



ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

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CEO's Message

Welcome to our review of 2021.

Despite the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, and thanks to the dedication and hard work of the Sirona team, we were once again able to remain open during 2021 providing our vital equine-assisted activity (EAA) provision to vulnerable young people.

During the second half of 2021 referrals increased significantly with enquiries growing by **62%** this year. Budget cuts and lack of alternative therapeutic provision further impacted negatively on young people's mental health and left Sirona with an ever-lengthening waiting list. In Devon the rising suicide rate now exceeds the England and Southwest average.

To meet some of this demand and in line with our longer term 'Diversity' programme we have broadened our services, to include ex-battery hens and new horticultural activities; both have proved successful additions, and we hope to further develop these in 2022.

Feedback from young people through a stakeholder consultation exercise in 2021 indicates that a key therapeutic element of our provision is the calm, quiet and safe space we provide at Sirona. It is therefore imperative that we continue to uphold this against the growing demands for the expansion of our service.

One of our core values is the welfare of our horses, and we were pleased to again be awarded the top (5 star) rating in our annual Local Authority Licence Inspection. We operate a strict limit on the number of weekly sessions each horse participates in, so introducing a wider range of activities allows us to maintain this standard without the need to expand our herd – with the additional inevitable cost implications.



Changing Lives with Horses



In line with our commitment to equine welfare and after many years of discussions with other organisations, our chair of trustees Sarah Urwin was recently invited to join a working party including Riding for the Disabled, Hartpury University, IFEEL, and Horseback UK to create the Human Equine Interaction Register. The intention of this register is to improve standards and ensure horse welfare in the rapidly growing sector of EAA.

We are so grateful for all those who continue to provide Sirona with support. Grants, donations, fundraising events and sponsorship of our horses all enable us to continue to provide life changing opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hannah Burgon'.

Dr Hannah Burgon,
CEO and founder

Objects and Mission Statement



Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship provides equine-assisted therapeutic and educational opportunities for disadvantaged young people and adults and those suffering social exclusion or disability through engaging in activities with horses, other animals and the natural environment. Our aim is to improve health and wellbeing and support beneficiaries to become more resilient and better able to overcome the challenges and disadvantages they face in order to have more positive life outcomes.



Core Values and Guiding Principles

- Sirona follows a person and animal-centered non-judgmental, relational and strengths approach where everyone is accepted as an individual
- Our horses' and other animals' well-being and welfare is paramount and we follow a positive reinforcement training approach, together with a natural management system, founded on research-based ethological principles
- Sirona believes that building long-term trusting relationships based on individual needs is key: placement length is therefore based on need rather than a set number of sessions
- This relationship-based approach includes our relationship with animals and the natural environment. Our activities include learning about the natural environment and the plants and animals we share our lives with
- Beneficiaries are involved in all aspects of their session planning and goals: we follow a strengths approach, where we co-design our activities with our participants
- Sirona is committed to ongoing personal development, with our provision being underpinned by evidence-based practice and theoretical frameworks based on attachment theory, trauma-informed practice and humanistic principles

In order to meet different individual needs session types include: 1-1 Equine-Assisted Therapy, small group Therapeutic Horsemanship, the British Horse Society Changing Lives through Horses programme and the Level 1 Diploma in Horse Care course in partnership with Bicton College. In addition, we offer additional alternative education sessions such as Equi-Art and Nature-Based

sessions, and walk and talk or room-based counselling sessions in our Shepherds Hut for adults or young people.

Referrals to Sirona come from social services children's services, fostering and adoption teams, from schools and colleges SEND officers, CAMHS, Youth Offending teams, other organisations working with young people and direct referrals.

Our work and achievements in 2021

1472 Session Delivery Hours

478 Total Sessions

73 Participants

Session types:

201 Therapeutic Horsemanship

106 Changing Lives Through Horses

82 C&G Level 1 Horse Care

47 Equine Assisted Therapy

26 Taster Visits

13 Holiday Horsemanship

3 Counselling

Referral Categories:

46 Mental Health/Anxiety Issues

32 With Special Needs

29 In Foster Care

25 Education & Health Care Plans

21 Education Other than at School

20 Self-Harming

19 Autistic Spectrum Condition

Other needs we supported:

- Social Emotional Behavioural Issues
- Young People with ADHD
- Young Offenders
- Attachment Issues
- Learning Disabilities

Our Team

5 PAYE Staff/ 2 Apprentices

6 Freelance:

Clinical Child Psychologist

Equine Assisted Counsellor

BHSAI Instructor

BA (Hons) QTS Teacher

Equine Workers

8 Board Members

29 Volunteers contributed 2331 Hours

TEAM TRAINING:

Mental Health Awareness

Restorative Practice

Diversity & Equality Workshop

Suicide Awareness

Online Safety and Digital Safeguarding

Neuro Diversity Training

Paediatric First Aid

Safer Recruitment

'Prevent' Government Terrorism

Awareness Training

Level 2 and 5 Safeguarding & Child Protection

Mindfulness team self-care day

Trauma Release Exercises Training

British Horse Society Training

for Weight Management

of Horses & Ponies

ADDITIONAL TARGETTED TRAINING:

GDPR + Data Protection Updates

Health and Safety

Supporting Volunteers

Employment Law & Coronavirus

Initiative on Domestic Abuse

EVENTS:

Sirona co-hosted the first South West

Equine-Assisted Therapy and Learning

Regional Practitioners meeting

Presentation of our work to Dartington WI

Visit of Anthony Mangnall MP

Team Development Day at Staverton Hall

Official Opening of New Modular Classroom

financed by Wooden Spoon Trust

and East Devon Golf Club

New Horticultural and Bio-Diversity Projects



In the spring we seeded our top field with a horse-friendly herb meadow seed mix, to try to reduce the rye grass which is too rich for our native horses and ponies. As a result we were able to harvest our first organic hay crop, reaping a very respectable 165 bales.

We were able to launch another exciting new project this year by introducing horticultural activities into sessions with young people. Shaun, our talented Maintenance Man built four sturdy planter boxes out of recycled scaffold planks which he positioned outside our office and classroom under the covered overhang. Volunteers and young people then filled these with some of our well-rotted manure and (peat-free) locally sourced compost. During the spring young people planted a range of seeds including mixed salad leaves, rocket and tomatoes, together with some herbs for both horses and humans and edible flowers such as Calendula. Another box was planted with strawberry plants donated by one of our volunteers.



Over the summer months many butterflies and bees were attracted to the wildflower meadow we had seeded in the autumn, and to the new plants and flowers in our covered overhang, which acted like an outdoor greenhouse.



Just sowing the seeds...

Many of our young people had never before participated in any gardening activity, so for them to be involved in the whole process from planting to weekly nurturing and finally harvesting was a really positive experience – with an added bonus - getting to take produce away to eat at home!



EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK:

Our mission is to improve the life outcomes of disadvantaged and excluded young people and adults through participating in equine, animal and nature-based therapeutic and educational activities. We measure this through assessing improvements in five key areas:

CONFIDENCE – COMMUNICATION – CALMNESS – EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING – PERSEVERENCE

These themes are all related to improved resilience - which is a factor that research has demonstrated to be strongly linked to improved life outcomes.

As a result of a research project in partnership with Hartpury University, our evaluation shows that after attending twelve equine-assisted sessions at Sirona:

74.6% of participants reported increased confidence
73.1% felt calmer and demonstrated increased calmness
70.1% had improved communication skills



I feel confident and comfortable at Sirona which I don't feel at school.

It has helped me manage my emotions – I don't get so angry now.

I look forward to Sirona...I feel calm and focussed.

I've learnt how to be around people. I feel more confident talking to people now.

...when I get frustrated at home I just think about the horses...and it calms me down.

It's just so supportive here. It's my safe space.

I feel calmer and able to communicate better...I don't feel scared of expressing how I feel.

It's a quiet and calm environment which helps me concentrate.

It took me out of a dark place and brought some light into my life

Martha's Story...

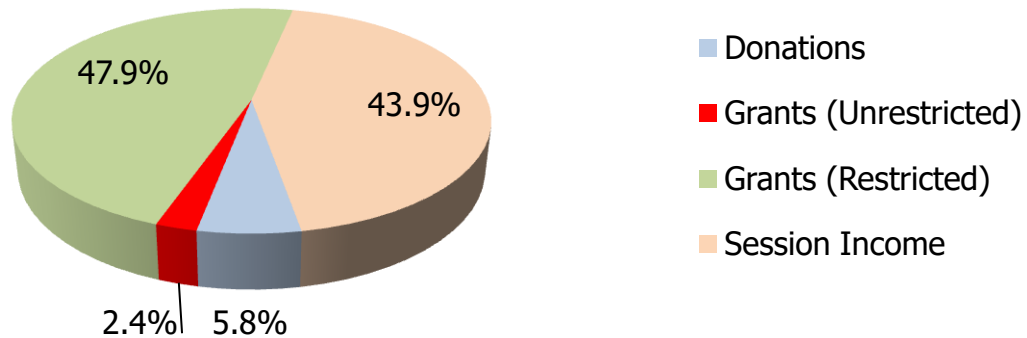
Martha is a young person whose difficulties in managing her behaviour and emotions were putting her foster home placement at risk; she was regularly excluded from school and when she first arrived at Sirona Martha found it difficult to communicate, preferring to keep her hoodie over her face and avoiding eye-contact. In her first few sessions Martha found it difficult to focus and was easily distracted, sometimes finding it difficult to manage her behaviour.

Our practitioner worked with Martha to identify the factors which might motivate or calm her through following our routine on each session of meeting with all the horses, and discussing how she felt they were feeling and what she thought they might like to do that day. Gradually Martha was able to remain calmer for longer periods; she was also encouraged to spend time with nature – touching the bark of a tree, noticing the colour of a flower and the smell of wild garlic, a grounding activity bringing her in touch with her senses. Over time, Martha's behaviour began to improve at home and at school, and she was referred to Sirona for a second term to build on her progress. Martha is now a different young person, confident and outgoing with staff, volunteers and other participants; she maintains her focus, is able to regulate her behaviour and has positive relationships with the horses.

On her feedback form Martha's foster carer wrote: *'Martha doesn't have meltdowns anymore, she is much calmer, her hyperactivity has slowed a lot and she's more tolerant, patient and helpful'*. Martha herself wrote: *'The animals make me feel really calm, they all have different personalities...it has helped me manage my emotions – I don't get so angry now'*.

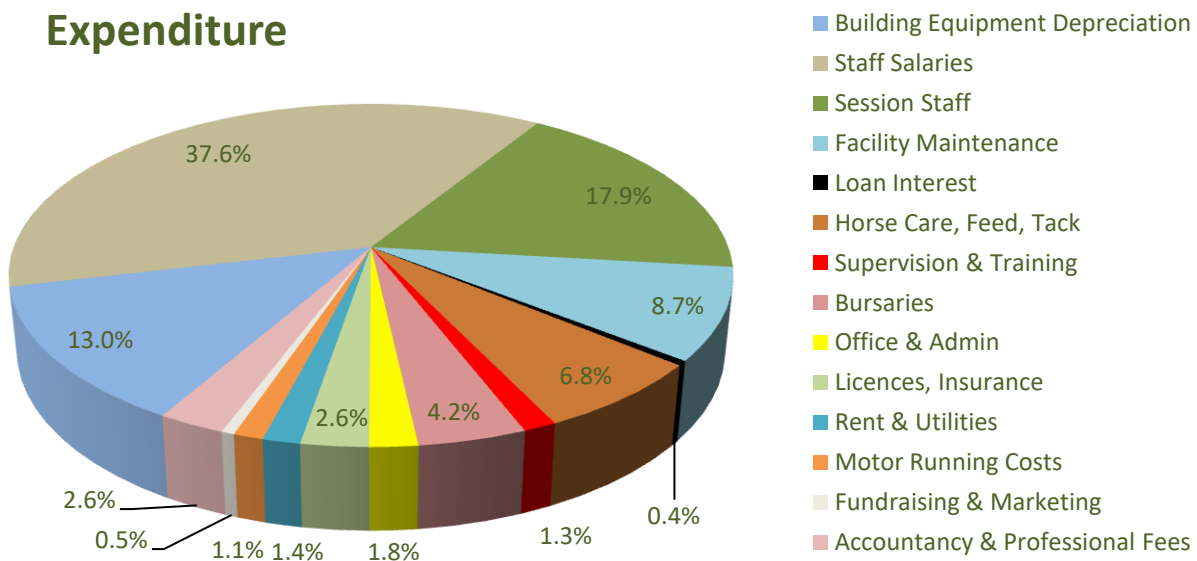
Our Finances

Income



Income from all sources in 2021 totalled £148,179. Income from grants accounted for 50.3% of the total. £71,002 (47.9%) of grant income was restricted (ie: The grant is provided for a specific identified purpose). Unrestricted grant income totalled £3,500, and a further £8,635 emanated from donations. Session income is received when an organisation or Local Authority make a referral to Sirona for an agreed fee, and session income from fees amounted to £65,042 of Sirona’s total income.

Expenditure



Our total expenditure in 2021 was £157,719.

55.5% of expenditure (£87,544) related to staff salaries and payments to our session staff (we have 5 PAYE staff, 2 apprentices, and a further 6 freelance specialists when required). During the year we were pleased to be able to provide bursaries to a total value of £6,570 to those unable to pay our fees. The care and welfare of our herd of 7 horses and ponies accounted for a further £10,785 (6.8%).

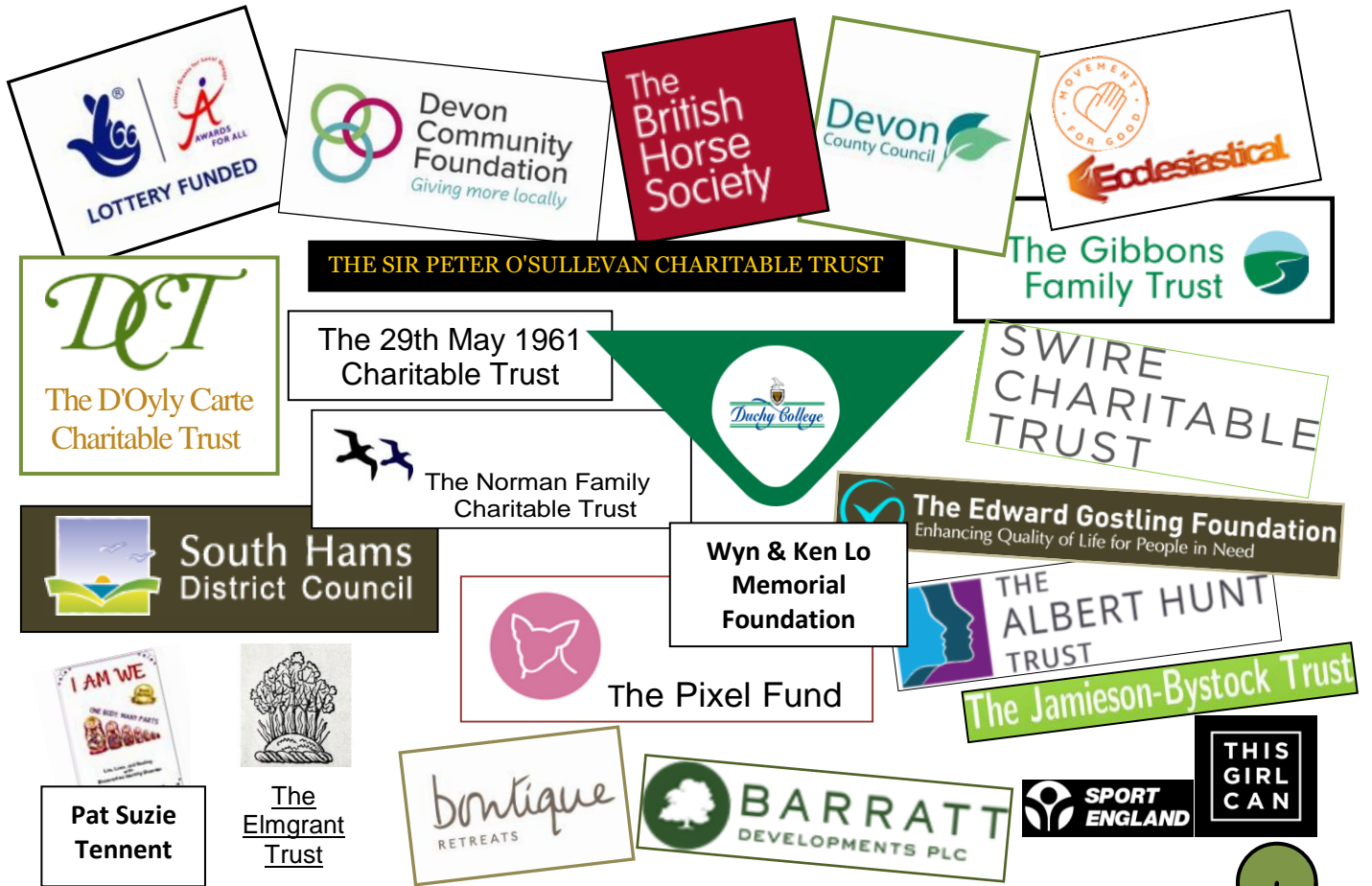
We make a great effort to ensure that most of our expenditure benefits our participants directly, and in 2021 we were able to contain office & administration costs to just £2,905 (1.8%).



Thank you!

We want to

We are indebted to so many individuals and organisations for their generous support...



...and a big Sirona THANK YOU...

- to our fabulous and devoted volunteers
- to all those who sponsor a horse or a pony
- to Friends of Sirona for their regular donations



Charity Information:

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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