

Policy Statement

Policy Title: BHS Volunteer Communications and Social Media Policy
Number: 11.17V1 **Functional Area:** Volunteers

Brief Description: Outlines protocols for volunteers regarding communications as part of their role and use of social media both as part of their role and outside their volunteer role.

Effective: November 2017

Approved by: Communications Department

Responsible Department: Volunteer Department

Policy Contact: emma.thompson@bhs.org.uk

Supersedes: N/A

Last Reviewed/Updated: November 2017

Applies to: All BHS Volunteers, including Trustees and Advisory Board Members

Reason for Policy: To clarify BHS expectations for volunteers in regards to communication to prevent problems from developing. This policy relates to the use of social media as part of a volunteering remit and provides guidelines about using social media, no matter what your volunteering role.

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy will help BHS volunteers ensure that their communications will support the charitable objectives and protect reputation of the BHS. We appreciate the passion our volunteers have for the Society but ask that communications are conducted in accordance with our volunteer policies and where appropriate; volunteers ask for support or guidance from the PR team or their Role Coordinator.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

Communications

For some roles it will be necessary for volunteers to communicate directly with members of the public or BHS members and others, communication may take place on social media or via email or post. If volunteers are asked to make a public statement in any other format they must contact their Role Coordinator or the BHS Press Office before doing so; in some cases it may be more appropriate for an employee to respond.

We ask volunteers to ensure any contact information they provide is kept private and their address is never made public for their own safety.

- I. When representing the BHS volunteers should use their full volunteer title, for example if they are an Access and Bridleways Officer: **BHS Volunteer Access and Bridleways Officer (insert area if appropriate)**. Role Coordinators can provide a BHS signature for formal communications.
- II. Volunteers shouldn't make any claims about the Society's products or services, or competitors' products or services that are not substantiated with adequate proof or related to their role remit.
- III. We ask that volunteers don't make comment about confidential financial information including committee or other BHS finances.
- IV. Society logos and trademarks may not be used without prior express written consent from a Director.
- V. If volunteers are unsure about any of the communications they are making they should contact their Role Coordinator or Department Director to confirm the correct information is shared in the best format and in the most appropriate way.

Confidentiality

Volunteers must not disclose any names or contact information in communications unless authorised to do so by the owner of that information. If relevant information is available in a public forum it is better to direct the correspondent to this information using a link rather than sharing the personal information.

Remember that these days it is almost impossible to ensure privacy. Volunteers should consider any conversations they have as being in the public domain, whether or not they have had them via email, post or in private Facebook conversations, and please conduct themselves accordingly.

Data

In 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into law, this creates much stricter guidelines on how private information is kept and shared. This will coincide with changes to BHS policies for our employees and volunteers to ensure the BHS remains within the law. If volunteers are holding information and are not sure of the implications of the GDPR they should contact the Volunteer Manager who can offer more support.

Social Media

Sadly, while being of great use to the BHS and a huge positive impact to the charitable sector, the rise of social media has also caused an increase in complaints to charities regarding the behaviour of their volunteers on social media platforms. This part of the policy endeavors to inform volunteers of ways they can keep themselves safe on social media and will ensure they do not accidentally cause damage to the reputation of the BHS. Please remember there is no such thing as absolute privacy online.

- I. If volunteers use social networks personally they must assume that their messages are visible to other volunteers, employees, BHS members, potential members and the general public. Consequently we ask that volunteers do not share their volunteer role in their online profile. This is important to ensure that they are able to have time off BHS work and participate in online pages and groups without been seen to be representing the Society. It will also ensure that members of the public will not attribute a volunteer's personal statements to the BHS.
- II. If volunteers are communicating on social media as part of their BHS volunteer role then they should use the signature provided by their Role Coordinator at the end of their response rather than changing their profile.
- III. If volunteers are communicating on social media as part of their BHS volunteer role then they should ensure they are confident that the statements they make are correct. If volunteers are at all unsure they should contact their Role Coordinator or Department Director to confirm the correct information is shared in the best format and in the most appropriate way.

- IV. Please be aware that even anonymous postings can be traced back to the Society. Volunteers should remember to be careful to manage what and with whom they are sharing and don't assume absolute privacy. Remember any posting on social media can be copied and reposted without their consent.
- V. Any information posted online should comply with the confidentiality policy in this document and in the Volunteer Policy; this also applies to comments posted on blogs, forums, and social networking sites.
- VI. Please be respectful to the Society, other employees, customers, partners, and competitors, if volunteers have a problem with the Society, employees or other volunteers within it, please address this to the Volunteer Manager in the first instance so it can be appropriately handled outside the public domain.
- VII. Do not publish racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise offensive language or content. Do not make offensive comments that have the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment, including spreading rumours about the Society or its partners. By publishing any offensive content volunteers risk bringing the Society into disrepute.
- VIII. Making offensive comments includes comments or posts about other BHS volunteers or employees, these can be taken as bullying and harassment or not taken in the context they were written. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated. Please refer to the '*BHS Volunteers Policy*' for clarity on this. Any instances of a BHS volunteer using social media to intimidate, bully or otherwise negatively impact another BHS volunteer or employee, whether or not it is made in the context of their BHS activities or remit, will be taken seriously.
- IX. If volunteers are involved in a thread where offensive posts are being posted by others they can contact the Volunteer Manager to confidentially discuss how to respond.
- X. Volunteers should be aware that their online presence and actions captured via images, posts, or comments can reflect on themselves and the Society and the Society's reputation.
- XI. Volunteers should respect copyright laws and reference or cite sources appropriately. Plagiarism applies online as well.

We appreciate it when volunteers bring to our attention online discussions about the charity, its volunteers or employees, however, we ask that they do not comment on these before discussing them with HQ. Volunteers should contact their role coordinator if they find a disturbing social media thread.

Poles and Surveys

Online poles and surveys are a very useful way to capture information. Any surveys or poles created as part of a volunteer remit are carried out with the express permission of their department.

III. DEFINITIONS

Social media:

- All online social communications including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Whatsapp, Snapchat, in some cases email may also be relevant.

IV. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, FORMS, GUIDELINES AND OTHER RESOURCES

A. Policy Statements and Other Policies

- *BHS Volunteer Policy*
- *Volunteer Press and Media Policy*
- Inappropriate use of social media may bring the BHS into disrepute, such cases will be addressed using the '*BHS Problem Solving Procedure*'.

B. Procedures

Any contact with the press should be done through the BHS PR Department on: 02476 840521 or email pressenquiry@bhs.org.uk

C. Other Resources (i.e. training, secondary contact information)

Communications Officers will receive additional training and information relevant to their role, it may be advantageous at times for Communications Officers to share or remind other committee members of this policy.

V. HISTORY

This policy replaces any previous documents relating to press and social media for volunteers.