

DIGSWELL PLACE GROUP RIDING FOR DISABLED CIO

KNOWN AS DIGSWELL PLACE RDA
Charity Number: 1163233

Trustees' Annual Report

From 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022



"Keep up the good work it benefits everyone involved", "Keep doing what you're doing. Thanks!!"
These were just two of the encouraging comments from our August 2022 survey of Digswell Place stakeholders. This year we have indeed kept going, not only in delivering sessions at near pre pandemic levels, despite some residual Covid impact, but also in continuing to work towards our strategic vision. Thanks to all involved, we end the year ready for 2022/2023 and looking forward to celebrating our 50th Year in 2023." Sue Clarke Chair Trustees Digswell Place Group RDA

1. Objectives & Activities

We provide disabled people with the opportunity to ride to benefit their health and well-being in Welwyn, Hatfield, Stevenage, Hertford, St. Albans and surrounding area.



Through riding and interacting with horses and the Digswell Place community we make a difference to the lives of our participants through:

Therapy

Achievement

Enjoyment

Purpose - What we do

The purposes of the charity are set out in the RDA member group Constitution:

The objects for which the CIO is established are to promote the objects of the Riding for the Disabled Association incorporating Carriage Driving a charity registered under charity number 244108 ("RDA"). Digswell Place RDA is a member group of RDA UK.

Objectives

Through horse-riding and horse care activities, we provide therapy, achievement and enjoyment to children and adults with a variety of disabilities. Participants gain physiological & physiotherapy benefits of exercise in the open air and mental health benefits from; learning a new skill, increased self-confidence & independence, improved communication skills and the opportunity to meet and socialise with our RDA community.

Our Activities

Operating from purpose built volunteer led facilities, provided exclusively for charitable purposes; we offer outdoor riding and equine based activities for children and adults with disabilities. Where there is capacity and with consideration to our Equine Welfare Policy, we support any adult or child with a mental or physical disability who may benefit. Rider applicants are assessed in line with practices set out by RDA UK, to ensure that it is safe and beneficial for them to participate.

Our 14 horses & ponies provide sessions in two outdoor arenas or in the adjacent woods. Sessions are run by RDA UK Accredited volunteer coaches and helpers, trained to RDA UK standards. Attendees include children from local specialist schools, children supported in attending from mainstream schools & colleges and private adult attendees.

Therapy - our participants;

Gain therapeutic benefit & reach therapeutic goals by connecting with animals. Improve physical mobility, strength and general fitness. Gain the physiological advantages & sensory stimulation of exercise in the open air.

Achievement - our participants;

Learn new skills, particularly horsemanship. Increase self-confidence and self-esteem by achieving personal goals. Develop life skills including communication & understanding instructions. Experience independence and responsibility.

Enjoyment - our participants;

Meet and socialise with the RDA community. Build relationships & share experiences. Combat social isolation & participate in group activities including tea with a pony, fundraising & committees.

The true cost of riding with Digswell Place RDA is not passed to the rider

Over 80% of respondents said our services provide value for money*

This value is delivered thanks to our committed volunteer community

130 Enhanced DBS checked volunteers support our activities

24 group sessions run per week

Delivered by 14 RDA UK accredited coaches

1 paid Equine Manager

1 part time Deputy Equine Manager recruited 2022

Every session is subsidised by our own fundraising activities. We aim to be an affordable, inclusive and accessible organisation. Bursaries are available to offset all or part of a rider's contribution so that financial hardship is not a barrier to benefiting from our activities.

We are a volunteer led organisation

Without our volunteers we could not achieve our charitable aims, they are at the heart of what we deliver and enable us to operate at the level we do.

Helpers and coaches prepare the horses and ponies, lead the ponies, side walk and coach. Pony carers (minders) ensure the day to day needs of their allocated ponies are met by exercising & schooling the ponies outside working sessions. They contribute a small amount to the upkeep of their pony and volunteer in session/fundraising roles.

Members of the Management Committee and Trustees are also helpers, coaches, riders and minders. The maintenance team keeps the yard safe and serviceable by maintaining fencing, paddocks & facilities.

Supporting the core volunteer base we have; a freelance advanced Coach, a full time employed Equine Manager and this year we recruited a part time Deputy Equine Manager to provide cover & support for the Equine Manager. These roles are critical to the charity continuing to deliver its charitable aims and public benefit. In addition to our own volunteers, when able to, we welcome placement students and host working parties to assist with larger maintenance & facilities projects.

96%* of our community find Digswell a welcoming, inclusive & friendly place

In the words of our volunteers:

"The friendship, being around horses and seeing the joy of clients"

"Seeing horses change people's lives and giving them freedom they may not normally have"

"Think I've already said it but the morning I volunteer is the highlight of my week"

"As a volunteer it is so rewarding and a happy place to be"

And our participants:

"Friendly, caring and knowledgeable people. Lovely ponies and facilities."

"Welcoming, thoughtful, inclusive friendly, a brilliant experience"

"It feels safe and friendly and helps develop you, whatever your ability"

"Staff, ponies and the whole ambience. Everyone is knowledgeable, welcoming and absolutely fabulous"

**Responses from DPGRDA August 2022, survey of participants & volunteers*

Delivering our public benefit and not losing sight of our vision

We confirm that the Trustees of Digswell Place RDA have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit issued by the Commission. We work within a Strategic Plan which states our vision to extend our public benefit:

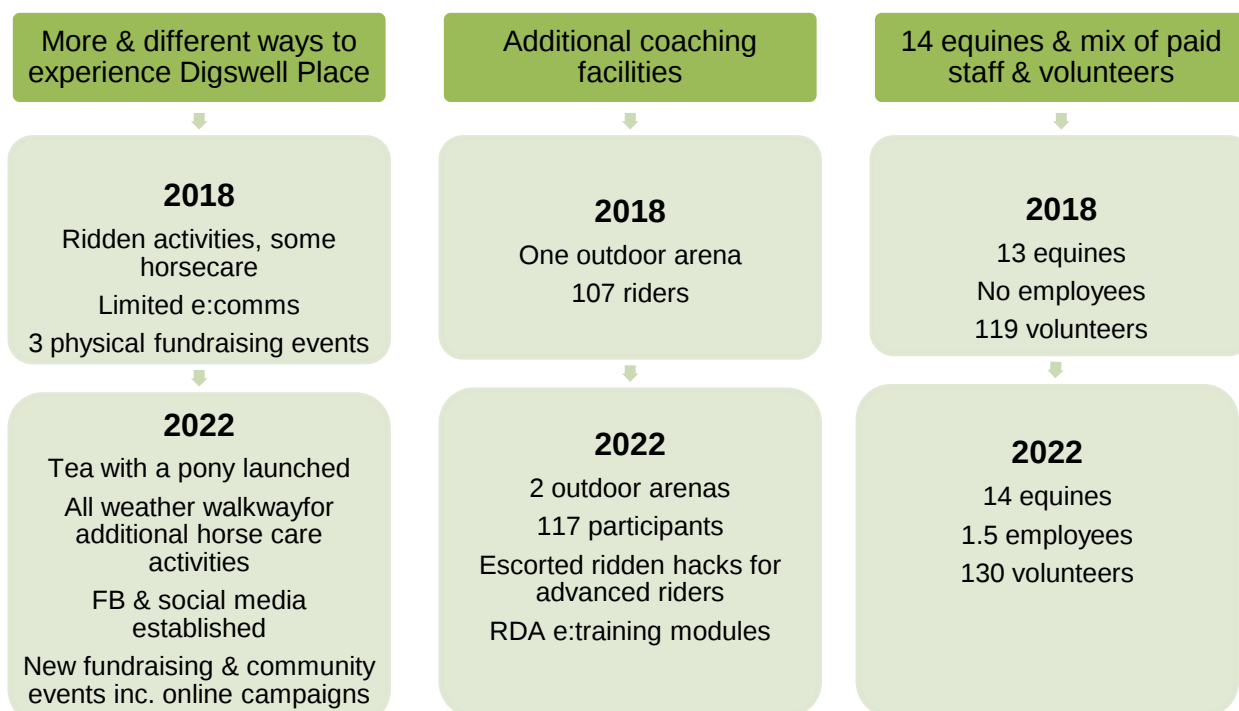
Our vision "To offer more & different opportunities to experience Digswell Place as a rider, volunteer or supporter. This will be delivered from our existing site with additional coaching facilities, 14 happy and healthy equines & a mix of volunteer and paid staff".

We're now ready to deliver that vision

Despite two years of disrupted activity and income due to Covid, we continued to work towards delivering our vision whilst still delivering for participants. We began September 2021 with 80 riders back in the saddle and ended the year with 117 participants, almost back at pre pandemic levels of 124 in 2019.

Meanwhile we continued our infrastructure and activity developments to deliver the vision originally developed in 2018, ready for September 2022.

Transition 2018 to 2022, whilst managing 2 years of Covid impacts:



2. Achievements, performance and impact

1,734 sessions delivered

Back to pre Covid levels

117 participants at year end

80 riders at start of year

53 new participants

Equine team at full strength of 14 ponies

Infrastructure development completed

Achievements

Although we still felt some residual Covid impact with higher participant and volunteer absences, sessions delivered were almost back to pre pandemic levels at 1,734 vs. 1,830 for year ending 2019, the last fully operational year.

As school groups returned in September 2021 activity levels built up and we welcomed 53 first time riders during the year. Demand, and support, for our services grew during the pandemic, resulting in a record waiting list of 40 participants at end of 2021. Forward planning in 2021, including training new coaches and 33 new volunteers, enabled us to welcome more new riders during the year.

One new equine, Rosie, joined our team and our young pony Baloo, completed his training and came into work, bringing us up to full strength and capacity.

Meanwhile, in line with our 5 year plan we; completed the all weather walkway surfacing, erected a shelter for Tea with a Pony, refurbished our old arena and erected a viewing box for the new arena.

Extended activities available

In line with our strategic plan to extend opportunities to experience Digswell Place, we achieved RDA UK sign-off to offer **Tea with a Pony** and **Endurance** riding activities. Tea with a Pony enables those unable to ride with us to benefit from; non ridden horse therapy, fresh air and light exercise, using our all weather walkway and shelter. For advanced riders, endurance activities offer ridden escorted hacks in the nearby woods.

Impact - some highlights



Tea with a Pony participant enjoys meeting Baloo

Edited extract from Welwyn Hatfield Times article 22/2/22 "Blind nursing home resident, 73, gets back in the saddle"

It's been five years since blind pensioner J has been able to ride a horse - but thanks to nursing home staff she has got back in the saddle. The 73-year-old resident of OL in Welwyn Garden City has been a keen horsewoman since she was four, continuing to ride throughout her life. It had already been some time since she had been on a horse when the pandemic hit due to ongoing health issues, and she feared she might never enjoy her favourite pastime again. But her dreams of riding came true thanks to the Make A Wish initiative run by the home's owners, which allows residents to tell staff any activities they want to do and places they'd like to visit. When J told the staff her wish, they got in touch with Digswell Place, a purpose-built, voluntarily run riding stables for adults and children with most kinds of disabilities."

And from our survey; 92% are satisfied with the service we provide and 89% agree we're meeting our charitable purpose. *"My son has made so much progress with RDA. There aren't many activities he can do with his disability so being able to do this is wonderful. It has improved his fitness and core strength beyond my expectations! Thank you!"*

Our volunteers are our fundraisers

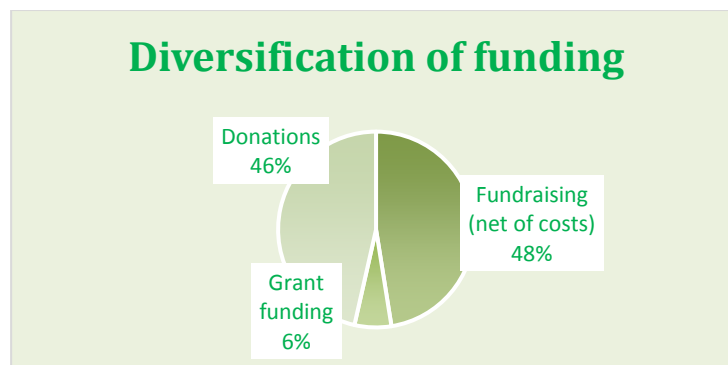
Huge support for the return of our established events

Donations remained strong

Funding support from local grant makers available

Our community is key to our funding success

Performance of fundraising activities – back on track



Our Fundraising Promise, based on the RDA UK's fundraising protocol, is a commitment to responsible fundraising.

We do not: use cold-calling or unsolicited direct-mailing; employ third party organisations to fundraise on our behalf; or sell or pass on individuals' details to third parties.

Fundraising, including securing grants, which is essential to meeting our running costs and subsidising the cost of rides, is undertaken by volunteers, leveraging off our local community and wider RDA networks. Local fundraising events account for 48% of fundraising income and donations from our local community 46%.

Physical events This year saw the welcome return of our annual themed ball in November and spring Dogs & Daffs event, with a strong turn out to both, providing a huge amount of enjoyment for our extended community and generating net income of £41k, with the ball auction alone raising a phenomenal £16k, ensuring that attendees from all walks of life continue to have the opportunity to benefit from the therapies on offer at Digswell Place. Learning from our covid lessons we flexed some of our fundraising activities in 2021/2022, substituting our summer show with a yard open day to showcase our capability to our immediate and wider communities and continuing with our Christmas Hamper raffle for volunteers and local contacts and periodic Cake and Plant sales at the yard gate on a Saturday.

Grant funding In 2021/2022 grant funding represented a much smaller proportion of our income – 6% - as covid funding gave way to event fundraising.

That said, we secured one final tranche of covid discretionary funding from the local authority for our business-as-usual costs which we (our equines in particular) were extremely grateful for as we cautiously emerged from the pandemic to protect the interest of our vulnerable attendees.

We were also very grateful to receive another generous grant from the Valiant Trust which funded a horse purchase, bring us up to a full complement of 14 equines which enables us to better meet the increasingly varying needs of our riders.

Donations We rely heavily on our local business community, volunteers and RDA family. They dig deep and expend a huge amount of time and effort to provide close to half of our funding for which is much appreciated. In addition to regular and one off donations; we have benefited from personal bequests, and sponsorship for volunteers' personal endeavours.

3. Financial Review

As in prior years we finance all expenditure from available cash funds: our underlying principle is to ensure we do not pass on any debt to future years.

We have used the Charity Commission's template Receipts and Payments statement and Statement of Assets and Liabilities to record the charity's receipts and payments for the year ended 31 August 2022 together with comparable figures for the previous year. These have been independently examined, are included at pages 11 to 12 and should be read in conjunction with this review.

Overall performance

Strategic focus

Investing in our future

Sustainable, consistent equine management

Cost of living crisis

Having demonstrated our resilience as a Group last year, emerging from the challenges of Covid with reserves of £152k in 2021/2022 we set about focussing on fulfilling our five year strategic plan, launched in 2018.

Investing in our future through our infrastructure

Extending our activities to include Tea with a Pony – a national strategic objective - necessitated some changes to existing facilities to ensure the safety and comfort of participants which were planned and for which we had secured some funding in prior years. Similarly we were able to draw on our strong reserves to refurbish our old outdoor arena in line with our capital plan thus providing scope to improve our coaching capability. That £25k infrastructure spend is non recurring in 2022/2023.

Sustainable equine management Whilst volunteers remain a fundamental part of our activity delivery, our strategy recognises the benefits to be derived from consistency of equine management and the use of paid staff to achieve this on a sustainable basis. This year we created a part time Deputy Equine Manager role to support the immediate and longer term needs of our ponies. This is a part time role but has already delivered some very positive outcomes. Staff costs accounted for 26% of our running costs in 2021/2022.



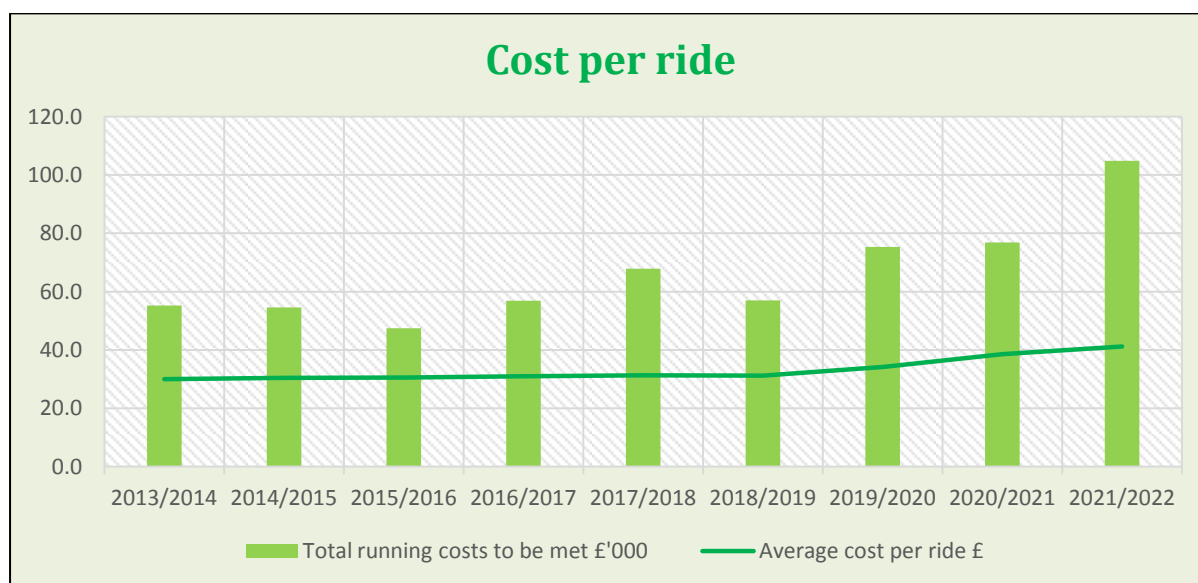
Cost of living crisis 51% of our running costs in 2021/2022 related directly to our equines. Whilst this included acquiring one new pony and tack, the bulk of these costs related to feed, bedding, farrier and vet bills, all of which were, and continue to be, subject to inflationary

pressures. Having a five year estates investment plan which ensures that ongoing maintenance costs are better controlled, a strong participant pipeline, relatively predictable minder income and an established reputation which delivers exceptional levels of fundraising income has helped us to mitigate, but not eradicate, the impact of inflation on our running costs in the last twelve months. We have seen an increase in our run rate (£71k in 2020/2021), some inflationary, some real long term increases in our cost base such as staff costs and costs associated with increasing our number of equines. We know that our costs can be quite “peaky” but are unable to predict the full impact of current inflationary pressures for 2022/2023 and therefore have prudently budgeted for a run rate of £100k for 2022/23, thus extend our funding gap and dependence on our fundraising capability.

Cost per ride

Rides continued to be delivered at £12 per session throughout the year, regardless of the size of that session. It's never a good time to increase charges but rides are heavily subsidised, our cost base is increasing and we know that we deliver good value for money and bursaries are available for those in need: Trustees therefore decided to increase the cost of rides for 2022/23 to £14 a session.

We continue to use average cost per ride numbers for decision making as this sits better with our cash accounting systems and peaky cost profile. In the last nine years we have experienced an increase in the average cost per ride from £30 to £41.16. Nine years ago running costs were £55.2k and now average at £66.2k.



Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 31 August 2022 we had cash reserves of £132k, a reduction of 13.7% over the previous year's closing reserves. This decrease is largely a timing difference between funding and investing in assets to fulfil our strategic objectives (£25k spend in 2021/2022).

Looking ahead

As stated in prior years, Brexit and Covid have increased our running costs. We anticipate that the current world political and economic climate will impose further increases on that cost base and has the potential to challenge our income streams as the cost of living crisis bites. Our recent survey gives us comfort in the level of demand for our broad range of therapies: a sense of place and purpose will drive our sustainability.

Policy notes

Reserves policy In May 2018 the Trustees adopted and agreed a Reserves Policy and agreed 18 months core activity expenditure should be held in reserve in case of a catastrophic loss of income. This was increased from one year to give time to strengthen our operating position and develop a sustainable fundraising programme to enhance our core deliverables. This level of reserves helped Digswell Place to weather the Covid storm and with the ongoing health, global political and economic uncertainty the UK faces, remains a prudent policy for us to retain for the foreseeable future.

Assets and Liabilities

All our reserves are currently unrestricted and held as cash with HSBC and Shawbrook Bank for ease of access. No investments are held by the Charity. No funds are held as custodian trustees on behalf of others. The Trustees choose not to publicly show the value of the ponies and horses, tack etc.

In 1996 the freehold of the land was purchased by RDA UK with Lottery Sports Funding.

The land is leased to Digswell Place RDA at a peppercorn rent.

The stables and classroom are insured at cost plus RICS inflation. They will have little realisable value and in the event that the charity ceases to be viable they will pass to RDA UK under the terms of the group membership agreement.

4. Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

Digswell Place RDA is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The CIO was entered on the Charity Commission Register of Charities on 20 August 2015 with the Registered Charity number 1163233. The merger of Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled 1074341 was registered on 12 November 2015 with a transfer date of 11 November 2015.

The charity is a member group of RDA UK. All member groups are governed by a Membership Agreement with RDA UK. Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled Association CIO's purpose is set out in RDA UK member group constitution. The Group is part of the Herts RDA Group and the RDA Eastern Region.

Governance & management

Digswell Place RDA CIO is governed by a Board of Trustees. The original Board of Trustees all stood for election in December 2016 at the inaugural AGM, as required by the CIO constitution. Additional trustees are sought from those actively involved in promoting the objectives of the Group. All trustees are required to have an enhanced DBS check where appropriate.

At August 2022 there were 6 trustees; minuted meetings are held at least 4 times p.a. or more often if needed. No person or body external to the charity is entitled to appoint any of the trustees.

The RDA UK document "the Essentials of Membership" sets out the standards and procedures by which the charity operates, including the minimum standard of qualification required of those responsible for the activity at any time. In this way we ensure that at any time, all activity is guided and supervised by an appropriate person and the highest standards of safety and welfare are maintained. The charity is accountable to RDA UK and is required to submit returns annually.

Trustee training and induction. A range of guidance produced by the Riding for the Disabled Association including the “Welcome pack for trustees” is supplied to each trustee. Relevant guidance and news releases from the Charity Commission are brought to the attention of Trustees. Support and advice is available from RDA UK and regional staff and the RDA UK website.

5. Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled Association	
Other names charity is known by	Digswell Place RDA	
Registered charity number	1163233	
Charity's principal address	Digswell Place Stables	
	Rectory Road	
	Welwyn	
	AL8 7SU	

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Sue Clarke	Chair Trustees & Trustee	Re-elected AGM 17/12/21	
Bridget Johnstone	Trustee & Group Secretary	Re-elected AGM 17/12/21	
Carol Redgment	Trustee	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Tom Gough	Trustee	Re-elected AGM 16/12/20	
Jennie Redford	Treasurer & Trustee	Re-elected AGM 2/2/18	
Annette Ponniah	Trustee & Safeguarding Officer	Re-elected 17/12/21	

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	<i>S. Clarke</i>	<i>J. Redford</i>
Full name(s)	Susan Clarke	Jennie Redford
Position	Chair Trustees	Treasurer
Date	5th November 2022	

Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled

Receipts and payments accounts

Charity no:
1163233

	For the period from	01-Sep-21	To	31-Aug-22	
Section A Receipts and payments					
	Unrestricted Funds To the nearest £	Restricted Funds To the nearest £	Endowment Funds To the nearest £	Total Funds To the nearest £	Last Year To the nearest £
Riders Contributions	20,287	0	0	20,287	7,552
Ponycare Helpers	10,575	0	0	10,575	8,665
Donations General	36,259	0	0	36,259	21,134
Discretionary grant - covid related for running costs		4,740	0	4,740	31,433
Grant from Welwyn Hatfield Community fund	0	0	0	0	9,000
Grant from RDA UK	0	0	0	0	3,000
Interest	209	0	0	209	631
Fundraising	63,598	0	0	63,598	24,985
Gift Aid Reclaim	584	0	0	584	2,600
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	131,513	4,740	0	136,253	109,000
A2 Asset and investment sales					
Sub total					
Total receipts	131,513	4,740	0	136,253	109,000
A3 Payments					
Fees, Hay, Bedding, Ferrier & Horsecare	34,974	0	0	34,974	18,799
Veterinary	5,504	0	0	5,504	9,704
Tack, Rugs, Equipment	3,501	0	0	3,501	440
Maintenance	10,603	0	0	10,603	12,923
Insurance, Utilities & Admin	7,282	0	0	7,282	6,541
Fundraising	26,536	0	0	26,536	1,495
Salaries, Pension & employers' NIC	26,858	0	0	26,858	21,846
Volunteers expenses	2,447	0	0	2,447	992
Motor vehicle expenses	3,721	0	0	3,721	86
Sub total	121,425	0	0	121,425	72,826
A4 Asset and investment purchases					
Pony purchase	10,000	0	0	10,000	5,565
Second arena judging box	749	0	0	749	0
Field reconfiguration - new field shelter	6,701	0	0	6,701	0
Investment in tea with a pony project	1,035	0	0	1,035	9,180
Refurbishment of old arena	16,774	0	0	16,774	1,635
Sub total	35,259	0	0	35,259	16,380
Total payments	156,684	0	0	156,684	86,206
Net of receipts/(payments)	-25,171	4,740	0	-20,431	19,794
A5 Transfers between funds	4,740	-4,740	0	0	0
A6 Cash funds last year end	152,654	0	0	152,654	132,860
Cash funds this year end	132,223	0	0	132,223	152,654

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted Funds To the nearest £	Restricted funds To the nearest £	Endowment funds To the nearest £
B1 Cash funds	HSBC Current A/C	7,298	0	0
	Cash	30	0	0
	PayPal account	1,545	0	0
			0	0
	Shawbrook CAF account 60 day fixed term	73,115	0	0
	HSBC Deposit A/C	50,235		
	Total cash funds	132,223	0	0
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))		0		
Details		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
B2 Other monetary assets	Debtors		0	0
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs 0	Cost (optional) 0	Current value (optional) 0
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		0	0	0
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates 0	Amount due (optional) 0	When due (optional) 0
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print name	Date of approval
		<i>S. Clarke</i>	Susan Clarke	5 November 2022
		<i>J. Redford</i>	Jennie Redford	5 November 2022

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the trustees/ members of	Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled	
On accounts for the year ended	31 August 2022	
Set out on pages	11 to 12	

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 August 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed: : A Bailey

A Bailey (Nov 27, 2022 18:53 GMT)

Name: : Alexandra Bailey

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

ACCA

Address:

10 Densley Close

Welwyn Garden City

Hertfordshire, AL8 7JX

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.