiety since she was 13. Although she struggled before covid, lockdown had a hugely negative impact on her life. It was so upsetting to see her having gone from a bright and lively girl to just a shell of her former self. Since Amelia started at Ride High, I have noticed such a huge difference in her. She spends more time downstairs and less time in her bed and she's more talkative and enthusiastic. I am so grateful she's had this opportunity. This increase in confidence that Ride High has given her meant that not only did we attend the college open evening, but she even attended some of her exams which 6 months ago I never thought would happen. Thank you so much for the work that you do and difference you've made already". Amelia's mum.

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Celebrating our volunteers

In June we held a special gathering to say 'thank you' to our lovely volunteers for the time and dedication they give to Ride High, week-in, week out.

We don't often get the opportunity to bring our volunteers together, so it was lovely to spend quality time together over cake.

We were joined by Councillor Zoe Nolan who told us that there are 84,500 volunteers in Milton Keynes! A truly amazing figure and one that makes us very proud to be part of the MK community.



In the Spotlight

When Shanika (pictured below) changed from working full-time to studying for a Masters she decided to commit some new-found free time to volunteering at Ride High, and we're so grateful that she did! Shanika supports our Friday afternoon group each week. Read what she has to say about her experience... and if you think you'd like to volunteer too please contact us...

"Each week I welcome the children and chat to them as we prepare to go out onto the yard. They ride in the outdoor school, sometimes go on a hack in the local village, manoeuvre obstacle courses and work with the horses on the ground. All the time I'm there to offer encouragement, to lead them on the horses, to help keep them safe and to make sure they get the very best from their experience. In the clubroom I help them with their projects.

I've been really taken aback by the difference I see in the children I've worked with from their first week to their final week. They go from being shy and quiet to being full of confidence and really enjoying themselves. The impact it has is incredible.

Getting to know the children we work with has been the best part. They are truly amazing and it's a privilege to see them grow, and to play a small part in that growth. I had never worked with children and young people before I volunteered here, but I've discovered a real passion for it, which I'm so grateful for! I find the whole experience really rewarding and I also like how it gives me a few hours each week away from my computer and my phone to spend outside - it's wonderful for your mental health".

For more information about volunteering email centremanager@ridehigh.org or call 01908 696169



MK Marathon Weekend

We had a fantastic time at the Milton Keynes Marathon Weekend on May bank holiday weekend!

Thirteen superstars took part in the 5K Rocket, Half Marathon and Marathon events for Ride High, raising over £8,000 for the charity. It was an incredible effort by everyone. One of our runners Emma - was the fifth lady to cross the finish line in the Half Marathon - despite taking a fall.

We also had a band of volunteers (including some of the Ride High children) out in force managing the water station at mile 12 of the Half Marathon route. We enjoyed cheering on all the runners and helping to keep them hydrated. MK Marathon Weekend is a fantastic community event and we look forward to getting involved again next year.



EMW Conquer the Three Peaks Challenge

A team at EMW Law recently took on the mighty Three Peaks Challenge. They did amazingly well despite some treacherous weather conditions.

3 Mountains Summited ✓

23 Miles Walking, 462 Miles Driving ✓

3064 Meters of Ascent ✓

The team raised an incredible amount - over **£6,800** which will be shared between three incredible charities: Ride High, Crawley Open House and Soup Kitchen London.



Amazing Grace

Grace is just 13 years old, but she's already had to cope with challenges and responsibilities that many adults would struggle with. Grace is a young carer for her mum who has epilepsy.

In the early days of her diagnosis, she had to take care of mum who needed 24/7 supervision. It was a very scary and uncertain time and Grace would worry constantly about her safety. "I'd hear a noise and have to check on mum. One day I had to give her CPR to save her life". Whilst home life was difficult, Grace also found school hard too.

Grace was referred to Ride High by her social worker with extreme anxiety. "I was in a low place. I love horses so I was happy to be offered a place at Ride High".

For someone who has experienced so much at such a young age it was amazing to listen to Grace's account of what Ride High has come to mean to her over her six-month membership.

Grace describes Ride High as a place where she can forget about her problems and stresses... it's a positive distraction. Whilst many of us don't like Monday's, for Grace it's her most favourite day of the week as that's when she comes to Ride High. "I've always struggled to go to school but coming here on a Monday sets me up and helps me to get through the week. It's become part of my routine and somehow makes it easier to do other things".

Grace has built a great connection with the horses. She's able to sense how they mirror our feelings and behaviour and so has learnt to be calm and less anxious around them. She rides well and has learnt so much about the horses. Where she was very quiet when she first came to Ride High, her self-confidence has grown and she's happy to speak out. "At school I've always been anxious about what other people think, but at Ride High I don't need to pretend. I can be myself and not worry about being judged. At Ride High I have friends and we all support each other".

Grace has achieved so much whilst at Ride High and it's a huge relief to her and to mum that she's now feeling much better. Mum's health has massively improved and during her time with us Grace has also changed school and is now in a much happier environment. Coming to Ride High has provided encouragement, comfort, routine, and the self-confidence to know she's going to be okay. "Anxiety can still strike any time, but now I don't let it stop me".



We're so proud of Grace and are humbled by her attitude and strength. We're also very proud that we've been able to play a small but important part in helping to shape what we believe will be a very happy future for her. Well done Grace!

Here's to a summer of fun

The long summer holiday is generally thought of as a happy time, but for many children it can be very long and lonely. This summer we have lots of fun and educational activities planned to help ensure that our members have positive experiences to remember.

Support from kind donors is allowing us to take members on a very special three-day residential to the Fortune Centre of Riding in the New Forest – our first visit for three years! For the first time, we're also running reunions to welcome back former Ride High members to reconnect and see how they're progressing.

We are also delighted to be launching a summer programme for Ukrainian children who have recently arrived in Milton Keynes. These children have had their lives ripped apart. Through our programme we hope to give them something positive to focus on and to provide stability, structure and security in what is a very uncertain time for them.

Thank you to the Milton Keynes Community Foundation for supporting this project.

We'll report back on all activities in our next newsletter!



Nature nurtures children

Our new Nature course is the latest addition to our suite of Clubroom projects, and we're pleased to say it's been an enormous success.

After their sessions with the horses, members attending our Thursday afternoon group have been learning about nature, wildlife and conservation in a fun. They've been creating habitats for lots of 'little' visitors to Ride High; building hedgehog houses, butterfly bars, bumblebee nests and bird feeders. They've also made footprint tunnels to record the tracks of animals visiting the Ride High garden and hidden a little camera in the garden to help identify them! They've learnt so much about lots of living creatures and had lots of fun at the same time.

Time spent outside in nature is so important for the children's wellbeing. It has given them an appreciation of their surroundings and encouraged them to play an active role in taking care of their environment.



Thank you Jack for giving back



We were absolutely astounded when ex Ride High member Jack visited us last month with a £1,000 donation for Ride High!

Jack recently turned 11 and instead of receiving gifts asked friends and family attending his birthday party to donate to Ride High. This was such a thoughtful act of kindness and the money raised will go a long way to helping many other children.

Jack is a young carer for his twin sister who has severe disabilities. Coming to Ride High gave him something positive of his own to focus on, and the opportunity to make friends and have fun. It was so lovely to see Jack and know that he's doing well since leaving Ride High.

Charity Golf Day at Woburn Golf Club Wednesday 19th October

Join us for Ride High's first ever Charity Golf Day at Woburn Golf Club. Kindly sponsored by Cawleys.

Woburn is a magnificent venue and you'll be playing on the newest of its three championship courses, The Marquess. Team entry includes breakfast, on-course competitions and refreshments, drinks reception, three-course dinner with wine, prize giving and goody bags.

Sign-up now to secure your team's place: www.ridehigh.org/golfday

Ride High Ball Saturday 21st January 2023

Save the date! There ain't no party like a Ride High party!

Our annual Ball is in the planning, and whilst it's all currently a little 'hush hush' we can promise you that it's going to be a fabulous evening not to be missed! More details will be released shortly but pop the date in your diary and reserve your tickets now!

Email: helen.dixon@ridehigh.org.



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