

Code of Conduct for BHS Accredited Professionals



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Please note: This document is uncontrolled once printed. Please check with BHS APC Team for the most up to date version.

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1 Introduction

British Horse Society (BHS) Accredited Professional Code of Conduct is built on the principles of integrity, honesty, fair play and respect. These principles are integral, not optional, and apply to all levels of ability and commitment. From recreational participation through to high level competitive equestrian sport, the welfare and wellbeing of the horse/pony and participant must be at the centre of all activities.

This Code of Conduct sets out standards you are required to meet as an Accredited Professional. It also details the possible outcomes and sanctions applicable if you are found to have breached the Code of Conduct

2 Scope and applicability

This Code of Conduct applies to:

- Accredited Professional Coaches
- Accredited Professional Grooms
- Accredited Professional Centre Coaches
- Accredited Professional Centre Grooms

This Code does not replace any policies an individual must follow with regards to any employed, contractual or volunteer duties they may carry out as an Accredited Professional. They must refer to the organisation/centre/individual responsible for those duties and responsibilities.

3 Shared values

As a BHS Accredited Professional, you are a recognised member of the Society and as such represent BHS by affiliation and when working in the industry. This includes use of social media. You're an important role model and are expected to promote high standards of behaviour and professional conduct.

BHS aligns with British Equestrian's core values all involved in equestrian activity are asked to demonstrate. As a BHS Accredited Professional, we expect you to share these values:

Performance: Strive to be successful in all your endeavours and deliver high standards.

Professionalism: Always remain objective and professional. Act with integrity in an ethical way and treat everyone with respect.

Partnership: Collaborate and find solutions to shared issues being open and honest at all times.

Passion: Be passionate in all your endeavours, working with others for the benefit of the participant or horse or pony.

4 Duty and responsibilities

You're duty bound to report safeguarding concerns about children, young people, adults at risk, volunteers you work with, fellow coaches, fellow professionals and yourself in line with *BHS Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* and *BHS Safeguarding Adults Policies and Procedures*.

An Accredited Professional must not have sexual related contact with a participant, trainee or volunteer under the age of 18. We would advise against relationships between an Accredited Professional and a fellow coach, instructor, teacher or trainer when you are in a supervisory role.

It's against the law for someone in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if that child is over the age of consent (16 or over) (Sexual Offences Act, 2003). To clarify this includes sexual innuendo, flirting, inappropriate gestures and terms, in person or through social media, texts and emails, taking part in sexting or otherwise sending inappropriate sexual images through technological systems.

You must abide by BHS policies, procedures and guidance relating to:

- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Everyone Welcome](#) (BHS policy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion)
- [E-safety](#) (the use of social media and online communications)
- Risk awareness and accident reporting (on APC Hub)
- Delivering BHS educational products and using BHS resources and logos (on APC Hub)

You must also uphold good practice relating to:

- Integrity, honesty, fair play, inclusivity and respect
- Adhering to rules of competition for the discipline which you are coaching or grooming for
- Promoting high standards of equine welfare
- Use of social media
- Referencing BHS or your role

Ensure that your words and behaviour are not subject to misinterpretation by the participants, parents/carers, or onlookers. The line between a professional working relationship and undue informality must not be crossed.

The following must be followed by all coaches and where applicable the role of the groom or ride leader:

Good practice	Inappropriate behaviour or practice to avoid
Treat everyone with the same degree of courtesy and respect regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and/or sexual orientation.	Never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting, demeaning, disrespectful or abusive language or behaviour. This includes verbal face to face or via social media or other written forms.
Promote and maintain high standards of horse welfare in all activities. Everything you do is for the good of the horse. Never result to or promote force of any kind. Use appropriate coaching techniques for the horse and rider capabilities.	Never engage in or tolerate any form of bullying, do not ridicule, or shout at participants or use sarcasm. Never blame the horse for an adverse situation or allow the rider to take their frustrations out on the horse, for example inappropriate whip use.
Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment, especially when working with young participants. Promote fair play, respect and high standards of behaviour. Place the wellbeing, safety and enjoyment of participants, and the horse, above everything, including winning.	Recognise that young participants under 18 cannot have alcohol whilst under your supervision or attending your event. Participants should not take prescription or non-prescription medicines or drugs whilst under your supervision, without their medical needs firstly being discussed. (Participants should be aware of FEI and BEF rules related to performance enhancing drugs for humans and equines).
Always provide feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner.	Recognise that young and vulnerable participants should not be exposed to extremes of heat, cold or unacceptable risk of injury.
Explain exactly what you expect of the participant and what they can expect from you. Ensure all parents/carers of all participants under the age of 18 understand these expectations.	Giving advice of a personal or medical nature unless you are qualified to do so.
Create an inclusive, safe and effective environment. Adhere to highest standards of health and safety. Risk assess for safety any areas or environments you use prior to any activity.	Lack of adherence to risk assessments. Failing to take all reasonable precautions. Failing to recognise that just because you have coached at a venue before or are familiar with the horse and rider partnership that there are not new risks to consider.

Encourage each participant to accept responsibility for their own behaviours and performance.	Failure to keep rider registration forms / documentation / records up to date.
Ensure activities are appropriate for the participants' ability level, age, maturity and for the capabilities of the horse.	
Ensure appropriate supervision of all participants, especially those under the age of 18 or vulnerable.	
Be a positive role model, consider your behaviour. Always appropriately challenge bullying behaviour.	

5 Guidelines on equine welfare

You'll be required to promote, protect and encourage the highest standards of equine welfare. You're a role model, and may be the most experienced equestrian in any given situation. You'll:

- Promote the welfare of the horse in all you do. For example, if you suspect a horse is lame, uncomfortable or showing signs of stress you assess the situation and take necessary action to improve the situation for the horse. This may include, suspending the activity, allowing the horse a break before continuing or changing the activity.
- Give support and advice as appropriate to the horse owner/rider/carer where you feel improvements could be made for the welfare of the horse.
- Ensure that you refer any owner or rider to a vet or appropriate professional should you suspect the horse is in pain, ill or injured.
- Recommend that all tack is to have been correctly fitted and be properly maintained by an appropriate professional such as a member of the Society of Master Saddlers.
- Encourage the improvement of knowledge and skills of the participant before using corrective equipment. Any equipment used must be with the welfare and comfort of the horse in mind.
- Uptake necessary Continual Professional Development or education to remain current in equine welfare advancements and practice.

6 Social Media

Social media includes any digital tool or platform used to create, share or engage with content or communities. This includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, blogs, forums, messaging apps, podcasts and online community platforms.

This Code of Conduct applies to social media content referring to BHS or any work or activity related to the equine industry, coaching or equestrian sports or activities, when posted from personal, professional/business accounts or other external account.

A misconduct procedure will be instigated if an Accredited Professional:

- Publishes content as part of their role or in a personal capacity, which makes defamatory comments about, BHS, BHS Stakeholders or other organisations or groups BHS may work with.
- Criticise or implies bias in the behaviour or actions of BHS and contracted or volunteer BHS positions including Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers, Inspectors, Advisors.
- Re-posts or re-tweets inappropriate content. This represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable.
- Is included in or publishes social media content in relation to BHS that has potential to negatively affect or impact BHS's business, products, services, events, members or reputation.
- Is included in or publishes social media content in relation to participation in equine activities (ridden or non-ridden), including the sport, that has potential to negatively affect or impact the public's perception of equine activities, our sport or reputation of our sport.
- Is included in or publishes social media content in relation to horse care, welfare and wellbeing that has potential to negatively affect or impact the public's perception or trust of horses in society.

When publishing content on your own personal or professional/business account/s or via other external account/s, you must be a positive role model and ambassador for promoting safe, ethical best practice and good horse welfare and wellbeing. This includes aligning to any legislation related to horse welfare in your nation of residence, and good practice frameworks such as the Five Domains Model. If your content is unaligned to ethical practice a misconduct procedure may be instigated. Examples of content include, but are not limited to:

- Unethical practice
- Unsafe practice
- Mistreatment or abuse of horses
- Poor equine welfare
- Use of ill-fitting tack
- Use of ill-fitting or unethical training aids
- Misuse of aids, tack or training aids

Posts relating to horse care, ownership, equine activities, including equine sports, must promote a positive and safe narrative across the equestrian industry.

7 Concerns, complaints and appeals

Any individual may wish to raise a concern, or complaint, regarding their interaction with an Accredited Professional.

An Accredited Professional may wish to raise a concern, or complaint, regarding their interaction or service received by BHS.

Concerns and complaints will be managed following the [BHS Raising a Concern Policy](#).

If you want to appeal against any decision made by the BHS this will be managed following the [BHS Raising a Concern Policy](#).

8 Misconduct procedure

If for any reason you are found to be in breach of this Code of Conduct your Accredited Professional membership may be removed without notice. A criminal offence may affect your status as an Accredited Professional.

Safeguarding concerns raised against an Accredited Professional may be investigated using one or more of the following frameworks, as appropriate:

- BHS Safeguarding Response Policy
- BHS Safeguarding Hearing Process

Please refer to these policies for possible outcomes following an investigation.

Any other concerns raised against an Accredited Professional will be investigated using the framework set out in the BHS Raising a Concern Policy.

The investigation will determine if a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred, and if so, depending on the nature of the breach, possible outcomes may include:

- No action.
- A reprimand.
- Termination of, or sanction to, BHS Accredited Professional Membership and/or BHS membership.
- Termination of, or sanction to, any volunteer role held within BHS.
- Termination of, or sanction to, any contractual agreement with BHS.
- Completion of recommended education, training or professional development.

8.1 Completion of recommended education, training or professional development

BHS will decide upon the nature of the education, training or professional development required. Sanctions or limits to the Accredited Professional membership may be applied during this time. BHS will write to the Accredited Professional with details of the training and expected timelines for completion.

Following the training, the Accredited Professional must attend an interview with BHS. BHS will invite the Accredited Professional to reflect on their behaviour and learnings for BHS to be satisfied the Accredited Professional has developed their knowledge or skills as appropriate. If BHS isn't satisfied, further education, training or professional development may be required.

If the Accredited Professional does not wish to take part in the training or follow up interview or if BHS isn't satisfied that appropriate development change has occurred following training, possible outcomes may include:

- Termination of BHS Accredited Professional Membership and/or BHS membership.
- Termination of any volunteer role held within BHS.
- Termination of any contractual agreement with BHS.

In addition, BHS will detail any sanctions imposed on rejoining as an Accredited Professional, volunteer or holding any contractual agreement with BHS.

8.2 Recovery of costs

In the event of BHS upholding a complaint/breach of the Code of Conduct the Accredited Professional may also be required to pay:

- Expenses incurred by BHS in the investigation of the complaint.
- Costs relating to the completion of recommended education, training or professional development.
- Administrative expenses of BHS limited to £350.

The limit unless specified to be at the sole discretion of BHS.