**GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW OF A PARTICIPANT’S ABILITY TO RIDE/CARRIAGE DRIVE**

**Introduction**

RDA is a voluntary organisation and recognises that the health and safety of volunteers, participants and equines is paramount. On many occasions there will be a natural, mutually agreed, point when a participant ceases to ride or carriage drive. At other times however, this can be a difficult and highly emotive decision to make. A group must be open and honest during their engagement with a participant and where necessary, their parent, guardian, or carer.

**Reasons for ceasing to offer riding and/or carriage driving**

There are many factors to consider when it is no longer appropriate for someone to continue to ride or carriage drive with RDA. These can include:

* An increase in weight (where there is no alternative suitable equine).
* A loss of balance where it is no longer safe for someone to ride or carriage drive.
* Other medical conditions where it is no longer safe for someone to ride or carriage drive.
* A change in behaviour which is likely to cause injury to the participant, volunteers, horses, and ponies.
* A change in behaviour, or action, that is contrary to RDA’s Safeguarding Policies (including use of social media), the Working Together RDA Code of Conduct or, in the opinion of the Group Trustees, is not in keeping with the ethos and principles of RDA.

**Process**

A key factor when a group is considering that it might be necessary to stop someone from riding or carriage driving, is to engage with the individual, parent, guardian, or carer at the earliest opportunity and raise their concern. Good and continual communication is essential and any delay in engagement could add to the emotion of the situation. It would be useful at this point to start a record of actions to assist with decision making.

Where appropriate a group should engage with their Regional Physiotherapist and seek advice from a participant’s physiotherapist or occupational therapist, who may be able to offer solutions to enable the participant to continue riding. Ultimately however, the health and safety of the participant, volunteers, and equine welfare remain priority.

As appropriate other alternatives could be recommended such as a move to another group with a suitable equine, if one were available, suitable facilities (such as a hoist), mechanical horse, or non-ridden activities such as horse care.

The Review of a Participant’s Ability to Ride/Carriage Drive form should be used to document and explain why the group has made the decision it has.

.