

**Annex B****Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults  
and Their Protection**

Children and young people are the future of the horse industry and any child who is involved should be able to participate in a fun, safe environment, and be protected from harm. There is no doubt that involvement with horses, be it in a sporting or leisure context, can have a very powerful and positive influence on young people. Involvement with horses and equestrian sports provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement and it can also help to develop valuable qualities such as self-esteem, teamwork and leadership. These positive effects can only take place, however, if equestrian sport is in the right hands – those of professionals who have the welfare of young people at heart, and who operate within an accepted ethical framework.

The BEF (British Equestrian Federation) places the highest priority on safety and enjoyment, and recognises that it has a duty of care towards children within the horse industry.

Any organisation, establishment or individual providing riding or horse management opportunities must do so with the highest possible standard of care.

**This is a summary document and the full policy along with guidance and accompanying appendices is available to view and download at our website [www.bef.co.uk](http://www.bef.co.uk) or hard copy from the BEF.**

**The full document additionally provides information on recruitment, selection and training criteria, photography guidance, complaints and appeals procedures and useful exemplars templates for use by clubs and riding schools.**

**1. Objectives of British Equestrian Federation**

Everyone who participates within the Horse Industry is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and to be given the chance to experience the feelings of joy, challenge and achievement that are inherent to the sport. To ensure this, the British Equestrian Federation and all Member Bodies are committed to devising and implementing policies and procedures to ensure all those involved comply with the BEF Code of Good Practice.

In addition, all young people are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere – at home, at school, in the park and in sport. Sadly some people will seek to be in the company of children simply in order to abuse them. The BEF is committed to devising and implementing policies and procedures to ensure everyone in the sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to safeguard children and to report any concerns about their welfare. It is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place; this is the domain of child protection professionals; the social service and the police force.

This document sets out the BEF's policies and procedures in fulfilment of its belief in and commitment to good practice and child protection.

### 1.1 Policy Statement

The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) fully accepts its legal (Children's Act, 1989) and moral obligation to provide a duty of care, to protect all children (and vulnerable adults) and safeguard their welfare, irrespective of age, any disability they have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation. **NB:** The Children's Act 1989 does not apply in Scotland, see Section headed Child Protection relating to Scotland.

In pursuit of this, the BEF is committed to ensuring that:

- The welfare of young people (and vulnerable adults) is paramount and children have the right to protection from abuse
- All young people who take part in Equestrian Events should be able to participate in a fun and safe environment and in an atmosphere of fair play
- It takes all reasonable practical steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. **It is the responsibility of child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, but is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns**
- All approved riding schools and registered instructors are required to sign up to the BEF procedures for good practice and child protection that clearly state what is required of them
- All employees and volunteers are carefully selected, informed about their responsibilities and provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- High standards of behaviour and practice are demanded through compliance with BEF codes of conduct produced for instructors, proprietors and volunteers
- Everyone knows and accepts their responsibilities and works together: parents, riders, instructors, proprietors, volunteers, and professional staff.

## 2: Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

### 2.0 Introduction

To provide young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in riding, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. This not only ensures that Equestrianism makes a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, but also protects all personnel from false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to differentiate poor practice from abuse, albeit intentional or unintentional. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of employees or volunteers in Equestrianism to determine whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however,

their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of a child. This section will help you identify what is meant by good and poor practice and some of the indications of possible abuse. Guidance on what to do if you are concerned about poor practice or possible abuse is provided in Section 4.

## **2.1 Good Practice**

All personnel should adhere to the following principles:

- Ensure experience at Equestrian Events is fun and enjoyable; promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.
- Be an excellent role model, do not drink alcohol or smoke when working with young people.
- Treat all young people and vulnerable adults equally; this means giving both the more and less talented in a group similar attention, time, respect and dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and place their welfare before winning, club or personal achievements. This means ensuring that the training intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional development stage of the rider and that all BEF guidelines for training intensity and competition are followed. Ensure training and competition schedules are based on the needs and interests of the child, not those of the parents, instructors or club.
- Wherever possible conduct all training and meetings in an open environment; and endeavour to avoid one-to-one coaching in unobserved situations.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with riders; it is inappropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person. The BEF supports the Home Office guidelines that recommend that people in positions of authority should not have sexual relationships with 16-17 year olds in their care. One adult should never share a room with one young person. Occasionally situations may occur when a number of young people and adults share a common sleeping area i.e. Pony Club Camp – although this is not recommended. Always ensure that parents' permission is gained in writing beforehand and riders are given an opportunity in advance to discuss this, air any concerns and agree the logistics of the sleeping arrangements.
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making. Avoid situations in which the instructor or team manager uses their position and power to dictate what the rider should and should not do.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people; if contact is required in teaching technique, follow the specific guidelines laid down by that sport governing body. Touching can be okay and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the rider's permission has been given.
- Ensure separate changing facilities are available for riders. Where supervision is required, involve parents wherever possible and ensure that adults work in pairs.
- Communicate regularly with parents, involve them in decision-making and gain written consent for travel arrangements. Secure their consent in writing

to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

- Be aware of any medical conditions, food intolerances, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Ensure you are qualified and up to date in first aid or that there is someone with a first aid qualification in attendance. (**Appendix J**).
- Keep up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance issues within the BEF. Maintain your registration status for this ensures adequate and continuous insurance cover.
- When riders travel away from home, ensure the guidance contained in the NSPCC publication: **Safe Sports Events** is understood and followed. In particular, if mixed teams are taken away, ensure they are accompanied by a male and female member of staff and safeguard them from the potential of same gender abuse. Adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children on their own into their own rooms. (**Appendix L**).

## 2.2 Poor Practice

The following is deemed to constitute poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with one child away from the others.
- Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never share a room with a child.
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Never allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Never make sexual suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Never invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Taking children alone on car journeys.

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the person in charge, the child's parent or the Governing Body CPO. If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague, make a written note of the event and inform parents of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a rider.
- If a child seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

To prevent the possibility of allegations, adopt the BEF code of conduct and follow this advice

- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with riders; do not allow an intimate relationship to develop and avoid horseplay and sexually suggestive language.
- Always work in an open environment; try to avoid private locations and/or one-to-one teaching in unobserved situations. However in the case of freelance instructors this may be unavoidable and effort should be made to ensure the instructor/pupil has a companion.
- Involve parents whenever possible; when travelling ensure adults work in pairs and never share a room with a child.
- Follow the BEF's code of conduct and the recommended procedures if you have concerns about the welfare of a child.
- Gain further child protection awareness and knowledge.

### 2.3 Indicators of Abuse and Bullying

Definitions of what constitutes abuse and bullying are described in **Appendix C**. Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. Becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working in sport to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns (see section 4.3)

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons

(e.g. being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture). Although bullying often takes place in schools, it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision. The competitive nature of Equestrian Events provides a potentially ideal environment for a bully to gain power over others. The bully might be:

- An Instructor/Trainer who adopts a *win-at-all-costs* philosophy.
- An official or parent who places unfair pressure on a person (e.g. Will never be selected for team again/threatening to sell pony).

Signs of bullying (dealing with bullying is dealt with in 4.5) include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to training or competitions
- An unexplained drop-off in performance
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

## REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS IN RELATION TO A MEMBER OF STAFF OR VOLUNTEER

