

# RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Spring 2021



## Springing into action...



I can scarcely believe that it's been a year since we entered our first lockdown. The pandemic has changed the world we live in and we'll feel the effects for years to come.

But spring is now here and with it lighter and hopefully brighter days ahead.

At Ride High we have exciting plans to expand our programme and to reach many more vulnerable children. We hope you'll continue to support us along the way.

Please look at our Ride High Cycle Challenge taking place this summer. It's going to be a fantastic event and is open to novice riders who would like to join a guided group, and more experienced riders who would like to create their own team.

If cycling isn't your thing, throughout this newsletter you'll discover lots of other ways in which you can get involved and help to make 2021 a life changing year for hundreds of vulnerable children.

Olivia Sugdon

Olivia Sugdon  
CEO, Ride High

## Anxiety to aspiration

James aged 15, was subjected to domestic abuse and neglect. His experiences left him feeling insecure, anxious and unable to trust anyone.

He didn't have any friends and was missing important time at school. When James first came to Ride High he was very quiet and withdrawn, but he made an instant connection with the horses and would spend time talking to them and gently stroking them.

Weeks into his membership we started to see a gradual improvement in his confidence, and he came to rely on his weekly visit and the safety and security it provided. When lockdown came into force we supported James throughout and saw continual progression.

During the 12 months he was at Ride High, James made friends – first with the horses and then the other children, and he took every opportunity presented to him. This attitude extended to his education, and now the child who thought very little of the future intends to go to College and to become an engineer.



## Ride High reaching out

This Easter we've had the privilege of working with 24 vulnerable children by collaborating with two charities in Milton Keynes - the British Red Cross (in conjunction with the Syrian Refugee Network) and MK Act (the domestic abuse service in MK). The pandemic has exacerbated the daily challenges these children face. Whilst their days should be filled with a mix of education, socialising and carefree fun, they have been shut indoors and become anxious and isolated.



Over Easter they enjoyed two half-day activity sessions delivered by our expert team at Ride High giving them the opportunity to have fun outdoors, to get active and learn new skills, to participate in activities with other children and to simply be happy.

The children made some lasting memories.

Thank you to the MK Community Foundation and Leap for funding this project.

"Thank you for making these sessions happen during such a challenging time. Parents have already contacted me to say what a positive impact the experiences had on their children. We are dealing with an exceptionally high caseload and we hope this is the beginning of an ongoing partnership and referral pathway for children in need".

Linda Aradi, Project Coordinator, British Red Cross.

"Ride High gave me a reason to be happy and to smile. Without it I'd be lost and lonely".  
Ride High member.



# Back in the saddle... again!

When the UK went into its third lockdown in January and covid cases in Milton Keynes were high, we made the difficult decision to suspend our programmes. However, in February, as soon as it was safe to do so we welcomed 37 new members to Ride High.

We conducted the sessions entirely outside and the children enjoyed spending time learning about the horses and how to ride. Soon we will be reintroducing the clubroom aspect of our programme to weekly sessions – the clubroom projects are a key part of the Ride High programme as it's here the children learn important life skills such as literacy, communication and teamwork.



# Rising to the challenge

In February we asked Milton Keynes to 'Bake the best of it' to help raise vital dough for Ride High.

We received a fantastic response to our online competition - 86 people entered and our judging panel, headed up by International Pastry Chef Claire Clark MBE were overwhelmed by the creativity and quality of the bakes.

Pictured are the winning bakes from each category: Horse, Coronavirus and Valentines (adult and child).

Thank you to all our judges and everyone that entered – we were delighted to see so many people getting involved and having fun taking part.

Together we raised just over £1,000.



# Egg-cellent Easter donations

Waitrose Oakgrove and Morrisons Westcroft kindly donated Easter treats to bring some cheer to our members over the holiday.

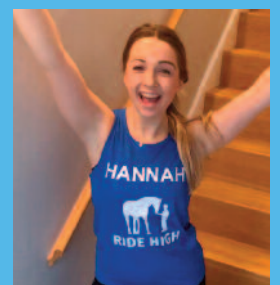


# Meet our Marathon Runners

We're absolutely delighted to introduce our 2021 London Marathon runners – **Hannah Ayres** and **Eddie Lawley**.

Hannah and her family are longstanding supporters of Ride High, and Eddie is a Director and Owner of Resolution Homes.

The London Marathon is widely thought to be the world's best marathon event and we're looking forward to cheering Hannah and Eddie over the finish line. If you would like to sponsor them, please visit: [Virgin Money Giving](#) and type in their names.



# Sadness to strength



**Katherine aged 12, was struggling to deal with her parents' complicated separation. She was caught in the middle and left feeling confused, insecure and extremely low.**

Coming to Ride High provided her with a much-needed focus. Upon joining she was immediately taken by the horses and very quickly settled into the clubroom environment. Katherine brought a teddy with her to Ride High every week - originally a comfort aid, over time it became more of a mascot and the other children in the group followed her example and bought their cuddly toys too.

Over the 10 months she was with us Katherine grew stronger and more confident. Her light which only flickered at first, got brighter and brighter as coming to Ride High made her happy and gave her the strength to manage her feelings and cope with the situation at home.

**We couldn't be prouder of Katherine – she made exceptional personal progress and was also a strong role model and comfort to other members at Ride High.**

## We need you

Do you have a couple of hours a week to support sessions with our members?



We need more volunteers who can work with the children; to have fun with the horses and support them with projects in the clubroom.

Our sessions run Monday to Friday during the day and early evening during

term time. Volunteering at Ride High really is so rewarding – and you don't need to have prior experience with horses – just a willingness to help our children and young people enjoy their weekly visit to Ride High. Volunteers play a crucial role at Ride High and are invaluable members of our team. If you're keen to make a difference this is the place to be.

**For more information please contact our Centre Manager Jayne Clent on 01908 696169 [centremanager@ridehigh.org](mailto:centremanager@ridehigh.org)**

## Introducing our new Chair of Trustees



In February we were delighted to announce the appointment of Tim Raper as our new Chair.

Tim spent the majority of his career as a solicitor with a City law firm, Charles Russell Speechleys. He's lived with his family in MK for around 30 years and following his retirement in 2018 has been using his professional experience to support local causes. Tim joins Ride High at an important chapter in its history, as we're looking to grow to help even more vulnerable children, and to expand beyond Milton Keynes.

Tim said 'I am extremely impressed by the impact Ride High has had on thousands of young lives in MK. The charity has achieved so much but has exciting aspirations to help even more children to thrive, and to extend its reach beyond the city. I am looking forward to working with the trustees and team at Ride High to help them achieve this'.

## Are you considering re mortgaging?

We have just partnered with fundugive2 – an experienced mortgage broker who is committed to giving back to the community. Fundugive2 will provide our supporters with a free re mortgage advice service to help you save money. If you decide to go ahead 25% of any fees they receive from the lender on completion will be donated to Ride High.

**This is a fantastic opportunity to support Ride High. For more information visit their website: [www.fundugive2.com](http://www.fundugive2.com).**

## We've hit 2,000 followers on Facebook



Thank you to everyone who follows our journey, comments on and shares our posts.

Social media is the easiest way to stay up-to-date with our latest news so if you're not already following us you'll find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked In at: **@RideHighMK**

# Saddle up this summer for our cycle challenge

After the stress and restraints of the last year, take up our challenge to experience adventure and achievement in 2021.

Choose a 50 or 100 mile road route through picturesque villages and stunning countryside in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Starting and finishing at the charity's home in central Milton Keynes, there will be fuel stations and roaming support along both routes. At the finish line there will be a well-earned celebratory barbeque and the Ride High children will present finishers with hand-crafted medals.

This is a fun and friendly event – accessible to everyone (aged 18+) who would like to achieve something amazing whilst raising funds for Ride High... and we'll be with you every pedal of the way. Through virtual gatherings we'll provide you with training tips and fundraising advice, and on the day you'll ride in small groups led by experienced cyclists – or you can form your own team with colleagues or friends. You won't be racing against the clock, so they'll be plenty of time to have a great day out whilst achieving your challenge.

Registration is £20 (50 miles) and £30 (100 miles) and we're asking participants to raise £350 each. For more information please visit: [www.ridehigh.org/cyclechallenge](http://www.ridehigh.org/cyclechallenge) or email [Helen.dixon@ridehigh.org](mailto:Helen.dixon@ridehigh.org).



SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST |  
50 & 100 MILE ROUTES | MK

**CYCLE  
CHALLENGE**

Achieve something  
amazing in 2021.

Sign-up to our fun and  
friendly challenge.

[WWW.RIDEHIGH.ORG/CYCLECHALLENGE](http://WWW.RIDEHIGH.ORG/CYCLECHALLENGE)

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:



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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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