

Festina Lenta

'A Space to Be Me'



A project by

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My Story with Festina Lenta

Festina Lente was founded in 1996 with the aim of supporting those most in need of social and economic inclusion.

Festina Lente is an equestrian centre based in Bray that provides:

- Therapeutic horse riding
- Equine assisted learning
- Main stream riding lessons
- Equestrian vaulting
- Equestrian training
- Therapeutic coaching programmes

A Brief Overview

- I was diagnosed with ADHD at 13
- I was diagnosed with ASD at 14
- I struggled with organisation and school.
- I struggled with sensory processing
- My hobbies at the time were swimming and gymnastics. These are both good for sensory disorders.



- After some research I decided to try horse riding as I heard this is a good sport for people with sensory issues and horses are very patient.
- I loved it from the very first day.
- I took some horse riding lessons. I enjoyed them but they were a bit fast paced at times.

- After completing TY I felt I could no longer go to school. The difficulties of class were too overwhelming for me.
- I knew I wanted a career in the equine industry but a lot of the courses required a leaving certificate and huge amounts of coursework.
- I found Festina Lente in Bray County Wicklow which seemed like a perfect fit.
- I was worried about the journey as I live in Cavan but my mum took me to meet the Yard Manager and I knew straight away it was the place for me.
- I understood the challenges of the journey but I really wanted to join the course. Festina Lente offered me a one week trial which was brilliant for me to be fully sure before I made a commitment.
- I felt great after my weeks trial so I joined the course. I take a 5.30am bus each morning. I then take a dart from Connolly station, one more bus and a 20 minute walk to the college each day.
- I am on the Equestrian training programme QQI level 4. This is a 3 year full time vocational programme. You do not need any experience to join.
- I have completed one full year.



This is me getting a horse from the field. We use head collars to help us lead the horses in and they usually want to stop for cuddles or scratches. I help bring the horses from the fields to the stables and back again. There are a few runs to the field each day.



Festina Lente

Festina Lente has 3 sections

- Horses
- Horticulture
- Community

It is charity based and includes:

Equestrian Learning Centre – This has a Mobile Equine Outreach where the ponies visit different places, therapeutic horse riding and lessons that are inclusive for everyone.

Day Services- This includes Saol Anois and other day services like employment programmes.

A Victorian Walled Garden- There is a garden shop and allotments.

QQI Courses – These are approved QQI courses and I am doing the QQI Level 4 Equestrian Training Programme.

My Daily Routine

- My daily routine starts by mucking out the horses stables.
- I enjoy the physical work but we have 36 horses so this is not the most enjoyable start to my day.
- Then we water the horses(give them all water)
- Then I have either classes in the morning or afternoon.
- A few times a week we have riding lessons. Usually we ride the horses for an hour.
- At lunch we hay the horses(give them all hay)
- I learn about caring for the horses, like what horses should eat, where they should live, how to tell if they are happy or anxious and how to clean and groom them.
- I learn about the equipment used for horses.
- I get to see the farrier and the vet and also learn about horses teeth.
- We learn how horses breed.
- I also learn how to keep myself healthy and we have classes on fitness, nutrition and mental wellbeing.

Why I love Festina Lente

- Festina is inclusive for everyone.
- I told my family it was the first place I ever felt I belonged. Everyone was the same as me and we are all treated equally.
- I have made good friends . We often meet for food after work or go shopping.
- I feel more independent. I want to work with horses so I am working hard every day for my future.
- I can be the best me and I am very proud of the work I achieve.
- There is a friendly atmosphere.
- Everyone on the course looks out for each other.
- We all encourage and help each other and I feel included.



Here I am with some of my class mates. We get along really well and we all treat each other with respect. We try to be patient and kind to each other. Even the horses stop to say hello and give each other a quick kiss.



The horses that work in Festina get treated very well. They take holidays just like us and they get breaks and rest days just like us. We have a holiday field and each horse takes a 2 week holiday during the Summer. Horses love to play and its great fun to bring them to the field and watch them enjoy themselves. Horses are herd animals and enjoy company. The ponies love to roll in the outdoor arena and the horses love to run free.

We also have horses that are in retirement. Prince is a yard favourite. He is quite elderly but still gets up to all sorts of mischief. He plays with the pigeons and can be found anywhere on the yard.



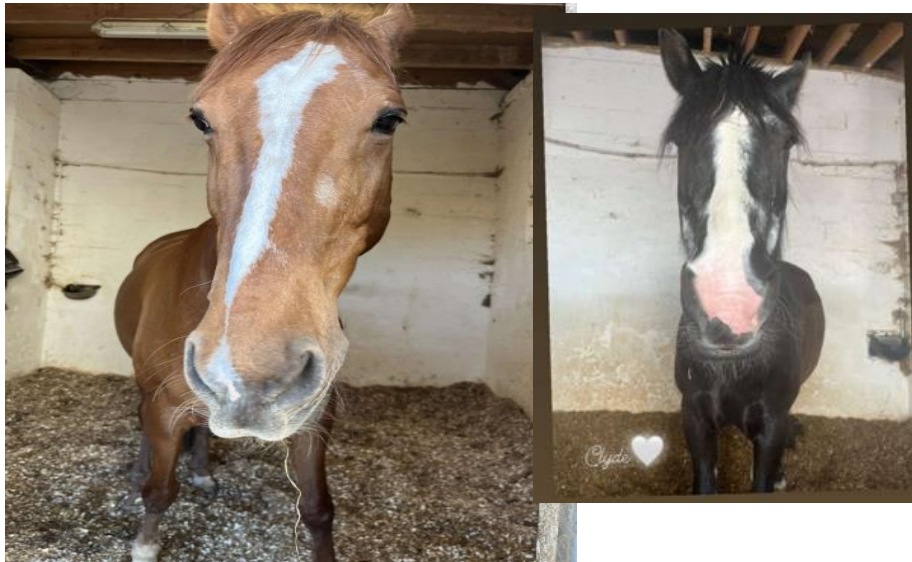
We have two indoor arenas and an outdoor arena. We also get to go on hacks which is where we go for walks with the horses. The horses are clever and know the sights and sounds of the arena and the walking areas.



Everyone is equal to a horse. People come together under a common love for these animals. We all learn in our own way just like the horses all have their own personalities and ways to learn.

Horses are intuitive and benefit people with physical, emotional and cognitive challenges.

Horses are therapeutic and help with mobility, strength and balance and coordination. The motion of the horse trotting is a great sensory feeling also. .



How Festina looks after me

- I was placed in a group with people of the same level and we all learn together. I like this as I can see progress every week as I fully learn once piece before I move on to another.
- If I have a day where I feel overwhelmed there is no pressure. I can go to a coach and take on easier tasks for that day until I feel like I can take on more.
- I love that I do not feel stressed or worried.
- I also get to go on day trips – this year I went to the National stud, the jump zone and on hacks and runs.
- The classes are interactive and the lessons are tailored for the people in the class. I learn at my own pace and in a way that I am comfortable with.
- There is no homework and all my projects are done in the classroom.

My personal Statement

- Working at Festina Lenta makes me feel calm and happy. It impacts me positively as I have made so many great friends, met intelligent animals and overall am happy here.
- My dream in life is to be a therapeutic horse coach which I can learn at Festina Lente

You can access the course online by
visiting www.Festinalente.ie



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