

RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Autumn | Winter 2021



What a year...



The year is whizzing by... but what a year it has been! We've tried to capture the most recent action and details of what's coming up here in our last newsletter of 2021!

September represented a fresh start post-covid as we welcomed 80 new members to Ride High. After some quieter months it is lovely to hear the charity house filled with the sound of their chatter and laughter. And I'm delighted to report that our new courses are proving to be very successful additions to our programme.

Our mission is to help transform the lives of the children and young people who we work with. This term we have launched our new Ride High Wellbeing Measure and invested in a new database to help us to more closely monitor our programme to ensure we're having a lasting impact on our members.

Fundraising through the pandemic has been extremely challenging so we were absolutely delighted with the success of our first Cycle Challenge back in the summer. 69 participants completed the challenge and raised an incredible amount of money for Ride High. The event was so well received that we're planning another for 2022 - read on for more details!

As you read on, you'll see stories about some of our members and the amazing progress they're making at Ride High. We've also highlighted lots of ways you can get involved so we can continue our vital work. From attending an event or volunteering, to making a donation - we are truly grateful for all your support.

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

Olivia Sugdon

Olivia Sugdon
CEO, Ride High

One step at a time

Ava aged 14, suffers with severe anxiety. She has regular panic attacks and suicidal thoughts. During her induction at Ride High Ava didn't say a word, and she only agreed to attend if her mum accompanied her.

At her first session Ava kept herself separate from the rest of the group and wouldn't let mum out of her sight. However, by the end of the session Ava started to relax a little and you could see she was enjoying spending time with the horses.

Gradually over a period of weeks she started to come out of her shell and no longer needed mum beside her. Previously we wouldn't have known Ava was even in the room - seven weeks into the programme she's making friends and joining in activities - these are huge steps for someone with such severe anxiety.



Ava still has a long journey ahead of her but she's now on the right path and will continue on our programme until she's ready to fly.

"Ava was very anxious about joining Ride High but over the weeks we have seen her anxiety improve and her confidence grow. She is learning to trust and form new friendships which is great progress for her, and the team are so supportive and encouraging. The horses are the biggest tonic - she treasures every minute with them and talks about them non-stop! Thank you so much for this opportunity." Ava's mum.

Raising the roof

Work has finally begun on replacing the roofs on reception and the charity house where the children's indoor sessions take place and other important facilities are, including the children's changing rooms and offices for our staff. Both roofs have been leaking badly, the timber is rotten, and they are beyond repair. New roofs will protect our facilities, ensure that they are safe for children, staff and volunteers for years to come, and provide much improved insulation and warmth.



The work has been funded by the Marshall Foundation, John Apthorp Charity, Screwfix Foundation and Bernard Sunley Foundation and we are extremely grateful for their support. Bailey Roofing MK are carrying out the work and we hope to be finished before Christmas.

"I love every second at Ride High. It's somewhere I can be myself and be happy. My confidence is growing and life doesn't seem so terrifying anymore". Ride High member.

From strength to strength

Kane aged 15, was referred to us by CAMHS as he struggles with low mood and has suicidal thoughts. He was painfully shy and when he first came to Ride High he told us he didn't have any friends. Kane had never ridden before so was nervous at first, but he fell in love with the horses almost immediately.

In the first few clubroom sessions when the group were discussing their favourite horses, he soon joined in what he considered to be safe conversations. His new passion helped him to build a strong friendship with another member and he's become a happier young man who is kind and considerate and supports the rest of the group.

Kane is growing stronger by the week - as are his horse-riding skills. We tell him how well he's doing but he still can't quite believe it. Over the coming months we intend to do all we can to help raise his confidence and self-belief.



In the Spotlight

Volunteering at Ride High is a great way to give back to the community, but it's also personally very rewarding. Rachel pictured below, has been volunteering with us for seven months now, read what she has to say about her experience.

"I started volunteering at Ride High because I wanted to help make a difference to children's lives. I keep coming back because the programme is simply amazing, and I love seeing the children grow and achieve new things every week. The beautiful outdoor setting, the horses and the wonderful team combined provide spectacular support for the children.

I help prepare the children for their horse sessions - making sure they're kitted up and everything fits properly, including their hats. I also help get the horses ready for the children!

During the riding lessons I tend to lead the children on their horses and give them lots of encouragement to help them feel confident so they have lots of fun! In the clubroom I enjoy helping the children with their project work. The children often arrive slightly nervous, but I love how they always leave with huge smiles on their faces.



"It brings me such joy to see the children fall in love with the horses. They learn something new every week - and so do I! It is the best part of my week and I feel really lucky to be part of the programme!"

Free Wills Month

This November we are offering you the opportunity to have your will written or updated free of charge.

We've teamed up with local solicitors firm, Tollers whom you can meet in person, or you can complete your will from the comfort of your own home using online will writing company Beyond.



Writing a will may seem daunting - in fact only 30% of the UK actually have one - but it is the best way to protect those closest to you and to make sure your wishes are carried out.

The difference a gift in your will could make...

Writing a will is also an opportunity to leave a gift to a charitable cause. A gift of any size would make a big difference to Ride High and a lasting impact on our children. By remembering us in your will you can be confident that your legacy will transform the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people like Kane.

NB. The will writing service is entirely free whether or not you leave a gift to Ride High.

Spread some cheer with our charity Christmas cards



As featured in Horse and Hound, Ride High members have designed a beautiful Christmas card to help raise money for the charity.

The Christmas card developed from a club room project in which our members talked about what Ride High means to them. Each of them chose a word to decorate part of the design so their feelings surround the beautiful golden horse. The children decided to call the card "Golden Spirit".

The A5 landscape cards are available to purchase at £4 for a pack of ten.

To order your Christmas cards please call 01908 696169 or email admin@ridehigh.org.



Ride High Sporting Success

On Sunday 16th August 69 riders cycled 4300 miles in our first ever Cycle Challenge.

Participants spent weeks and months preparing to cycle the 50 or 100-mile route. The majority of participants cycled as a team, others joined a guided group led by an experienced cyclist.

On the day, teams started leaving Ride High from 7am. The routes took in picturesque villages and stunning countryside in the Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire areas. There were marshalled check-ins in the beautiful villages of Old Warden and Steppingley for teams to rest and refuel.

Back at Ride High eagerly awaiting guests welcomed cyclists over the finish line. Every single participant completed the event and



was presented with a very special medal decorated by Ride High members, and enjoyed a well-earned BBQ.

"Thanks for a really well organised and enjoyable event. Great route, supportive volunteers and a really special medal – I have had dozens of medals over the years but none as meaningful as this one!"

James Farmbrough, RSM.

Thank you to our sponsors Cawleys, Sysmex UK, Truck East, Marshall Amplification, Scotts of Thrapston, RSM and All Things Business MK.

On Sunday 3rd October Eddie and Hannah completed the London Marathon in aid of Ride High.

Eddie from Resolution Homes Ltd - this being his 10th marathon, finished in 3:05 and Hannah - she smashed her first ever marathon in 4:22!! HUGE congratulations and thanks to them both.

Combined, event participants raised over £46,000 which will enable us to work with many more vulnerable children. We are truly grateful to them all.



Have your donation doubled this Christmas

We're taking part in The Big Give Christmas Challenge - the UK's biggest online match funding campaign. We're hoping to raise £8,000 in just one week to support 32 children through a 12 week programme at Ride High starting in January 2022.

Every donation we receive will be generously matched by our supporters Dentons and SDC and Big Give Champion Four Acre. That means for every £10 donated, we will receive £20 towards our services, up to £4,000.

Give a gift to change young lives

Alfie is 10 years old. In his short life he has already experienced great trauma having been subjected to neglect and domestic abuse. He lived with his grandad on a residency order but had to move back home after his behaviour started to deteriorate. Back at home Alfie regularly goes missing and his behaviour has led to suspensions at school and involvement in antisocial activity in the community.

Alfie feels a deep sense of rejection and anger and without our help is at risk of exploitation. However, he's still so young and if we can bring him to Ride High and help to instil a sense of belonging, of respect and trust, we know we can help direct him onto a more positive path.



We have a long waiting list of children and young people like Alfie facing unbearable challenges. We're asking you to help us to give 32 of them a very special gift this Christmas - an invitation to join Ride High in January for an experience that will transform their lives forever.

How you can help

From Monday 30th November to Tuesday 7th December please donate to Ride High via the webpage below. Any amount big or small will make such a difference to our work.

www.ridehigh.org/christmaschallenge

With thanks to our supporters:



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A successful launch

Our new clubroom courses have been running now for eight weeks, and we're delighted to report that they've been very well received by our members and are proving an enriching extension to our core programme.

Our science-based course, supported by a visiting expert, Dr Flinn, has seen the children taking part in all sorts of exciting experiments, including making fizz-pop rockets to illustrate effervescence, chemical painting; using colours to detect acids and alkalis, and building and launching water filled rockets to explore aerodynamics and air pressure.

Our portfolio course is for teenagers who are not engaged at school. They have been using their time in the clubroom to produce a portfolio - building on their learning from their practical sessions with the horses. So far, they've completed two of eight badges; Perfect Paddock, where they learnt what a horse needs from his paddock and designed their own 3D models; and Grooming, where they studied the correct ways to groom a horse and the grooming kit. For these young people, participation in the programme will provide them with a formal record of their learning representing their commitment, attendance and achievement – for themselves but also for potential employers.



2022 Events

The Ride High Masquerade Ball

Saturday 29th January, Jurys Inn Milton Keynes

The Ride High Ball is coming back with a bang! Enjoy a fabulous and fun evening with four-course meal and great entertainment including a live band and disco, and live and silent auctions. We guarantee you'll have a fantastic evening in aid of Ride High. Tickets are selling fast so grab yours before it's too late.

Tables of 10 or 12 are available or you can purchase individual tickets: Standard tickets: £90, Corporate tickets: £110 (including programme advertising) or VIP tickets: £130 (including a VIP reception and priority seating in the ballroom).

MK Marathon Weekend

Sunday 1st and Monday 2nd May, Starting and finishing at Stadium MK

We have 20 places to give away for Milton Keynes's very own Marathon Weekend. Join the Ride High runners to take on the MK Marathon, Half Marathon or 5K Rocket Run!

We'll support you with your fundraising, provide you with a Ride High personalised running vest, and will be there to cheer you on the big day. Our fundraising target for one of our MK Marathon places is between **£50 & £500pp** dependent on the distance. The MK Marathon routes are consistently ranked in the TOP 10 in the UK and we guarantee you'll have a great time. There is also a Marathon Relay if you'd like to run as a team.

Ride High Cycle Challenge Sunday 14th August, Starting at Ride High

After the success of our first Cycle Challenge, it's returning bigger and better for 2022 with brand new 50 and 100 mile road routes! Enter a team or join one of our guided groups led by an experienced cyclist. We are also introducing a new 100 Mile Relay event! This will be a fantastic challenge and we'll be with you every pedal of the way with Zoom sessions and training rides to help prepare and support participants.

Registration fees start from £25pp and fundraising targets are between £25 and £350pp dependent on the distance. Included in the registration fee: fun and safe road routes with first aid support provided, Ride High cycling shirt for the big day, water and snacks at stops en route, race medal decorated by the Ride High children and a celebratory BBQ for you and your supporters at the end.

For more information about our events please visit:

www.ridehigh.org/events

A BIG thank you to all our supporters:

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

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