

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR
AND
PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

RDA Instructors are involved in assisting with the rights of people with Learning Disabilities, i.e. with developing social equality through riding. This can involve facing challenging behaviour.

Severely challenging behaviour is defined as: "behaviour of such an intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to and use of ordinary facilities" (University of Kent/Kings)

Guidelines are in place to assist people working with service users (in this case riders) in the event of a situation that could place any of the following in jeopardy:

- a) The rider
- b) The instructor
- c) The helpers
- d) The horses
- e) The other riders

Common Law provides that everyone has a right to defend themselves by the use of reasonable means. Reasonable is defined as:

- a) The force used should be no more than is necessary to accomplish the object for which it is allowed (so retaliation, revenge & punishment are not permitted).
- b) The reaction must be in proportion to the harm that is threatened.

Therefore, in each situation the following must be taken into account:

The contrast between:

- a) Strength
- b) Size
- c) Expertise of the assailant and the defendant
- d) Type of harm being threatened

Obviously, the greater the severity of the danger, the more reasonable it is to take tougher measures. In assessing the reasonableness of the defence, account must be taken of the fact that the defendant may only have a brief period to make up their mind what to do. All circumstances must be taken into account, including the possibility of retreating from the assault (Legal Aspects of Nursing – Dimond 1995).

A duty of care exists when duties and responsibilities are imposed upon professional or paid carers. This means taking reasonable care to avoid acts and omissions which are likely to cause harm to another person.

Each service user(rider)with Learning Disabilities will have a Care Plan. This plan will involve management strategies for challenging behaviour which may involve physical intervention. A protocol for the use of any kind of physical intervention must be included in the plan. Carers/staff are aware of the intervention techniques required for individual service users (riders) and are trained in these techniques. Some of these techniques involve how to "defuse" a situation. Physical intervention should only be carried out by trained carers/staff. Some situations require two carers/staff.

So where does that leave us – the RDA Instructor?

Consultation with schools, centres, etc. that access your group should help you to become better informed regarding riders that may show challenging behaviour. Training is available in physical intervention by specially training p.i. trainers. These are often trained by the police.

This will cover induction in

- a) Awareness of challenging behaviour.
- b) How to prevent it
- c) How to react in situations to keep yourself safe
- d) How to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

The Department of Health and The Department of Education and Skills issued guidance notes under Section 7 of the LASSL Act 1970 entitled "Guidance for Restrictive Physical Intervention; How to provide safe services for people with Learning Disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder" in July 2002. This states that "All staff require induction training before being required to work with people who present challenging behaviour"

Not all RDA Groups will have riders with challenging behaviour but those that do should be aware of who they are. Instructors must ensure that these riders have the necessary number of carers/staff (trained in physical intervention) on site. These carers/staff must be holders of green cards so that they can enter the riding area.

It might well be advisable for the RDA Instructor, or a nominated person, to undergo induction training so that the RDA Group is not left in a vulnerable position.