

RDA Unicorn Centre Trustee Recruitment Pack

Hello and Welcome

As part of a federation of Riding for the Disabled Association Groups, spanning the UK the Unicorn Centre harnesses the power of the horse to enrich lives across the Tees Valley area. The Unicorn Centre, a self-funded registered charity, is a purpose-built riding for the disabled facility that supports disabled people of all ages through programmes that improve wellbeing, physical health, independence and confidence.

Disabled people face many barriers that limit their full participation in community life, education and employment, negatively affecting their overall health and wellbeing. Our transformative work, drawing on the powerful connection between equines and people, helps to overcome these barriers.

Opened in 1998, the Centre is an established part of the local community and has a strong contingent of local volunteers who play an active and vital part in delivering our activities.

Construction of the Centre was completed in April 1998 with an official opening in November that year by HRH The Princess Royal, the President of the Riding for the Disabled Association. She has since visited the Centre twice more in 2008, and in 2020 just prior to the Covid Lockdown.

Our Patron is eventing coach and mentor Nicola Wilson MBE, former event rider and 2012 Olympic silver medallist.

Around 100 riders receive lessons weekly at the Centre on our specially selected horses and ponies. They come individually, or from schools, adult training centres and adult residential homes. We also offer therapy sessions for those not wishing to ride but have meaningful contact with horses either at the Centre or in the community.

We rely entirely on our activities, fundraising, grants and donations to raise monies to cover our annual £250,000 costs.

The difference RDA activity makes

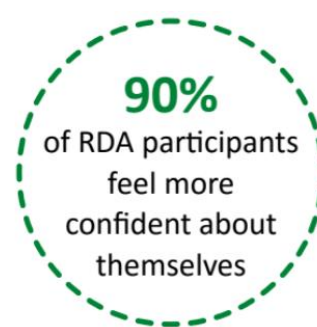
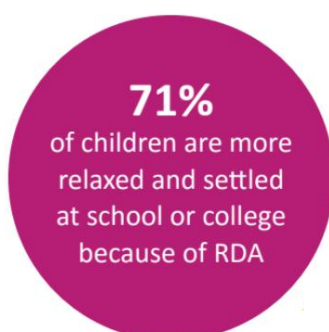
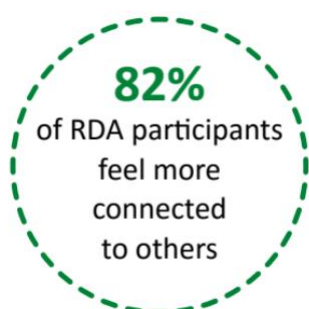
Disabled people and people living with long-term health conditions face persistent and intersecting barriers that limit their full participation in community life, sport, education and employment (Activity Alliance,2023).

These barriers start with societal prejudice, lack of access to spaces and services, and financial constraints, which in turn negatively impact disabled people's overall health and wellbeing.

RDA has a proud history of being uniquely placed to address systemic societal challenges by:

- **Significantly Improving wellbeing** - RDA participants report significantly higher life satisfaction and happiness than disabled people nationally.
- **Increasing Connection** - RDA tackles the social isolation experienced by many disabled people by offering safe, inclusive spaces where people make friends and feel connected to others and nature. Families feel less isolated and enjoy calmer relationships at home.
- **Increasing independence, confidence and self-esteem** - RDA helps participants feel accepted, build self-belief and discover new aspirations – from animal care careers to taking part in other activities outside of the arena.
- **Increasing physical activity and ability** - To help disabled people become more physically active, RDA provides participants with a unique opportunity for them to move while doing something they enjoy – and this measurably improves their activity levels.
- **Improving engagement with education** - Attending RDA is an opportunity for many disabled children to experience learning in a completely different and transformative way. Educators observed that RDA sessions notably improved children and young people's confidence and engagement with school– they became more relaxed, patient and resilient, which in turn contributed to better participation in lessons and engagement with peers.

80% of parents/carers report that the changes in participants wouldn't have happened without RDA.



The Role Our Trustees Play

The RDA Unicorn Centre are a Registered Charity (Registered as the R.D.A Centre in Cleveland Limited - Number 1062577). This means that our Trustees have a legal obligation to our organisation and our beneficiaries.

Our Board of Trustees are responsible for our Governance and Compliance, managing organisational risk and setting the Strategic Direction for the organisation - making decisions about the future of our organisation, and monitoring and reviewing our impact against our charitable objectives.

Our Board also oversee our Legal and Financial Responsibilities in accordance with our Governing Document, charity law and other relevant legislation - ensuring that we are accountable to our donors, beneficiaries, regulators and the broader public.

Our Trustees work closely with our Centre staff to ensure that The RDA Unicorn Centre is operationally doing everything necessary to serve our communities in ways which are ethical and legal, whilst also ensuring we are impactful in the work.

The Types of Trustees the Centre Needs

The Centre is at an exciting but also challenging juncture in its journey. We need to evolve our charity and ensure that we are in good health as we move into the future.

Having recently communicated that the Centre's future was in question, the Centre has received overwhelming support from its community, owing to its local importance.

Now stabilised we are eagerly seeking the right expertise to ensure the future thriving stability, quality and financial strength.

We are looking for Trustees from a range of backgrounds, and we welcome applications from all individuals who have applicable skills. For guidance, our current priority areas include:

Leadership

We are seeking a Chair of the Trustee Board. Our Chair, will provide strategic leadership, support our staff team, and inspire talented people across the Unicorn Centre to deliver meaningful impact in our community. This is a rewarding opportunity to use experience, vision, and influence to help harness the power of the horse to enrich lives across the Tees Valley area. Join us and lead change that lasts.

Finance

We are looking for people from a financial background to help with oversight of our budgeting, planning, forecasting, investments, governance, reporting and financial decision-making. This is a great opportunity to work closely with organisational leaders to ensure every penny makes a difference.

Administration

Good record keeping and organisation play a vital role in ensuring the effective governance and smooth operation of the board. We are looking for a detail orientated person who can be responsible for maintaining accurate records of meetings, preparing and distributing agendas and minutes, managing official correspondence, and ensuring compliance. In addition to act as a key liaison between Trustees and management, supporting clear communication and documentation of board decisions to uphold transparency and accountability.

Income Generation

We are seeking Trustees to help us build a strategic approach to income generation and to help us diversify and grow our income generation. We are seeking passionate people with experience in fundraising across a variety of income streams to support our leadership team as we further develop our fundraising ambitions.

Marketing and Communications

We are eager to recruit Board members who can share their experience of communications and strategy development as we seek to increase the visibility and credibility of the Centre in the Tees Valley area. This will be crucial to underpin our approach to new areas of income generation.

Health and Education

Our work is fundamental to the health and well-being of local people and there is an exciting prospect to improve our interconnectivity with statutory services, especially in health and education. We are seeking valuable knowledge and experience of SEN education and/or integrated care boards (ICBs).

Expectations of Our Trustees

Trustees are a crucial part of the Unicorn Centre team. We acknowledge that Trusteeship is a voluntary role and therefore aim to be as transparent as possible about time commitments for potential applicants.

In the six months, it is important to be candid that we need Trustees to roll their sleeves up and set the foundations for the future of the Centre. Setting the strong foundation through developing a new business plan and strategic approach may require more time than would typically be expected.

Following the initial six-month period, it is expected that time required will settle. Trustees will then be expected to attend regular board meetings, which will take place either in-person in our area of operation, or on-line.

There are approximately 6 full board meetings per year, plus additional meetings for any sub-groups which Trustees may decide to form.

Alongside these expectations, board members will also hold responsibility for our strategic direction, financial planning and investment, and our compliance and governance. If you have any questions about expectations and responsibilities, we encourage you to ask these during the recruitment process.

If you would like more information on the role and responsibility of Trustees we encourage you to read the [The Essential Trustee: 6 Main Duties](#).

Interested in Joining Our Board of Trustees?

We invite you to come on a journey with us to plot the future and stability of this wonderful place in our community.

Next Steps

If you are interested in joining our Board of Trustees, we would love to hear from you. Please express your interest by submitting a CV along with a one-sided covering statement to unicorn@uptax.co.

Expressions of interest close on Tuesday 31 March 2026.