

IMPACT REPORT



WELCOME



Olivia Sugdon
CEO



Phil Zeidler
Chair of Trustees

"Ride High reaches the hearts of young people who are hurt and are lost, scared and doubting. With support from the amazing mentors their confidence soars as they build relationships with the horses and learn to care for them. We have watched our young people go from timid, mute and sometimes very angry humans to smiling and communicative students who build lifelong memories and a strong sense of achievement".

Karen Wasway, Head of Year 7, Lord Grey Academy.

'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.

We're delighted to present Ride High's 2022 Impact Report.

In this document, you'll learn about what Ride High does, and the significant difference we make to the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Milton Keynes and surrounding areas.

Demand for our unique service has continued to increase since the pandemic and is reflected in our growing waiting list of over 100 children in need. Other sources within Milton Keynes indicate rising levels of childhood poverty, a growing demand for mental health services, a decline in educational attainment amongst disadvantaged children and young people, and children in the most deprived neighbourhoods not getting enough exercise.

Ride High is addressing all these needs and in 2022 managed to support 256 children and young people facing such challenges. We provided them with a safe and therapeutic sanctuary, where they could find some respite from their traumas and challenges and find peace and happiness in spending time with our horses, in learning new skills and developing a shared interest that bound them together and created long-lasting friendships. A regular weekly visit to Ride High provided stability and consistency and over time our members grew in confidence and moved from a position of surviving to thriving. The transformations we witness are truly incredible.

We can only achieve such outcomes with the support of the wonderful Milton Keynes community – individuals and corporate organisations, fundraisers, donors, supporters and volunteers, and Trusts and Foundations from across the UK. Their contributions are invaluable and are highlighted with our sincere thanks within this report.

Ride High has come a long way since it was first established 14 years ago in 2008 by Rachel Medill MBE. We're very proud of the fact that we provide such a vital service to the Milton Keynes community, and we continue to work hard to meet the growing needs of our new City.

Whilst this report focuses on our achievements in 2022 it also looks to the future – where we plan to increase the number of children we work with in Milton Keynes but also to grow geographically and establish additional sites where there is a need for our services.

We hope you enjoy learning more about the work of Ride High, and that it inspires you to consider how you might get involved and support our vital work in the future.

Thank you.

Olivia Sugdon
CEO

Phil Zeidler
Chair of Trustees



ABOUT RIDE HIGH

Ride High transforms the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in Milton Keynes. We aim to effect lasting change in their attitude, self-confidence and life prospects so they become happy young people who are positively engaged in the outside world.

All the children are referred to us by professionals so we can prioritise those most in need of our help. Each faces overbearing challenges that make everyday life a struggle. They may be in foster care, a young carer, having suicidal thoughts, they may have been a victim of abuse or neglect, or living in homes dominated by ill health. Over 80% of our members have mental health challenges. Many are disengaged and not attending school.

In 2022 we worked with
80
children each week

We've supported
1,800+
children in total

We were established
14
years ago

and whisper in its ear – and that's where the transformation starts. Over a period of 3–12 months, dependent on each child's needs and progress, we use this connection and the children's new-found interest in horses to engage them in a weekly educational programme that supports their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Time spent riding and caring for the horses provides vulnerable children with a challenge and something to look forward to each week. Although some of our children have no positive relationships when they first come to us, they can build strong bonds with horses relatively easily. As they learn new skills their confidence and self-esteem increase. In the presence of the ponies they learn to manage negative feelings and anxieties, to feel calmer, more resilient and happier.

In our clubroom our dedicated Children's Team works closely with the children as a group to help them to develop important social and personal skills. Through a variety of clubroom and nature-based projects, they encourage discussion, participation and working together.

Children develop their speaking and listening skills and they build positive relationships and even friendships with their group members. Although the projects are fun, they're an integral part of our internal learning programme, The Ride High Award.



Ride High uses horses as a vehicle to transform the lives of these children. Horses enable us to connect with children in a way other more traditional interventions such as counselling fail. Many of them won't speak but they'll put their arms around a horse



Vision

To transform the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.



Mission

Ride High will provide bespoke programmes using horses as a critical enabler to improve the mental health, wellbeing, and long-term outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.



Values

Encouraging
Achieving
Belonging
Inspiring



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 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.

WHO WE HELPED

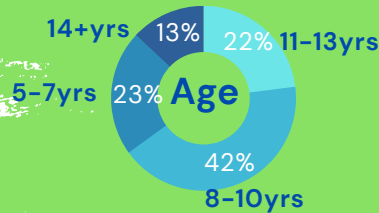
"Thank you for making me feel safe and welcome. You have really helped me feel good about myself".

Ride High Member.

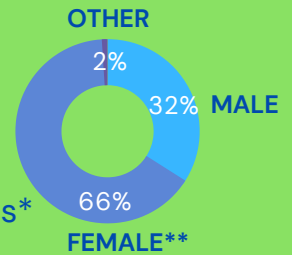


256

children & young people



41% Ethnically diverse backgrounds*

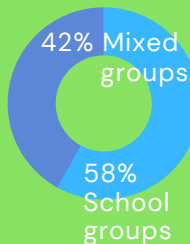


*52% of school aged children in MK are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
**50.5% of the MK population are female.

Our membership

Children are referred individually by professionals and are allocated a group when a place becomes available.

Schools also refer groups of children they identify as needing additional support.



12% LIVED IN TOP 10% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS

29% LIVED IN TOP 30% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS



25% QUALIFIED FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS***

***15% of school-aged children in MK are entitled to FSM.

Reasons for referral

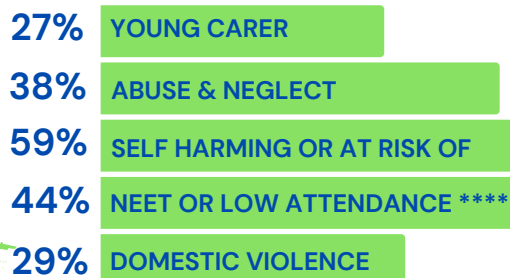


have

Mental Health Challenges

83%

and several other mountains to overcome...



****Not in Education, employment or training.



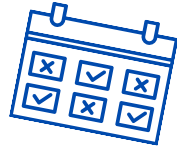
Grace, 13 is a young carer for her mum who has epilepsy. Grace would worry constantly about her safety and whilst home life was difficult, she found school hard too. Grace was referred to Ride High by her social worker with extreme anxiety. For Grace, Ride High became a place where she could forget about her problems and stresses. Her weekly visit became part of her routine and something positive to focus on. Grace built a great connection with the horses. She was able to sense how they mirror our feelings and behaviour and so learnt to be calm and less anxious around them. She rode well and learnt so much about the horses. Where she was very quiet when she first came to Ride High, her self confidence grew and she became happy to speak out. Grace achieved so much whilst at Ride High. It provided her with 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".

OUTCOMES

We use a combination of methods to measure the impact Ride High has on children and young people. It's important for their voices to be heard and allows them the opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions and emotions, and to feel truly valued.

Attendance
90%



"Mentally Ride High has helped me to express how I feel and it's okay to talk about my problems. I've also learnt how to control my emotions better".

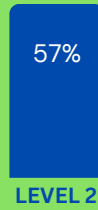


Ride High Member.

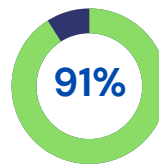
Ride High Award



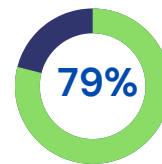
100%
OF MEMBERS
ACHIEVED
LEVEL 1.



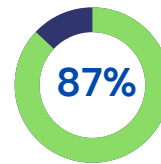
The Ride High Award monitors and evaluates progress in social skills (speaking and listening; participation, self-control and teamwork) and horse skills.



LOOK FORWARD TO COMING TO RIDE HIGH



HAVE FRIENDS AT RIDE HIGH

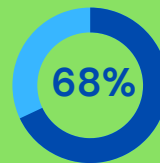


FEEL THEY CAN TALK TO STAFF ABOUT THEIR TROUBLES

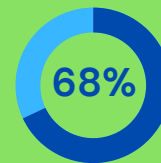
Members voice
Records members thoughts & feelings.

Wellbeing measure - mixed group members

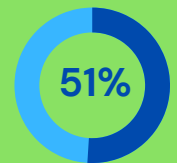
Our wellbeing measure allows our members to reflect on their own progress at regular intervals, helping them to recognise their achievements. An initial assessment identifies areas of particular need for each individual to focus on and we support them to meet their goals. It's in these areas that members tend to make the most progress and members with the highest needs achieve a higher level of progress.



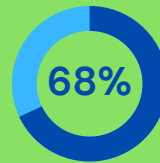
MADE PROGRESS IN COMMUNICATION



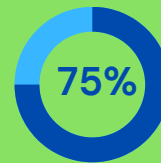
MADE PROGRESS IN SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE



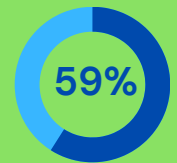
MADE PROGRESS IN CONTRIBUTION



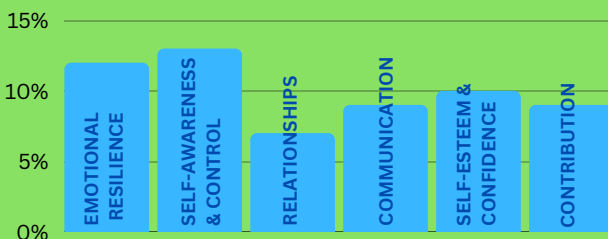
MADE PROGRESS IN EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE



MADE PROGRESS IN SELF-AWARENESS & CONTROL

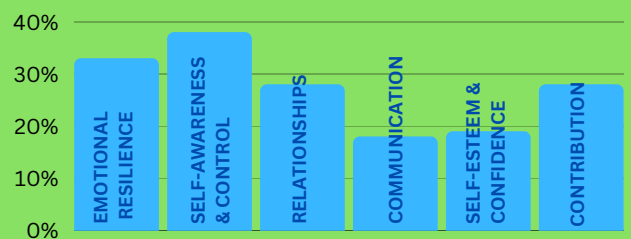


MADE PROGRESS IN RELATIONSHIPS



PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

*Note 10% represents significant progress.



PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN WITH THE HIGHEST NEEDS

"...services like Ride High are essential to the wellbeing/stability children and young people require to move onto a positive pathway".

Amy Webb, Inspector, Problem Solving and Violence Reduction, MK Police.

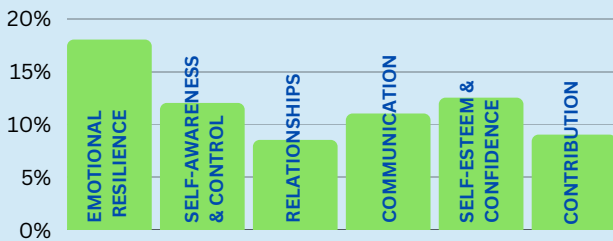
OUTCOMES

"Whenever he had a rough day he waited for Ride High. It always picked him up and looked forward to it. It's just a 'wow' for him, it was his place".

Ride High Parent.

Wellbeing measure – School Programme members

Members attending our School Programme are as young as five years of age. Activities are adapted to their needs and each school's objectives. Teachers are present and observe their students but the children also have the opportunity to reflect on their progress by completing the wellbeing measure. Significant progress is often seen in as little as half a term, and those with the highest level of need tend to make the most progress.



PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN



PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN WITH THE HIGHEST NEEDS

*Note 10% represents significant progress.

"We selected children who may lack confidence, who can be introverted and, at times, find it hard to express their feelings. In a short space of time, we've seen the children's confidence and self-esteem soar. The nervousness the children faced around the horses to begin with has been replaced with a sense of excitement, followed by the desire to share their experiences with anyone who will listen!"

Jo Mackay, Stimpson Academy



Words members used to describe Ride High

SAFE TEAMWORK RESPECT
 FUN CALM ACTIVE FRIENDS
 OUTDOORS TRUST TOGETHER HAPPY
 CONFIDENCE LAUGH SPECIAL
 HOPE CREATIVITY



SPECIAL PROJECTS

New courses



Three new clubroom courses have proved an enriching extension to our core programme. A science-based course, supported by a visiting expert with exciting experiments. A portfolio course specifically for teenagers who are not engaged at school, and an outside course teaching an appreciation of nature, wildlife and conservation.

New CRM



The introduction of a CRM will make data collection more efficient and help us to analyse our effectiveness, and to have the maximum impact on our children.

Diversity



Efforts to ensure that Milton Keynes' diverse population is reflected in our membership have resulted in a 500% increase in referrals from ethnic minority groups between 2020 and 2022.

Reunions



Our first reunion events for former Ride High members 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.

Ukrainian Programme



During the summer we delivered a special six-week programme for Ukrainian children who had recently settled in Milton Keynes. After everything they have endured it provided them with a positive focus and something to look forward to.

Wellbeing measure



In response to feedback from members we have developed a new Ride High Wellbeing Measure to track individual progress. The new measure is completed independently, concentrates on appropriate key areas for development and is without a scoring system so elements of judgement have been removed.

Environmental impact

We take our environmental responsibilities seriously - here are some examples of how we are working to limit and reduce our environmental impact and carbon footprint, to help safeguard the world for the next generation of children.



We use repurposed and recycled office equipment donated by local businesses.



We have made energy efficiency improvements to buildings.



Members are transported via the Ride High minibus reducing individual journeys & carbon emissions.



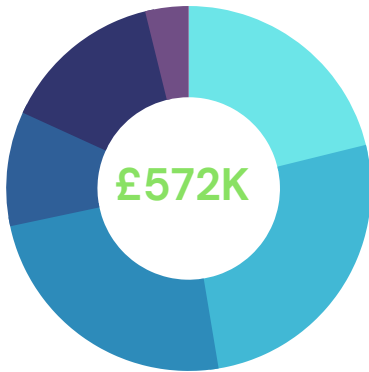
Our horse manure is removed by Cawleys and composted for use as fertilisers to be spread on local fields.

A new roof on the charity house means that our indoor facilities are protected and more energy efficient.



We have systems in place to maximise our recycling capabilities. Cawleys also manage the collection of all our recycling.

INCOME



- Grants 26.2%
- Fundraising events 24.3%
- Donations 21.2%
- Rent & Investments 14.3%
- Referrals 10.1%
- Other 3.8%

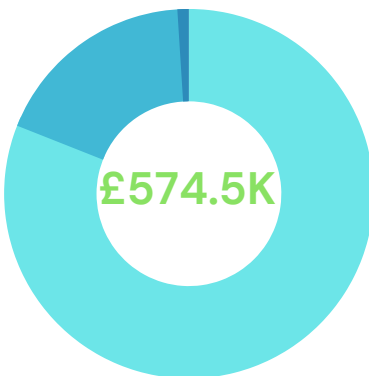
Grant funders



Our services are free to children, but with no Government funding, we have to raise every penny necessary to deliver our service. This is only possible due to the level of support and generosity shown to us by our supporters.

Ride High is working towards becoming financially sustainable. In 2017 we took possession of a riding school in Milton Keynes, now called the Ride High Equestrian Centre. In addition to this being the home of the charity, all profits are donated to Ride High and within five years it will be generating an invaluable income stream to support the charity.

EXPENDITURE



- Direct charitable activities (including horse sessions) 81%
- Raising funds 18%
- Ensuring good governance 1%

Including the children's sessions with the horses, direct charitable activities account for well over 50% of our expenditure, which mainly comprises salaries and the cost of transporting children between our Centre and their schools or homes. Our fundraising costs include making all our grant applications as well as organising events such as our Masquerade Ball, a Cycle Challenge and a Golf Day.

The rest of our expenditure goes on support costs, such as rent, rates, insurance, utilities and lease obligations. Some of these items are outside our control but where we can we ensure that we keep the costs as low as possible.

In October 2022 our rent increased from what was previously a peppercorn rate to the full amount.



FUNDRAISING

We organise fundraising events throughout the year but we're grateful to those who run their own events and take on challenges to raise funds for Ride High.

Ride High Masquerade Ball



Our first fundraising ball post-Covid was a huge success raising a record-breaking £140,000.

MK Marathon Weekend



Thirteen superstars took part in the 5K Rocket, Half Marathon and Marathon events for Ride High, raising over £8,000.

Ride High Cycle Challenge



Despite a heatwave, 52 amazing individuals jumped in the saddle and collectively cycled 2,000 miles raising over £17,000.

Ride High Charity Golf Day



Our first Charity Golf Day at Woburn Golf Club raised an incredible £25,140.



EMW Law completed the Three Peaks Challenge 3 mountains, 23 Miles walking, 462 miles driving, 3,064 meters of ascent.

The team raised over £6,800 shared between Ride High, Crawley Open House and Soup Kitchen London.

Tritax Symmetry completed the Yorkshire Three Peaks. 24 miles, 5,200ft ascent and all within 10h58! The team raised over £5,800 shared between Ride High and Ronald McDonald House Charities.



"Ride High came into our lives when my daughter had a breakdown of her mental health. Coming to Ride High changed her. She loved being around the horses and the support and encouragement from the programme was a significant part of her recovery. I ran the MK Half Marathon for Ride High because I wanted to be able to give back to them because they helped get our daughter back".

Stephanie.



Smart Recruitment raised £1,500 in the David Goggins Challenge.



Ex Ride High member Jack raised £1,000 by asking for donations instead of birthday presents.



The Giocosco Concert Band raised over £600 at their Christmas Concert.

SUPPORTERS

Ride High has a dedicated team with a wealth of experience, but there aren't many of us! We greatly appreciate individuals and groups who donate their time, money and expertise to support our work.

Supporting Ride High is highly rewarding and flexible to fit around individuals' lifestyles and commitments.

"It is a joy to witness and be part of the journey in developing confidence and skills in the young people".



Corporate supporters

We are fortunate to have the support of a number of corporate partners who we work closely with in a variety of ways. Whatever the size of company our aim is for all partnerships to be mutually beneficial – helping to transform young lives whilst also delivering clear business benefits, including brand awareness and staff engagement.



Corporate volunteer days at Ride High

Volunteers

Our regular volunteers dedicate two hours a week to supporting members in their sessions. They are crucial to the delivery of our programme.



31
regular
Volunteers



Volunteers
donated over
2000
hours



100%
benefit from their
time at Ride High



84%
say it supports
their wellbeing

Cawleys is a family run business with over 70 years of experience, delivering sustainable waste management solutions.

"At Cawleys we believe the work Ride High does is invaluable and we are extremely proud of the wonderful relationship we have built over the last five years. Our involvement includes, but also goes beyond traditional fundraising. We support the organisation of their Cycle Challenge, manage the charity's waste collections, visit the children to talk to them about our business and encourage them to understand the benefits of recycling – they even visit our Materials Recycling Facility for 'behind-the-scenes' tours".

Anna Cawley
Strategy & Communications Director

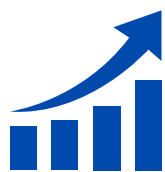


LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

"The service you provide is exceptional... I have never come across a service that's so consistent or as caring".

Ride High Parent.

Our goals



INCREASE

the number of children & young people we support



EXPAND

geographically with two new sites in areas with high needs



EXTEND

our programme to transition members onto their next steps

In 2022 we secured a three-year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund which in 2023 will help us to increase the number of children we support from 80 to 120 every week. Over the course of a year we'll work with a minimum 300 children. The grant is also allowing us to introduce additional wellbeing elements and optional counselling to our programme.

The demand for our unique service extends far beyond Milton Keynes and its neighbouring areas. Our ultimate goal is to evolve from a local charity to a national charity, starting with two satellite centres in areas where there is a particularly high need. Growth of this kind will require additional support and we're currently looking for organisations and individuals who would like to get involved.

We're planning to pilot a new Transition Programme for Ride High leavers to help support them back into society. The benefits of such a programme will be enormous. We'll be able to ensure that children and young people remain on a positive pathway as they gain their independence, ensuring that the progress they achieved on the Ride High Programme is sustained.



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



Friends and supporters and members of the Milton Keynes community gathered to celebrate the award.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Thank you to everyone who supported us in 2022. We really couldn't have achieved what we have without you.

If you'd like to be kept up-to-date with Ride High news and events please visit our website to subscribe to our regular newsletter.



www.ridehigh.org



fundraising@ridehigh.org



01908 696169 / 07507 308943



Ride High Equestrian Centre
Redland Drive
Loughton
MK5 8EJ

Find us on social media via [@RideHighMK](https://www.instagram.com/RideHighMK)



Make a donation



Registered charity number: 1138260.

