



CHELMSFORD CITY
RACECOURSE

Diversity and Inclusion Award

'Autism in Racing'

Showcase
& Awards
2023



Proudly partnered by



RACING POST



Objectives



- Introduce children to racing, as a new generation of racegoers
- Provide a platform for a local charity and to raise awareness of their important work
- Create a safe environment for children with autism to experience racing

This was the third Autism in Racing raceday that we have hosted with Racing Together and Immersive Interactive's state of the art sensory room.

We invited families with autistic children to visit the racecourse, introducing them to horseracing.

Through research it became clear that facilities and events focusing on autistic children's needs are very few and far between. Our raceday provides an escape from the normal pressures they face in their home environment where they will not be judged and can relax knowing that they are in a safe happy environment, where their children can play together, and families can meet.

Having run the event previously, we wanted to make the event bigger and better than before and approached a local charity called POP Essex to invite them along with their equipment and specialist staff to help provide some play equipment, enabling us to fulfil what we were trying to achieve.

POP Essex is a recently founded local charity that supports the needs of SEND families in Essex, by offering stay, play and respite sessions for children with special needs in the local community.

Delivery

The team identified two marquees that could be used to make families and autistic children more comfortable. One marquee was for sensory activities and soft play, and the other was used for quieter activities with drawing and Lego. This area also had a family rest area and big screen with calming sensory moving images playing. The sensory room provided by Immersive Interactive was also located in this area, close to both marquees, and was easily accessible to families. Both marquees have private comfortable garden areas, where they could either be close to the Parade Ring and up close to the horses or enjoy the racing on the home straight from our Queen Charlotte Marquee.

Gates opened at 3:20 for those with Autism wristbands to allow them to come in before the general public and crowds who came from 4:20. The marquees, soft play, sensory room and play bus was open until the last race which was 8:50pm.

To attract families to the event, we worked with local charities and schools, used social media and email marketing.



Results



There were a limited number of families that we could accommodate in the sensory room itself, which we quickly booked up. Knowing that we could accommodate more families in another space, we chose to open up the opportunity to more families, who could come, and enjoy the racing and quiet environment even without access to the sensory room.

We are proud to have welcomed 86 adults, and 99 children. Double the number of people that we welcomed in 2022.

Working with community partners:

The JPL Racing school held a Shetland pony race, before our regular evening racing, which was a real highlight for the children.

Ensign buses provided a play bus, which was a hit with all the children.

The Chelmsford City Football Club team joined us for a kick about.

A local face painter came for the children.

Legacy:

This event has become a firm favourite with local families. The feedback that we have received is incredible. We will be hosting Autism in Racing events in the future. We have also heard from racegoers, that there are many more families who would like to attend similar days, whose children who have special educational needs and disabilities, and those without an autism diagnosis. To facilitate them experiencing racing, we will be putting more events that are extended to all children with special needs and their families.

Supporting Information

Customer Feedback from 2023

Great day despite the weather your staff were amazing with the children x [Sue](#) 1:44
Fun day at [Chelmsford City Racecourse](#) yesterday with [POP Essex](#) for Autism in Racing Day
My Alfie had a blast, thank you xx
George loved it, thanks everyone!!

Well, what can I say? I was kinda dreading today to be honest. I thought Harry would hate the horse racing and be totally anxious. It turns out, he loves the horse racing and is currently running around with another boy "shooting" each other! This has been such an easy, relaxing day. Having a chance to go over, watch the races and then come back to the marquee between races to chill out. It's been wonderful and we honestly cannot thank you enough for this amazing opportunity. I really do hope that we have an opportunity to come along again. Many thanks
Tara, [Dave](#) and Harry

I would 100% recommend going if held here again if your associated with autism as t will love it! I know I would love to be able to come and do this experience again with r girls!

Thank you so much for a lovely day!

[Jade Melissa Tredget](#)

