



## Gaddesden Place Riding for the Disabled



# A Mechanical Horse to Provide Physical and Psychological Therapy

### "It's what you can do that counts!"

"Gaddesden Place RDA is my haven." (mum of a child with learning difficulties).

"He is calm and relaxed after riding. He is a different person" (mum of a severely autistic child.)

"... we are so grateful for the dedicated volunteers who have allowed our daughter to learn and to achieve something that she loves" (mother of a teenager with learning difficulties).

There are currently 11.5 million disabled people in the UK; almost half are inactive (43%). Riding for the Disabled (RDA) stands out from many other therapies by developing physical, cognitive and social skills simultaneously.

At Gaddesden Place RDA we provide physical and psychological therapy through horse riding, education and interactive programmes to over 100 riders a week. We are fully inclusive and offer our services to people with a wide range of disabilities, including cerebral palsy, stroke, learning difficulties, the autism spectrum and sight and hearing impairment.

### Our current challenges include:

- i) we are running at capacity with 6 ponies and have no stabling or grazing to accommodate more;
- ii) we help over 100 riders each week but still have over 80 on the waiting list;
- iii) we have a gap in funds between running costs and income generated, and we are extremely reluctant to increase the cost to riders/parents;
- iv) we cannot accommodate certain riders over a particular weight for health and safety reasons.



### The advantages of a mechanical horse

The mechanical horse is an innovative and well-matched solution to the above challenges. It is an amazing piece of technology that looks like

a horse and can accurately replicate a horse's actions including walking, trotting and cantering at different speeds. It can be programmed to a rider's specific needs, and its purchase will allow us to become more sustainable in the long term.

With it, we could increase the number of riders participating in a beneficial RDA activity without needing more ponies or grazing; this would reduce the numbers on our waiting list, and these extra riders could then increase our revenues. It would also allow us to increase our weight restriction making our offering more inclusive and could provide more intensive tailored therapy for some of our existing riders.

Research has demonstrated the benefits of riding for many physical and mental disabilities. Riding can lead to an increase in self-confidence and willingness to communicate: this can increase self-esteem, emotional well-being, and greatly improve family relationships. Riding can improve core strength, allowing children who have been confined to a wheelchair, for example, to sit at the table with their parents. As a disabled individual is often restricted and isolated, one common but vital benefit is simply fun for the rider and pleasure for parents seeing their child enjoy themselves in a social environment.

A mechanical horse would significantly improve our ability to provide crucial therapeutic riding for children and adults with restrictive disabilities.

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