



Safeguarding Procedures for Children and Young People

September 2026



Introduction

This document sets out the procedures to be followed when a safeguarding concern is raised within the remit of British Horse Society which includes organisations and individuals set out in the scope of our Policy document. Our policy and other relevant documents can be found on our [safeguarding policy website page](#).

Specifically, this document explains the steps to be taken when a safeguarding concern is received, if something is witnessed which raises concerns about child protection or where an allegation is made against an organisation or an individual associated with BHS of inappropriate or unlawful conduct involving a child or young person.

It is intended to guide those involved with or working on behalf of BHS in responding to safeguarding concerns safely and effectively.

Recognising concerns

Everyone has a duty of care to act when they recognise a safeguarding concern. It is important that signs of abuse or harm are not ignored.

A full list of safeguarding concerns signs and indicators can be found on the [NSPCC website](#), they might include:

- Unexplained change in behaviour
- Unexplained bruises or injuries, or an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent
- Missing belongings or money
- Not attending / no longer enjoying sessions
- Distrust of a person in a position of trust / authority and particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Changes in weight, or unwilling to eat with others
- Sexually explicit knowledge or behaviour
- Genital pain, stomach pains, discomfort, pregnancy, incontinence, urinary infections, STDs
- Dirty, ill-fitting clothes or a lack of appropriate clothing for the weather
- Self-harm. Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities or keeping covered up in warm weather
- A fear of a particular group of people or individual
- Low self-esteem, increased anxiety, being withdrawn
- Displaying hyper vigilant behaviour
- Less willing to share information, talks about keeping secrets

Recognising a safeguarding disclosure

A disclosure of abuse or harm may happen in a variety of ways:

- Directly – making specific statements about what's happened

- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways

A child or adult may not always be aware that they are disclosing through their actions and behaviour. In some circumstances a disclosure may be partial, this means some details or information about what a child or adult has experienced will be given, but not the whole picture. This could happen over a period of time which when pieced together gives a full picture of what is happening. However, it is important that initial signs of abuse or harm are not ignored and reported immediately.

For further details about poor practice, types of abuse, prohibited conduct and low-level concerns see our [‘Safeguarding guidance on types of abuse and harm – children and young people’](#)

Responding to a disclosure

Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns can arise from many different sources. These may include the child or adult themselves, a friend, coach, parent, carer or guardian, another individual, or information shared by another organisation.

It is important to remember that it is not your role to investigate or determine whether abuse has taken place. However, everyone has a responsibility to recognise, respond to, and report concerns.

If you have any doubts about what steps should be taken or how to respond to a safeguarding concern, contact the BHS Safeguarding Team for advice.

Key principles when responding to any safeguarding concern

- **Stay calm and take all concerns seriously.** Avoid rushing into action without considering what is appropriate.
- **Prioritise safety.** Ensure the immediate needs of the child are met and that they are protected from further harm.
- **Do not investigate.** Avoid making assumptions, speculating, or allowing personal bias to influence your response.
- **Involve the individual where appropriate.** If it is safe to do so, ask what they would like to happen next.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Only share information with those who need to know, such as your organisations Safeguarding Officer or British Horse Society Safeguarding Team. Ensure anyone receiving the information understands its sensitive nature.
- **Inform parents or carers where appropriate.** If they are not implicated in the concern, they should usually be informed unless doing so could increase risk. If unsure, seek advice before taking action.
- **Report promptly.** In an emergency, contact the emergency services (999). If the matter is not an emergency but you are concerned that a child or young person is

at risk of harm, contact the police by telephoning 101 without delay. You can also contact your [local authority social care team](#).

- **Inform BHS Safeguarding Team** If you contact the police or local authority in relation to a safeguarding concern which relates to BHS, you must inform the BHS Safeguarding Team without delay.
- **If BHS Safeguarding Team are unavailable.** If for any reason you are unable to contact the BHS Safeguarding Team or if you have ongoing concerns after doing so, you can make a referral to one of the following external organisations:
 - British Equestrian via Safe to Play Website:
<https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/safetoplay/>
 - NSPCC 24-hour Safeguarding Hotline: 0808 800 5000

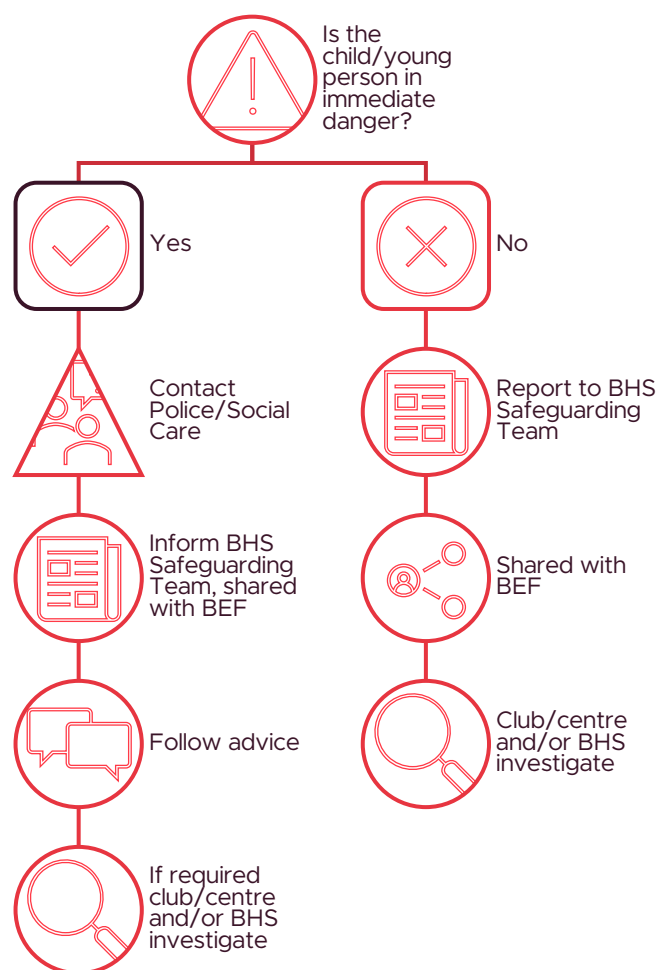
Key principles when responding to a direct disclosure

- **Listen carefully and calmly.** Give the person time and space to talk.
- **Offer reassurance.** Let them know they have done the right thing and that what they have shared is important.
- **Limit questions.** Avoid asking questions unless necessary to clarify. Never ask leading questions.
- **Be honest about next steps.** Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you will need to share the information with the appropriate person or organisation to help keep them safe. If relevant, explain that other agencies (such as the police) may also need to be informed.
- **Do not probe or share opinions.** Avoid pressing for more information than is given or offering personal views.
- **Do not make assumptions.** Never assume the person has told, or is able to tell, someone else.
- **Record the information.** Make a clear and accurate record of what has been shared as soon as possible.

Recording and reporting

Section 10 & 11 in BHS Safeguarding Children and Young Policy people details what and how to report and record a concern.

Appendix 3 in BHS Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy details how to decide when to report a concern on. Record any action you have taken and who you have reported the concerns onto including the contact details, date and time and your rationale for sharing.



Contact details

BHS Safeguarding Team

DEI, Safeguarding & Wellbeing Manager and DEI & Safeguarding Officer

Tel: 02476 840746

Email: safeguarding@bhs.org.uk

Confidential email: cpleadofficer@bhs.org.uk

If there is an emergency or you believe that someone is in immediate danger, contact the police by telephoning 999 as soon as possible.

If the matter is not an emergency but you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of harm, contact the police by telephoning 101 without delay. You can also contact your [local authority social care team](#).

Other contacts

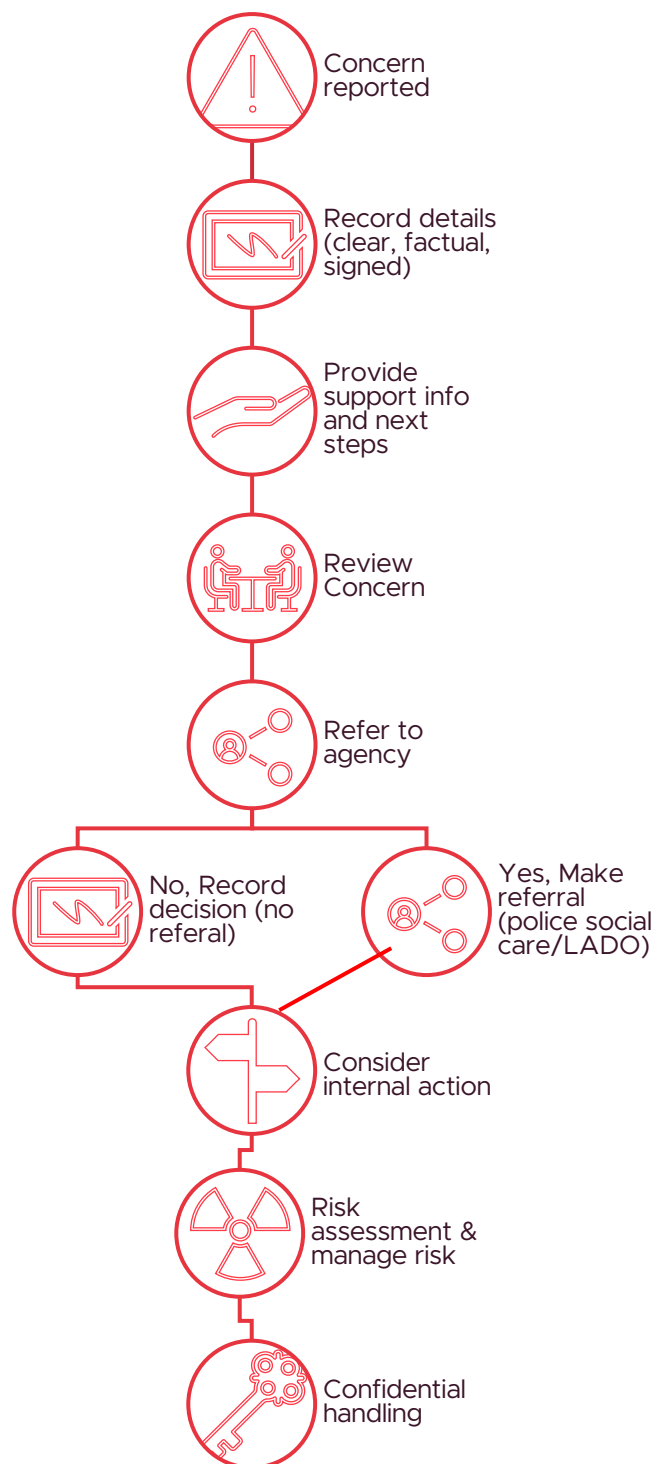
British Equestrian (BEF) safeguarding@bef.co.uk or call 02476 698871

NSPCC 24-hour Safeguarding Hotline: Tel: 0808 800 5000

If you contact the [police](#) or [local authority](#) in relation to a safeguarding concern which relates to the BHS, you must inform the BHS Safeguarding Team without delay.

How BHS responds to safeguarding concerns

This flow chart summarises the how BHS responds when a safeguarding concern is raised with the BHS Safeguarding Team.



All safeguarding concerns must be taken seriously, including anonymous reports, historical concerns, and those involving former members, volunteers or staff.

No one should handle a concern alone — always seek advice from experienced professionals (e.g. Safeguarding Team, BEF Safeguarding Advisory Group, statutory agencies such as police or local authority).

All concerns must be recorded in writing in line with Section 10 & 11 of the BHS Safeguarding Children and Young People policy. Records should include:

- Date and time
- Who raised the concern (if known)
- Who received it
- Full details of what was shared
- A clear, factual account
- Signature and date

Records must be stored securely and handled in line with GDPR and BHS policies.

When receiving a concern, the Safeguarding Team will:

- Follow the principles set out in the policy
- Check what support the person needs
- Explain next steps where appropriate, including:
 - What will happen next
 - How information will be recorded and shared
 - That it may be shared with agencies such as police or local authorities
 - That updates will be provided where possible
 - Who their point of contact is
 - What support is available

The Safeguarding Team should review the concern and decide whether it needs to be referred to another agency (e.g. police, social services, LADO), using the When to make a referral document (Appendix 3 in the policy).

- Views of the child and young person should be considered where possible
- If no referral is made, the reasons must be recorded

Where possible, the child and young person should be kept informed and involved in decisions.

If a referral is made, the Safeguarding Team will inform the Chief Operating Officer within 24 hours if the level of concern is high.

All concerns will be referred to the BEF Safeguarding Officer.

The Safeguarding Team should decide whether an internal investigation is needed:

- Some cases may be resolved through advice, training or supervision
- In other cases, BHS action may need to wait until external investigations are complete

If an allegation is made about an individual:

- A decision must be made about whether to inform them
- This decision should consider risk and potential impact on investigations
- Advice should be sought from external agencies
- Reasons must be recorded

If the individual is informed:

- A separate point of contact should be assigned to support them
- This must not be the same person supporting the reporter or person at risk

The Safeguarding Team should also take steps to manage risk and prevent harm:

- Carry out a risk assessment
- Work with clubs or Approved Centres where needed
- Actions may include suspension, alternative arrangements, or restricting access

Information should be kept confidential within the Safeguarding Team and only shared more widely when necessary to:

- Protect those at risk
- Progress the case
- Manage risk
- Seek advice or supervision

Parents and carers

BHS will work with parents or carers wherever possible, as they can provide valuable insight into the wellbeing of the child or young person and how best to manage any risks. However, if sharing information with them could increase risk, this must be flagged with the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

A decision about whether to share information should then be made carefully, taking into account:

- The age and capacity of the person at risk
- Their views (where appropriate)
- Advice from relevant agencies

Working with safeguarding partners and managing risk

BHS works closely with statutory agencies (e.g. police, social services, LADO) in line with national safeguarding guidance.

If a concern comes from an external agency, the Safeguarding Team must record it properly.

If another agency is investigating:

- Keep in touch and ask for updates (around every 6 weeks)
- Join strategy meetings where possible
- Consider pausing any BHS investigation until their work is finished

Sharing information between agencies is key to keeping people safe; we will be proactive in sharing and requesting information and always follow data sharing rules in the safeguarding policy.

Some external investigations can take time, we will keep asking for updates and where appropriate, keep the person involved informed about timelines (with agency agreement) Once an external investigation finishes BHS will decide if any further action is needed

Possible outcomes and what BHS will do:

- If found guilty or given a caution:
 - Inform BEF via Globocol
 - Carry out a risk assessment
 - Consider membership, affiliation, employment or volunteer status
- If found not guilty:
 - This doesn't automatically mean no risk
 - Carry out a BHS investigation and risk assessment
- If no prosecution:
 - Still carry out a BHS investigation and risk assessment

BHS internal investigations

The aim of a BHS internal investigation is to understand what happened and manage any safeguarding risk.

Investigators should:

- Be independent, trained, and have no involvement in the case
- Declare any conflicts of interest

The investigation will:

- Speak to witnesses
- Work with police and agencies
- Offer the person involved a chance to respond
- Provide updates on progress
- Be clear about how information will be used —full confidentiality cannot always be provided if we are working with other agencies.
- Usually, the person involved should be told about the investigation, unless it increases risk.

If new safeguarding concerns arise:

- Share information with police or agencies where needed
- If an external investigation starts; the BHS investigation may pause

Investigations should:

- Be thorough but timely
- Minimise distress and avoid retraumatising people
- Always prioritise safety and wellbeing

Important:

- People don't have to take part, but can bring a support person
- Notes and statements should be recorded and agreed
- Extra care is needed when involving children (consider welfare, wishes, and impact)

At the end of the investigation:

- A report is produced with findings and (where relevant) recommendations
- Investigators do not make final decisions

The Safeguarding Team and Chief Operating Officer will:

- Review the report
- Decide next steps (these may differ from recommendations)

Outcomes may include:

No further action – all relevant people are informed

Action needed – move to a safeguarding hearing, our *Safeguarding Hearing* process is a separate policy and is available on request

Throughout the process:

- Keep communication clear for those involved where possible
- Balance sharing information with managing risk and protecting the investigation

Whistleblowing

We have a separate whistleblowing policy which is available on our [website](#)

Review and learning from incidents

BHS Safeguarding Team will review policies and procedures after significant incidents and from feedback received. BHS works alongside British Equestrian and other equestrian member bodies by being a member of the British Equestrian Safeguarding Action Team (SAT Group). This group meets regularly and reviews the learnings from cases and adjusts policies, procedures and training accordingly.

Roles and responsibilities

Section 2 and 5 of the BHS Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young people explains the scope and roles and responsibilities that the policy covers. This section provides more information about specific roles and their responsibilities.

It is important to note where our affiliated organisations have implemented their own safeguarding policies and procedures which address how to respond to safeguarding concerns, those documents must, at a minimum, comply with the requirements of this policy and the BHS Safeguarding Policy.

Affiliated organisations

Our Affiliated Organisations or people are BHS Approved Centres, BHS Accredited Professionals, British Riding Clubs and Affiliated Equestrian Access Groups

Each affiliated organisation has direct safeguarding responsibility for:

- Staff, consultants, coaches and officials they employ;
- Volunteers of the affiliated organisation;
- Venues they own;
- Events and programmes they run; and
- Ensuring all accreditation requirements are met by accredited coaches, employees, officials and venues.

Each of these affiliated organisations should make recommendations and support the development of good safeguarding practices within their organisation. They should:

- Implement a Safeguarding Policy that upholds the principles of the BHS Policy.
Where there is any conflict arising between the BHS and affiliated organisations policies, decision-making should be based on the core values set out above, with the safety and welfare of children, young people as the overriding principle.
- Centres, clubs and groups will have due regard and processes in place for safer recruiting.
- Nominate a Safeguarding Officer; Club or Centre Safeguarding Officer (CSO) who will:
 - Work with others in the centre or club to ensure a positive child-centred environment.
 - Respond to any allegations or complaints made from within your club/centre and make sure staff and volunteers are sensitive to signs that may indicate possible safeguarding concerns.
 - Communicate with centre or club management and the BHS Safeguarding team regarding concerns
 - Maintain contact details for local children's social care and the police.
 - Ensure that their club or centre is aware of the BHS Safeguarding Policy, procedures and guidelines
 - Ensure new policies and procedures and training opportunities are circulated to staff, members, participants and volunteers regularly.
 - Ensure parents/children are aware of the policy and procedures.

- Receive queries and offer support regarding safeguarding concerns.
- Undertake training as necessary.
- Promote training to club and centre support staff, members and volunteers of the affiliated organisation.
- Assist the club or centre to ensure that codes of conduct are in place for club staff, volunteers of the affiliated organisation, coaches, young people and parents.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a “need to know” basis.

BHS Safeguarding Team

Both the DEI, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Manager and DEI and Safeguarding Officer jointly hold the role of BHS Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO).

The role of the LSO is:

- To ensure that the clubs, centres, volunteers of BHS and members within BHS are aware of BEF and BHS policies, procedures and guidelines and adopt and adapt them as appropriate.
- To implement and manage appropriate Safeguarding procedures in relation to child protection and safeguarding ensuring that the BEF is informed when necessary (level 2 threshold and above).
- To respond to any allegations or complaints made from within BHS. Operationally, to deal with the complaint/allegation to conclusion in line with agreed protocols including reporting to statutory agencies where necessary.
- To represent BHS on the BEF Safeguarding Action Team (SAT).
- To ensure the effective protection and safeguarding of children and young people by encouraging and supporting each club/riding school events holder or competition to appoint a nominated safeguarding officer.
- To encourage and support each club/riding school, event holders or competition to adopt and promote BHS policies and procedures.
- To provide and promote education and training in safeguarding in partnership with the BEF to support staff, officials, members and BHS volunteers.
- To manage and monitor the implementation of the policy and procedures and feed back to the BEF on an annual basis.
- To support the relevant BHS departments to ensure that BHS procedures for recruitment of staff and volunteers are followed and all appropriate existing staff or volunteers have up to date criminal record checks where required.
- To ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a “need to know” basis.

Safer Recruitment

Section 6 of our BHS Safeguarding Children and Young People policy has our statement on safer recruitment.

Safer recruitment practices includes:

- A clear role description setting out what tasks are involved
- A person specification (what experience, skills and behaviours are required)
- A clear job advert
- A consistent application form to gather information related to each candidate
- Require specific written references, and follow up on them

- Interviewing candidates using consistent and open questions
- For relevant posts, conduct a criminal record check as appropriate (be aware that different countries within the United Kingdom have different criminal record check processes).
- Risk assess any information which comes to light that is concerning
- Verify stated qualifications and experience
- Record the recruitment decision in writing
- Provide a thorough induction to the role (including safeguarding policies and training, and codes of conduct)
- Implement a probation period
- Using self-disclosure forms as appropriate

For more information on safer recruitment visit the [NSPCC website](#)

Criminal record checks

Criminal record checks are mandatory in the UK for all people in regulated activity or work with children and young people. Each nation has its own version of criminal record checks:

- Scotland – Disclosure Scotland the Protecting vulnerable groups scheme
- England and Wales – Disclosure and Barring Service
- Northern Ireland – Access NI checks

Our website holds the most up to date information on who needs to be checked and how checks can be carried out, follow the appropriate link for your country of residence;

[England and Wales](#), [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#)

Regular checks are required (at least every three years) unless the individual is signed up to the update services or relevant scheme in their nation.