



**Annual  
Review 2020**

## 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 increase 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  
reflects on 2020,  
a year of  
challenges –  
and affirmation.**

**Few could have forecast at the beginning of the year** what 2020 would bring, with the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the lives of everyone across the world. Despite the upheaval, uncertainty, and challenges of the pandemic, and in only our second year at our new Dartington Hall home, the team pulled together - at times under extraordinarily challenging conditions – to keep our centre open throughout 2020, providing our much needed equine-assisted activities to vulnerable young people for whom contact with horses and nature has been even more important during this difficult period.

**2020 began with our timetable full and a steady waiting list.** Prior to the pandemic we were running a number of group sessions including a second Nature-Based Activity group alongside our 1-1 Equine-Assisted Therapy sessions. During January - March we also completed an exciting new Equi-Art Project led by local community artist Jan O'Highway. This consisted of 12 sessions with the objective of producing a set of mosaic signs for some of our new buildings. The artist was in residence on different days so that young people could drop in and take part as they wished. The whole Sirona team and volunteers were also involved in the various aspects of the design and layout of the signs alongside the young people, producing small clay objects which related to each building which were then laid within the mosaics to produce beautiful, colourful, bespoke signs.

It was a very successful and popular project which we hope to repeat in the future.

**Then the Covid-19 pandemic struck and everything changed.** Our board of trustees took the decision to close Sirona for a week prior to the Easter break whilst seeking guidance on our position and undertaking organizational and financial risk assessments. With support from our local authorities, and in line with Government guidance, the decision was taken to remain open for vulnerable young people needing mental health support. Although clearly a financial and operational challenge, we implemented rigorous risk assessments, robust cleaning, and social distancing – all accommodated within a completely revised timetable. In spite of everything, feedback from young people and their parents and carers was overwhelmingly positive, with their sessions at Sirona being the only constant in their lives for many of our participants.

**Despite the challenges that Covid-19 created for our charity,** it has provided some really valuable learning as we were forced to slow down and run a much smaller timetable with only 1-2 young people on site at a time. We rediscovered the importance and value of having a quieter space for those young people who need this, and for the horses who have benefited from less hustle and bustle involved with group sessions. We are therefore building more 1-1 'quiet' sessions into our timetable going forward, (although this provides additional funding challenges of course!). Finally, the pandemic confirmed what a truly exceptional and committed team we have at Sirona, who pulled together under really challenging circumstances to continue to provide our vital equine-assisted activities to those vulnerable young people most in need.

*Hannah Burgon, CEO*

# Our work and achievements in 2020



- 78** Participants
- 24** From foster care/ adoption
- 17** Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 41** With mental health/anxiety issues
- 3** Work Placements
- 367** Sessions
- 222** Therapeutic Horsemanship
- 45** Equine Assisted Therapy
- 21** C & G Horse Care Level 1
- 32** BHS Changing Lives Courses
- 12** Nature Based Activities
- 12** Equi-Art Sessions
- 23** Taster Visits

## Our Team

2 New Apprentices

7 PAYE Staff

6 Freelance: Clinical Child Psychologist Equine Assisted Counsellor BHSAI Instructor BA (Hons) QTS Teacher Equine Workers

31 Volunteers - 3025 Volunteer Hours

7 Board Members

## Team Training & Events

Volunteer Tree Planting Day

**Volunteers & The Law Course**

**Diversity & Equality Workshop**

**Introduction to Suicide Awareness**

**Trauma Informed Training**

**Fire Awareness Training**

**Emergency First Aid at Work**

Supporting Young People

involved in Modern Slavery

**'Prevent' Government Terrorism**

**Awareness Training**

Level 2 and Level 5 Safeguarding

& Child Protection

**Safeguarding Young Volunteers Training**

**Presenting our work 'Surviving Covid'**

**to the Horses in Education & Therapy**

**International (HETI) Autumn forum**

## Key achievements in 2020...

- ✓ Managing to remain open to support vulnerable young people throughout the pandemic.
- ✓ Research partnership with Hartpury University + evaluation of our equine-assisted sessions.
- ✓ New partnership with Bicton College to reinstate the City & Guilds Level 1 Horse Care Course.
- ✓ Reinstating the Level 2 and 3 horse care apprenticeship and recruiting 2 new apprentices.
  - ✓ New innovative Equi-Art project producing beautiful mosaic signs for our buildings.
  - ✓ East Devon Golf Club + Wooden Spoon Trust raising funds for a new classroom



# Equi-Art Project 2020



During January to March we ran a pilot art project with Jan O’Highway, a local community artist who became our ‘Artist in Residence’ one day a week for the twelve week period. This allowed participants the freedom to drop in to a session as they wished. The project was supported by Devon County Council’s Small Grants Fund for disabled children. Under the artist’s supervision, participants were able to design and produce mosaic and clay signs for our buildings. Young people collected natural objects from around Sirona for inspiration, and then created small clay models ranging from snails and leaves, to stirrups, boots and brushes, horse heads, rosettes and hearts. Even our resident dog and cat have been immortalised in clay! The young people chose the colours that they wanted, and once finished, the models were glazed and fired back at the artist’s studio.

Through involvement in the project and seeing their work publicly displayed, we hoped that young people would experience, sometimes for the first time in their lives, a pride in their work, a sense of achievement, improved self-worth and increased self-esteem.



## Some feedback from young people attending:

*“It’s like a safe place to go.”*



*“When I’m at Sirona I feel like I can be who I want to be, I can wear what I want, look how I want and I won’t get judged for who I am”.*

*“It has helped me be calmer and less stressed out.”*



**Some comments from parents and carers:**  
*‘He’s sooo happy, relaxed, and can’t wait to go every week. He loves it!’*  
*‘Everyone is in agreement about how much she is benefitting from what you provide,*



**Outcomes and Conclusion:** The Equi-Art project was a great success. Sirona gained some beautiful new signage, and a number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds were able to take part in a totally new activity and learn skills which may open up future opportunities. In particular, one young person currently in residential care, was identified as having real artistic talent as well as experiencing significant mental health gains. He was provided with clay to take home and is now being encouraged by his children’s home to continue to nurture his talent. Having an additional indoor activity has proved to be of great value over the winter months – an idea that we intend to develop further in the future.



# Evaluation Impact Report 2020

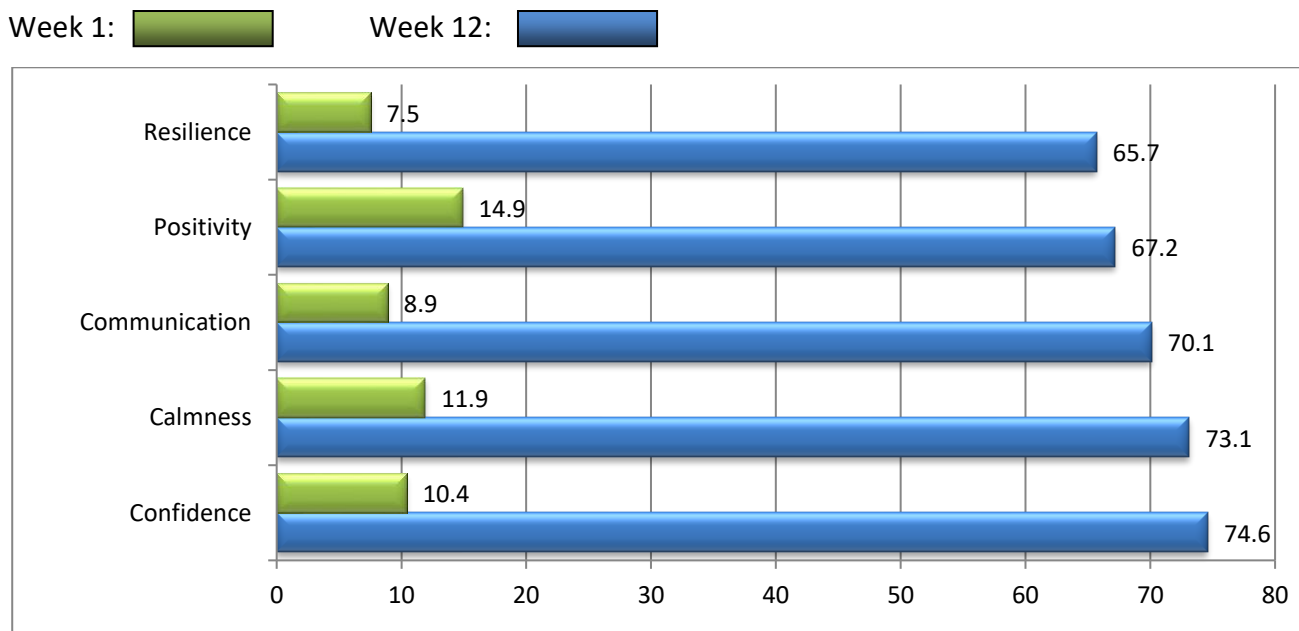


Referrers and participants regularly provide Sirona with feedback on improved wellbeing and positive outcomes from attending our equine-assisted sessions, and this success is reflected in our growing waiting list and recognition of the benefit of our provision. However, we recognise that it is vital to quantify this through robust evaluation, and our recent research partnership with Hartpury University has provided the opportunity to prove the effectiveness of our equine assisted therapy and learning provision to a wider audience.

Our 2020 Evaluation and Impact Report is the result of a detailed research study into the outcomes of young people attending Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship over a 2 year period. The study was undertaken as part of a postgraduate MSc in Equine Science at Hartpury University Equine Faculty. Overall the equine-assisted therapy and learning programmes at Sirona were found to significantly increase participants pre and post self-assessment wellbeing scores by **68.5%** (Wilcoxon signed rank:  $P=0.0005$ ). The following is a brief extract:

*There is a growing body of qualitative research providing evidence to support the effectiveness of Equine-Assisted Therapy and Learning in improving wellbeing. However, there is limited quantitative evidence to support EAT/L programmes. Using a mixed method approach this study has provided preliminary evidence that Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship's EAT/L programmes have been fulfilling its aim of having significant positive impact on participant's confidence, calmness, communication, resilience and overall positivity. There was a significant positive increase in participant's self-assessment scores between the 1st and 12th weekly sessions, indicating that participants felt they have significantly improved in each of the five areas as a result of the programmes.*

Participants scored themselves on the 5 variables before and after the 12 week course.



*96 care-giver questionnaires were also analysed. These helped to validate the findings by reducing the impact on results of self-reporting. This study on the effectiveness of the equine-assisted therapy and learning programmes at Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship provides evidence to support referral to our services as an effective and highly impactful option for young people experiencing mental health and other support needs.*

The full report is available on our website - [www.sironaequine.org.uk](http://www.sironaequine.org.uk)

# Changing Lives with Horses...



## Sarah's Story...

*I first came to Sirona for therapeutic horsemanship sessions when I was struggling a lot at school with stress. I had been school refusing for two years by then and I had been diagnosed with severe anxiety and depression. The first time I visited the yard I felt happy and welcome and I made an instant connection with a horse called Rosie.*

*I started regular sessions and felt the difference very quickly, it helped my confidence enormously and gave me something to get up for. I soon realised that I always wanted to go to Sirona even if I was feeling bad because the horses never asked anything of me. I didn't have to feel a certain way for them to still want me there. It was so much better than traditional therapy in a stuffy office sitting across from someone who asked lots of uncomfortable questions, I always felt worse after sessions like that. Sirona made me feel better. I always came home with a smile on my face.*

*The sessions at Sirona really helped relieve the stress of studying in sixth form. After I finished school I decided to start the Level 1 Diploma in Horse Care at Sirona. After finishing the Diploma I was offered the chance of a regular work experience placement at Sirona and I jumped at the chance to spend a whole day working at the yard! I felt comfortable and happy there, and working with the horses gave me confidence in myself.*

*In September I will be moving to London to start a degree course at University and I'm so excited! I'm going to miss Sirona. I wouldn't be where I am today without the support of everyone (human and animal!) at Sirona and I couldn't be more grateful for what they've done for me.*



## Ben's Story...

*My experience at Sirona was life changing. When I first started I will admit I was sad and angry at the world and didn't know what to do, but when interacting with the horses it made me realise that I was not alone and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I made great attachments to the horses and people working there and I am forever grateful.*

*As a consequence of being at Sirona I am now working at a racing yard and hopefully off to Newmarket Racing School next December.*

## Changing Lives with Horses...

...extracts from feedback received from some of our young people:

"It's helped me decide what I want to do in the future."

"Sirona has helped me loads in life, it's made me be able to hold my anger and be a lot happier."

Sirona is the best place in the world. It has changed how I feel about myself.

"The horses make me feel safe and calm."

"I feel calm when I'm at Sirona, it's calm there, everyone is nice and friendly which makes me relax. It's quiet too."



"The horses make me feel calm and positive and I can speak to them about my feelings or anything else."

"The horses make me feel a lot more calmer and help distract myself from thoughts and worries."

"Because Chapas has experienced abuse, I feel like he understands me and I understand him, because we've both had difficulties ... I think that's why he trusted me to touch his nose (which has scars). There's trust and a connection."

"The horses make me feel like I'm one with them. It feels like the horses care for me like I'm their child."

"Before I start my session I'm extremely energetic and hyperactive but during and after I am more calm and regulated. I learnt how to channel my energy and control my emotions when having a panic attack as I thought back to what I had learnt here."

"It's helped me a lot with panic attacks such as using calmness techniques to help bring myself back to being calm."

"I would love to say how much this horse means to me. Chapas has helped me through all the rough times and has helped my confidence so so much."

...and some feedback from parents and carers:

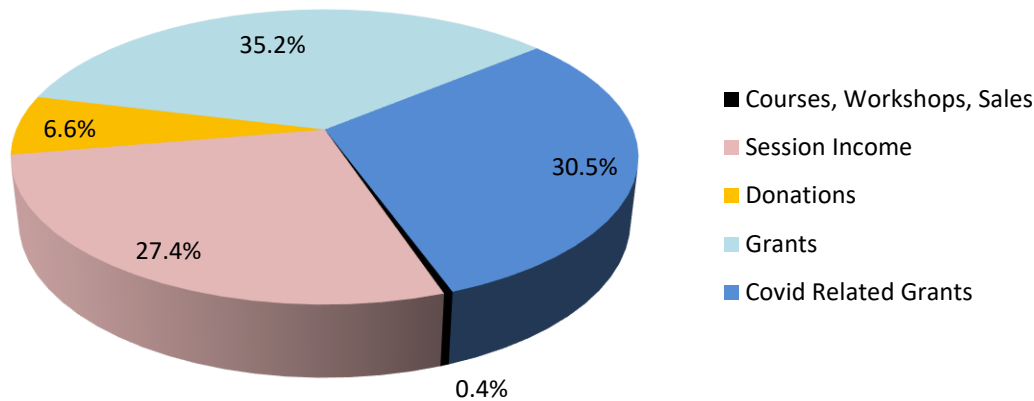
"He has been happier after each session – to the point of being joyful and using words like 'amazing' which I don't think he has ever used before."

"She has come so far since attending. She comes away happy, talks about what she's done and learnt. It has given her lost more confidence around other animals and she has decided she would like to work with horses or animals when she leaves school."

"I cannot get over the extent to which the therapy has impacted positively on our (young person)! Amazing work you do!"

# Our Finances

## Income

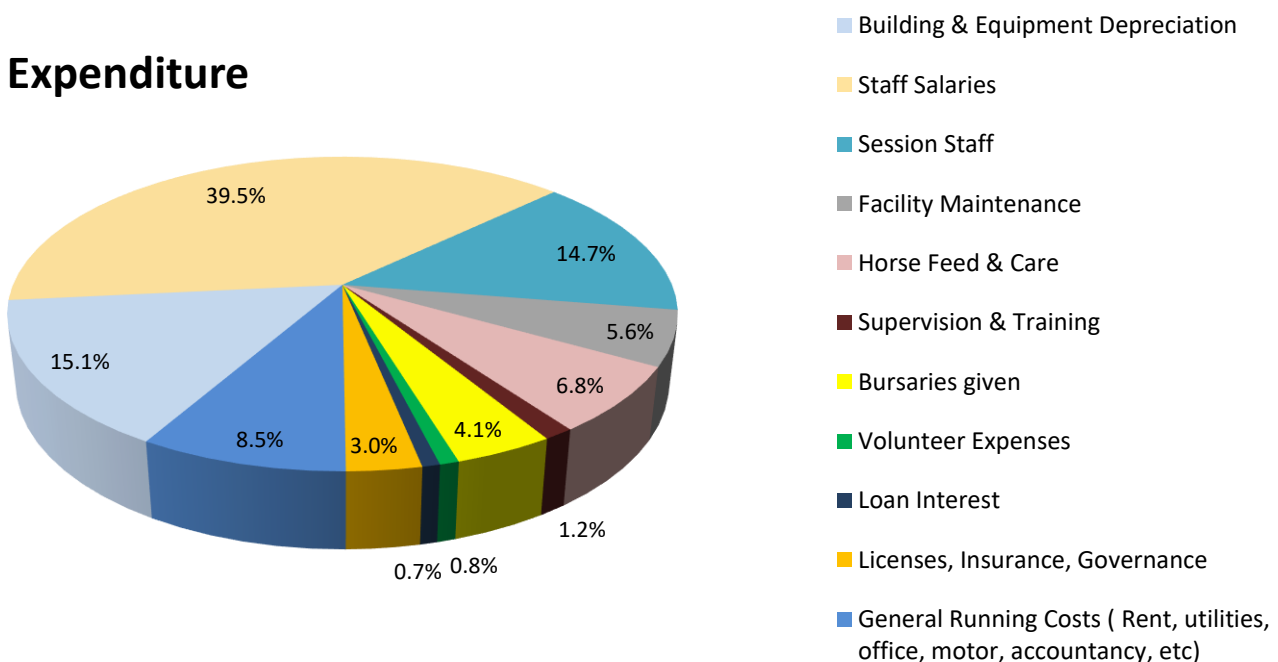


Total income during the year was £195,062, over 93% of this figure being provided by grants and session income. Grant funding totalled £127,990, of which £59,399 related to government and local authority Covid Support grants. £53,497 was received from session income, donations amounted to £12,806 (including gift aid) and a further £769 was raised from courses, workshops, and T-shirt/ book sales.

Session income increased in the first quarter of the year, but in the second quarter this income halved as a result of the first lockdown and picked up only very slowly in the second half of the year because social distancing required that all sessions needed to be on a one to one basis. In spite of these constraints, our 2020 session income came within 3% of our 2019 total.

Funding continues to be an ongoing challenge for the charity and we are deeply appreciative of the regular support of friends of Sirona, and of the generosity of grant making bodies during the current crisis. Our work would not be possible without this essential support.

## Expenditure



During the year, Covid requirements and social distancing measures resulted in a significantly higher number of one-to-one sessions, increasing salary and session costs by 16% over the 2019 level, from £67,162 to £78,365. However, we were able to compensate for most of this increase by controlling expenditure in other areas.

Our total expenditure increased from £143,286 in 2019 to £144,787 in 2020, an increase of only 1.05%.



*To those who support us with funds, time, and expertise –  
Thank You All!*



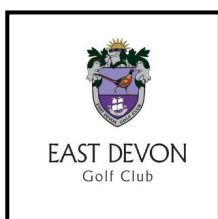
The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust



The Elmgrant Trust



The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust



The Norman Family Charitable Trust

THE VALERIE AYTON CHARITABLE TRUST

The late Barbara Hunt-McLanahan



The late Mary Frances Tennant

*..and our fabulous staff and volunteers whom we could not do without..*



Lucy  
David  
Shirley  
Christina  
Hesti  
Jane

Lisa  
Owen  
Matthew  
Amber  
John  
Jan

Sue  
Sally  
Amber  
Richard  
Rosie  
Nat

Angie  
Emma  
Charlotte  
Natalie  
Cora  
Kate

Cat  
Shaun  
Fanny  
Diane  
Jane  
Zoe

Our Trustees

Sarah Urwin (Chair), Susan Bicks, Laurel Ellis, Deirdre Ford, Sarah Mathews

*and finally,  
thank you  
so much -*

*to East Devon Golf Club*

*and the Wooden Spoon Trust*

*who joined together to raise funds for a new bigger  
classroom and office building in order to enable Sirona  
to remain open over the winter months with social  
distancing in place.*

*The build took place in December under challenging  
weather conditions - and a huge thank you to all those  
involved including Mr Modular, Graham Soper & Matt  
Symes, South West Crane Hire, Shaun Derioz, Matt  
Burgon and George and Sammy Congden for working  
over the Christmas break to make this happen.*



### The serious stuff:

Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship CIO is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charities Commission of England and Wales. Charity No: 1169709.

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