

Horse Riding and Carriage Driving for Disabled People in Scotland

This fact sheet provides an overview of horse riding and carriage driving for disabled people in Scotland. It also provides useful contact details to signpost you to your local riding/driving centre, so you can join in or volunteer.

The development of riding for disabled people

In 1952, Danish rider Lis Hartel won a silver medal at the Helsinki Olympics. Not only was Lis one of the first women to compete in equestrian sport at Olympic level, she did so despite having contracted polio eight years earlier. Lis became an inspiration for the growing number of people across the UK and Europe who believed that riding and carriage driving should be made accessible to children and adults with disabilities, not just for fun, but for therapeutic benefits too.



The national organisation that supports and promotes equestrian activities in the UK is the charity RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association), and today there are around 500 RDA groups offering riding, carriage driving, showjumping, vaulting and endurance. There are 54 such groups in Scotland, supporting 3455 riders and drivers. In addition to RDA there are many different clubs that focus on offering activities for disabled people.

Equestrian activities are suitable for all ages and abilities, deliver a wide range of health benefits and offer opportunities for competition at all levels. All of the current Team GB for Para-Equestrian Dressage started out with the support of RDA and Emma Douglas who started on the BEF World Class Development Squad in 2015 is

a Para-Equestrian Dressage rider who advanced from the horsescotland Performance Squad.

Uniquely, equestrian sport offers the chance to work in close partnership with another living thing, to develop a special bond that adds a whole other dimension not found in other activities.

Activities

Riding

Learning to ride is a fun and healthy activity, which can be enjoyed by all ages and is suitable for people with learning and/or physical disabilities. Special equipment such as mounting ramps and hoists can be used to help with mounting (getting on), and sometimes different types of reins are used depending on a rider's individual needs. Support from a 'ground team', including a leader and one or two side-walkers, is provided at RDA groups to give confidence to the novice rider or those with balance concerns.

Riders develop a range of skills and can take proficiency tests to progress through the technical aspects of riding such as sitting position, steering and control. The paces of the horse are explored, with walk, trot and canter all providing their own different



challenges.

Carriage Driving

There are seven RDA Carriage Driving Groups in Scotland. Driving is a fantastic sport for those looking for a different kind of challenge and who want a great way to explore the countryside.

In addition to the seven RDA Carriage Driving Groups, horsescotland Club Member Sports Driving Unlimited (horsescotland's Club of the Year in 2015, coached by the Coach of the Year Amanda Saville) provide carriage driving for disabled people.



Drivers progress in the same way as riders and can take proficiency tests to increase and demonstrate their ability and knowledge. Drivers can compete in RDA and British Driving Society shows that have suitable classes.

Dressage

For those looking for more of a challenge from their riding, dressage offers a truly rewarding experience. With its focus on balance, control, mobility, memory and freedom, dressage enables riders to develop the more advanced equestrian skills.



There is a competitive element to dressage for those who want it, both through RDA and, at the higher levels, British Dressage. Dressage is currently the only equestrian discipline represented at the Paralympics.

Vaulting

Vaulting is essentially gymnastics on the back of a moving horse.

Competitive Vaulting is a youth sport, but at the novice and recreational level it has much to offer to all ages and abilities. As

well as RDA groups offering vaulting, Scottish Equestrian Vaulting and horsescotland Club Member Equibuddy provide opportunities for disabled people to get involved within their clubs.



Showjumping



Not for the fainthearted, showjumping is a great test of the horse/rider partnership, often pushing balance, skill and nerves to the limit. For the competitive rider,

RDA and British Showjumping have created a seamless link from pole work to podium, offering competition opportunities for riders of all abilities.

Endurance

Endurance riding is growing in popularity throughout the UK, and since its introduction to RDA in 2013 many more disabled people are taking the chance to ride outdoors and test their riding skills out in the countryside. RDA Endurance rides are between 1 and 10 kilometres and Scottish Endurance Riding Club rides start from 15km.

The Classifications

In Equestrian sports, athletes don't need classification until they reach competition level. At that point, classification is handled by RDA, whose classifying physiotherapists assess rider or driver to determine which class they should compete in.

Riders are graded from Ia or Ib to IV, where IV is the least impaired.

Current Para-Equestrian Team GB

Lee Pearson CBE, Grade Ib

Natasha Baker, MBE, Grade II

Sophie Christiansen OBE, Grade Ia

Ricky Balshaw, Grade Ib

Sophie Wells MBE, Grade IV

Coach Education & Qualifications

The quality of instruction at RDA is second to none, combining equestrian knowledge with an in-depth understanding of a wide range of disabilities. It takes dedication and drive to become an RDA Instructor.

RDA delivers a tailored programme of training and assessment to help coaches achieve their goals.

UKCC

Keen to offer Instructors and Whips (carriage driving coaches) every opportunity to further their professional development and improve their coaching skills, RDA has introduced the UK Coaching Certificate, working alongside horsescotland to deliver the courses.

UKCC is a government initiated and recognised quality standard for coach education applicable to all sports disciplines. UKCC accreditation offers RDA Instructors their first nationally (and internationally) recognised BEF qualification endorsed by Sports Coach UK (ScUK) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The qualifications are transferable between sporting disciplines.

In Scotland UKCC qualifications are awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and funding

support via sportscotland is available for candidates.

What to expect

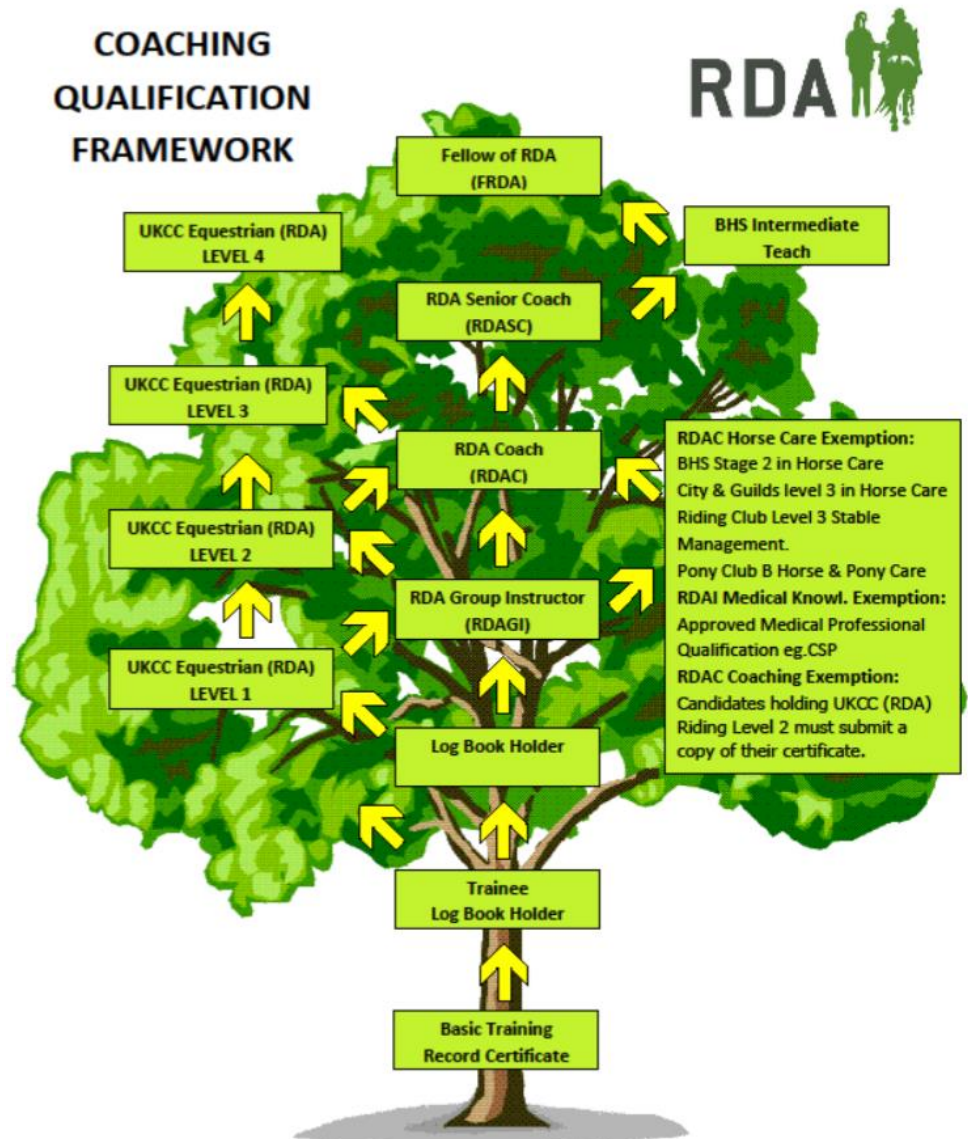
There are four levels of coaching competency within the UKCC:

Level 1 Assistant Coach (Assist more qualified coaches but not work unsupervised)

Level 2 Coach able to teach alone but with some supervision (prepare for, deliver and review coaching sessions)

Level 3 Autonomous Coach (plan, implement, analyse and revise annual coaching session/s)

Level 4 Coach regarded as a National Expert (performance coach or development coach)





Key Contacts

RDA UK (staffed)

www.rda.org.uk

0845 658 1082

horsescotland

www.horsescotland.org

01563 549 802

info@horsescotland.org

RDA Edinburgh & Borders

Chairman 0845 241 6313 (volunteer)

RDA West & Central Scotland

Chairman 0845 241 6314 (Volunteer)

RDA Grampian & Highland

Chairman 0845 241 6315 (Volunteer)

Other information sources

www.bef.co.uk

Association of British Riding Schools

www.abrs-info.org

Endurance GB

www.endurancegb.co.uk

British Showjumping

www.britishshowjumping.co.uk

British Dressage

www.britishdressage.co.uk

British Driving Society

www.britishdrivingsociety.co.uk

www.vaulting.org.uk

Equibuddy

www.equibuddy.com