

Highland Group RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association)

Registered Charity in Scotland SC007357



Samantha's Story

Samantha was born with a range of complex needs, including spina bifida and hydrocephalus (an accumulation of fluid within the brain) which typically cause visual impairment, poor balance and mental impairment. Samantha finally left hospital after 8 months but remained reliant on a breathing tube and feeding tubes. Her parents were told Samantha would never be able to walk and would have significant learning difficulties.

Samantha came to RDA on the recommendation of her physiotherapist. When she started RDA sessions, she relied heavily on her wheelchair but could only take a few steps with her walking frame. She needed support from two people to be able to sit on the horse but loved the feeling of freedom and normality it gave her.

Very quickly Samantha's core strength improved and she could sit comfortably on her horse and even began to trot. This made a massive difference to her on a day to day level. Soon she was racing down the corridors at school and confident to walk outside. Not long after that, she was ditching her walking frame entirely indoors.

It's not just Samantha's physical wellbeing that has improved - getting to know the horses and develop a bond with them, learning to predict their temperament and just having a companion who didn't judge her abilities or make demands of her helped her to feel able and equal. She has learned to follow instruction and keep herself and others safe. She has learned kindness and tolerance. She has learned she can do things she never dreamt she would manage. Samantha's mum said:

"I can honestly say horse riding through RDA has been the most therapeutic and life improving experience for Samantha, the real bonus to her is she just loves going, loves the people, the horses and although it challenges her, it feels like fun!"