**RDA UK Update 11 August**

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**Goodbye to Claire Milican**

This week we say goodbye to Director of Operations Claire Milican, who is leaving RDA after 9 years. Claire has made an impact on so many areas of RDA life, especially her work on safeguarding and coaching, and most recently her tireless efforts to support groups during lockdown and as they prepare to restart. We owe Claire an enormous debt of gratitude and would like to take this opportunity to thank her for everything she has done for RDA.

Claire is succeeded by Anna Hall, who joins us from the BEF. Welcome Anna! You can contact Anna at ahall@rda.org.uk

**Getting Started Update**

We have an amazing 79 groups that have restarted in some way – groups of all sizes and types. Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has started on this path. We hope you have enjoyed being back and we know what a huge difference it makes to participants and volunteers. Need a bit of a nudge to get going? Frances, Coach and Group Chair of Lambourn RDA has produced her ‘Top Tips’ for restarting. Find them here under ‘alternative activities and top tips’ [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/)

**Easing of Lockdown**

There have been changes in regulations in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Jersey since last writing to you. Find the latest update ‘UK Ease of Lockdown 10 Aug2020’ here under ‘Updates to Guidance’ [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/)

**Carriage Driving**

We know how difficult it is for all groups to get started after Covid-19 and for many Carriage Driving groups the idea of getting the group back together feels impossible. However we do have 15 Carriage Driving groups who have managed to find ways to get some activities going, albeit it non-driving activities.

Margaret Brockie, National Lead for Carriage Driving, sent a message out yesterday to all CD Groups, outlining her thoughts on how some driving may be started. Email Emma Bayliss ebayliss@rda.org.uk if you would like a copy.

If a group is not able to start driving there are other non-driving options available which some groups are taking up e.g. Quiet Corner, where the participants come to spend time with their favourite pony.....ideas can be found at [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/) .

**Vaulting**

Vaulting groups are able to get re-started, as long as they can meet their government’s social distancing rules. For most this will mean individual sessions, although for some there could be pairs or groups if household bubbles allow, or in Scotland and Wales if the Vaulters are 11 years old or younger. Anyone taking part would not be able to wear face coverings during the session.

If Vaulters need help with mounting/dismounting the horse, this must come from a suitably trained householder.

Sessions will need to be adapted to ensure the approach to the horse is socially distanced from the Lunger and safety is kept at the forefront when mounted, with sessions in walk only.

Before getting started Vaulting Groups will need to ensure they have completed the RDA Checklist and Covid Risk Assessment, including sanitising of all equipment. For the pad covers, to help with the required sanitising between uses, it is suggested that fitted cot sheets be used and changed between sessions.

**Horse Matching**

We are trying to match groups needing horses with groups who are not able to work their horses presently. We have had a kind offer from a group in the North Midlands who has facilities and sufficient forage etc. to support up to 2 equines through the winter and beyond if necessary. They are flexible on the type of equine; as long as they are already RDA assessed and are suitable for working livery to support their keep. If you are interested, please contact the Group Support Team at National Office on groupsupport@rda.org.uk.

**Q&As:**

**Q**: Is it possible for volunteers / staff to lead in sessions?

**A**: It depends where you are in the UK. It is not possible to lead safely at 2M, so if your government requires you to socially/physically distance at 2M it is not feasible for non-household members to lead a rider safely. The only possible exception is with Stage 3 leading where the rider has control of the horse and the leader is essentially providing assurance and this may be possible at 2M, but needs to be carefully assessed by the group.

If you are lucky enough to be in a part of the UK that has no social distancing, then of course volunteers will be able to lead if they wish.

For those parts of the UK who need to maintain distancing of 1M+ it may be that volunteers / staff feel able to meet the mitigation required whilst leading, but remember at the moment RDA does not allow face coverings during riding sessions. This means those involved will need to feel comfortable that they can safely mitigate by being 1M + not facing the rider or others taking part.

Horses will need to be comfortable / retrained to be led in this way, as they will be used to being led at the shoulder which is not possible for effective 1M+ leading. Groups will also need to factor in the size of the equine; the smaller they are the further forward the leader will need to be. It is not possible to safely side-walk at 1M+.

Before leading in sessions, volunteers and staff should take time to train at the new distances; it can be more demanding and tiring, and certainly needs practice.

Any group who leads in this way MUST ensure their Covid-19 Risk Assessment is updated to reflect this.

**Q**: Is it possible for us to run “meet the Pony” and other sessions at alternative venues?

**A**: It is, but the venue must first be risk assessed, using the RDA Venue Risk Assessment Form, found at [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/health-safety/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/health-safety/) . It is only an option to enable RDA registered participants to take part, not for new or non-disabled activity.

If the Group is doing this as a “one-off” they could do this as a “Day Out” by also completing the Day Out insurance form on the MyRDA website holidays page and sending to RDA National Office.

Should the Group wish to do this more regularly, during the pandemic period, the venue would need to be assessed by the Regional Coach (or duly appointed person) as an additional group venue. Once assessed, National Office will need to be advised by the Regional Coach so that our records can show an alternative venue for insurance purposes.

**Green Card Certificates**

Over recent years, only a small number of volunteers have sent their green cards to National Office to receive a certificate and numbers continue to fall.  With this in mind, and with the introduction of additional volunteer training modules online, we are no longer going to produce green card certificates.

Green cards should continue to be completed as normal, but please don’t send them to National Office. Signed green cards should be kept with the rest of the group records.

**Virtual Windsor RDA Dressage Challenge**

Entries open on Friday 14 August for the Virtual Windsor Autumn Series, which features the ‘Virtual Windsor Riding for the Disabled Association Dressage Challenge’. There are now tests for classified, ID and non-classified riders and the class is open to RDA and non-RDA riders. The competition is being run by Virtual Windsor Horse show. Visit virtual.rwhs.co.uk