

# RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Winter 2020



RIDE HIGH

## An unforgettable year...



2020 will certainly go down in history as a year of uncertainty and change. But on a more positive note, at Ride High we will remember it as a year we came together, got creative, and adapted our service so we could continue to support the most vulnerable children.

In this newsletter we've tried to capture what we have achieved this year – all of which would not have been possible without the help of our wonderful volunteers, supporters and donors.

Whilst 2020 has been challenging, recovering in 2021 will no doubt present new challenges – fundraising in particular will almost definitely be more difficult. The pandemic has forced us to cancel our annual fundraising ball so instead we are launching a Christmas Cracker Online Silent Auction on the 1st December. Please do support us and get involved.

All that remains is for me to once again thank you for your support, and to wish you a healthy and Happy Christmas, and the very best for 2021.

Olivia Sugdon

Olivia Sugdon  
CEO, Ride High

## Consistent Care Creates Change



Lisa, aged 14, came to us suffering with extreme anxiety and low self-esteem, which prevented her from attending school full-time. She found it very hard to communicate and join in activities with other children, and so had become very isolated.

Lisa started at Ride High in September last year. Initially she came along with her step-mum and dad to support her. In the first week she observed; in the second she felt able to try riding

a horse. By the third week she felt ready to embrace Ride High on her own. From that moment Lisa went from strength-to-strength and her confidence soared. **She was back into full-time school within a couple of months** and even joined a netball club.

When we went into lockdown in March Lisa took part in our distance programme, and took comfort from completing 'Ride High by Post' activities – her favourite being planting the seeds. Lisa returned to Ride High after lockdown and we continued to support her through the summer and back into school. She left last month a changed young lady. The long-term nature of Ride High's programme has equipped her with the confidence and skills she needs to stay in school and thrive.

Lisa's Step-mum said, *"The service you provide is exceptional... I have never come across a service that's so consistent or as caring. Lisa has become so much more confident since being at Ride High. Thank you."*



1st – 13th December

On the first day of Christmas we are bringing you an online auction to get your Christmas shopping started with a bang!

We have a huge selection of unique, high-quality items and experiences – each one kindly donated to help support Ride High and to enable us to continue into 2021.

Bid online through our dedicated auction website: <https://app.galabid.com/rhcc>.

The auction will close at 9pm on Sunday 13th December.

*Ride High has taught me how to control my anger. It's helped me to make friends and I've learned skills that will help me in the future. I really don't know how I would have coped if I hadn't come to Ride High". Ride High leaver*



RIDE HIGH

## Vital Statistics

130 children supported



74 Ride High Awards achieved



30 agencies worked with



15 dedicated volunteers



## Ride High by Post



22 weeks



31 projects



1,262 packs posted

January

## New CEO in the saddle

After 11 years as Ride High's Chief Executive, Founder Rachel Medill MBE stepped down and handed over the reins to Olivia Sugdon. Rachel remains as our Patron.

## National lockdown

Due to the CV-19 crisis we had to suspend all our normal activities. We were hugely concerned about the impact this would have on our members. We immediately set about revising our programme to maintain support for the children.

March

## Ride High by Post

During lockdown our main priority was to continue to support the children. We created a programme that we could deliver virtually through online forums and live video streaming, alongside a series of 'Ride High by Post' activity packs sent out every week.

The packs contained instructions and materials required to complete fun and educational activities developed to suit the needs and abilities of our members and to build skills that we would normally work on at Ride High. The packs gave the children something positive to focus on and bought a smile to their faces when they came through the letterbox each week.

We owe a huge thanks to the Milton Keynes Community Foundation, Sysmex and individual donors who supported this project.



April

## Back in the saddle and smiling

After six months of uncertainty we were delighted to start the Autumn term and finally get the children riding again. We created a COVID adapted 'new normal' and very quickly saw a significant improvement in the children's wellbeing.

September



March



## Award Winners

Ride High was named MK Charity of the Year at the Milton Keynes Business Achievement Awards. We were very proud to be amongst the best of MK businesses and to be recognised for our work in the community.

## A year in review



2020

Despite the challenges we've continued to make a difference to young people's lives at a time when they've needed us more than ever before.

## Working together to support more children

Funded by the MK Community Foundation we collaborated with two other MK charities, The Henry Allen Trust and Harry's Rainbow to run a special programme for children suffering from cancer or bereavement. This included time with the horses and activity packs.



October

## Time to Transform

During lockdown we took the opportunity to make some much needed improvements to our charity house.

A grant from the Milton Keynes Development Partnership enabled us to restore our windows, and funding from Marshall Amplification and Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council allowed us to replace our very tired heating system. Both improvements mean that our children will be safe and warm in the colder months.



May

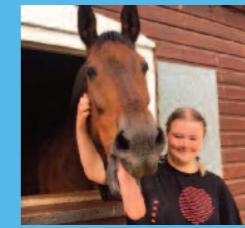
## July Making headlines

Ride High featured on ITV News. The news team visited Ride High to find out how we'd been supporting children during the pandemic.

Jade, one of our members who was visiting Ride High for the first time since February, spoke brilliantly about how important Ride High is to her, and how Ride High helped her cope during lockdown.



## Light at the end of the tunnel



Easing of restrictions meant that we were able to start bringing children physically back to Ride High. There had been some regression in the children's mental health and wellbeing; some were refusing to leave the house.

We initially conducted one-to-one meetings with all our members to explore how they'd coped during lockdown and what their needs were. There were lots of tears – but they were also tears of joy as they spent quality time with the horses and the team after such a long time away. Bringing them back allowed us to help ease their anxieties, reengage them back into normal life and start preparing them for school.

June

## Superstars

completing challenges for charity

The pandemic resulted in the cancellation of several fundraising challenges leading to a huge loss in income to charities. Thankfully many of our supporters decided to continue with their challenges... Claire and Aimee walked an incredible 20 miles for us. Christian from Tesa, Dave and Nigel from Cawleys and Helen from Ride High created their own '100-mile cycle challenge'. Lisa, Lisa, Heide and Caroline each took on the MK Half Marathon Reimagined.

Collectively they raised just shy of £6,000!



August

## September Special Delivery

We took delivery of a brand new minibus thanks to The Clothworkers Foundation, the Bernard Sunley Foundation and The Sun Readerfund. Our old minibus had been faltering over the last year and we desperately needed a new one so we can continue to provide our members with reliable and safe transportation to and from Ride High every week. Many of our children wouldn't be able to get to us without the transport we provide and travelling together is a key part of the programme.



September

## Looking forward...

The pandemic has resulted in an even greater need for our services so our primary focus for 2021 is to support more children. We are planning to achieve this in two ways; to identify the groups of children who need us most, and adapt the programmes to meet their specific needs, and to launch an Out-reach Programme in schools so we can reach even more vulnerable children.

# Laughter after lockdown

John 14, has a difficult home life and was referred to us because he suffered with extreme anxiety and panic attacks. On his first few visits to Ride High last November he wouldn't say a word. However he warmed to the horses immediately and it was clear he was a natural rider.



Over the course of the first couple of months John gradually came out of his shell and started to interact a little with other members of his group and shared his worries with staff.

**He made friends with others in his group and developed an infectious laugh that would fill the Clubroom.**

But then we entered lockdown and, trapped at home, John's life became almost unbearable again. He felt alone and isolated, and his anxiety intensified. We kept in regular contact and he took part in our distance programme. Seeing the horses in our Facebook Live sessions gave him one reason to smile.

Post lockdown we've worked closely with John to help him regain his confidence and manage negative thoughts and feelings that resurfaced whilst stuck at home. His panic attacks are becoming manageable again and the laughter has returned. We'll continue to support John on the programme until he is strong enough to move on.

## Charity Challenges... 2021 dates for your diary



### Milton Keynes Marathon - 3rd May 2021

Take on a Marathon, Half Marathon or Marathon Relay right on your doorstep!  
The MK Marathon routes are consistently ranked in the TOP 10 in the UK.

### Ride High 100 Mile Cycle Challenge - August 2021

Join Ride High on their very own ultimate cycle challenge through the picturesque villages and stunning countryside in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire.

### London Marathon - 3rd October 2021

Ride High has two charity places up for grabs for the most popular marathon of all time.  
For more information about these events please contact Helen Dixon on 01908 696169 or email [helen.dixon@ridehigh.org](mailto:helen.dixon@ridehigh.org).

**Visit [www.ridehigh.org/events](http://www.ridehigh.org/events) for more information**

## A BIG thank you to all our supporters:

### Grant Funders:

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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.

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