

## Volunteer Guidance Note - Raising Concerns

We want volunteering with the BHS to be a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone, but we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When concerns are raised about a volunteer, it's our responsibility to look into these carefully and take appropriate action if needed.

### Our Commitment to You

Here at BHS, we recognise volunteers as people who generously choose to give their time, skills, and passion to support the charity and its objectives, without any expectation of financial reward beyond genuine out-of-pocket expenses. As volunteers are not employees of the Society, they are not bound by an employment contract, are not subject to employment legislation, and are not covered by BHS employee disciplinary procedure.

- We will always support volunteers throughout this process, and every concern raised will be taken seriously.
- We will always aim to resolve any concern in a positive and constructive way, so that good relationships can continue between everyone involved.
- Our duty is to ensure that everyone representing BHS — and supporting our charitable objectives — is acting with the best interests of horses and the charity at heart.

### Your responsibilities

We truly value the time, skills, and knowledge that our volunteers bring to BHS, and we understand how frustrating it can feel when a concern is raised. To help us work together positively, we ask the following of our volunteers:

- Read the Volunteer Policy and any other policies or guidance relevant to your role. These documents are designed to create a safe, positive, and supportive environment for everyone.
- If a problem arises, please refer to the Raising a Concern Policy and seek support from a member of staff so that any issues can be addressed as early and effectively as possible.

### Concerns about volunteers

If a concern is raised about you, please know that we understand this can feel upsetting or frustrating. We ask that you remain patient while we work through the process. You will have direct support throughout, and we're here to help you every step of the way.

- If an informal concern is raised ([Step 1 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)), we will attempt to resolve the problem without an investigation.
- If it is more serious, then a formal complaint ([Step 2 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)) should be raised.
- When a formal concern is received, the relevant BHS Team will investigate your complaint and review any evidence and documentation supplied.

Examples of more serious complaints include but are not limited to:

- actions that prejudice the reputation of the Society

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- actions that put the health or safety of others at risk
- inappropriate behaviour
- self-promotion/conflict of interest
- disregard for BHS volunteer policies or procedures
- bullying and harassment

Volunteers will be offered support from the Volunteer Support Team, and you're welcome to have a family member, friend, or another volunteer with you at any meetings. They can provide additional reassurance and support throughout the process.

In some cases, we may need to record phone calls or meetings as well as take written notes. We will always ask for your permission before making any recordings. Any recordings made will only be used to support the investigation.

In some situations, a volunteer may be temporarily suspended while an investigation is carried out. For example, a Welfare Adviser might be taken off a case that has led to a complaint. Other volunteers may be asked not to attend events or meetings, or to pause certain volunteering activities during the investigation. These steps are only taken to ensure the process is fair and thorough for everyone involved.

## **Outcome**

Once the process has been completed, the findings and recommendations will be shared with the appropriate Director, who will decide on the next steps. An investigation may conclude that no action is needed, or it may determine that action must be taken. Any outcomes will be communicated carefully and sensitively to the volunteer involved, and we will ensure this happens in a timely manner.

Investigations can also highlight areas where the Society itself could improve. When this happens, we use these insights to make positive changes and help prevent similar issues in the future.

## **Actions**

If an investigation finds that a volunteer has acted inappropriately or in conflict with the Volunteer Policy, some form of action may be required. Possible actions include, but are not limited to:

- Talking with the volunteer about the findings and asking for changes in behaviour.
- Asking the volunteer to complete additional training.
- Removing a volunteer from a specific role.
- Ending the volunteering relationship.
- Removing the volunteer as a member of the Society. (Any decision to remove a member will be formally approved by the Trustees.)

## **Appealing an Outcome**

Should anyone be unsatisfied with the outcome they can appeal the decision ([Step 3 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)).

We want your volunteering time with us to be positive, rewarding and fun! We're here to support you — so please don't ever hesitate to speak up

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