



RCA



Pontefract Racecourse

Category – The Raceday Award

Racing For Everyone

Proudly partnered by



Racing
Together

RACING POST



RACING
FOUNDATION

Showcase & Awards 2023



Objectives



We had been keen to improve the facilities for racegoers with special accessibility requirements and/or additional needs for some time. With the Industry Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion in our mind, and using the recommendations from our LiveTourism Assessment, we compiled an ambitious & lengthy programme of works to carry out improvements to accessible facilities at the Course.

The scheme was to be carried out in house by our team of Groundstaff with the objectives being to create a more accessible and welcoming venue for:

- Wheelchair users
- Customers with special learning or educational needs
- The Deaf Community
- Neuro divergent racegoers or families with children living with autism
- Dementia patients

The culmination of the work was to showcase an 'open house' race meeting - the inaugural **'Racing For Everyone' Raceday**.

Finding the calendar position for the event was key as it had to work for our target customer group. We took the decision to replace one of the most popular race meetings on our calendar - 'Rugby League Evening' - as this date worked well for the customer base we were keen to attract. Losing an established, popular theme was undoubtedly risky but the team were determined to work hard to improve the attendance and make the event an evening to remember. We set ourselves the following ambitious KPIs:

- To increase the attendance of the event by 10% (Rugby League Evening had attracted a great crowd of 2760 people in 2022).
- To increase raceday income by 10%. Admission income had been just over £15,000 in 2022. This KPI was particularly challenging given that our admission charges had dropped by 12% and we would need to allocate some free tickets to specified user groups.
- We also wanted to see a marked increase in under represented communities – in particular those with special education needs, the Deaf community, wheelchair users – and were keen to receive their feedback on the new facilities and what we had put in place to make their evening as enjoyable as possible.

Delivery



With the improvement scheme works complete, we compiled a guestlist to invite to our 'Racing for Everyone' Raceday. We worked closely with Autism in Racing, approached local Deaf Community groups in Wakefield, Leeds, Doncaster and Sheffield, hospice centres in the area (including the Prince of Wales Hospice) and local S.E.N. students and care centres using our contacts from the Into The Sky Theatre Company for S.E.N students who use the Racecourse weekly. We offered them all free tickets for the event.

Staff training: before the day, we held training for all staff focusing on areas of improvement highlighted in the LiveTourism report.

Orientation Tour: with the gates for the race meeting officially opening at 4.30pm, we hosted an orientation tour at 3.30pm for those who may not have been to the Racecourse before, or wanted to familiarise themselves with the site before others arrive.

Carers / Personal Assistants: in line with our policy, we offered free entry to racegoers who require a Carer or Personal Assistant. We enabled online booking of these tickets to make the booking process as easy as possible.

Deaf Community: we employed two BSL interpreters – one whose role was to sign the race commentary on the big screen, and the other who was located in a bar/restaurant to help with food/drinks orders and bets. This interpreter also arranged Parade Ring visits to ensure Deaf racegoers could have the complete experience. We also installed 5 hearing loops in critical areas of the course.

Hard of sight: we produced large font menus, drinks lists and racecards which were deployed throughout the site.

Dementia Patients: we secured the rights of a film from the BBC archives documenting the Racecourse in 1975. Our 'Trip Down Memory Lane' talk included a screening of the film, displays of the course through the 20th century and a Q&A discussion on memories of the venue.

Autism in Racing: knowing that many people with autism prefer routine, certainty and familiarity, [we created a video](#) to send to those booked to attend showing the journey from the car park to the entrance, and around the enclosures. We provided a dedicated room to allow additional space, kids packs with ear defenders and activity booklets, and the Immersive Sensory Room.

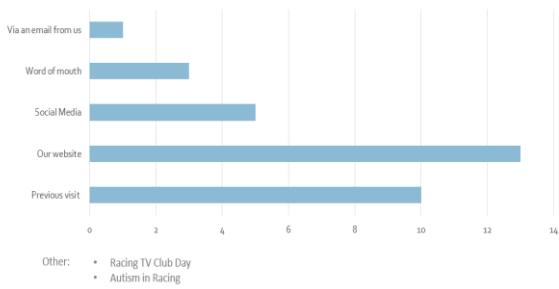
Hidden Disabilities: we provided a stock of sunflower lanyards at all entrances as well as creating a quiet area with a good view of the horses overlooking the Parade Ring with specially commissioned sunflower benches.

Wheelchair users: the improvement scheme included enlarging all viewing areas and improving access to them. We also refurbished all the accessible toilets in line with LiveTourism recommendations, with colour contrasting grab rails, low level mirrors, sinks and hooks and installing privacy screens should the personal assistant need to stay in the room.

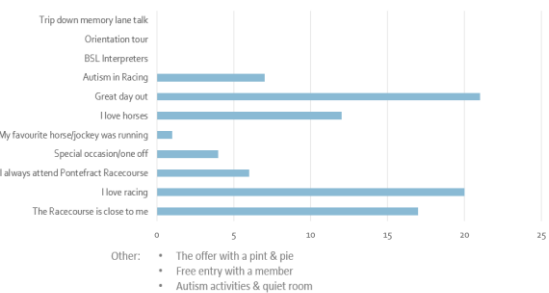
Results

- We had an absolutely phenomenal day with some brilliant feedback.
- We had 104 pre-booked racegoers from the Deaf Community.
 - There were 23 dementia patients in attendance.
 - Rather than 1 orientation tour at 3.30pm, we ran 5 such tours as they were oversubscribed.
 - 76 wheelchair users attended.
 - 319 Carer / Personal Assistant tickets were allocated.
 - There was a 13% increase in the attendance from 2760 people to 3127.
 - Raceday admissions income increased from £15,275.60 to £19,639 – an increase of 28.6%.
 - 114 guests registered through Autism in Racing before bookings closed. Due to the popularity of the event, a second raceday has already been programmed for October 2023.
 - Creating a database for those with specific needs has enabled us to promote future events and we've seen a fantastic take up in those re-booking through the season with just over 20% of those getting a free ticket already paying to attend a subsequent raceday.
 - We created and sent a post raceday 'satisfaction' survey to all attendees with a selection of the results below.

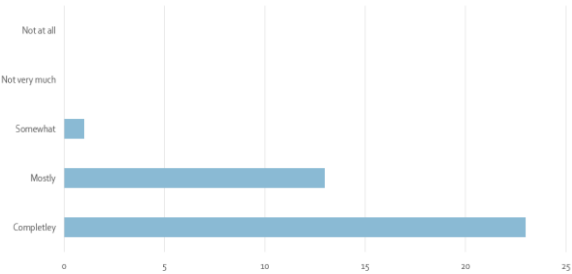
Q3. How did you first hear about this raceday?



Q5. Which of the following attracted you to attend this raceday?
Please select all that apply.



Q9. To what extent did your experience at Pontefract meet your expectations for the event?



RACING FOR EVERYONE

WE WANT TO MAKE TODAY'S RACE MEETING AS ACCESSIBLE AS WE CAN AND HAVE MADE A FEW ADDITIONS TO THE DAY TO IMPROVE THE EVENT -

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

- 3 pm** We are hosting an orientation tour before the general public are admitted. We will highlight some of the recently upgraded facilities for those who may have additional needs or specific accessibility requirements.
- 4 pm** There will be a 'trip down memory lane' featuring a short BBC video from 1975 and a presentation looking at the history of the Racecourse.
- 4.30 pm** Sunflower lanyards are available at the entrances. There are also sunflower benches on the Marquee Site in a quiet area of the Racecourse, specifically for those who need a little space.
- 4.30 pm onwards** We have an autism friendly, mobile sensory space on the Marquee Lawn, to the left of the Parade Ring.
- 5 pm onwards** We have two BSL interpreters with us. One will be signing the race commentary on the big screen while the other will be on hand in the Paddock Bar area and self service restaurant.
- 5 pm onwards** Large font menus and racecards are available from the Raceday Office throughout the evening.

Supporting Information and customer feedback

Pontefract film from 1975



Hi,

I just wanted to let you know what a fantastic time we had at the racing for all event on Monday Evening 12 June. The quiet Autism space was really appreciated and gave my Son the opportunity to really get involved and place his own bets in a safe, non judgemental environment. He is asking if we can take him to the race day you have on Monday 3rd July and wondered if you would have any quiet spaces for us to use again on this day.

Fun exciting and relaxing

As a family we live the races in particular living so close. While the sensory area was great for children who needed to burn off some energy there should also be a area restricted to quiet and calm for sensory overload children - we are as a family really happy that you are making changes to give those with additional needs opportunities to have great fun. Thank you.

I've spoken to all those that attended from Doncaster Deaf Trust and they had an amazing time- for all of the students it was their first time attending any racing event and having it all accessible was incredible as most events aren't interpreted. Even though most of the students couldn't bet due to age restrictions, having it all explained in their first language made sure they would be able to make informed choices if they decided to bet in the future!



Louen absolutely loved it, especially the parade ring and watching them 'running past sounding like a thunderstorm' We spent quite a bit of time sat on the raised area adjacent to the sensory room watching the parade ring and also getting a bit closer at the pre parade where it was less crowded. He loved spotting the differences in the how they looked.

Thank you so much once again for the opportunity. Louen had an absolutely amazing day. Ponte races agreed we could park in the picnic area and sent a ticket through to make entry easy. When I phoned them after building myself for a good few minutes before hand to do so, they were very understanding about how Louens fear of flying insects had increased in the last few weeks and that having the car as a safe area would make a massive difference. Thank you again for all everyone is doing.

Sunflower benches, access to hospitality suite & premier enclosure, staff on-site
Improvements: More sunflower benches

Made her day ❤️ Exciting, new experiences & great atmosphere. Would like to thank Autism in Racing for a fantastic first experience of horse racing.



As a wheelchair user with cerebral palsy, it is often difficult for me to have the same experience as others. Ive been coming to Pontefract for a few years but have been blown away by the improvements to the course this year. Being able to see the horses right on the winning line is incredible! It makes me feel like a VIP rather than someone with a disability.

Cant wait to be back

Billie x