British Horse Society

Social Media Policy

V2.0

July 2026

Policy reference sheet – British Horse Society Social Media Policy

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1.0	All	Creation of policy	07.2026

Policy component		Description	Check
1	**Policy statement**	**This document is British Horse Society's policy for Social Media use.** This policy is to promote the safe and responsible use of social media platforms. To inform employees and stakeholders of the potential risks of social media use and to share best practice.	
2	**Policy audience**	Stakeholder Groups including Employees and agency workers, Contractors, Volunteers, Trustees, Accredited Professionals, Approved Centres, BRC clubs, Affiliated Equestrian Access Groups, Others as relevant	
3	**Review programme**	Next review date is 06.2028 Policy will be reviewed and approved by the Policy Review Group	

Sign off	
Signed by	Kate Cobley
Signature	
Date	09/07/26

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1. Introduction

1.1. We're here to help horses and everyone who cares for them enjoy the best possible life together. Social media enables us to champion horse and rider safety, access, education and care, and to ensure every horse is respected, protected and enjoyed by knowledgeable, caring people.

1.2. Social media is a public space. Reputation, safeguarding risks, misinformation and legal implications can arise quickly. This policy ensures:

- BHS maintains trust and credibility.
- Horses, riders and vulnerable people are protected.
- Stakeholder Groups understand expectations and responsibilities.
- We comply with charity law, data protection law, copyright law and the Lobbying Act.

1.3. BHS is keen to promote the safe and responsible use of social media platforms but also to make our stakeholders aware of the potential risks and to share best practice.

1.4. Failure to follow this policy may be considered misconduct and result in action to be taken under the relevant policy and/or procedure.

1.5. The misconduct procedure and outcomes following an investigation may be different for each Stakeholder Group. The Stakeholder Group should refer to their individual contractual obligations/code of conduct/agreement/policy/terms and conditions/handbook applicable to their relationship with BHS.

2. Scope and application

2.1. 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.

2.2. This policy covers any social media content referring to BHS, or any work or activity related to BHS or the equine industry, coaching or equestrian sports or activities, when posted from personal, professional or business accounts or other external accounts.

2.3. This policy applies to BHS:

- Employees and agency workers
- Contractors
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Accredited Professionals
- Approved Centres

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- BRC clubs
- Affiliated Equestrian Access Groups
- Others as relevant.

This policy applies to the Stakeholder Groups within the scope of using:

- All BHS official channels, including regional/national pages and official groups.
- Personal and professional/business social media where referencing BHS or your role.
- Personal and professional/business social media where referencing the equine industry, sport or equine activities.
- Social media platforms on web, app, desktop and mobile.

2.4. For the purpose of this policy, the above groups and individuals within will be referred to throughout as Stakeholder Groups, unless otherwise specified.

2.5. Organisations, professionals and community groups listed above are strictly responsible for managing their accounts. We'd strongly recommend they produce their own social media policy or community guidelines. BHS have resources available to Riding Clubs, Centres, Coaches and Affiliated Equestrian Access Groups for this purpose.

2.6. This policy sits alongside and is supported by:

- BHS Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Your contractual obligations/code of conduct/agreement/policy/terms and conditions/handbook applicable to your relationship with BHS.

3. Why BHS uses social media

3.1. Social media helps BHS and its stakeholder groups share information, promote safe and ethical equestrian practice, support participation, celebrate impact, engage communities and further our charitable purpose.

3.2. It should be used responsibly, accurately and in a way that protects horses, people and the reputation of BHS and the wider equestrian community.

4. Governance and escalation

4.1. Concerns relating to official BHS social media channels, reputational risk, media interest, complaints, misinformation, safeguarding concerns or potential breaches of this policy should be escalated through the relevant BHS contact, or where urgent, to the Social Media Manager, PR Manager, Head of PR or Director of Marketing, Communication and Fundraising as appropriate.

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4.2. Only those authorised in writing by the Social Media Manager may publish content on BHS channels.

4.3. All Stakeholder Groups are responsible for their compliance with this policy.

4.4. Participation in social media on behalf of BHS is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.

5. Using social media

5.1. General Guidance

5.1.1. When publishing content 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 care and 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

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

5.1.3. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive BHS or equine activities. Don't:

- Publish content as part of your 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 imply bias in the behaviour or actions of BHS and contracted or volunteer BHS positions including Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers, Inspectors, Advisors.
- Re-post or re-tweet inappropriate content. This represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable.
- Be included in or publish social media content in relation to BHS that has the potential to negatively affect or impact BHS's business, products, services, events, members or reputation.
- Be included in or publish social media content in relation to participation in equine activities (ridden or non-ridden), including the sport, that has the potential to negatively affect or impact the public's perception of equine activities, our sport or reputation of our sport.

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- Be included in or publish 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.

5.1.4. When referring to BHS:

- Make clear views are personal ("views my own")
- Don't imply you speak on behalf of BHS
- Never request or share personal or confidential information
- Don't engage in political, equine welfare or reputational debates on behalf of BHS
- Never comment on criticism of BHS, escalate instead to BHS

5.1.5. Employees and trustees who have a personal blog, social media profile or website which indicates in any way that they work or volunteer at BHS should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest with their line manager (employees) or BHS Volunteer Manager (trustees). Similarly, employees or trustees who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work or volunteer for British Horse Society should discuss any potential risk or conflicts of interest.

5.1.6. Other Stakeholder Groups who have a personal blog, social media profile, website or other paid or unpaid public platform which indicates in any way they are affiliated to, or have a professional relationship with BHS should discuss any potential risks or conflicts of interest with BHS.

5.1.7. Don't approach high profile people or organisations from your personal social media accounts to ask them to support the charity, as this could hinder any potential relationships that are being managed. This includes asking for reposts about the charity.

5.2. Managing official BHS social media channels

5.2.1. No new official BHS-branded social media channel, page or group should be created without approval from the Social Media Manager or relevant BHS lead. Stakeholder groups managing their own channels remain responsible for ensuring their channels are clearly named, appropriately managed and compliant with applicable BHS policies, guidance, agreements or handbooks.

5.2.2. Only those authorised by BHS may publish content on official BHS social media channels. This includes national, regional, local or group channels managed by, or on behalf of, BHS.

5.2.3. All official BHS social media activity must be accurate, respectful, accessible and aligned with BHS values, tone of voice, brand guidelines and charitable purpose.

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5.2.4. Approved photography, templates and brand assets should be used wherever possible. New creative assets or content outside approved templates may require approval from the Social Media Manager or relevant BHS lead before publication.

5.2.5. Official BHS content should be accessible. This includes using plain English, adding alt text to images, using captions or subtitles on videos, ensuring graphics are clear and legible, and using inclusive language.

5.2.6. BHS may hide, delete, report or block content or users where posts, comments or messages are abusive, threatening, defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, misleading, unsafe, unlawful, in breach of safeguarding, confidentiality, privacy or data protection requirements, or contrary to platform rules.

5.2.7. Positive or supportive comments may be responded to by authorised admins in a kind, helpful and appropriate way. Complaints, criticism, misinformation, media enquiries, legal concerns, safeguarding concerns or reputational issues must not be debated online and should be escalated through the relevant BHS route.

5.2.8. If a post, comment, message or situation creates or relates to a serious incident, safeguarding concern, welfare concern, legal issue, media enquiry, reputational risk or public safety concern, do not engage further online. Capture relevant information where appropriate and escalate immediately through the relevant BHS route, or where urgent, to the Social Media Manager, PR Manager, Head of PR, Director of Marketing, Communication and Fundraising or CEO as appropriate.

5.2.9. BHS may pause scheduled or planned social media content during a crisis, serious incident or period of heightened sensitivity.

5.3. Young and vulnerable people

5.3.1. Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming or radicalisation.

5.3.2. All Stakeholder Groups have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that vulnerable and young people are kept safe from harm. If you come across anything online that could mean someone is at risk, you should follow BHS safeguarding policies or your club or centre policy.

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5.3.3. Refer to our Safeguarding Policies and E-Safety guidance for further information.

5.4. Use of BHS logo and branding

5.4.1. Never use BHS's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos must be requested from the brand team and any content created must adhere to our brand guidelines.

5.4.2. Stakeholder Groups should refer to their contractual obligations/code of conduct/agreement/policy/terms and conditions/handbook (applicable to your relationship with BHS) for appropriate usage of BHS logo and branding. A brand toolkit can be requested.

5.5. Press

5.5.1. If you're contacted by the press about your social media posts or role that relates to BHS, you must talk to the press team immediately and under no circumstances respond directly. Forward on the contact to pressenquiry@bhs.org.uk.

5.6. Defamation

5.6.1. Defamation is when a false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published in print (such as in media publications) or online (such as Instagram Story, Facebook Live, Snapchat post). Whether Stakeholder Groups are posting content as part of their role or in a personal capacity, they must not bring BHS into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals, BHS, BHS Stakeholder Groups or other organisations or groups BHS may work with. You may be liable for prosecution.

5.6.2. Stakeholder Groups are expected to maintain a professional approach towards others at all times on social media.

5.7.Copyright law

5.7.1. It is critical that all Stakeholder Groups abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, when representing the charity. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

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5.8. Confidentiality

5.8.1. Any communications that Stakeholder Groups make must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that BHS is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date, or information from people who the charity has worked with which is private.

5.8.2. It is forbidden to post screenshots, images or upload onto social media any BHS document that is marked as confidential, or the recipient has received notification in writing that the document is confidential. Examples of such marking may include, but not limited to, 'For Internal BHS Use Only' or 'Strictly Confidential' or 'Confidential' or 'Contains Personal Data'.

5.8.3. Sharing of any BHS confidential document is only permitted if the poster has obtained written confirmation from the author of the document that it is suitable to be shared on social media.

5.9. Discrimination and harassment

5.9.1. Stakeholder Groups must not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official BHS social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.
- Using social media to bully another individual.
- Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

5.9.2. All users should be aware that comments which are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, may lead to disciplinary action. Comments that include a reference to a person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability may attract a high disciplinary sanction, or even attract civil and criminal action.

5.9.3. Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable

5.10. The Lobbying Act

5.10.1. Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose but can never be party political. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law (often known as the 'Lobbying Act*).

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5.10.2. Under the Lobbying Act, organisations (including charities which spend more than £10,000 across the UK on 'regulated activity' during the regulated period) need to register with the Electoral Commission within the outlined windows for elections.

5.10.3. Regulated activity is any activity which could reasonably be seen as intended to influence people's voting choice, either for parties or candidates (which a charity could never do) or for categories of candidates (e.g. female candidates, or candidates who support Net Zero). During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the Director of Marketing & Communications.

5.11. Use of social media to support fundraising

5.11.1. Where social media is used to support fundraising, content must be accurate, transparent and compliant with BHS fundraising guidance and applicable fundraising regulation.

5.11.2. Posts should make clear the purpose of the appeal and, where full details cannot be included in the post, should link to further information about the campaign, how funds will be used and how people can donate.

*Set out initially in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 and the Elections Act 2022

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