



Annual Review

2019

What we do...

Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship CIO provides equine-assisted therapeutic and educational activities for disadvantaged, excluded and disabled young people and adults set within the natural environment. Our aim is to improve health and wellbeing and increased opportunities to support beneficiaries become more resilient and better able to overcome the challenges and disadvantages they face – so leading to more positive life outcomes.

Sirona's CEO, Dr Hannah Burgon looks back over 2019 in our beautiful new centre

This was our first full year at our fabulous new purpose built centre based on the Dartington Hall Estate near Totnes. Settling in and completing the building work has been all consuming, but we have ensured that the practicalities of moving have not interrupted our core work with disadvantaged adults and young people. Alongside our equine-assisted provision we have completed the post and rail fencing for our arenas, and built a new haybarn, toilet block and cloakroom to complete the build. We continue to receive increasing numbers of referrals, and now have a permanent waiting list for our equine-assisted sessions. There has been a noticeable increase in the level of referrals for young people with higher support needs, such as those who self-harm or suffer severe mental health and anxiety issues, all of which require higher levels of professional staffing. This has implications for funding as we have had to respond to this with more 2-1 and 1-1 individual equine-assisted sessions.

A highlight in 2019 was the commencement of our new Nature-Based Activity sessions in our small woodland copse led by our Forest School Leader Angie Whitehead, supported by grants from The Big Lottery Community Fund, Devon Community Foundation and Devon County Council. This is a project we have been wanting to include in our provision for many years but did not have a suitable space at our previous site. We ran our first project in the autumn for 4 young people with various support needs such as Autistic Spectrum, ADHD and mental health issues, with the aim of improving mental and physical health, social skills and team work, and inspiring a love of nature and the outdoors. The pilot sessions were a great success with much positive feedback from our participants. A separate report on the Nature-Based pilot is available on request.

During 2019 we have continued to run the British Horse Society 'Changing Lives Through Horses' programme, providing an alternative curriculum for young people to gain a certificate in horse care from the BHS. We are also currently in discussion with a number of providers so that we can re-instate our City & Guilds Level 1 Horse care courses for young people with additional educational support needs. Our previous provider (Duchy College) have unfortunately now discontinued all their off-site provision at the current time.

In 2020 we intend to expand our nature-based activities to two groups per week; this will also free up resources and allow more 1 to 1 equine-assisted sessions with young people with more complex support needs. Alongside this we have new courses for the public planned such as Mindfulness with Horses, Environmental Arts Therapy and a unique Foraging for Humans and Horses that we hope will be well received and bring in additional income to our charity.

Dr Hannah Burgon CEO and Founder

Charity Number	1169709
Registered Office	The Merchant's House, 10 Town Quay, The Plains, Totnes, TQ9 5DW
Business Address	Buckhams Stables, Old School Farm, Dartington Hall, Totnes TQ9 6EB
Web Address	www.sironaequine.org.uk Email: info@sironaequine.org.uk

Our Work with Beneficiaries.....

158

Direct Session Beneficiaries

**148 Direct Participants
10 Work Experience Students
& Supported Volunteers**

424

Total Beneficiaries

**149 Attended our events
63 Volunteers
54 Attended our courses
158 Direct Beneficiaries**

448

Equine assisted sessions

**260 Therapeutic Horsemanship Sessions
32 Equine-Assisted Therapy sessions
90 Level 1 Course sessions
3 Changing Lives Students
8 City & Guilds Level 1 Horse Care Students
100% Level 1 Pass Rate
51 Bursaries given
644 Session Hours**

Producing exceptional outcomes through our specialist equine-assisted provision

During the year Sirona worked with a diverse range of organisations across Devon to improve life outcomes for our beneficiaries through our proven specialist and unique equine-assisted therapy and educational provision.

Referrers to Sirona

Community Health Services + Children's Services + Education Providers + Private Sector Providers + Voluntary & Community Sector + Local GP's + Direct Referrals + Youth Offending + Fostering Teams + Social Care Teams + Housing Associations + Careers South West + Pupil Referral Units + CAMHS + NHS + Community Colleges

Impact and Evaluation



We conduct regular Impact and Evaluation reports, with previous support from The Child Outcomes Research Consortium and the SSE. Our 2019-20 Impact and Evaluation report is currently in progress in collaboration with Hartpury University.

Our 2018 report identified that our participants:



Felt better able to deal with trying new things or meeting new people



Showed improved levels of concentration



Felt more in control of feelings and emotions



Reported improved self-confidence

100% of participants reported improvements across a range of indicators.

100% of students enrolled on the City & Guilds Level 1 Horse Care course at Sirona gained a qualification.

70% of participants felt calmer in challenging situations.

68% of participants reported feeling happier and more positive.

A Sirona Case Study

'MA' was 12 years old and in foster care when he was first referred to Sirona. MA's application form stated that he struggled with relationships, had a history of challenging behaviour and was refusing to attend school. MA had been unable to engage with Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who then suggested Sirona. After his initial Therapeutic Horsemanship sessions at Sirona, MA's counsellor described his behaviour as 'defensive and withdrawn'.

Following our child-centred non-judgemental approach, over time MA began to develop trusting relationships with several of our horses especially with Daisy – an older, very gentle mare. MA learned that to build up trust with Daisy he had to learn to be calm and composed - to breathe slowly and regulate his behaviour. MA later told us: *'If I'm feeling stressed at school or at home I think of breathing alongside Daisy, and it helps to calm me down'*.

Following a block of Therapeutic Horsemanship sessions MA was ready to progress to 1:1 equine-assisted therapy with a counsellor; during this time we supported MA through some personal difficulties including several bereavements. Although still with occasional ups and downs, MA's behaviour at school improved sufficiently for him to take some GCSE's, and at Sirona he progressed to successful completion of our Level 1 Horse Care Course. Sirona also provided MA with work experience to assist his transition to college and independence when he was 16.

In Feedback, MA wrote: *'Sirona has helped my confidence, helped me in my relationships and communicating, (and) people listening and not judging me no matter what I say'*.

Comments and feedback...

Everything I did in life felt bad. I felt like a lost lipstick in a bag. Coming to Sirona made me feel found, like the bag was opened and there I was.

The horses make me feel calm and positive and I can speak to them about my feelings. Sirona is the best place in the world!

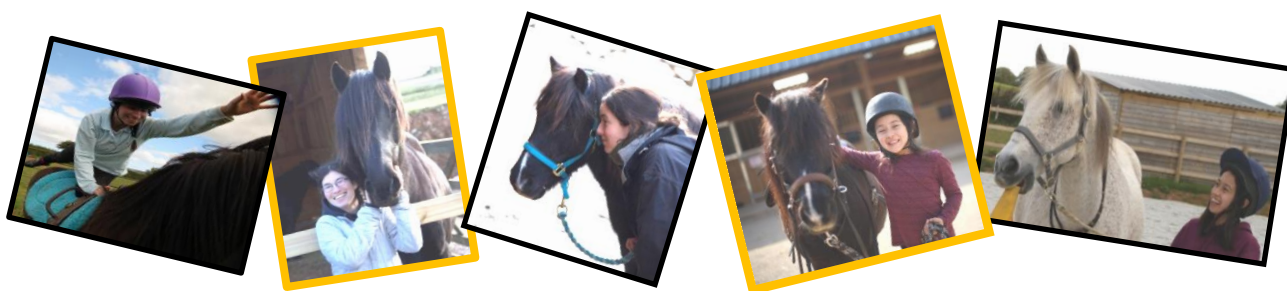
Working with Chapas has helped me feel calmer and has helped my confidence.

Being at Sirona makes me feel happy and relaxed.

What our Young People say

It's helped with my depression and anxieties and it's been such an amazing journey, meeting new people. Sirona's my third home – I don't know if I'd be here without it.

Thank you for all your help and support over the last few years. I can't even begin to explain how much Sirona has helped me! You've changed my life in such a positive way. I think what you are doing here is truly incredible, I'll never forget my time here. Thank you so much.



She would come here every day if she could. Sirona is her happy place.

He has learnt to work with other young people, something that that he normally struggles with. He's soooo happy, relaxed and can't wait to go every week. I've never seen him so excited...he loves it!

What Parents and Carers say

I would like to offer my deep gratitude for everything that you have done for C. You have all been a REAL lifesaver for her and our family.

Since attending Sirona he has gained confidence (and) new skills. He looks forward to his Sirona time and talks about his time there very much. All staff at Sirona have been very professional and caring towards him.

(Teaching Support Assistant)

Attending Sirona has helped L to talk more about how she feels because of her past. She is starting to feel OK if something goes wrong – (and) less anxious.

(Foster Carer)

I would just like to thank you so much for the most wonderful experience you have given my daughter...her confidence and language has come on so much.

She has benefitted... in all aspects of her life. Her confidence has greatly increased, learning responsibility and also to be more independent and work as part of a team.

(Parent of young carer)

Nature-Based Activities

Our move to Dartington has allowed us to realize a long held dream, as it has provided us with a space where we could begin to introduce Nature-Based Activities into our programme. Much research has been published proving that time spent in the natural environment benefits both physical and mental wellbeing, and these concepts are integral to Sirona's broad ethos and objectives.

It is acknowledged that many young people are now alienated from the natural environment and spending little time out of doors. It is hoped that through providing Nature-Based Activity sessions, participants will benefit from improved health and well-being, together with social and emotional benefits and a greater interest and appreciation of the natural environment.

In the Autumn we launched a 6-week pilot project; limiting this initial group to four students with varying emotional and behavioural support needs.

The sessions were led by Angie Whitehead (Level 3 qualified Forest School leader) supported by Kate Ford, (BA Social Work) and Alex Goswick (volunteer).



Some of our activities:

Stone-age fire lighting using flint and steel; green woodworking – spoon carving; mud kitchen; cooking on the fire; leaf painting; Christmas wreaths; clay faces; team games; foraging; forest walks with ponies; tree & plant identification; den and shelter building; learning knots.

Some comments from our young people...

I can hear the wildlife, it's peaceful; I love the art activities; I enjoy being outside, I feel happy in the woods; I love watching the fire and being outdoors; I feel calm in the woods; I liked making my spoon; Lighting the fire and making different types of wood has been my favourite activity; I love having Foxy (dog) on the session to look after, she trusts me now.

Some outcomes of our pilot:

SHELTER & DEN BUILDING – creates a safe space that provides shelter. A wide range of skills are involved: Teamwork; Social Skills; Problem Solving; Language and Communication; Planning.

FIRE ACTIVITIES – Learning personal responsibility and managing risk; building trust; Confidence Building.

TOOL ACTIVITIES - Improving Motor Skills and Spatial Awareness; Independence; Listening skills; Planning; Self-awareness.

One of many positive comments from a parent:

"Her anxiety levels are reduced; she has more confidence and pride in herself since learning new skills like fire building and cooking."

Courses, Training, Events

Courses for the public

- Lecture/Demo by Lucy Rees, International Equine Ethologist and author of bestseller 'The Horses' Mind'
- Introduction to Equine-Assisted Therapy and Learning: The Sirona Approach
- Bespoke courses for Exeter College Counselling Course &
- HUGS FOUNDATION: An equine rescue charity

Team Training

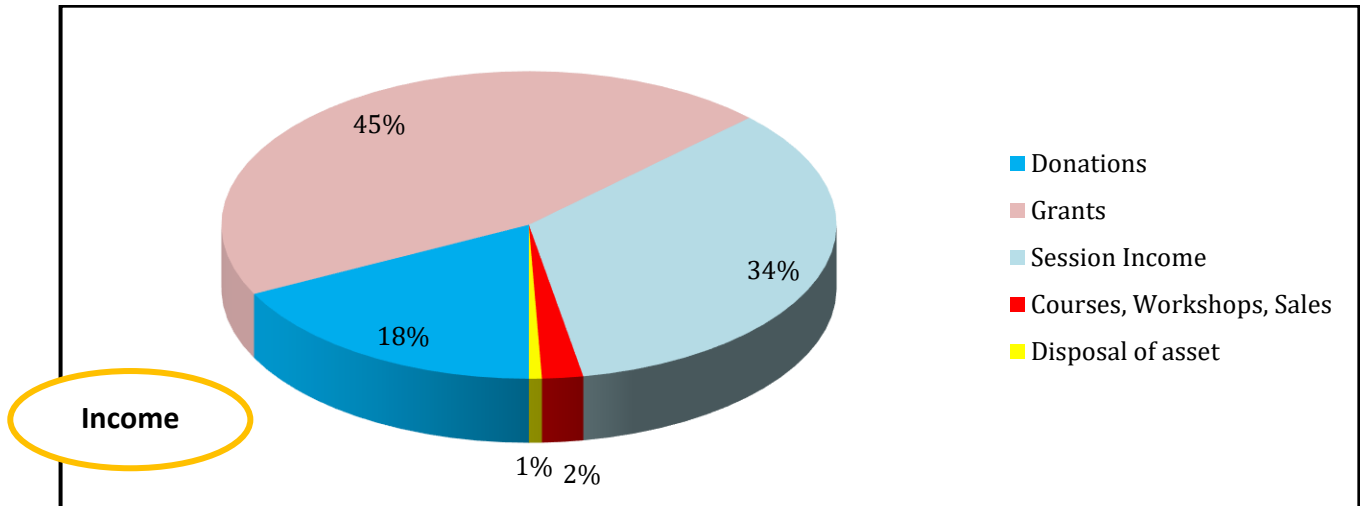
- Strength Based Practice: Deirdre Ford
- First Aid at Work & Forest School and Equine Specific
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Level 2 and Level 3
- Supervising Volunteers
- Gang Culture and Young People
- GDPR & Data Protection
- Equine Hoof Care Workshop
- Photoshop for Social Media Training, Digital Penninsular Network

Events

- Volunteer Tree Planting days: 20 volunteers helped plant 250 native trees and hedging around our new home
- Volunteer Nature-Based area preparation day.
- Caring Town Totnes Event: Sirona Information Stand
- Young Person's Provider Event; Princes Trust, Plymouth.
- Safeguarding Information Event: VOYC, Exeter
- Torbay Early Help Fair: Information Stand
- Sirona Annual Open Day (June) - 120 people attended. £1071 raised on the day with a £10,000 donation the following week from a generous local benefactor.
- SSE women in Enterprise Visit and talk
- Presentation to Barton Baptist Church in Torquay.
- Exeter Racecourse Information Stand and Collection - raised £589.

In 2019 a total of 220 people attended our courses, training and events!

Our Finances

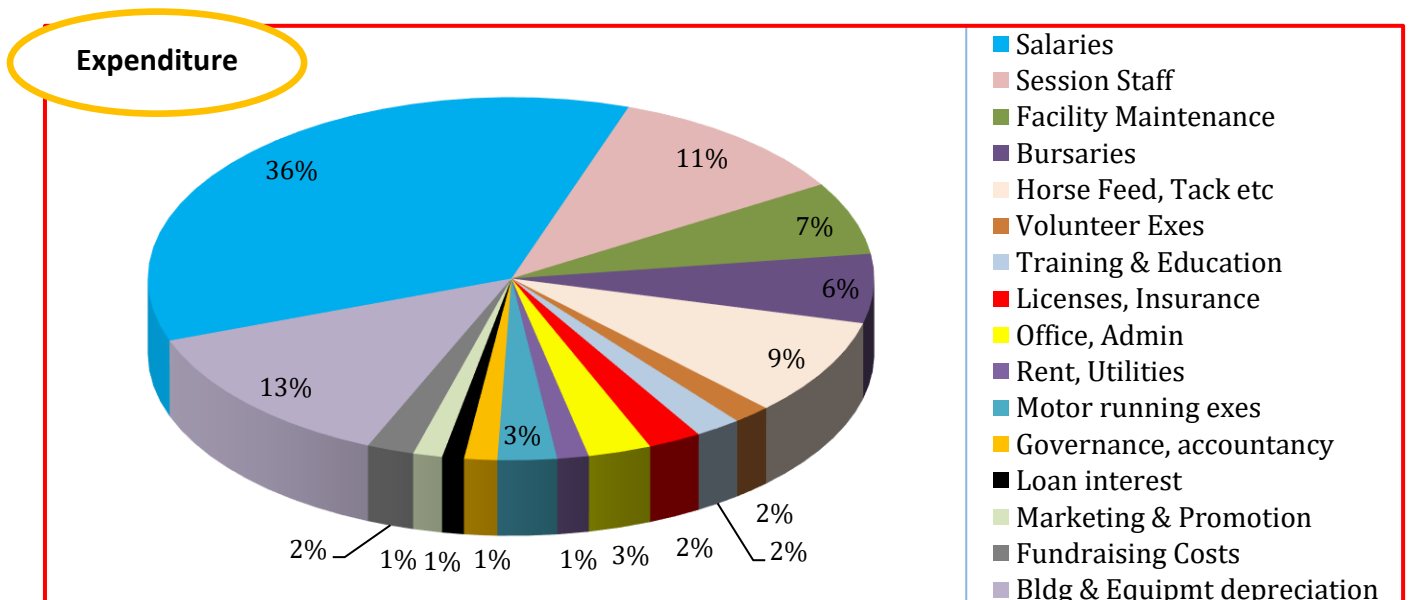


Our total income in the year was £159,945, of which £72,215 was received through grant funding and £28,121 was made up of donations (including gift aid). With the exception of £250, all other donations were classed as unrestricted funds. 89% of our grants were given for a specific purpose, and therefore classed as restricted funding. Session income generated a further £55,082. Courses, workshops, sales of T-shirts and books raised a further £3,442, and the disposal of a tangible asset added a further £1,085.

The level of grant funding has reduced following the completion of the bulk of the work on our new centre. During the year the toilet block and hay barn were completed at a cost of £14,063.

Total expenditure for the year amounted to £143,286 (£112,025 in 2018). The bulk of the increase related to session staff costs and salaries, and reflects increasing demands for us to work with young people with complex needs and requiring additional support. Office and administrative costs are a necessity, but we were able to contain this expense to £4,041 - slightly less than 3% of our total expenditure.

Funding continues to be an ongoing challenge, and we are deeply appreciative of the regular support of friends of Sirona, and of the generosity of both grant making bodies and individual donors without which our work would not be possible.





FRIENDS
of
SIRONA



Northbrook Community Trust

THE VALERIE AYTON CHARITABLE TRUST



SWIFT FUNDRAISING LIMITED



We are very aware that Sirona could not exist without the help and support of so many generous people and organisations - and to you all a huge.....



The Elmgrant Trust

Baynton Ford Charitable Trust

Wyn & Ken Lo Memorial Foundation



The Hon. David Delfont Trust



Harriet Bushman Agapanthus Silk

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust



The Jamieson-Bystock Trust

VERONICA AWDRY CHARITABLE TRUST

...and not forgetting some of our fantastic, hardworking volunteers...

Amber P
Lara
John C
Jane S
Jan O'H
James H
Kate F
Kate M
Jim
John H

Hesti E
Rhys M
Lisa B
Lottie C
Pat T
Phil E
Zoe H
Tracy S

Amanda L
Christina C
Dominic D
David S
Ginny S
Ann R
Alex G
David W

Mia B
Lucy R
Louise B
Matthew B
Natalie B
Nick H-W
Nicole B
Oliver S

Sue P
Sally C
Shaun D
Shirley H
Tracey H
Steve A
Richard U
Rhiannons