



BHS Volunteer Mentor Guidance Note

Support for BHS Volunteers

Every volunteer is supported by a named employee who acts as their role coordinator. This will be someone from either the Development Team or the department you volunteer with. Your role coordinator is there to guide you in your role, help you access training and resources, and should always be your first point of contact if you have any questions or need support.

Volunteer Mentoring

Volunteers also have the option to be matched with a Volunteer Mentor. While this is particularly helpful for those who are new to volunteering with BHS, it's open to everyone. Volunteer Mentors are current or past volunteers who have experience in the same role, so they can offer practical advice, share their experiences, and provide a helpful volunteer's perspective. Their main aim is to help you feel confident, supported, and settled in your volunteering journey with BHS.

What does mentoring involve?

Every mentoring relationship is different and should be shaped around what works best for both you and your mentor. Together, you can agree on what support looks like. Depending on where you're based, this might include meeting face to face, chatting on the phone, or a mix of both.

There's no fixed timeframe for mentoring, it's completely flexible. Some mentoring partnerships last a short time, while others continue as the volunteer grows into new responsibilities. The most important thing is to be open and honest with each other about your availability, experience, and what you'd like to get from the relationship.

What is expected of a Mentor?

- Share your experience as a volunteer
- Give support, information and guidance when needed
- Introduce your mentee to colleagues or contacts who could support them in their role, or if they are in a different geographical area explain the people they need to seek out. This could be BHS volunteers or employees, or contacts in external organisations for example their local authority.
- Encourage them and allay any concerns or fears

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What is expected of a Mentee?

- Be open and honest with your mentor
- Ask for help and support when needed
- Be realistic about the time and support your mentor can provide
- Be willing to act as mentor for a new volunteer when you have settled into your role
- Remember – we were all new at some point. Think about your first time experience, how could you help to make the process easier.

What makes a good mentor?

- You need to be a people person, with great listening skills
- Able to communicate clearly
- Have a positive outlook, especially about BHS and being a volunteer
- Display sensitivity and be empathetic to your mentees situation and experience
- Have a non-judgmental attitude

How do we match mentors and mentees?

When a volunteer asks to be matched with a mentor, their role coordinator will get in touch with volunteers who have previously agreed to support others in this way, or with those they feel would be particularly well suited to the mentoring role. If a volunteer is happy to act as a mentor, the role coordinator will then share contact details with both parties so they can connect and begin their mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality

Conversations between mentors and mentees about a volunteer's experience and enjoyment of their role should be treated as confidential and handled with care. This helps build trust and ensures volunteers feel comfortable sharing openly.

There are a small number of exceptions to this confidentiality. These include situations where discussions reveal information that could be harmful to the mentee or others, such as concerns about bullying or discrimination, or information that could be damaging to the Society, for example where BHS policies may not be being followed. In these circumstances, the mentor should contact the Volunteer Support Team for guidance on the appropriate next steps.

Developing Volunteer Mentoring in BHS

BHS is committed to continually developing and improving all aspects of volunteering. We really value hearing from our volunteers and encourage you to share feedback about your experiences with the Society.

Mentors and mentees are invited to share their thoughts on the volunteer mentoring experience with their role coordinators or the Volunteer Support Team. Your feedback and ideas help us understand what's working well and where we can make improvements, ensuring the mentoring programme remains supportive and rewarding for everyone involved.

Mentors can contact the Volunteer Support Team on volunteer@bhs.org.uk, 02476 840479 at any time for support or guidance.