

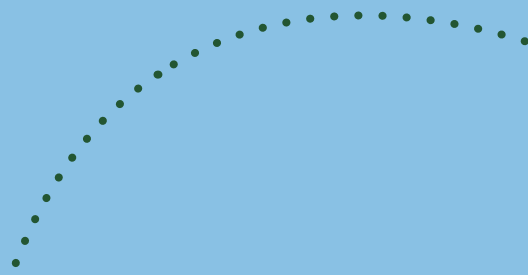


**RIDE HIGH**



**2025 Impact Report**

# **Changing Children's Lives**



**Changing children's lives is the sole purpose of Ride High, a charity delivering exceptional outcomes.**



## Our Purpose

**2025 marks 17 years of progress. Through the unique connection between children and horses, we effect lasting change in the wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem and life prospects of young people - helping them become happy, confident and positively engaged in the world around them.**

This year has seen a higher demand than ever for our unique services, which support children affected by a wide range of issues; bereavement, children in care, domestic abuse, poverty and those with severe mental health challenges, such as anxiety, self-harm and suicidal ideation.

In 2025, Ride High transformed the lives of more than 350 disadvantaged children and young people and we want to thank you for supporting us in continuing to deliver our exceptional work.

As well as learning to ride and care for our horses, children take part in clubroom projects, such as arts and crafts and science and nature. A new programme of content is being introduced in 2026 to include photography and a variety of sporting activities and outdoor pursuits including climbing, yoga and archery.

With Ride High bridging the ever-expanding gap in public services, the support of our corporate partners, grant funders, donors, volunteers, referral agencies and the Ride High team has never been more crucial.

## Beyond Ride High Children's Charity

In 2017 we launched our social enterprise, Ride High Equestrian Centre, which has enabled us to deliver riding lessons, learning programmes and holiday activities, with all profits supporting the charitable objectives of Ride High. Today, the two create a community where people and horses come together for good.

This year, in partnership with Haddon Training, \*Aim High has laid the foundations for a new Alternative Education Provision. Delivered at the Ride High Equestrian Centre, Aim High will provide a supportive, practical environment for young people aged 14 - 25 with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) to gain qualifications, develop life skills, build confidence and achieve their potential. With the first intake of students starting in Spring 2026, young people attending Aim High will gain a Level 1 and 2 in Horse Care and Animal Care at the Ride High Equestrian Centre.

In addition to the growing opportunities in Milton Keynes, we recently announced our plans for a new site in Chester, enabling us to double our charitable impact and helping to change the lives of children in some of the country's most deprived areas.

Our 2025 Impact Report celebrates the value Ride High has delivered this year, demonstrating the exceptional outcomes achieved, the stories from some of the children and young people who have taken part in our programme and the volunteers, team and funders that have made it all possible.

*Thank you*

**Olivia Sugdon (CEO) and  
Phil Zeidler (Chair of Trustees)**

\*Ride High Equestrian Centre and Aim High UK are trading names for PegasusforRideHigh Limited.



# The Need & Our Impact

The challenges that children face today and the impact this is having on our public services is well documented on both a local and national level. MK Community Foundation's Vital Signs report (editions 11 - 13) highlights the local need for support in some key areas, including poverty, physical activity, mental health, education, crime and transport.

Ride High provides vital early intervention to support children through difficult times. We work as a trusted referral partner with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), CLA (Children Looked After) and national health services to reduce the risk of cases escalating.

	Local need	Our impact
 <b>Poverty</b>	→ 32% of children in Milton Keynes are living in poverty.	→ Ride High proactively reaches those in the greatest need, with 33% of 2025 participants living in the city's most deprived areas.
 <b>Physical Activity</b>	→ 50% of 11-16 year olds in MK are not active for the recommended 60 minutes plus a day.	→ In 2025, 100% of Ride High children increased their physical activity as a result of joining the programme despite 15% of attendees reporting no participation in exercise at all prior to attending Ride High.
 <b>Mental Health</b>	→ 20% increase in young people in MK presenting with mental health issues.	→ With 70% of 2025 participants facing mental health struggles, Ride High's horse-led intervention fills the city's most critical wellbeing gap.
 <b>Education</b>	→ 26% of secondary school pupils in MK missed 10% of school in 2023.	→ In 2025, 56% of participants showed improved school attendance after joining Ride High.
 <b>Crime</b>	→ 13% increase in youth-related crime.	→ Research links school exclusion to increased crime. By improving attendance, Ride High is actively helping to lower youth crime rates.
 <b>Transport</b>	→ 42% of Milton Keynes residents identified transport as a priority for improvement, according to an MK Community Foundation survey.	→ In 2025, 89% of participants relied on our free minibus - without it, many couldn't attend Ride High.



## → Enhanced social and personal skills

100% of participants in 2025 made progress in one or more of these target areas:

- ✔ Emotional resilience
- ✔ Communication
- ✔ Self-esteem and confidence
- ✔ Relationships
- ✔ Self-awareness and control
- ✔ Contribution

## → Health Benefits

Riding provides outdoor, physical activity for children who may not have the confidence to take part in mainstream sport - with an hour in the saddle burning around 350 calories (according to a British Horse Society-commissioned study 'The Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK'). Riding and groundwork also help improve cardiorespiratory fitness, balance, posture and coordination. Time spent with horses can also have powerful mental health and wellbeing benefits, providing a calming environment that helps reduce stress and anxiety while building confidence and self-esteem.

## → The Power of Horses

UK-based research studies confirm the positive impact on children of being around horses and nature. A British Equestrian study, 'The Power of Horses: Equestrianism's Social Value', puts a social value of **£3,500 per year** for a young person riding weekly, and **£2,000 per person, per year** for off-horse participation. This means that for every participant, the activity generates this equivalent amount in improved wellbeing, confidence and public health savings, **totalling £1.2 billion** annually in the UK.

# 97%

of children look forward to coming to Ride High

# 93%

of children said they have friends at Ride High

# 95%

of Ride High's 2025 participants said they felt able to talk about their troubles

# 99%

of children achieved the Ride High Award

# The Year in Numbers

# 374

Young lives transformed

## Ages



60

Children aged 5-7



97

Children aged 8-7



127

Children aged 8-10



90

Children aged 14+



## Reasons for referral

- ♥ Self-harm
- ♥ Suicidal ideation
- ♥ Abuse
- ♥ Neglect
- ♥ Domestic abuse
- ♥ Bullying
- ♥ Isolated
- ♥ Parent / Family situation
- ♥ NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- ♥ Low school attendance
- ♥ Young carer
- ♥ Bereavement
- ♥ Looked after children

## Referrals

12 Schools participated in the School's Programme

71 Referring agencies

## Gender



232

Girls



135

Boys

7

Other

## Ethnicity



269

White British



105

Ethnically Diverse



## Counselling

62 Children participated in group counselling sessions

15 Children participated in individual counselling sessions

# Ride High Stories



## Grace ↓

### Former Ride High member and now a volunteer

When I was diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FDN), a condition that causes seizures and has a big impact on the way I'm able to live my daily life, my world shrank to the confines of my home. I was unable to attend college in person and needed to be accompanied if I left the house.



I continued to study online, but with my course centred around animals it was difficult to not be able to get hands-on experience as part of my studies. Being referred to Ride High was a breakthrough moment for me, I had the opportunity to learn about horses, how to care for them – grooming, feeding, managing their wellbeing – and to reconnect with my love of animals.

As well as reigniting my passion for animals, Ride High gave me confidence, I didn't feel judged or restricted by my condition and I was able to get out of the house and socialise in a way that I hadn't for a long time. It was a safe space where I could meet new people, build relationships and start to feel like me again.

Thanks to Ride High I've been able to further my education and I'm now working towards a foundation degree in Animal Studies, with the ambition to pursue a degree in Zoology. For now though, I'm back at the place where it all started, volunteering at Ride High and helping other young people who are facing similar challenges, giving back with the same support and encouragement I had, which feels incredibly rewarding.

## Natalie ↓

### Children's Mental Health & Wellbeing Coach at Two Mile Ash School

I have been referring students aged 8-11 from Two Mile Ash School, who come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a variety of needs, to Ride High for many years. In the last year alone, I've referred children facing challenging situations at home, including domestic abuse, parental illness and bereavement, as well as those with social and school challenges such as Emotional Based School Avoidance, anxiety and low self-esteem.

Ride High provides a safe, fun environment where our students feel welcome and empowered to take part in physical, creative and therapeutic activities that help develop strategies and healthy habits, equipping them with skills they can apply to their everyday lives. Students have the opportunity to build relationships

with other local children who might be experiencing similar challenges, helping them realise they are not alone and that there's always support available. The impact that Ride High has on our children means we see a huge change in their overall wellbeing and improvements in their mental health.

Ride High is invaluable to our community and as well as the positive outcomes experienced by students, feedback is always extremely positive and the support offered is greatly valued by parents too.



## Mylo

### Former Ride High member

I'm 8 years old and started my Ride High journey in September 2025. My older brother had already completed the Ride High programme, with the charity supporting my family since my Mum was diagnosed with cancer.

I was worrying about my Mum a lot, she was doing everything she could to get better, but her being unwell made me feel sad and anxious. Being at Ride High helped me to forget about those feelings for a while. When I was riding Treacle, all I thought was "Come on Treacle, let's go!". My head felt quieter and I was happy to be riding him.

Before I started at Ride High I didn't talk a lot, but being there helped my confidence and I quickly made two good friends, Henry and Kalal. We loved doing clubroom activities, like art and crafts together. One of my favourite days at Ride High was when we made monster creations together, it was really fun and we laughed a lot.



The Ride High team and volunteers were really kind, they always listened and helped me if I was feeling worried and made everyone feel included and brave enough to try new things. Ride High has been there for my whole family and, even after I finished the programme, I continued to go to Ride High for counselling, which has helped me to talk about my feelings and what's happening at home. Even when things have been hard, Ride High makes me feel safe and happy.



## Dr Mac Heath

### Director of Children's Services, Milton Keynes City Council

As the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes City Council I've worked with Ride High for a number of years. Throughout our partnership, I've seen the profound positive impact the charity has on children and young people across our city.

Ride High's approach is inclusive, working hard to remain accessible to a range of children and families who otherwise wouldn't be able to experience these opportunities. The team and volunteers recognise the challenges faced by young people, particularly regarding mental health needs, relationships and socialisation. Ride High enables a range of topics to be explored with families to help improve emotional wellbeing and supports a path of re-engagement for children who have become disaffected.

**The charity helps young people understand the link between physical and mental health while providing sensitive support for those facing confidence issues related to self-image and their ability to relate to others.**

Beyond the direct support for children, the team is flexible and the charity is a confident partner, consistently responsive to the needs of commissioners. Ride High expands influence and supports us in reaching children and families in Milton Keynes who need our support the most.

# Our Community

## Friends

Ride High is fully self-funded, meaning we rely solely on the generosity and support of our friends and corporate partners. Our fundraising events play a vital role in sustaining and growing our work to transform children's lives. In 2025 we've hosted some successful charity events. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in organising, attending, donating and partnering with us.

### → Our 2025 fundraising highlights:

- ♥ Burns Night 'Torch of Tartan' themed charity ball, which directly funded 37 children to attend our life changing summer programme.
- ♥ Inaugural Cheltenham Preview Night, which was attended by 160 guests.
- ♥ New for 2025 - Ride MK Cycling Festival with 140 participants.
- ♥ First Charity Clay Shoot Day at Courteenhall in Northamptonshire.
- ♥ Inaugural Inspirational Speaker Event.
- ♥ Plus a Golf Day, Skydives, MK Marathon Weekend Runners, a Charity Football Tournament and much more.
- ♥ £12,000 raised through our match-funded Big Give Christmas Challenge.



We're very grateful to have support from organisations and individuals who take on corporate, team and individual challenges and events in aid of Ride High. This year, that support included a group of local teens who took on the National Three Peaks Challenge and walked almost 24 miles, climbing the three highest peaks in Scotland, England and Wales to raise awareness and funds of our children's charity. Accompanied by a support crew, the six young people borrowed the Ride High minibus to help them cover the 1200 mile road trip and we're very proud of their amazing effort.

If you've got a 2026 challenge or event that you'd like to take on in the name of Ride High, it could be anything from a quiz or bake sale right through to an endurance challenge like the one above, we'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with us at: [fundraising@ridehigh.org](mailto:fundraising@ridehigh.org)

## The Team

Without our fun, friendly and dedicated team, Ride High and the impact we have on children's lives wouldn't be possible. We asked **Mark**, our Club Leader, who has been with us for over seven years, what's special about working at Ride High.

**It can be a challenge - some of the children's situations are tough, but that's what makes it so rewarding. When I'm able to make a difference and see children smile, hear them laugh and watch their confidence grow it makes me realise how special and life changing my role is.**

Find out more about our inspirational team at <https://ridehigh.org/team/>.



## Volunteers

Our team of volunteers make it possible for Ride High to continue to deliver the quality and increase the variety of activities we offer to children, from learning to ride and care for horses to clubroom projects. But it's not just the young people that benefit. Our recent survey revealed that **100%** of volunteers feel Ride High has a positive impact on their own wellbeing.

**Volunteering at Ride High gives me a sense of purpose and improves my mental wellbeing.**

Volunteers consistently tell us that seeing children grow in confidence and being a part of their Ride High journey helps them to feel trusted and valued in their role. Ride High volunteers develop skills, including communication and listening, confidence, teamwork, working with children and young people, patience and emotional awareness, which support them in other areas too - work, family life and other community activities.

Recognising our commitment to creating a consistent and positive volunteer culture at Ride High, in April 2025 we appointed **Joanna Marfleet** as our first -ever Volunteer Manager. If you'd like to find out more about volunteering at Ride High, email Joanna at [volunteermanager@ridehigh.org](mailto:volunteermanager@ridehigh.org)

## Treacle

We couldn't talk about our incredible community without giving credit to our Ride High horses and this year in particular to our award-winning superstar pony, Treacle.

27-year-old Treacle, who has taught countless children and three of our instructors to ride, has in recent years stepped back from riding and taken on the role of sensory, groundwork and SEN session champion. With her endless patience, love of children and gentle nature, Treacle was awarded the British Horse Society's **'Equine Personality of the Year'** for the horse or pony that does the most for people. We're so proud of you Treacle.



# Driving social change through charity partnership

Following the launch of the HORIBA Cares in the Community CSR program in early 2025, HORIBA UK established a valuable partnership with Ride High to combine philanthropic fundraising and donations of IT equipment with hands-on volunteering and STEM outreach for the charity's learning and education programme.

HORIBA completed two volunteer days in 2025, including building a Halloween Trail for the children and cleaning out the Ride High stables. Recognising the importance of digital technology within a charity, HORIBA also donated laptops to enable our team to deliver its life changing work.

Leveraging HORIBA's knowledge and experience as a global leader in science and technology, their veterinary team delivered a session at Ride High on careers in animal healthcare, sparking curiosity in science among children from disadvantaged backgrounds and proving that a career in STEM is within their reach.

Finally, HORIBA entered two teams into the Ride High Golf Day, combining corporate networking with targeted fundraising.

In November 2025, HORIBA UK won Gold for Corporate Social Responsibility at the National SME Business Awards, with its charitable activities, including those with Ride High recognised.

**Aimee Baker**, CSR Coordinator at HORIBA UK, commented:

**Our partnership with Ride High moves beyond simple fundraising and aligns with our ambition to create lasting impact through long-term collaboration. Our hands-on volunteering and STEM outreach aims to inspire the children at Ride High and support the charity in its work to transform children's lives. Winning the Gold CSR Award at the National SME Business Awards was a proud moment for us, but the real reward is seeing the impact of our support and we look forward to continuing to build on our partnership to deliver even greater impact in the future.**

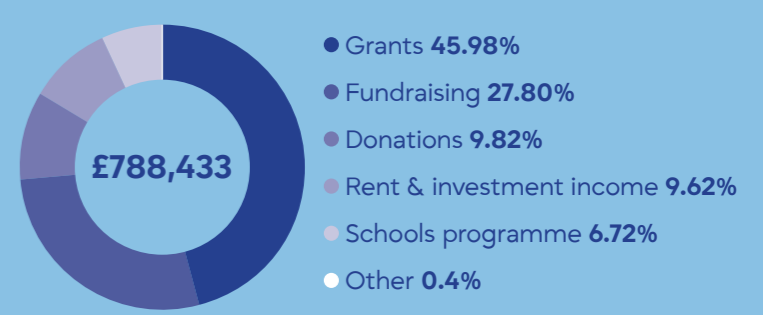
# Funding our future

Whether you're contributing to our core programmes, supporting our ambitious new projects or helping us build a sustainable foundation for the years ahead, every donation helps Ride High to change children's lives. Your generosity directly supports children facing adversity, providing them with the tools to become happy, confident and positively engaged in the world.

## A Long-Term Vision for Impact

We have developed a diverse funding model to support a sustainable future. This includes multi-year grants from trusts and foundations, a well-established calendar of fundraising events – with new additions introduced in 2025 – and generous support from our stakeholder community through corporate partnerships, donations and pro bono expertise. Profits from Ride High Equestrian Centre and income from our Schools Programme also contribute directly to funding the support we provide to young people.

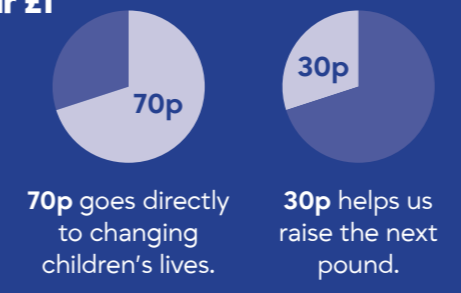
## What we raised in 2025



## What we spent in 2025



## Your £1



## Grant Funders



# Changing Children's Lives



## Thank you to our Corporate Partners



## Ready to make a difference in 2026?

Your generosity is the foundation of our future. The demand for our unique services continues to grow as we embark on our most ambitious chapter yet and we need your continued support to make it a reality.

Contact us at [fundraising@ridehigh.org](mailto:fundraising@ridehigh.org) to discuss fundraising, corporate partnerships, grant and legacy funding or reach out to our Volunteer Manager at [volunteermanager@ridehigh.org](mailto:volunteermanager@ridehigh.org) to join our team.

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



Ride High Registered Charity Number: 1138260



[www.ridehigh.org](http://www.ridehigh.org)