



Showcase & Awards 2025

Wincanton Racecourse

Racing Together Community Award

The Paddock Society



WINCANTON PADDOCK SOCIETY

A community open house that
will take place on the last
Tuesday of every month at
Wincanton Racecourse from
10.00am - 12.00pm offering
complimentary warm drinks and
cakes

Wincanton
RACECOURSE

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Objectives



Paddock Society was founded with a vision to make meaningful use of the generous space at Wincanton Racecourse outside of racedays and allow the local community to make meaningful connections.

During the season, the racecourse acts as a vibrant social hub, bringing people together to connect, celebrate, and enjoy shared experiences. However, once the racing calendar ends, this outlet for community connection ceases. The space sits largely unused, and the social opportunities it naturally provides disappear with it. We saw an opportunity to change that, to keep the spirit of connection alive all year round by reimagining the racecourse as a welcoming, community-focused space beyond race days.

Wincanton is facing significant demographic changes. The town's elderly population is growing steadily, with those aged 80 and over expected to make up approximately 13% of the population by 2030 and by 2030, over one-third of Somerset's population is projected to be aged 65+, significantly higher than national averages. This trend brings with it increasing challenges around social isolation, especially for older adults who may be less mobile or live alone.

Around 1 in 4 elderly people living alone have mental health issues like depression or anxiety, compared to about 1 in 5 who live with others. The lack of accessible, welcoming spaces for informal connection means that many residents, particularly the elderly, can go days without meaningful social interaction.

That's why we created Paddock Society: to offer a relaxed, inclusive space where people can come together, completely free of charge, to simply chat, connect, and feel part of their community.

Our aim is not to create a formal service, but rather to provide a friendly environment where people can drop in, see a familiar face, and know they're not alone. In doing so, we hope to transform a largely underused local asset into a year-round space that supports mental wellbeing, combats loneliness, and strengthens community ties.

Delivery



Paddock Society was brought to life through a collaborative partnership between Jockey Club Catering and Wincanton Racecourse, with a shared vision to open up the racecourse as a community space during its off-season.

The timing of each session was carefully planned to avoid clashing with race days and to complement, rather than compete with, other community events and initiatives happening in the local area. This ensured that Paddock Society would be a consistent and accessible option for those looking to connect with others in a relaxed setting.

Attendance was completely free of charge, with guests warmly welcomed and offered complimentary tea, coffee, and cake. The atmosphere was intentionally informal and inclusive, encouraging people to drop in at their convenience.

To help spark conversation and make the space more engaging, we introduced simple but effective activities such as a book swap table, board games, and puzzles. These served not only as entertainment but as gentle conversation starters, helping people feel at ease and encouraging interaction among guests who may not have known each other beforehand.

We promoted Paddock Society across our digital platforms, including social media channels, and actively engaged with local community groups to spread the word. Additionally, we distributed printed leaflets to key locations throughout Wincanton, including cafés, GP surgeries, libraries, and community centres, to ensure we reached as many people as possible, particularly those who may not have access to the internet.

Results



The creation of the Paddock Society enabled the racecourse to build meaningful connections with a diverse range of community groups, all united by a shared commitment to supporting those who need it most. This collaboration not only strengthened local partnerships but also helped align the racecourse more closely with the social needs of the wider community.

We've developed strong and meaningful relationships with several local organisations that reflect Wincanton Racecourse's community strategy, to be an intrinsic and active part of the local community. Our partnership with Wincanton Cares supports their work connecting residents with local services and resources, helping people stay informed, supported, and engaged. We also collaborate with the Methodist Church, which runs a wide range of initiatives for those aged 55 and over, including lunch clubs, social outings, and evening entertainment, all designed to reduce isolation and bring people together. We have arranged to provide a free Christmas lunch this December for 50 of their regular attendees. Although there would normally be a cost, we will be covering it entirely to make the meal free of charge.

We've built a particularly impactful relationship with Got Your Six, a charity that promotes the mental health and well-being of the military community. This has led to the launch of Wincanton's first-ever Military Raceday on Thursday 4th December, with free tickets offered to those who interact with Got Your Six. It's a great example of how we're using the racecourse to create deeper, more inclusive community connections.

Additionally, Racing Welfare is offered a hospitality box during the race season at Wincanton, providing a welcoming space where individuals from the racing industry can come together, socialise, and enjoy their shared passion. They have also supported The Paddock Society, helping to ensure that those who visit during the racing season have a reason, and a place, to return even when racing isn't on, continuing that sense of community all year round.

The Paddock Society acts as a natural extension of these partnerships, offering a relaxed, welcoming environment for people to return to the racecourse even when the racing stops, keeping the spirit of community alive all year round.

Supporting Information

So far, we have successfully hosted five Paddock Society events, each one helping us to strengthen community ties and create meaningful connections. Through this work, we have built relationships with three local charities with whom we had no previous engagement, opening the door to future collaboration and support.

Across our events, we have welcomed around 50 individuals who might otherwise have been without a regular social outlet, providing them with opportunities to connect, belong, and feel part of something bigger.

Our community strategy is also becoming more comprehensive and intentional.

For example, we have invited the Got Your Six charity to be part of our Military Raceday, and we are partnering with the Methodist Church to host a free Christmas lunch for their regular attendees.

This is only the beginning. Each month, we continue to meet new people and organizations who show us how we can contribute more than just commercial benefit, we can be a genuine force for social good. We are excited to see how these partnerships grow and where this journey of community connection will take us.

