

Changing Lives Through Horses Participant Testimonial

My daughter Ruby is 13 and was diagnosed with Autism and Social Communication and Sleep Disorders when she was 5 years old. Ruby has always been a kind-hearted, sensitive and caring child but has suffered setbacks in school settings because of her diagnosis. Her Autism means she struggles with sensory issues, sees situations differently from others and has difficulties with social and communication. As her brain is different when processing information, this has led to her falling behind educational targets. She was supported in primary school and left in July 2021 with an Educational Healthcare Plan; which was agreed by her secondary school that they could fulfil.

In February 2022 we were forced to make the difficult decision to remove Ruby from her secondary school setting as she was being subjected to bullying, extreme anxiety with pressures of school. Ruby's anxieties show in the form of her pulling out chunks of her hair regularly and hiding it, extreme stomach and joint cramps, not sleeping, emotional meltdowns and night terrors. Her school placement could not prevent these actions so I agreed to home school Ruby until the Local Authority could find a suitable safe place for her to learn.

Due to the current pressures on the education system, the LA could not provide Ruby with an educational setting. As time went on and we were learning on our own I was becoming anxious that Ruby may disengage with the world, through no fault of her own.

In June 2023, a friend got in touch and told of about the 'Changing Lives Through Horses' course at Wirral Riding Centre. It's accredited by the British Horse Association and supports children who cannot access school. The course covers a range of practical skills, functional and personal development. The children achieve qualifications in horse care and management and riding. After a phone conversation and a couple of short visits Ruby began the course. She was very anxious to be left on her own, due to her past experiences with children and adults in school. She also has always struggled with her communication and social skills due to her diagnosis. Ruby was adamant she would not be confident to ride a horse.

Now, with the help and support of an amazing team of staff, we are in May 2024. Wirral Riding Centre has become a massive part of Ruby's life. She loves attending here. She has confidence to speak and communicate with others, she rides to a fantastic standard and is continuing to love and learn. She has found her niche with horses and loves every single aspect from working hard to clean and feed to enjoying the love they give and she returns to them. She talks to the horses and loves to find out everything she can to get to know each of their personalities and quirks. She cares really deeply for them.

She loves working with the children and staff on the yard and is thoroughly enjoying the qualification and written side of the course too.



Ruby is a happy girl and that is all I ever want from her. Come rain, wind or shine she always wants to get up and get to her course.

She still has her diagnosis and condition and we still can have a few mishaps and worries but working on this course at WRC, has given Ruby the confidence to find her voice, which means we can sort out any issues she may feel she has in a safe and secure way.

I cannot thank WRC enough for the continued work they do for Ruby and for giving her a fantastic lease of life. I'm confident that the skills Ruby has learned will stay with her into adulthood.

Katie Capper