



Volunteer Handbook

2026



Welcome

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We're really pleased that you have chosen to volunteer with us and are excited about what we can achieve together. As part of BHS One Team, you are at the heart of the largest equestrian charity in the UK. At BHS, every person is supported and encouraged to be the best they can be. We hope you'll love volunteering with BHS, and while our charity benefits from your knowledge and experience, we also want to support your personal growth and development. BHS is a place where you can make a real impact, whether you are directly supporting us to deliver our charitable aims, or in a support role, you can help us as we innovate and campaign for the equestrian community and work together for a better future for horses and everyone who loves them. In short, we are here **For Horses. For People. For Life.**

- James Hick, CEO

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The journey behind the name

The importance of horse lovers coming together to promote horse welfare and campaign for horses' place in society has been long-lived and remains as relevant today as when British Horse Society began in 1947.

By combining much older organisations - the Institute of the Horse and Pony Club and the National Horse Association of Great Britain - the BHS brought together, in one voice, a community dedicated to improving the lives of horses and those who love them.

That need remains as vital today as it was when we started. Together our community educates to promote horse welfare. Campaigns to keep equestrians safer on the roads. Lobbies to safeguard access to off-road riding and driving. And works tirelessly to protect the future of horses in our society, preserving the horse-human bond for the next generation.

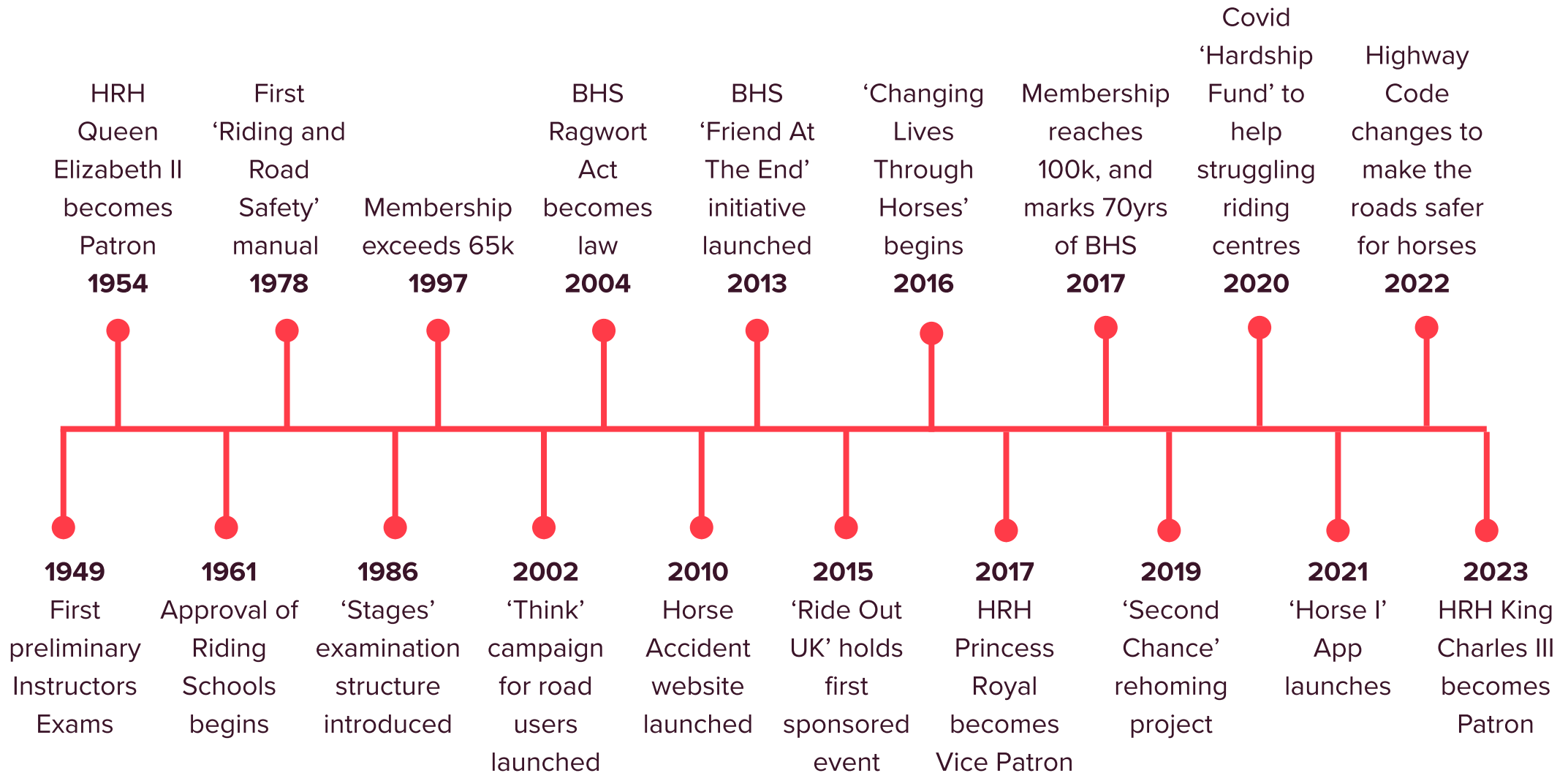
Thank you for choosing to join our community and volunteer with us! By giving your time, you'll play an important role in securing our future.



**First Chairman of BHS
(1947-1952)**

**Lieutenant Colonel The
Hon C Guy Cubitt DSO,
shown here at
Badminton.**

Key milestones



Our purpose

We're the largest equestrian charity in the UK, and we know the amazing feeling that horses and people share. We're here to help horses, and everyone who cares for them, enjoy the best possible life together.

Our values



We put horses at the heart



We take the lead



We give our heart and soul



We muck in

For horses. For people. For life.



Our charitable objectives

Our vision is for every horse to be respected, protected and enjoyed by knowledgeable, caring people.
We're here to help horses and everyone who cares for them to enjoy the best possible life together.



Education

To promote and advance the education, training and safety of the public in all matters relating to the horse.



Safety

To promote the use, breeding, wellbeing, safety, environment, health and management of the horse for the public benefit.



Participation

To promote community participation in healthy recreation involving the horse.



Welfare

To promote and facilitate the prevention of cruelty, neglect or harm to horses and to promote the relief, safety, sanctuary, rescue and welfare of horses in need of care, attention and assistance.



Access

To promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriageways, public paths and other land.



Martin Clunes OBE,
President since 2011

Our team

Patron & Vice Patron

King Charles III became our Patron after the passing of his mother Queen Elizabeth II. HRH Princess Anne, the Princess Royal serves as our Vice Patron.

President

Our President Martin Clunes OBE, has an ambassadorial role, ensuring that our work is heard and highlighted.

Board of Trustees

Our Board of Trustees are volunteers too! As a charity, our BHS Trustees have the legal responsibility to ensure good governance, set strategy and ensure charitable funds are spent wisely. We are committed to the importance and input of volunteers, and our specialist Trustee for Volunteering ensuring the voices of volunteers are heard at the highest levels of the charity.

CEO

As CEO, James Hick is responsible for ensuring that all of us deliver on our charitable aims and working together for horses. James is supported by a team of Directors.

Directors

There are a number of directorships across the BHS, some you would find in most organisations such as Finance and IT, and some more specialist for our work such as Horse Care & Welfare, Access, Safety and Education.



The volunteering programme is an important part of the Development Directorate, led by Emma Stone, Director of Strategy and Development, but volunteers are integrated into all our specialist teams.





Employees

We have about 200 employees around the British Isles.

The teams you will come across most include:

Development Team

Each part of the British Isles is looked after by a dedicated Manager. They support volunteers, the equestrian community, and organise events that help deliver our charitable aims. Your Regional or National Manager will be one of your main points of contact.

Volunteer Support Team

This team makes sure the volunteer programme is compliant and that volunteers have a great experience from recruitment to recognition. We also provide support to Regional and National Managers and deliver new volunteering projects and initiatives.

Volunteer Co-ordinators and Field Officers

Some departments also have Volunteer Co-ordinators and/or Field Officers; if you are an Access, Welfare or Safety volunteer, these employees will also support you in your role.

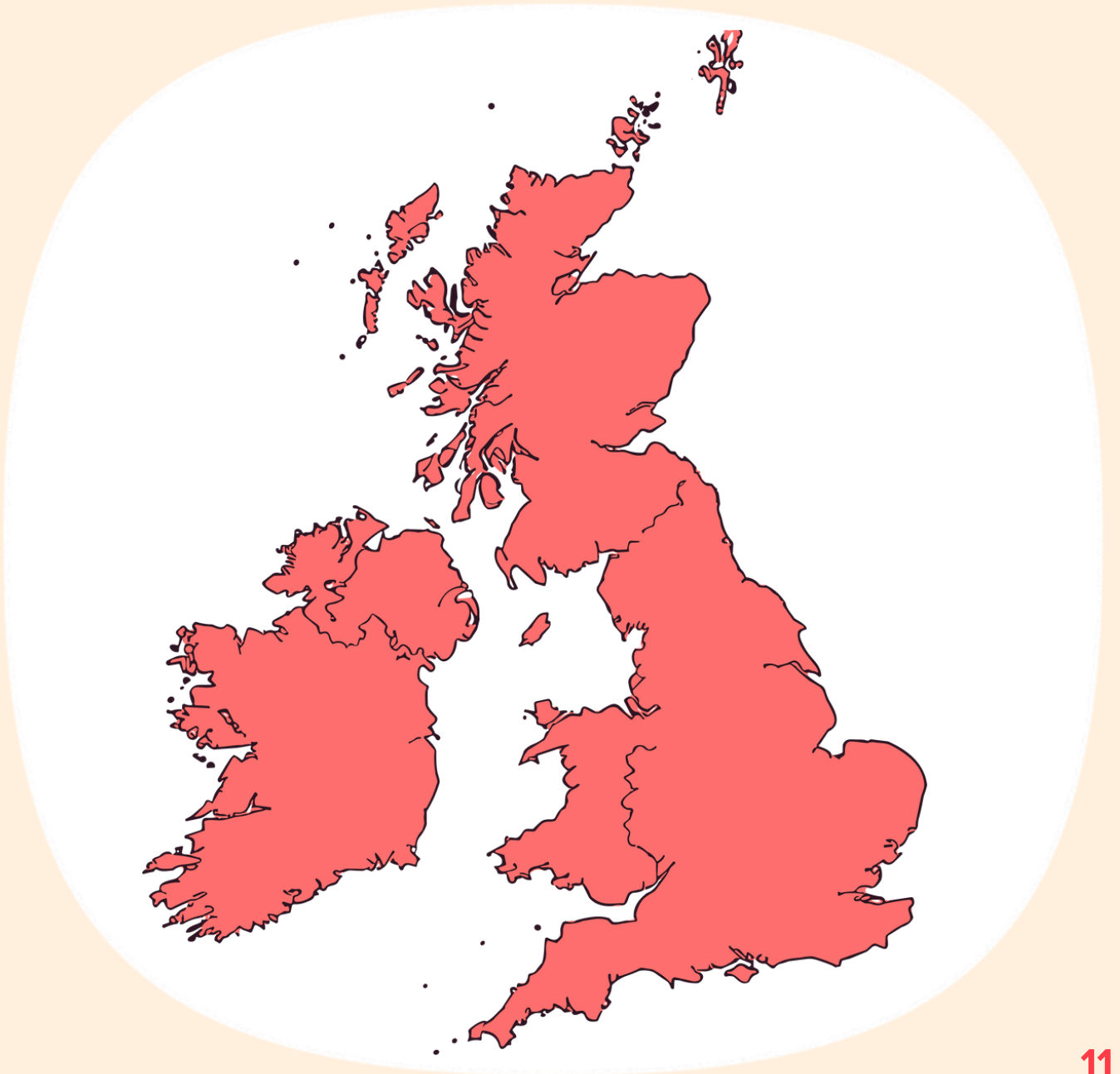
Where you fit in

Thank you for being part of our incredible community of more than 1,400 volunteers who make a real difference for horses and the people who love them.

The hours our volunteers contribute can be valued at an amazing **£1.7m per year**, and we're truly grateful for the time, energy, and passion you give.

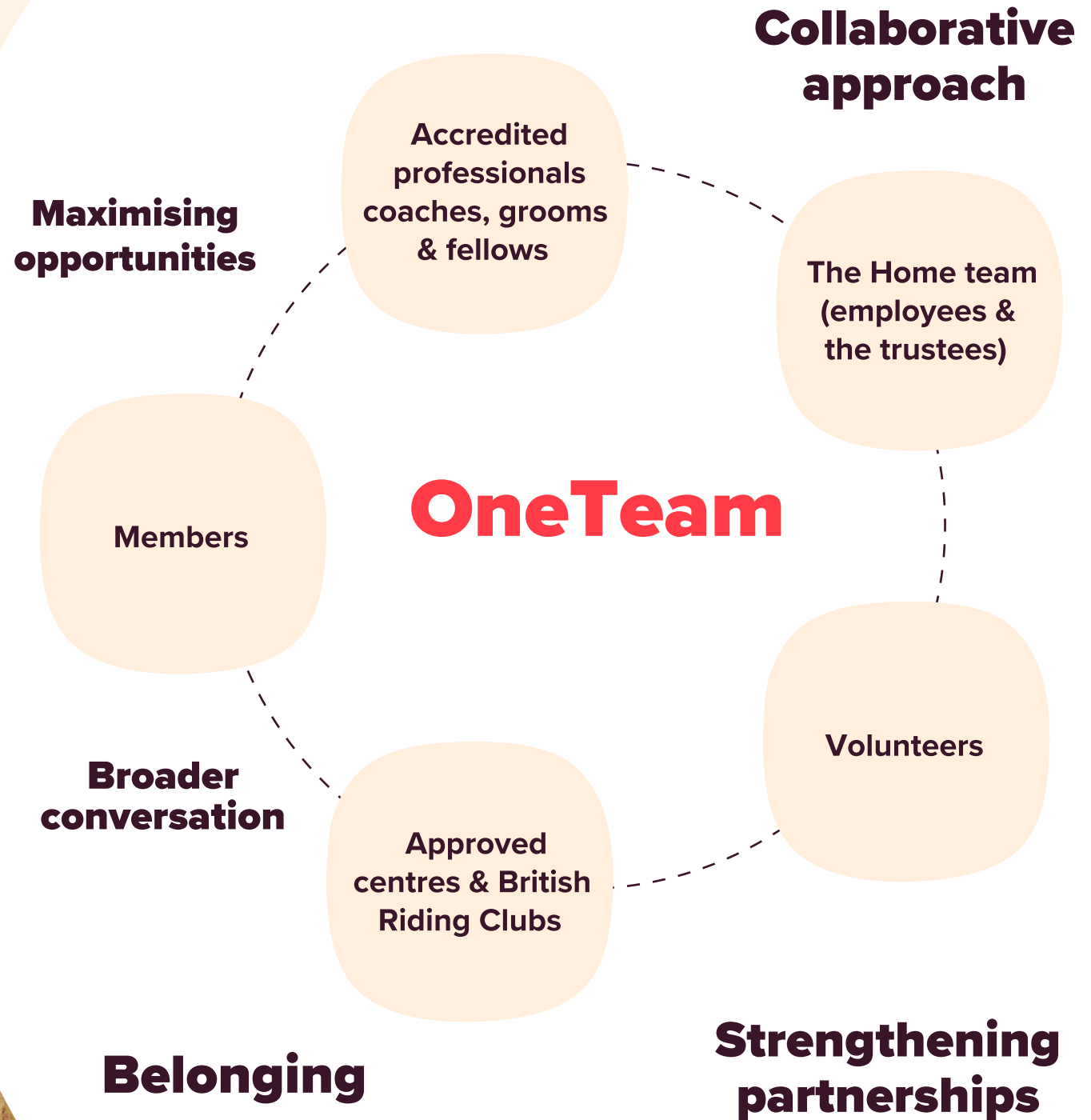
We're here to help you feel supported, connected, and part of something bigger. Think of it like a community - everyone has a role, and each one plays an important part in achieving our shared aims. Whether you're helping at events, supporting your local community, or taking on a leadership position, you're a vital part of what makes BHS strong.

Together, we achieve incredible things - and we couldn't do it without you!

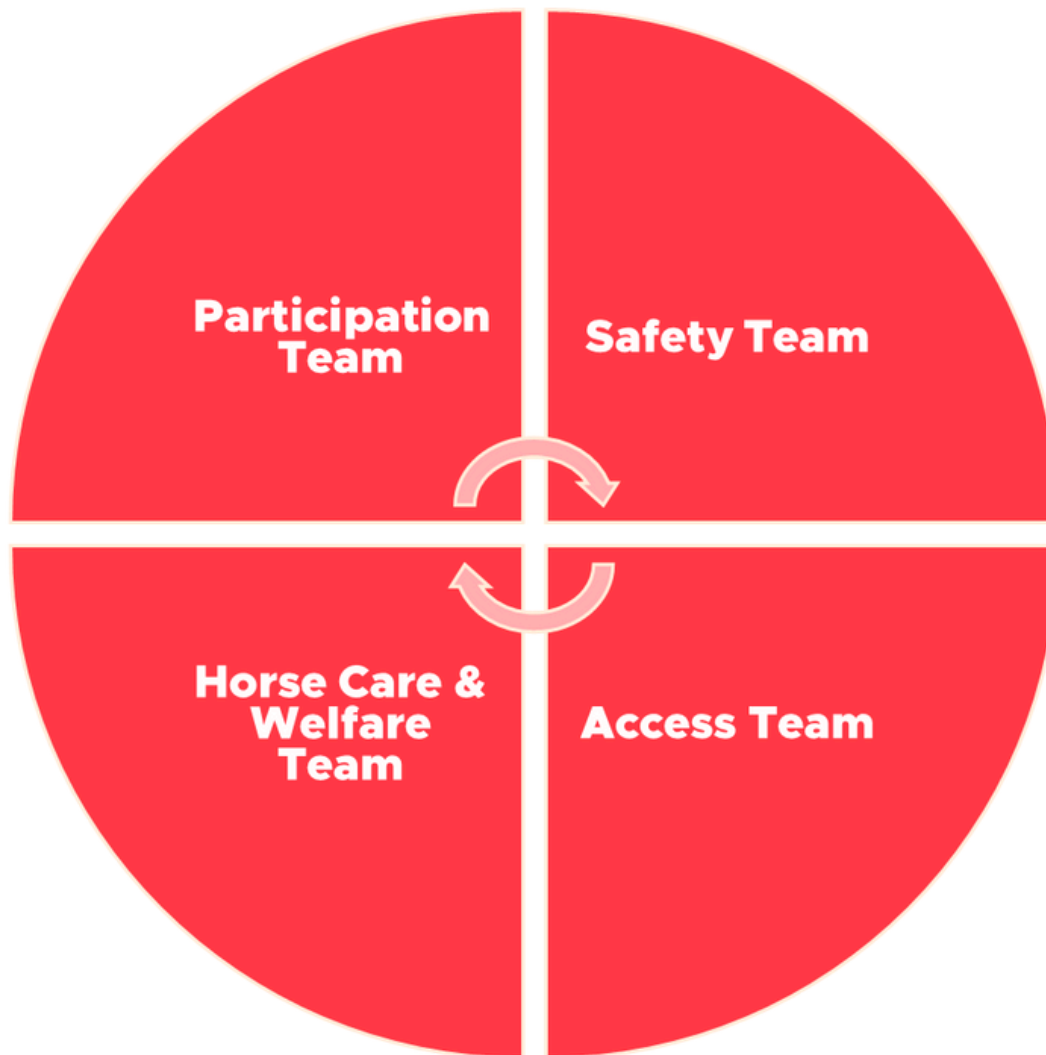


One team big impact

From accredited coaches to volunteers, members and trustees – every part of our community plays an important role. Together, we are One Team, united by collaboration, shared goals and a passion to create a better world for horses and those who care for them.



Volunteer meetings



Each region or nation has four volunteer teams focusing on different areas of our charitable outputs: Events, Safety, Horse Care & Welfare and Access.

Each team meets at least four times a year. Meetings are led by the Regional or National Manager. You should attend the meeting most relevant to your role, but you are welcome to attend all of them.

These meetings are usually held virtually, using Microsoft Teams. If you are new to Microsoft Teams, we're happy to help you to join the online meetings on your laptop or device (no need to download or buy any software).

(Part of the Horse Care & Welfare meetings are closed to discuss confidential welfare concerns.)

Our relationship with you

All successful relationships need good communication and a clear set of expectations. All of us should agree on how we work together and treat and support each other.

What you can expect from us

- A safe volunteering environment.
- To offer equal opportunities for all.
- To match your interests, skills and experience with the right role for you.
- A clear communication structure so that you fully understand your role and how you can feedback.
- Appropriate training opportunities, support, resources, and information
- Access to trained members of staff to support, guide and advise you.
- Insurance and reimbursement of agreed expenses.
- To fulfil our responsibilities regarding your health, safety and welfare.
- Respect, courtesy and appreciation.
- Celebration of your successes and recognition for your support.
- Decisive action against bullying and harassment.

What we expect from you

- Respect all governance, policies, guidelines, and decisions.
- Nourish a positive, enthusiastic, professional, and courteous approach.
- Work collaboratively as part of a team.
- Engage with communications, act as required, and raise any concerns.
- Attend meetings, events, and activities organised by your team.
- Complete necessary training to stay informed and effective.
- Notify us of any personal changes affecting your volunteering or if you wish to stop.
- Use your volunteer email address where provided.
- Declare any conflicts of interest with the BHS.
- Uphold standards of horse care/welfare.

Keeping connected

Good communication helps everything run smoothly.

We understand that life gets busy and volunteering may need to pause at times - just let us know so we can support you and stay connected. You'll get much more out of your volunteering when you keep in touch with us and your fellow volunteers regularly.



Email

You will need to use your BHS Volunteer email address (unless you are an occasional volunteer). This is the primary way we will communicate with you. It is important you check your email account regularly as we will not contact you on your personal email unless there is a support issue.

[Click here](#) for help and guidance about your volunteer email account. If you need 1 to 1 support, you can book a [Support Session](#).





WhatsApp

We also use WhatsApp groups to communicate with volunteers, which is a quick and modern way to keep you updated. Speak to your Regional or National Manager if you would like to be added.

Newsletters

We'll send you a regular e-news, which includes important updates on training, volunteering opportunities and other updates. You can also browse some [older newsletters](#).

Social Events

Alongside online meetings, we'll invite you to social events. Please try to come if you can, it's a great chance to meet local volunteers who share your passion for horses... and enjoy some cake!

Help us keep your details up to date

If anything changes, please let us know so we can update our records.

To update, just email volunteer@bhs.org.uk.

You can also ask us to check what current details we hold for you.

Staying safe

Our commitment to keeping everyone safe

We are committed to following good health and safety practices and providing a safe working environment that complies with all legal requirements. Everyone has a role in keeping our environment safe.

You must:

- Take care of your own safety and those around you - your actions make a difference!
- Avoid unnecessary risks so everyone stays safe.
- Follow our Health & Safety policies and measures - they're here to protect you.
- Report any accidents, incidents, or hazards to a staff member right away.
- Complete the relevant H&S training - it helps keep you confident and prepared.
- Know what to do in an emergency - being ready matters.
- Let us know immediately if you feel unwell while volunteering - we're here to support you.

You'll receive Health & Safety information during your Welcome session. Depending on your activities, we may ask you to complete other training such as first aid, risk assessment, or manual handling.

Staying safe

Lone working

If you are volunteering alone, make sure that you are familiar with our Lone Working policy and follow our guidelines:

Safe travelling

Plan ahead: Share your route, destination and expected return time.

Travel safely: Drive with care or use public transport or walking where suitable.

Stay prepared: Park safely, hide valuables, wear appropriate clothing and carry your BHS ID.

Stay connected: Check mobile signal before travelling and download what3words for emergencies.

Safe working

Work with others wherever possible - lone working is not advisable.

Stay aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts.

Leave immediately and inform us if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Keep in touch when working alone.

Contact us for advice or lone-working training.

Staying safe

Safeguarding

Everyone should be able to take part in sport and recreational activities in an enjoyable and safe environment, free from harm. Legislation places additional safeguarding duties on organisations to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

- Safeguarding those at risk is a shared responsibility.
- All children and adults at risk deserve to feel safe and must be protected from abuse and neglect.

You can find further guidance and read our safeguarding policies on our website [here](#).

Wellbeing and mental health

If you are feeling unwell or are experiencing any issues with your physical or mental health the please do reach out to your key staff contact or the volunteer support team, who will be able to signpost you to additional support.

Staying safe

Data protection

We take great care to protect your personal information and keep anything you share with us confidential. We follow our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act, and you can read our full policy [here](#).

We ask that you handle any personal or confidential information you come across, such as contact details for fellow volunteers, event participants, or land and horse owners - with the same level of care.

Safety briefings

If you volunteer with others at any of our BHS organised events, we will provide a full safety briefing before the activity starts.

The safety briefing helps make sure everyone feels confident, prepared, and protected. It gives you the key information you need to carry out your role safely, covering; potential risks, what to do in an emergency, and how to look after yourself and others. By taking a few moments to understand these guidelines, we can all help create a safe and supportive event.

Staying safe

Health & Safety policies

Keeping everyone safe is a shared responsibility, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

By following the guidance in this section and taking a moment to familiarise yourself with our key policies, you're helping create a positive, secure environment for all volunteers, participants and public. If you'd like to explore any topic in more detail, you can find our full Health & Safety, Risk Management, Safeguarding and other related policies [here](#).

Insurance

We hold [insurance](#) that covers you for any volunteering activities that we might ask you to complete.

Who to contact

Our Health, Safety and Environment Manager is

Samar Chakraborty

Email : samar.chakraborty@bhs.org.uk

Volunteer life

Resources

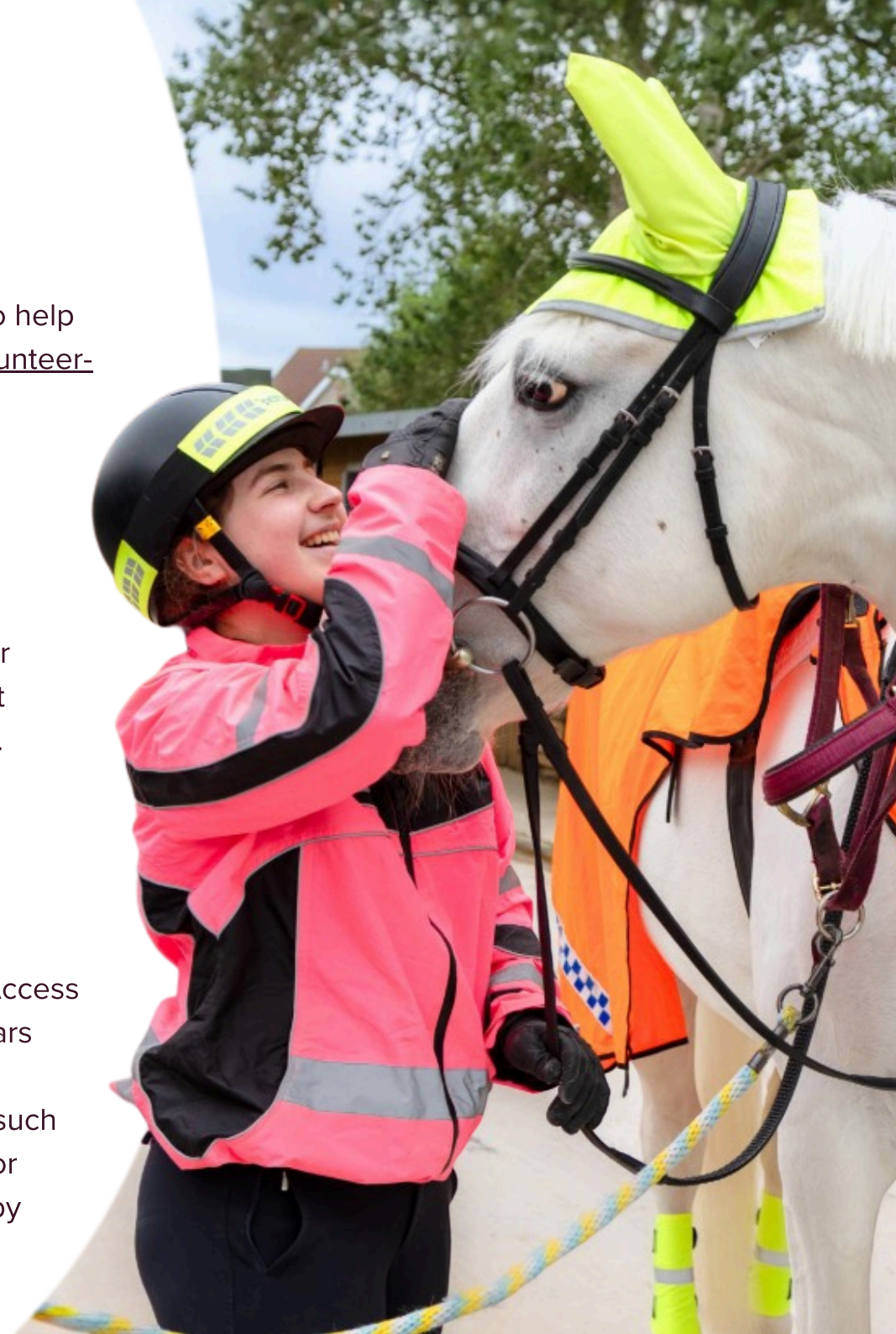
There is a handy hidden link on our website with lots of resources to help you in your volunteering - simply type and save www.bhs.org.uk/volunteer-resources into your browser.

Expenses

We want to make sure no volunteer is ever left out of pocket for any costs they incur while helping us. Recording expenses also helps us understand the real cost of running our activities and events, so your claims make a big difference. We encourage all volunteers to submit expenses promptly and accurately so we can reimburse you quickly. You can find the Expense Policy and claim form [here](#).

Training

We offer lots of training opportunities. Some are available to all volunteers, including Volunteer Welcome sessions and Equestrian Access training (use discount code VOL100). We also offer access to webinars and other courses of interest. Upcoming training opportunities are advertised in the volunteer newsletter. If you are in a specialist role such as Horse Care & Welfare, Friends at The End, Access & Bridleways or Equestrian Safety you will also receive bespoke training organised by your department.



Volunteer identification

To help you feel safe, confident, and part of the team, we offer an official photo ID badge and lanyard.

When you're supporting events or activities, we'll also provide you with branded high-visibility (Hi-Vis) clothing to wear on the day.

These items play an important role in helping you:

- Be easily recognised as a valued member of our team, so the public know who to approach.
- Stay safe, especially in busy or outdoor settings where visibility is key.
- Show a united, professional presence, reminding everyone that we're working together towards the same goals.

We simply ask that you wear your ID badge and/or Hi-Vis whenever you're representing us. All items are provided by the organisation, and we just ask that they're returned if you decide to step away from your role.

[Order](#) your badge and lanyard.



Thanks and recognition

Your time, energy, and passion make a huge difference, and we want you to feel valued and appreciated for everything you do. Every contribution helps us achieve our goals and support our community.

Local volunteering achievements are celebrated on social media, in newsletters, or in British Horse magazine. We will also recognise your volunteering commitment every 5 years and there are regular opportunities to nominate other volunteers (or be nominated yourself!) for our local 'You're a Gem' awards or national annual awards.



How to step back

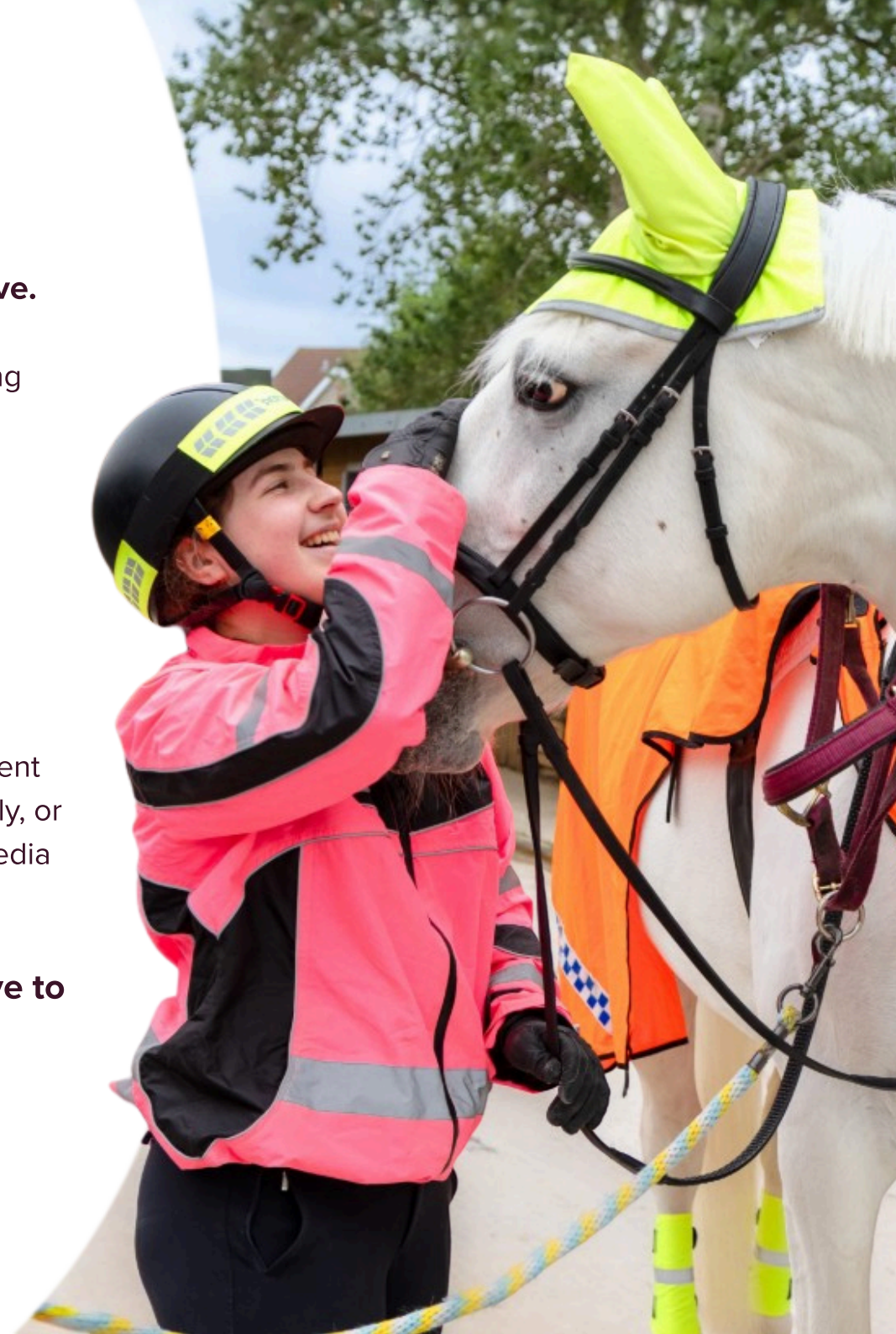
We completely understand that circumstances change, and we're grateful for all the time, energy, and enthusiasm you give.

If you ever decide that you're no longer able to continue volunteering with us, please just let us or your key contact know as soon as you can. Keeping us informed helps us plan ahead and continue supporting our volunteers and activities smoothly.

Other ways to stay involved

If stepping back completely isn't what you're looking for, there are plenty of other ways to stay involved. You might prefer to try a different volunteering role, just take a break, or maybe help out less frequently, or simply continue to support us by following and sharing our social media posts.

Every bit of involvement makes a difference, and we'd love to keep you connected in whatever way works best for you.





**British
Horse
Society**