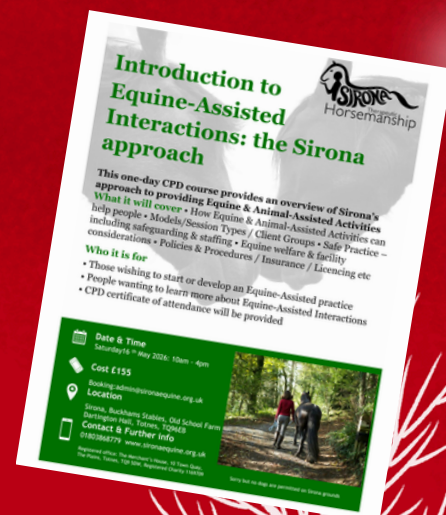


WELCOME TO OUR CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2025

It has been a busy autumn term at Sirona. Alongside welcoming many new young people to our therapeutic sessions this term we have also been busy with maintenance tasks on our land in preparation for winter together with a number of events, both at Sirona and out in our local community.

In this newsletter we are bringing you:

- How the animals are helping our young people.
- Biodiversity update.
- Christmas Gift Ideas supporting Sirona.
- Support Sirona and get a stocking filler gift for only £3.
- Our Day at the Relational Practice Conference .
- Animal update - can you train a chicken to jump?
- A report from our Autumn Open Event.
- Course for 2026 An Introduction to Equine Assisted Interactions - the Sirona Approach.



A very Merry Christmas to all our Sirona family, friends, supporters and funders. Thank you so much for all your support this year and wishing everyone a super 2026!

WELLBEING SESSIONS

We have noticed a sharp increase over the past few years in young people being referred to Sirona with extreme levels of anxiety and being unable to attend school, often referred to as Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). This term has been no exception with over half of our current participants being referred with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and either not attending school, in part time education or educated other than at school (EOTAS).

Many of these young people have been traumatised by the education system and as a result completely withdrawn, in some cases finding it difficult to speak in certain situations - sometimes known as selective or elective mutism.





One of the things we struggle with at Sirona is the widespread use of all these terms and acronyms which we feel can lead to dehumanising, stigmatising and labelling of young people, and as a result is in contradiction to our child-led, relational approach. This is where horses provide the perfect antidote as horses and other animals are not interested in labels and acronyms, what clothes the child is wearing or whether they speak or not. In fact animals much prefer people who are quiet and who relate to them as they would like to be treated themselves, with respect, kindness and consideration of their individual strengths and needs - our ethos at Sirona.

Providing an environment that meets the needs of both horse and human set against stressed social services and education systems together with over stretched funding streams can be very challenging at times. It has therefore been heartening to witness powerful instances of connection and relationship between young people and our horses and other animals this term providing confirmation of all the hard work behind the scenes by our wonderfully passionate team at Sirona.

HOW THE ANIMALS ARE HELPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

We are always in awe of how our horses and other animals seem to know when and how to show up for young people. This term Chapas has been especially drawn to a new young person who has been unable to attend school due to her anxiety and the school not being able to meet her needs. This young person initially appeared to be uninterested in the horses, which we understood could be masking her lack of confidence around them, but she nevertheless chose to continue to attend Sirona, and we adapted the sessions accordingly giving her the choice of less challenging activities such as feeding the goats and searching for our hen's eggs which she was positive about. At the start of each session we followed our normal ritual of going round to greet each horse, together with meeting our cat Ginger and Elsie, the lurcher dog.





This creates a sense of stability and safety for young people so they always know what will happen when they arrive at Sirona, and also gives us the opportunity to check in with them that day and introduce some simple grounding exercises. We do this following our 'traffic light system' for greeting our horses, checking in together whether the horse is communicating if they want to interact that day or not. It also enables us to begin to introduce some useful grounding and breathing exercises before meeting the horses in a way which is relatable and meaningful for the young person. In these sessions Chapas, our largest horse who was rescued from Spain very underweight, and who is normally most interested in food as a result, would immediately leave his hay and come forward to greet this young person, even pawing his hoof in the air at her if he didn't get the attention he wanted.

This made the young person laugh, and as the weeks went by she, in turn, became more interested in Chapas, wanting to learn more about him, where he liked to have a scratch and moving onto feeding then grooming him at liberty, then eventually being able to lead him out to the field. This was a huge achievement for this young person, whose confidence and whole demeanor changed to being open, talkative and positive about trying new things, with the aim of progressing onto a small group session next term. The young person told us that

“Making relationships with horses feels a lot easier than making relationships with people. I love Chapas - he makes me feel happy”.



FEEDBACK FROM OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



Some feedback from young people this term includes;

"being at Sirona has helped me learn how to be calm and has given me something nice to remember if I feel sad or nervous or angry".

"Animals make me feel happy and the horses are amazing and I love them."

"I feel calmer - I got taught that the horses feel calmer if you take a big breath - I've realised that if I do that myself it works that same for me".

"Its calm and quiet at Sirona – and its getting out of the busy noise of everywhere. Ginger purring makes me very very calm and very very happy – I love her lying with me".

"Sirona has helped me face my fears and feel less nervous".

"I feel like I belong at Sirona".

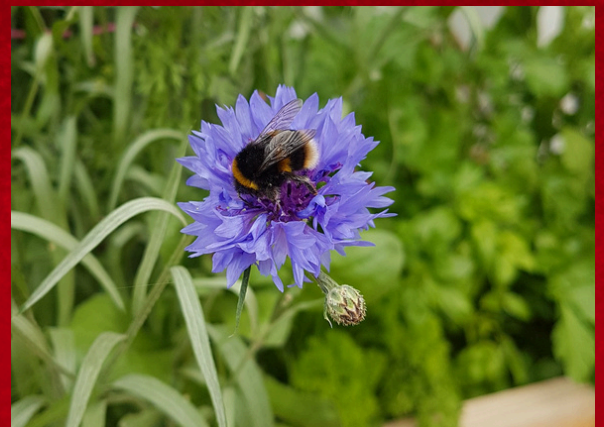


Another young person noticed that Ginger, our very special Sirona cat, is getting a bit older now and thought she should have a specially made warm box to sleep in. Together with Shaun, our brilliant all round maintenance man, (and after giving Hannah a headache with getting the use of additional tools added to our insurance) they made this brilliant bed box for her which she loves.



WORK AROUND OUR SITE

Improving the biodiversity of our site is linked to our wider environmental commitment, which is woven into our belief that we are all part of a wider ecosystem. Over the past few years we have seen the huge impact just small changes on our site can have to both the soil, nature and wildlife. Each year we have been resting, mulching and reseeded different areas with native meadow grass seed and herbs, then leaving this to seed into late summer so providing habitat for butterflies and insects before allowing the horses on to graze the longer and less rich grass over the autumn. Preventing all the fields being over poached and becoming horse sick has improved both our land's soil health together with our horses' health, and attracted more insects and wildlife as a result. We now have barn and tawny owls, stoats, hedgehogs, bats, lots of different butterflies, dragonflies, newts and toads in our pond and lots of different birds including both green and greater spotted woodpeckers across our site.



To build on this we are really grateful to our landlord the Dartington Hall trust adding our main 10 acre field, which was previously on a short term grazing licence, to our long term lease so we can now look towards planting more trees together with another native hedge in the near future.



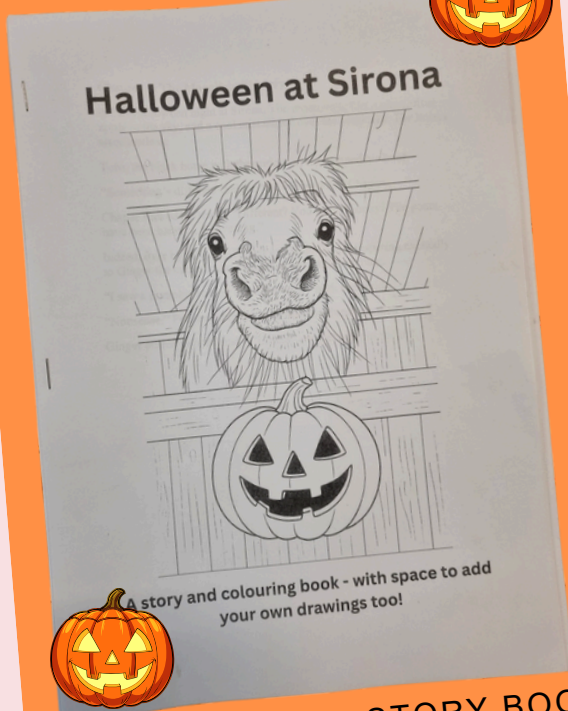
CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

Ways you can support Sirona

- Grab a supersoft cotton organic hoodie or Tshirt for that horse mad person in your life
- Teatowels and mugs make great stocking fillers, order direct and pick up before Christmas
- Christmas cards of the ponies - we have some beautiful photos of the ponies made into cards, a lovely way to support the charity
- Sponsor a Pony gift - a thoughtful clutter free gift for any family member - find details are here on our website
www.sironaequine.org.uk/sponsor-a-pony-new/ or **click the button below**



Only £3
Ideal stocking filler



**COLOURING AND STORY BOOK
ABOUT THE SIRONA ANIMALS**

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers at Sirona are amazing, we really appreciate all they give to supporting our work and Elaine our Friday volunteer is no exception. As well as being a godsend on the yard helping with all the animal care and exercising horses, in her other life Elaine is an author and editor working in PR and coaching and recently wrote a beautiful short children's story and colouring book based on our Sirona herd of horses.

Called 'Halloween at Sirona' it features all of the Sirona horses and other animals centred around the theme of kindness and Halloween. Elaine captures their individual personalities and the spirit of Sirona perfectly. We aim to have it produced and bound as a book to sell to raise funds and awareness of Sirona, but in the meantime we have some photocopied copies available which make lovely colouring books to keep children occupied over the Christmas hols and a super cheap stocking filler at £3!

THANK YOU TO THE WAKEFIELD TRUST

We extend our heartfelt thanks to The Wakefield Trust for once again supporting our work at Sirona.

The Trust has previously supported Sirona's work and we are so grateful for their continued support this year with a repeat funding award.

The funding enables our young people to continue to access sessions here at Sirona and also welcome new participants every term.

Feedback we receive (see page 4 for some recent examples) demonstrates the hugely positive and beneficial impact participants gain - and why funding is so crucial to enable us to continue our vital work.



RELATIONAL PRACTICE CONFERENCE



Keeping up to date with practice and research is really important to our work at Sirona and the team were pleased to attend the Relational Practice conference in Torbay recently. It was a really informative day with presentations from Louise Bomber where she talked of her campaigning to get DDP (Dyadic Developmental Practice) employed in all schools, <https://www.allado.org.uk/the-team/louise-michelle-bomber/>, together with an inspiring talk by Luke Rodgers on 'The Moralism' approach for working with young people combining structure with empathy <https://thecareleaders.com/team/>.

It was heartening to hear from a range of speakers validating our approach of child-centred, trauma-informed and relationship based practice, and also of the importance of letting go of labels and disempowering language, something we are really conscious of at Sirona.

So we felt very honoured to discover that local Torbay Parent/Carer's Support Group, 'Mums Supporting Better Futures' <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2194220067755720/> who were presenting on the day, promoted Sirona as one of the organizations who 'have supported us when we have nowhere else to turn'. This felt like real validation of our work and of the huge difference that our amazing team of practitioners make to children and families who are struggling to navigate getting the right support these young people desperately need. Thank you for a great day to all those involved in organising and presenting at this event.



Join our
mailing list
here!



CAN YOU TRAIN A CHICKEN TO JUMP?



The answer to this question isYES! Our equine and animal assisted therapeutic sessions can involve any of our animals here at Sirona who choose to participate (if appropriate) and that includes our 5 rescued battery chickens. One participant in particular has felt very drawn to spending some time with the chickens and was curious to see if the chickens would engage in an enrichment activity such as hopping through a hoop held low to the ground with a corn incentive. The young participant and the practitioner are starting to have some success and definitely lots of fun along the way!

WELCOMING TWO NEW TRUSTEES TO SIRONA - SARAH AND FEARNE.

We are in the process of welcoming on board two lovely new trustees with social care and horse expertise roles, but we are still on the lookout for trustees with accountancy, finance or HR experience, please get in touch if you would like to know more about what the role entails.

Do you have accountancy, HR or finance experience and would like to be a part of Sirona? Please get in touch by emailing info@sironaequine.org.uk





AUTUMN OPEN DAY 28TH OCTOBER 2025

The sun shone once again for Sirona's Autumn Open Morning event on the 28th October. We welcomed over 70 visitors through the gates to our Dartington Estate home to meet all the animals, have fun with crafts and games and enjoy a cup of tea and homemade cake, all whilst helping support the charity and have a great time!

It was lovely to see current participants attending with their families aswell as new faces, local people from our community who came along to support us and help raise funds to continue our services to help vulnerable and disadvantaged young people also from our community.

There were lots of horseshoes painted and decorated and pictures coloured in and all the animals were very happy to meet and greet people - Chapas in particular was very chatty with his adoring fans.

Thank you so much to all our supporters who helped make cakes, raise funds by purchasing our bespoke Christmas cards and Sirona hoodies, T shirts caps and other merchandise and also volunteering to help out on the day.

We are SO PROUD to announce the day raised a huge **£913.13** to support Sirona's activities and this helps to fund our therapeutic sessions and the care of all the horses and animals.

TOTAL RAISED

£913.13



COURSE FOR 2026

Introduction to Equine-Assisted Interactions: the Sirona approach



This one-day CPD course provides an overview of Sirona's approach to providing Equine & Animal-Assisted Activities

What it will cover • How Equine & Animal-Assisted Activities can help people • Models/Session Types / Client Groups • Safe Practice – including safeguarding & staffing • Equine welfare & facility considerations • Policies & Procedures / Insurance / Licencing etc

Who it is for

- Those wishing to start or develop an Equine-Assisted practice
- People wanting to learn more about Equine-Assisted Interactions
- CPD certificate of attendance will be provided



Date & Time

Saturday 16th May 2026: 10am - 4pm



Cost £155

Booking: admin@sironaequine.org.uk



Location

Sirona, Buckhams Stables, Old School Farm
Dartington Hall, Totnes, TQ9 6EB



Contact & Further info

01803868779 www.sironaequine.org.uk

Registered office: The Merchant's House, 10 Town Quay,
The Plains, Totnes, TQ9 5DW, Registered Charity 1169709



Sorry but no dogs are permitted on Sirona grounds

We are delighted to announce that we are offering another chance next May 2026 to learn all about the world of equine assisted therapeutic interventions and activities - Introduction to Equine-Assisted Interactions - the Sirona Approach.

Perfect for those wishing to start or develop an equine-assisted practice or just learn more about the work we do, this popular course is open to the public and aims to give participants an overview of Sirona's approach to providing Equine & Animal-Assisted Activities and the logistical considerations.

****CPD certificate of participation****

In person course-

- Saturday 16th May
- 10am-4pm

The course covers:

How Equine & Animal-Assisted Activities can help people

Models / Session Types / Client Groups

Safe Practice – including safeguarding & staffing

Equine welfare & facility considerations

Policies & Procedures / Insurance / Licencing etc

Here is some feedback from previous participants attending the course:

"Overall an excellent introduction to EAI. Comprehensive coverage of all the important subject areas. Loved the section on horse welfare, choices and how to support horses in this area."

"A vast amount of information delivered in a very coherent way."

"Liked the honesty about the pitfalls and difficulties of setting up a business."

To book or just enquire please email
admin@sironaequine.org.uk or call 01803 868779

'photos of young people featured are models not current participants'.

