

Policy Statement

Policy Title: Volunteer Policy

Number: 11.17V2

Functional Area: Volunteers

Brief Description:	The Volunteer Policy is a core document that lays out our key expectations for all volunteers and anyone working with or supporting volunteers. It covers all elements of volunteer activities and is intended to support a positive environment for all volunteers and employees.
Effective:	November 2017
Approved by:	Volunteer Department
Responsible Department:	Volunteer Department
Policy Contact:	emma.thompson@bhs.org.uk
Supersedes:	Volunteer Policy 2015
Last Reviewed/Updated:	November 2017
Applies to:	All volunteers and anyone working with or supporting our volunteers.

Reason for Policy: To support best practices and update the previous policy in an effort to create a supportive environment for employees and volunteers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are an established and integral part of The British Horse Society (BHS), a core part of our team, operating in conjunction with our employees and partners. They provide a link to our members and the broader equestrian communities we currently work with and those we aim to engage with in the future.

The BHS recognises volunteers as people who choose to commit their time and expertise to the charity and its charitable objectives without expectation of a financial reward, except actual out of pocket expenses.

The Society values the contributions that our volunteers make to our organisation. We recognise that volunteering is a two-way process: providing the BHS with peoples' time, skills, experience and enthusiasm and volunteers with the opportunity to support the Society, enhance or develop skills, make social contacts, have new experiences and have fun.

The BHS would like all volunteer experiences with the Society to be enjoyable and rewarding. The Society is committed to ensuring equal opportunities and treatment of our volunteers. We pledge to guide and support volunteers in a way that ensures the needs of both parties are met.

Our mission, values, policies and procedures are in place for the benefit and protection of everyone and every horse. We recommend that all volunteers read these and bear them in mind whilst volunteering.

We ask that all volunteers respect the structural governance of the Society in all aspects of BHS related work, communications, events and activities. We ask that all volunteers represent the BHS in a positive light during the course of their time as a volunteer, any problems can be brought up directly with the Society.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

Building and Sustaining Relationships

Many of the BHS volunteer roles require a level of team work and collaboration with other volunteers, employees, other organisations and the general public. The BHS believes these relationships should be built and maintained with respect and compassion.

Please be mindful that everyone is unique in the level of commitment and time they are able to devote to their volunteering. When communicating with other volunteers, employees or whilst representing the Society, volunteers should always be polite and respectful and ensure that they act with integrity, diligence and care whenever engaged in Society business. At times some volunteers may find themselves taking a greater leadership role, this is to be encouraged but not taken advantage of.

Expenses

All BHS volunteers are entitled to receive expense payments to cover their mileage and other expenses paid out during the course of their assigned role. It is good practice for all volunteers to have their out of pocket expenses reimbursed and the charity encourages and provides funds specifically for that. No volunteer should be singled out or made to feel guilty for requesting reimbursement for expenses.

Health and Safety

The BHS works to ensure volunteers are safe in the undertaking of their roles. This may include training and support specific to their role such as lone working procedures, first aid training and risk assessment advice.

Volunteers are representatives of the Society and should never carry out BHS assigned roles or activities related to it whilst under the influence of alcohol, drugs that have not been prescribed or anything else that might hinder their ability to carry out their role safely or to a high standard. Should volunteers feel unwell or not themselves during the delivery of their role they should alert another volunteer or employees as soon as possible for support.

The BHS holds an insurance policy which covers volunteers when carrying out activities that fall within the remit of their assigned roles. This policy covers events held by BHS volunteer committees. To be sure the insurance policy will be applied volunteers must ensure that an employee knows the

event is going ahead. Committees must retain all risk assessments and in the event of an accident complete an *Accident Report* and send this to the Volunteer Manager.

We ask that all volunteers are mindful of their own safety and the safety of the horses and other people around them and avoid taking unnecessary risks whilst volunteering for the Society.

Equality

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and our Equality Policy, the BHS is committed to ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities to volunteer. We will provide support to enable volunteers to carry out the role of their choosing; however, due to the nature of our work this may not always be possible. We will always try to provide support but where it would not be safe or appropriate for a volunteer to carry out a specific role we will endeavour to offer them an alternative option.

Press and Social Media

We ask that all BHS Volunteers refrain from speaking with the press in their volunteer capacity but rather contact the BHS Press Office. Where it is regarding our charitable objectives the Press Office will ask the relevant director or employee to make a comment, this enables us to provide a clear, concise and consistent message.

We advise volunteers against representing themselves as BHS volunteers on social media and ask that they do not put this information in their profile. Some BHS roles may require volunteers to communicate with other volunteers or members of the public via social media, email or letter, the *BHS Volunteer Communications and Social Media Policy* provides further guidance on this.

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

If volunteers are contacted by the press they should direct them to the BHS Press Office which is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The contact number is 02476 840521 and the email is pressenquiry@bhs.org.uk.

Confidentiality

Some of our volunteers are required to maintain confidentiality as part of their role. This will be specified in the role description and in the training. Occasionally we may ask volunteers not to share information about embargoed campaigns; this will also be explained at the time.

These days there is a high expectation of data protection. Permission must now be given for the potential use and handling or holding of data and the length of time it will be kept. Volunteers must not hold the contact or banking details of any BHS Members or members of the public unless they have their express written permission to do so. Should information be acquired, this must only be used for the purposes identified and must be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed. For example for an event, bank details or emergency contact information may be kept for the duration of the event but then must be destroyed as soon as the event is over. Where volunteers need further support they should contact the Volunteer Manager.

While we understand that maintaining confidentiality can be challenging it is a vital part of some of our roles. It gives people trust in the BHS, which may give them the confidence to report a welfare concern where they would otherwise not feel safe to do so. If volunteers are not sure about maintaining confidentiality or are worried they might have broken it they should contact their role coordinator immediately to discuss.

Trial Periods

The BHS has trial periods in certain roles to give the Society and the volunteer time to decide if the role and the relationship are the right fit for them. If there are elements of the volunteer's behaviour during this time that cause concern for the Role Coordinator or other employee or volunteers these concerns should be confidentially raised with the Role Coordinator or the Volunteer Manager so that, if appropriate, they can be addressed during the trial period.

If a problem arises while volunteers are still in their trial period a decision may be made to extend the trial period or to end the volunteering relationship entirely.

Bullying and Harassment

Everyone in the team, volunteers and employees alike, deserve to be treated with respect. As such the BHS will not tolerate bullying or harassment under any circumstances.

The Society is committed to creating an environment free from embarrassment, intimidation, threats, discrimination or harassment. The Society will do all that is reasonably possible to prevent such events occurring and will take steps to ensure such behaviour is dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is sometimes the 'grey' areas that cause most problems. Examples of unacceptable behaviour within the Society include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, ridiculing, insulting or demeaning someone (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief)
- Using social media, email or other written correspondence, social events or meetings to threaten, belittle or be malicious to or about others
- Rude or unwelcoming behaviour towards anyone, including people of a different economic background, age, class, religion, sexual orientation or race
- Unfair treatment, exclusion or victimisation of someone for any reason, including their location, economic or cultural background.

Volunteers can complain about behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Complaints can be made using the '*Volunteer Complaints Procedure*' and will be dealt with using the '*Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure*'. Maliciously making or supporting an untrue complaint will not be tolerated.

Whistle Blowing

The British Horse Society aims to always act within the law. The Society has rules and we aim to ensure these are always observed and we are totally honest in all our dealings. Trustees, employees and volunteers therefore have a responsibility to act with integrity, diligence and care whenever engaged in Society business. They also share a responsibility to bring to the attention of the appropriate person in authority any instance where the highest standards of regularity and propriety are not being achieved.

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer of the Society have determined that no person, whatever their position within the Society, will suffer any disadvantages whatsoever as a result of raising a legitimate concern about the lawfulness or appropriateness of any action of the Society. The only exception to this will be where it is clear, on investigation that the allegation has been made maliciously. Any issue in good faith will be treated as a matter of the strictest confidence.

III. DEFINITIONS

Volunteer:

- The BHS recognises volunteers as people who choose to commit their time, expertise and passion to the charity and its charitable objectives without expectation of a financial reward, except actual out of pocket expenses. As volunteers are not employees of the Society they are not under any binding contract, are exempt from employment legislation and are not covered by BHS employee disciplinary procedure.

Bullying:

- The BHS defines bullying in general terms as: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment:

- The BHS defines harassment in general terms as: unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of people in the undertaking of their volunteer role. It may be related to age, race, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, nationality or any protected characteristic of the individual and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

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

A. Policy Statements and Other Policies

BHS Volunteers have many policies and procedures supporting their roles, these will provide additional information for some of the elements of this policy. These can all be found here: www.bhs.org.uk/volunteer-resources.

These core policies are:

1. Press and Media Policy
2. Communications and Social Media Policy
3. Health and Safety Policy
4. Expenses Policy
5. Conflict of Interest Policy
6. Financial Regulations

B. Procedures

The core procedures relating to volunteers are:

- Volunteer Complaints Procedure
- Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure

Forms

- Conflict of Interest Declaration Form
- Accident Report Form

C. Guidelines

The guidance relating to volunteers cover:

1. Committee Meetings
2. Committee Elections
3. Committee Events
4. Problems and Disputes
5. Mentor Guidance
6. Young Volunteers

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

We are creating training opportunities for all of our volunteers, currently Access and Bridleways Officers and Welfare Officers are required to undertake training to carry out their roles.

E. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

N/A

V. **HISTORY**

This policy was previously created as part of the Volunteer Agreement, it now stands apart from that as a separate document. It is required reading for all new and current volunteers and provides a summary to other policies.