



IMPACT REPORT 2023

WELCOME

We are delighted to present Ride High's 2023 Impact Report.

Given the challenging times in which we are operating we are thrilled that we have continued to succeed in our mission to transform vulnerable young lives in Milton Keynes and surrounding areas. This annual report captures some of our greatest achievements.

As the demand for our unique service continues to increase year-on-year, it has long been our ambition to expand our programme to more children. Following a significant award from the National Lottery Community Fund, we were finally able to increase the number of children we support on a weekly basis by 50%. This resulted in our working with 337 children in need in 2023 – the most we've ever helped in any one year.

Such an expansion required a tremendous amount of preparation, including the recruitment of new staff and volunteers, training and development for our growing team, not-to-mention considerable logistical and operational planning. Our team is now all the stronger and the benefits of our efforts are reflected in the progress the children have made.

We take great pride in how we meticulously measure our impact and adapt our programme to meet the needs of our community. You will see how our outcomes data and feedback from members, their carers and referrers highlights how Ride High has increased the confidence, resilience, happiness and the health and wellbeing of our beneficiaries.

In 2023 we enjoyed greater engagement within the local community, working closely with a variety of businesses, and forging new collaborations with organisations including the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit.



Our focus has always been local, but having now demonstrated our value over 15 years, confidence in our service is rapidly growing regionally and nationally. Awards from prestigious funders including the Henry Smith Foundation and the Masonic Charitable Foundation are a testament to the quality of our service, and are allowing us to strengthen our presence in Milton Keynes whilst developing plans to expand geographically and establish sites in additional locations where there is a need.

So, whilst this report looks back on the highlights of 2023 and aims to acknowledge those who have helped us get this far, we are also looking forward and invite existing and new supporters to join us on our journey. Together we are making a difference.

We hope you enjoy reading our report.

Thank you.

Olivia Sugdon
CEO



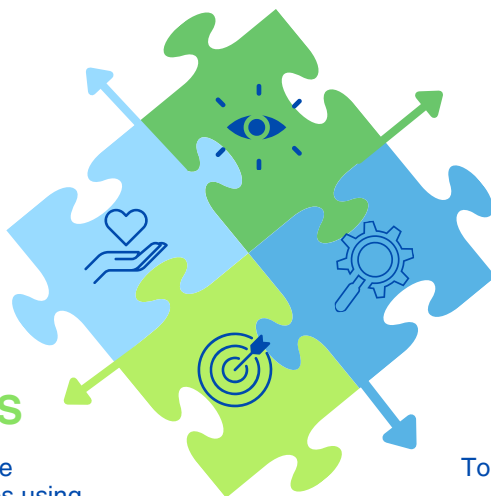
Phil Zeidler
Chair of Trustees



OUR STRATEGY

VALUES

Encouraging
Achieving
Belonging
Inspiring



OBJECTIVES

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.

VISION

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

MISSION

To support a minimum of 300 children and young people per year in Milton Keynes and to expand our offering within the next five years by opening at least one more site.



We were chosen to meet His Majesty the King on his celebratory visit to Milton Keynes to mark its new status as a city. Ride High was proud to be included in the bid for city status.



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Milton Keynes is a vibrant new city within which we are very proud to play an important role. But many young people face huge challenges as a result of poverty, neglect and abuse, isolation and poor mental health, which make them vulnerable to a number of risks and can have a detrimental impact on their futures.

At Ride High we address these challenges by offering them a fun and educational programme that promotes physical activity in the great outdoors, that encourages the creation of positive relationships with people and animals, that develops skills and knowledge which drives self-confidence and self-worth and helps to enforce a healthy lifestyle.

By attending Ride High every week for up to a year, we provide young people with stability and consistency, and the transformations we witness are quite incredible.

<p>30% OF CHILDREN ARE LIVING IN POVERTY*</p>	<p>KNIFE CRIME IN THE THAMES VALLEY REGION TRIPLED BETWEEN 2015 AND 2023**</p>	<p>25% OF 11-16 YEAR OLDS SUFFER WITH POOR MENTAL HEALTH*</p>
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IN MILTON KEYNES

<p>12% OF NEIGHBOURHOODS ARE IN THE TOP 20% MOST DEPRIVED IN ENGLAND***</p>	<p>67% OF THE MOST DEPRIVED CHILDREN ARE NOT GETTING THE RECOMMENDED DAILY EXERCISE*</p>
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"I am impressed with Ride High's provision for vulnerable young people facing challenging circumstances. After visiting the charity and speaking to the members I can see how their experiences with the horses have the power to act as a great early intervention or rehabilitation for those who may be at risk or have already been involved in offending. We whole-heartedly support their efforts as part of our commitment to the community".

Dan Gidman, Police Sergeant, Inclusion & Engagement, Violence Reduction Unit, Thames Valley Police.



We helped the MK Food Bank to break the Guinness World Record for the number of food cans lined up in a row.

"Riding makes me feel calm and sessions in the clubroom are great fun. I don't worry and feel anxious like I used to. I take each day as it comes but the difference is that I now actually want to see tomorrow".

Ride High member.



We transformed our run-down orchard into a beautiful community sensory garden for our members and beneficiaries of other community groups to enjoy.



Grencore 

With food donations from Grencore and The Grumpy Cook we're able to provide our members with a healthy lunch every day.

*Vital Signs MK 2024. **Thames Valley Police.***Vital Signs MK 2023.



BATON OF HOPE

Ride High was very proud to carry the Baton Of Hope on part of its journey through Milton Keynes. The Baton of Hope UK Tour has become the UK's biggest ever suicide prevention initiative. We stand with all those involved across the whole country to raise awareness and more support of suicide prevention and mental health challenges.



OUR IMPACT

“During difficult times, the incredible team and the beautiful horses have given my daughter a positive focus and a wonderful experience. She’s more settled and more focused. The service is invaluable and has made such a difference to her”.

Parent of Ride High member.

MEMBERSHIP



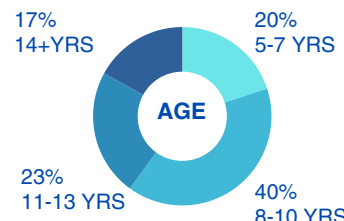
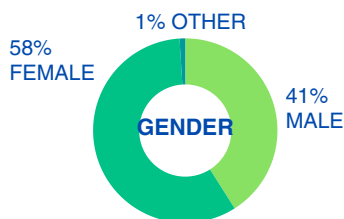
337

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



30%

ETHNICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS



8%

LIVED IN TOP 10% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS

22%

LIVED IN TOP 30% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS



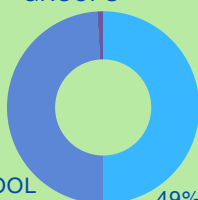
30%

QUALIFIED FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

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

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

1% SINGLE AGENCY GROUPS



REFERRALS WERE RECEIVED FROM

47

AGENCIES

12

SCHOOLS TOOK PART IN OUR SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

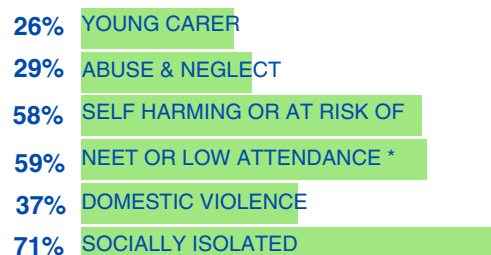
REASONS FOR REFERRAL



80%

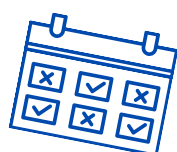
HAVE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

AND SEVERAL OTHER MOUNTAINS TO OVERCOME...



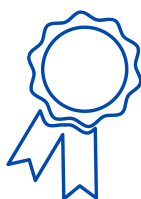
*Not in Education, Employment or Training.

OUR OUTCOMES



ATTENDANCE

85%



94%

OF MEMBERS ACHIEVED THE RIDE HIGH AWARD

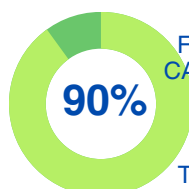
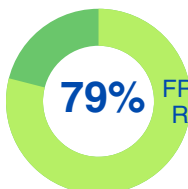
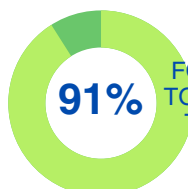


CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN FUN AND EDUCATIONAL TRIPS



72%

ATTAINED A POSITIVE DESTINATION ON LEAVING RIDE HIGH

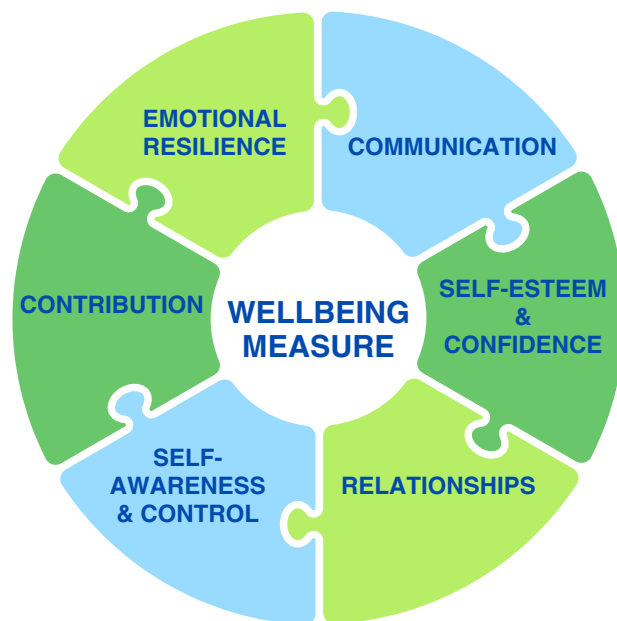


OUR OUTCOMES

We use a combination of methods to measure the impact Ride High has on children and young people. One such method is our Wellbeing Measure which allows our members to reflect on their own progress 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 - regularly repeating the measure to track their progress.

The Wellbeing Measure focuses on six key areas. Experience shows us that the most commonly shared areas where members require support are Self-esteem and confidence and Emotional resilience. Strong progress in these areas often leads to higher achievements in others.

Our data shows us that those with the highest needs achieve a higher level of progress, and often, that younger members make the most progress. This supports our early intervention programmes, but also our desire to expand our programmes specifically for teenagers.



MIXED GROUPS



90%
MADE PROGRESS IN
ONE OR MORE OF
THEIR
TARGET AREAS

SCHOOL GROUPS



96%
MADE PROGRESS IN
ONE OR MORE OF
THEIR
TARGET AREAS

WHERE CHILDREN MADE PROGRESS



LEVEL OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED

BY THOSE WITH THE HIGHEST NEED



OUR STORIES

Poppy was referred to Ride High with severe anxiety and a fear of leaving the house, which resulted in her missing four years of school. When Poppy joined us she was unsurprisingly quiet and awkward in a new setting. However, it was clear early on that she found great comfort in being with the horses, and she progressed quickly with her riding and groundwork. Within just a few months you'd find Poppy grooming on the yard with a beaming smile on her face. She began to talk openly to visitors about how she loved the responsibility of looking after the horses, and how being trusted to care for the horses boosted her confidence. Armed with her new-found skills and confidence she's now looking to the future. She attended an interview at Moulton College, and was offered a place on their Equine Management course.

"Ride High ignited a passion within Poppy and empowered her to look to the future and not let her anxieties get in the way". Poppy's dad.



"His confidence has improved and coming to Ride High has helped him emotionally and at school. He lights up when he's around the horses and always comes home from Ride High happy and chilled. It's meant the world to us, and it's meant the world to him".

Archie's mum.



Martina was referred to Ride High by her social worker. Her first weeks at secondary school coincided with a family breakdown and she had to move house. It was a very challenging time which knocked her confidence. She spent most of her time alone and became severely isolated and depressed.

It took a little while to settle at Ride High but with the support of Mark, her Club Leader and in a safe environment she made new friends and started to speak out. Initially Martina was quite intimidated by the horses, but learning to look after them and to ride gave her a huge confidence boost. ***"For the first time I enjoyed learning and being around people and it showed me I can achieve anything in the right environment".***

Ride High provided Martina with the space to be who she wanted to be. She took great pride in her achievements and extended her efforts to school. Martina went on to complete her GCSE's and is now happy at college.

LOUGHTON SCHOOL

"We have been attending Ride High for a few years now. The children we send may have Special Educational Needs or Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. I have accompanied the children and the impact Ride High has on them is wonderful to see. After their sessions they skip back into school and talk about what they've done at Ride High and how much they've enjoyed it. The horses are wonderful and so patient with the children; they appear to know and understand what they need. The team at Ride High really go the extra mile to ensure the children are all engaged. The difference we see in the children week on week is amazing; their increase in confidence is particularly impressive".

Lucy Lock, Assistant Head for Inclusion & Key Stage One, Loughton Manor First School.



LIZZIE, 15

Home life for Lizzie was chaotic. Her family social worker referred her to Ride High to provide a positive and calming influence. Lizzie joined our Portfolio group for teenagers having never ridden a horse before. Naturally she was nervous, but with support from the Ride High team, within her first month she was delighted to be told she was 'riding like a professional'!

"It's funny, I feel so relaxed when I'm on a horse now, I just forget about everything else, and it seems like the most natural place to be".

Lizzie's new riding ability filled her with great pride, a sense of accomplishment, and helped to steer her in a positive direction. Lizzie even chose to do her work experience placement at the Ride High Equestrian Centre.



OUR PEOPLE

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our dedicated army of volunteers support our members week-in-week-out with their riding and clubroom sessions. They are a friendly and trustworthy face for our young people. Our volunteers find their Ride High experience equally rewarding. In 2023 we created a Volunteer Handbook and developed new training opportunities to provide them with additional support for their important role.



OUR TEAM

We are very fortunate and proud to have a friendly, caring, professional and highly skilled team leading Ride High. We are also a very happy team! We work tirelessly together to achieve our shared mission to support children with the highest needs in our community. Where possible, we support ex members to volunteer at the Ride High Equestrian Centre, and three young people have followed an apprenticeship - it's wonderful to see those we have helped in the past come full circle, join our team and give back.



80%
OF STAFF
HAVE BEEN
WITH US FOR
4-10 YEARS

"The absolute best part of volunteering every week is that I get to witness and be part of the transformation the children make in their time at Ride High."

"My involvement with Ride High has given me a whole new perspective on life and I always look forward to coming to the centre every week to see the children."

Sean, Volunteer

#VolunteersWeek

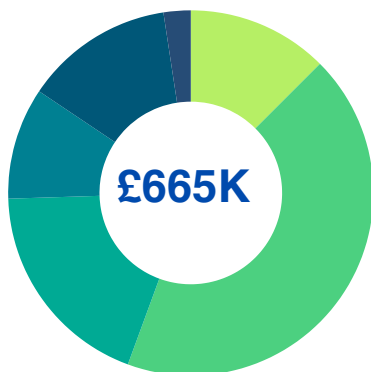


FINANCES: EVERY PENNY COUNTS

Ride High was one of 200 organisations to be awarded funding from the Youth Justice Sports Fund StreetGames, a fund to help keep vulnerable young people away from crime and antisocial behaviour. The crime severity score in Milton Keynes increased from 8.2 to 14.8 between 2013 and 2022 and knife crime and youth violence are areas of concern*.

*Vital Signs MK 2023.

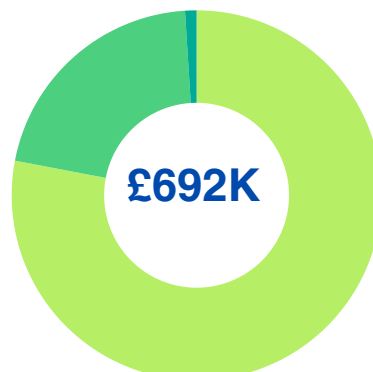
INCOME



- Grants 43.1%
- Fundraising events 18.9%
- Donations 12.5%
- Rent & Investments 13.2%
- Referrals 9.9%
- Other 2.4%

Fundraising in 2023 was unsurprisingly challenging with donations and events accounting for 14% less of our income than in the previous year. Fortunately success with our grant applications helped to fill the shortfall.

EXPENDITURE



- Direct charitable activities (including horse sessions) 78%
- Raising funds 21%
- Ensuring good governance 1%

Our services remain free to children and young people. For every £1 donated, 78p goes directly on charitable activities. To help maintain financial stability during the cost-of-living crisis, we have increased investment in our fundraising efforts.

GRANT FUNDERS



FUNDRAISING

Our fundraising events throughout the year included a Quiz at the Marshall Amplification Studio, Golf Day at Woburn Golf Club, and of course our famous Ride High Ball with a Roaring Twenties theme started the year in true style. We're grateful to everyone who supported these events and also to those who took on their own challenges and organised events to raise vital funds for Ride High.

In May we once again enjoyed watching our runners participate in the Milton Keynes Marathon Weekend - a fantastic community event.

Participation in the Big Give match funding campaigns gave our donors the opportunity to have their donations doubled for free.

We were also delighted to launch our new fundraising programme 'Hobby the Horse'.

HOBBY THE HORSE

Cawleys
Real people. Real responsibility.

REEDBUT GROUP
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH INNOVATIVE PACKAGING



Hobby the Horse is a fun and educational programme where school children design and make their own Hobby Horse using recycled materials and hold an event to fundraise for Ride High. We've created fantastic resources for teachers to make the programme fun and easy to implement and it also complements the Key Stage 1 Curriculum. Several schools across Milton Keynes participated in the launch in 2023 and the feedback has been excellent. Our aim is to expand the programme in 2024.

www.ridehigh.org/hobbythehorse

MATCH FUNDING CAMPAIGNS



theBigGive

Doubled donations enabled us to purchase 'Custard' a new pony for the children.

SPONSORED CHALLENGES



Digby and Max climbed to the top of Scafell Pike with their legs tied together and raised over £1000.

CORPORATE TEAM EVENTS



EMW



RIDE HIGH EVENTS



OUR CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

We are fortunate to have received support from many businesses and organisations across Milton Keynes who are just as passionate about making a difference to young lives as we are.

Together we have worked in a variety of ways that extend beyond purely financial input. Businesses have offered their time, expertise, skills and the commitment of their employees, and we have built strong partnerships that are beneficial to both parties.

Many organisations now offer their employees one or more volunteering days throughout the year, allowing them to select a charity to 'help out'. Several teams used their time to help onsite at Ride High, others organised a fundraising initiative or arranged a special event or visit to their workplace to educate our members about what they do. Some businesses offered their employees more flexibility and allowed them to use their time to volunteer at Ride High on a weekly basis for an hour or two for a term (twelve weeks). Volunteering in this way allowed individuals to have an even greater impact and a more rewarding personal experience.



Fun and educational visits are an important part of our programme. We were fortunate to visit Red Bull Racing for a behind-the-scenes tour.



SIS

Teams from longstanding supporter SIS volunteered for the day in our community garden and donated Christmas gifts for our members.



"Ride High aligns with our Stop Hunger Foundation goals by empowering those in our local community to gain new skills they can use for their future. We provide skills based and hands on volunteering opportunities for our employees with local charities."

"Ride High has been an amazing collaboration and a chance to use both these elements in one. Those who have taken part have gained a truly memorable and valuable time. We will continue to build on this and offer our employees the opportunity to do this for years to come."

Clare Coleman, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Lead, Sodexo.

OUR PLAN FOR 2024 & BEYOND

At Ride High we are constantly evolving our programme to ensure that we are addressing the challenges and needs faced by vulnerable children within the Milton Keynes community. We will continue to do this throughout 2024 and have exciting plans to introduce innovative educational projects in partnership with local businesses – further broadening the horizons of our young people.

Whilst we remain focused on supporting over 300 children and young people in need in Milton Keynes each year, we are also pursuing our plans to open at least one new site within the next five years, allowing us to extend our service beyond the city to areas with high needs. We are engaged in some very interesting opportunities but can't reveal any details just yet – you'll just have to watch this space!

Of course our plans are reliant on a strong team, a dedicated army of volunteers, donors, fundraisers and funders, partners and friends and we look forward to working together to achieve our ambitions.

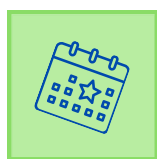
“Thank you for the incredible impact you have had on our son. His confidence has improved no end, and he now has this wonderful spring in his step. I hope you fully appreciate the difference you make to these kids’ lives. Every child should have the opportunity to go to Ride High”.

Parent of a Ride High member.



WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU...

... it's true, we need you!
You don't always have to donate to make a difference. Below is just a handful of the ways you can support us.



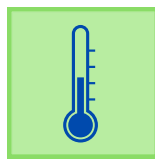
ATTEND AN EVENT

Join us at one of our annual events.



VOLUNTEER

Make a difference to young lives and gain a rewarding experience.



FUNDRAISE

Create, bake, dance - there are lots of ways you can raise money to support us.



REFER

It's free and easy for professionals to refer MK-based children to our programme.



SPONSOR HOBBY HORSE

Help us to expand our new fundraising programme.



SPONSOR

Sponsor a child to attend Ride High and change their life forever.



OFFER YOUR EXPERTISE

... to help us strengthen our outcomes.



COTY

Choose us as your Charity of the Year and work in partnership with us.



LEAVE A LEGACY

... that will transform young lives.



CHALLENGE...

... yourself to run, walk, cycle, swim... achieve your goal and get sponsored to do it.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who supported us in 2023. Without you we could not have had such a positive and long-lasting impact on so many vulnerable young lives.

If you would like to discuss ways in which you can help us, or to make a donation please get in touch:



www.ridehigh.org



fundraising@ridehigh.org

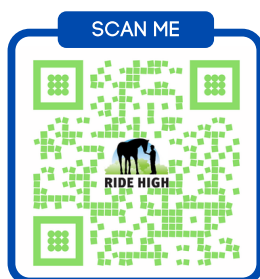


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MK5 8EJ

Find us on social media via @RideHighMK



RIDE HIGH

Registered charity number: 1138260.

