



RDA IMPACT REPORT 2020

ADAPTING.
SURVIVING.
THRIVING.





**HRH, THE PRINCESS ROYAL,
RDA PRESIDENT WRITES**

OPPORTUNITY IN ADVERSITY

This past year has brought unprecedented challenges to RDA, both at national and local level. The closure of all our groups has had a devastating impact on those who rely on our activities for their physical and mental well-being.

Yet within this year of restrictions, RDA has found ways to adapt: introducing new activities and keeping the joy of horses alive for many thousands of people – even those isolated at home.

We have demonstrated our ability to embrace change and find opportunity in adversity. I have spoken to coaches who have introduced adapted activities that will make a lasting impact on their group, and riders

who have benefited from spending time with horses in new ways. Family members have been trained as helpers – bringing parents and siblings into the RDA experience like never before. And one group successfully organised an appeal to buy their stables threatened with closure.

This year has also taught us so much about the need for RDA in communities across the UK. For many disabled people, RDA is a frontline service delivering vital access to exercise, physical therapy and mental well-being. Our challenge now is to bring our services back to those who have lost out in recent times, and to grow our reach so that more people can benefit.

“ Within this year of restrictions, RDA has found ways to adapt: introducing new activities and keeping the joy of horses alive for many thousands of people – even those isolated at home



ABOUT RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION

At Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA), our horses benefit the lives of over 25,000 disabled children and adults.

With fun activities like riding and carriage driving, we provide therapy, fitness, skills development and opportunities for achievement – all supported by 18,000 amazing volunteers and qualified coaches at

nearly 500 RDA groups all over the UK.

RDA is an inclusive and diverse organisation. We welcome clients with physical and learning disabilities and autism, and there are no age restrictions.

Through our network of member groups, RDA is at work in every corner of the UK,

in our cities and remote rural areas, bringing the therapy, achievement and fun of horses to as many people as we can.

We are a charity, and we can only carry out our life-changing activities thanks to the generosity of our donors, the dedication of our volunteers and the good nature of our fantastic horses.

**SORRY, WE'RE
CLOSED
DUE TO COVID-19**



**ED BRACHER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, RDA UK**

In March 2020, all RDA groups across the UK closed their doors – an unprecedented event in our 51 year history. The National Office also closed, with a core staff team continuing to work from home, while others were furloughed. Central support for specific activity areas was curtailed, and resources diverted to help meet new and emerging challenges.

Fundraising for groups became an immediate issue, with events cancelled and no income from riding and carriage driving sessions. New challenges emerged as the crisis continued: care for horses, the isolation of participants, the drop in volunteer confidence. Groups needed timely,

relevant information to help keep them up to date in a fast moving situation. They needed access to new funding streams, clear guidance, and support for new and adapted activities.

With the hope of restrictions easing, our efforts refocused on helping groups to restart: creating COVID-safe venues, operating within frequently changing guidelines, retraining volunteers, returning horses to fitness and building the confidence of participants to return to RDA.

Throughout this year, RDA – its participants, volunteers and staff – have shown unprecedented levels of resilience, adaptability and innovation.



A YEAR OF CHALLENGES

RDA has faced unprecedented challenges over the last 12 months, and our groups and participants have adapted with tireless ingenuity



“ While we hope never to have another year like this, we have learned so much about the need for our work, our ability to thrive in uncertainty and the importance of RDA in supporting communities all over the UK...

ED BRACHER

13 MAR
The 'Delay Phase'
Advice to staff and volunteers about hygiene, working from home, cancelling non-essential travel, meetings and training



16 MAR
50 RDA groups close voluntarily. Safeguarding & first aid updates extended by six months. Coaching assessments postponed

17 MAR
'Strong advice' issued to RDA groups to close and suspend all activity. Regional Qualifiers/ National Championships cancelled

19 MAR
Dedicated webpage created to support groups with up-to-date guidance and support. Equine welfare advice issued



24 MAR
All RDA activity suspended, apart from essential care for horses

2 APR
Launch of Emergency Fund Appeal



14 APR
First round of crisis grants awarded to groups, totalling £60,000

17 APR
New working party meets to discuss practical measures for a safe return to RDA activity

21 APR
Most RDA UK staff furloughed. Core team remains for group support, fundraising & communication

1 MAY
RDA CEO Ed Bracher delivers the first in a new series of webinars to groups

20 MAY
Survey launched to understand impact of lockdown on the RDA community

1 JUN
Rule of Six allows some RDA activity to resume





HOW WE SUPPORTED OUR GROUPS

In July 2020, three months into the Covid-19 crisis, over 3,000 of the RDA family took part in our lockdown impact survey

WHAT OUR SURVEY SAID

“ We have had updates, regular emails and we follow RDA on Facebook and Instagram where they post pictures of the ponies, which my daughter loves... ”

“ They have given me something to look forward to. They have put tests on the internet, which I found interesting. They have kept me informed, so I don't feel forgotten. Thank you... ”

In July 2020, we carried out a survey among the whole RDA community – riders, carriage drivers, families, carers and volunteers – to find out what impact prolonged RDA group closure was having on individuals. After more than three months of lockdown, we wanted to understand how people were affected by not being able to access our activities, and how we could help.

Over 3,000 people took part from across the RDA family, making this the biggest research project we have ever carried out.

The results showed that the prolonged closure of RDA groups has had a detrimental impact on the majority of our members, particularly among riders and carriage drivers, and specifically in the areas of physical and mental well-being and loss of confidence.

The inability to connect in a meaningful way with RDA's horses and other members of groups exacerbated the issue for many, for whom RDA is their sole access to activity, therapy and social life.

take part in each week. Although the population generally may have found new ways to exercise or socialise during lockdown, for RDA members that isn't always possible, and many people come to us precisely because it is the only physical activity they can do independently. Lockdown left much of our community without access to any exercise or social life.



IMPACT ON OUR 18,000 VOLUNTEERS

Confidence levels emerged as the most significant worry among volunteers, with 63% saying they felt less confident than before. Physical and mental wellbeing were also areas of concern for many.

HOW OUR GROUPS RESPONDED

One of RDA's key strengths has always been tackling social isolation, and our research highlighted the vital part played by groups even when no RDA activity is taking place. With creativity, ingenuity and no shortage of commitment, they took the RDA experience online with competitions and quizzes, virtual meetings and social events, activities and educational resources. For some of our participants, RDA was the only organisation to reach out and stay in touch with them during lockdown.

IMPACT ON OUR 25,000 PARTICIPANTS

Among participants, the biggest areas of concern were (and remain) physical and mental well-being, with over 75% saying closure was having a negative impact on both. Social skills were also affected and 63% said their confidence levels had dropped. Our research revealed that, for many, RDA is the only physical and/or social activity that they



1 GRANTS TO GROUPS

Since lockdown in March 2020 we have run three grants rounds, firstly to support groups in immediate crisis, then, as the situation continued, to help groups with plans to adapt or restart activity once conditions allowed. Overall we awarded almost £300,000 in direct grants to groups around the UK.

CASE STUDY A LIFELINE FOR BELVOIR VALE

Belvoir Vale RDA in Nottinghamshire applied for a 'Crisis and Resilience' grant from RDA UK in June. Like many of our groups, Belvoir Vale was desperate to reopen, but struggling

to meet the costs after the cancellation of their usual fundraising events. Our grant helped to cover the shortfall for the following six months, enabling them to restart as soon as possible.

- ### WHAT WE DID....
- We responded quickly and decisively to the needs of our groups
- Crisis and Resilience Grants
 - Liaison with government and Sport England
 - Up-to-date advice and guidance
 - Daily (then weekly) email briefings
 - Weekly webinars
 - 'RDA at Home' online resources
 - Development of adapted activities
 - Training videos (new YouTube Channel)
 - 'Road to Restart' programme
 - Fundraising and PR resources



£300k

We awarded almost £300,000 in direct grants to our groups

“ We had invested in new equipment, PPE and other safety measures to help us restart, but we just couldn't afford our main running costs, like arena hire. The grant from RDA UK was a lifeline, allowing us to restart with nearly all our riders – and even introduce new non-ridden pony sessions too... ”



- 2 JUN** HRH The Princess Royal sends letter to support RDA volunteers
- 22 JUN** Launch of 'Resilience' national fundraising campaign
- 26 JUN** RDA joins lobby to allow indoor riding arenas to reopen in England. Scottish govt reopens indoor arenas
- 1 JUL** RDA opens dedicated phone-line for group support and launches alternative activities inc. 'Quiet Corners'
- 4 JUL** Indoor arenas reopen in England. 'Gatherings' of 30 people allowed in England & NI
- 17 JUL** Second round of group grants awarded, totalling £82,000
- 15 OCT** Disability dispensation introduced in England and Wales
- 23 OCT** Wales goes into second lockdown
- 29 OCT** Research into activity levels shows 152 RDA groups managed to reopen, but overall only 7.5% of participants have been able to return to activity

REGIONAL RESPONSE TARGETED RESPONSE TEAMS

2 Our 18 regional volunteer teams provided the dynamic local support needed throughout the crisis. They held regular zoom meetings, training and events for the groups in their areas to keep them updated and connected. They collected valuable insight about groups in difficulty and helped us to direct support where it was needed most. These responsive teams were vital in a crisis that involved devolved governments, local restrictions and frequently changing geographical variations.



'RDA AT HOME' SAFE ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING AND FUN

5 With all on-site RDA activity suspended, we expanded the range of resources available for participants and volunteers to access from home. A dedicated page on the RDA website now offers a selection of fun and educational resources for riders and drivers. We updated and expanded our e-learning programme and took much of our volunteer and coach training online. Workshops were delivered regionally and nationally via Zoom, supported by presentations and 'how to' videos on a new dedicated YouTube channel.

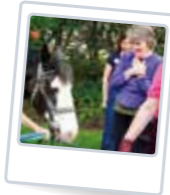
RDA EXPERTS PUTTING OUR HEADS TOGETHER

3 A working party was pulled together during lockdown one, formed of volunteers from across the UK who had come forward with ideas of how RDA could get going again as soon as restrictions allowed. This group immediately became a vital part of our response to COVID, turning government guidance into practical advice, and helping to create new and adapted activities for when lockdown eased.

CASE STUDY JOINED-UP THINKING

66 As an RDA volunteer and a Speech & Language Therapy Clinical Coordinator for my local NHS Trust it was great to be part of the working party and to feel I was helping groups during what has been a very difficult time. I tried to align our RDA guidance with what I was being told at the NHS, and to make sure we were always up-to-date with the latest government advice. It has been great to be able to talk to volunteers from other groups and work together to find practical solutions for getting activity restarted safely...

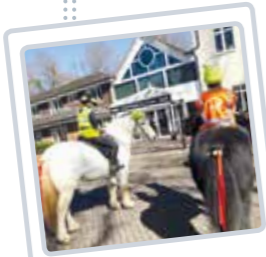
TERESA DRAKE, RDA VOLUNTEER



IN THE NUMBERS

36

of our reopened groups have introduced new or adapted activities



ADAPTED ACTIVITIES DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

4 COVID brought a pressing question: how to do RDA without being able to do RDA? The answer? Adapt and innovate. Lockdown gave us the motivation to develop a very different kind of RDA experience, but still with horses at the heart of things.

When it was still possible to deliver face-to-face activities, groups offered Quiet Corners,

grooming and horse care, groundwork and even long-reining. Volunteers took ponies out into their communities, visiting schools and care homes, as well as special visits to those isolating at home.

A sensory experience was also developed for care homes and other specialist settings, to bring the sights, smells and feel of the stable yard directly into people's hands.



CASE STUDY QUIET CORNERS – A SAFE SPACE

66 We wanted to find an activity for people who couldn't get back to riding because of social distancing. Even having people on the yard meeting the ponies didn't feel safe or distanced enough. Quiet Corners was a secluded space where people could spend time with a pony – but it soon developed another meaning: a place for quiet thought and mindfulness. It became a corner where people could sit, spend some time, stroke a pony and talk if they wanted to. We'll definitely be carrying on with it in the future...

KAREN THOMPSON, RDA UK LEAD, COACHING



ADAPTED ACTIVITIES OUR TA-DAH LIST...

- 'Quiet corners'
- Long reining
- Groundwork
- Sensory experience
- Grooming and horsecare
- Visits to schools and care homes
- Online resources



66 I go to Quiet Corner every week and I enjoy it. It gives me social contact and breaks the isolation of lockdown. It gets me out of the house for time outside in the fresh air with horses. I'm learning about the ponies and how to relate to them. It's not the physio that I get from actually riding, it offers more, and different movements to what I do in the rest of life...

OTTER BAKER, RIDER, WELLOW RDA

66 Your staff have made me feel included and connected during Covid. Their friendly and helpful advice has made it feel better. They have helped me to develop confidence for using online training so that I can still get awards. I'm so proud to be part of RDA...

FIONA JONES, RIDER, GORDON RDA

6 ROAD TO RESTART THE FUTURE

In February/March 2021, where the vast majority of participants had been unable to access face to face RDA activity for a whole year, we drove a five-week programme called 'Road to Restart'. Each week focused on a specific theme, echoing the challenges groups faced in being able to restart: building trustee confidence; preparing groups for restarting; horse fitness; welcoming participants back into RDA and fundraising. Each week, resources and live webinars were produced to tackle the topic and signpost further support.



5 NOV
Second lockdown begins in England. Scotland introduces 5-tier system.

6 NOV
Princess Anne chairs RDA AGM on Zoom

3 DEC
England introduces three tier system. RDA activity resumes with pre-lockdown restrictions

CRISIS RESPONSE TIMELINE 2021

JAN 2021
Third round of group grants awarded, totalling £83,000

14 JAN
RDA announces 'Virtual National Championships' in September

28 JAN
Weekly '30-minute Webinar' series begins

4 FEB
RDA featured on BBC news at 6pm (6m+ viewers)

THANK YOU...

In a year which has seen change for us all, the constant has been the support of our incredible donors. Thanks to you we have been able to continue supporting our community of volunteers and disabled riders.

This year, your support has enabled us

to provide advice, guidance and financial assistance to help groups to get started after lockdown.

Together, we have ensured that the RDA community continues to make a positive impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of all our participants.

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Aird Charitable Trust
ALBORADA Trust
Andrews Bowen Charitable Trust
Bedmax
Bell DR & RE Charitable Trust
Benevity Charitable Giving
Blakemore Foundation
Boehringer Ingelheim
Bothwell Charitable Trust
British Equestrian Trade Association
Brownlie Trust
CA Rookes Charitable Trust
CAF Resilience Fund
Cairnfold Charitable Trust
Carron Charitable Settlement
Cassidy Group
Childs Farm
Childwick Trust
CMS Foundation
Dodson and Horrell
Dumbreck Charity
Elba Trust
Elvy Charitable Trust
Gallus Trust

George Goodsir Charitable Trust
GF Charitable Trust
Gilander Foundation
Gledswood Charitable Trust
Godolphin
Harris Family Trust
Hartpury College
Hasluck Charitable Trust
Hazel & Lesley Peskin Charitable Trust
Helen Rice Foundation
Helianthus Trust
Hirst Foundation
Hobson Charity
Homelands Charitable Trust
Howden
HPower Group
HSBC
Ian Askew Charitable Trust
ICAP Charity Day
Jack Lane Charitable Trust
JFC Agri
JM Finn & Co
John Walter Wynne Charitable
Discretionary Trust
Leonard Laity Stoate Charitable Trust
Lillie C. Johnson Charitable Trust

Manson Family Charitable Trust
Marantha Evangelistic Ministries International
Marston Charitable Trust
Maxwell Morrison Family Charitable Trust
Michael & Anna Wix Charitable Trust
Middlesex Sports Foundation
Miss Mary DM Andrew Charitable Trust
Möbile People.Powered. Logistics
Mrs FB Laurence Charitable Trust
MSD
Muddy Mare
National Animal Feeds
Nicholas Jones Charitable Trust
Oliver Wight EAME LLP
Pantheon Charitable Trust
Pauline Bishop Charitable Trust
Players of People's Postcode Lottery
PoshMuckerz
Princess Anne's Charities
Roger & Irene Graham Charitable Foundation
Salesforce Foundation
Sandra Charitable Trust

Sharegift
Sir Arthur Black Trust
Sir Cliff Richard Charitable Trust
Sir Peter O'Sullivan Charitable Trust
Smithers Purslow Sport England
St Maur
The Association of Inner Wheel Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland
The Trefoil Guild
The Tomoro Foundation
Tudor Foundation
UK PonyCon
Wainwrights Screenprint
Whitewater Ltd
Worshipful Company of Loriners
Worshipful Company of Saddlers
YBS Charitable Foundation
Zoetis

INDIVIDUAL DONORS
Thank you to all of the individuals who have supported RDA either through a donation, raising funds through fun activities, In Memorium or through a legacy.

“On behalf of our players at People's Postcode Lottery we are proud to be long-term supporters of RDA. We've seen first hand the life-changing impact of their fantastic work on the RDA community of disabled riders and volunteers across Great Britain...”

“RDA empowers people young and old to do more, be more and have more fun. What's not to love!”

JOANNA JENSEN,
FOUNDER, CHILD'S FARM

11 FEB
Dedicated YouTube channel for RDA training and information

18 FEB
Park Lane Stables RDA reaches £1million fundraising target

23 FEB
Launch of 'Road to Restart'

29 MAR
Return to organised outdoor activity in England

LOOKING AHEAD

The work continues to reopen our groups and welcome all our participants back as soon as possible

STAY IN TOUCH

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Riding for the Disabled Association
Incorporating Carriage Driving