



Equine Welfare Steering Group Action Plan

2026-2028

As responsible members of the equestrian community, we pledge to the Charter of the Horse for the ethical and fair treatment of all horses and other equids under our care.

ABOUT US

British Equestrian (BEF) is the national federation for horse sports in Great Britain, affiliated to the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI), the international governing body of equestrian sports. We exist to provide leadership, vision and purpose in steering the direction of equestrianism.

We are an umbrella organisation representing the interests of over three million riders, vaulters and carriage drivers via 19 independent member bodies.

FOUNDING MEMBERS



MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



THE CHARTER FOR THE HORSE

We have uncompromising commitment to the guardianship of the horse as our guiding principle. In March 2024, together with our member bodies, we commissioned and signed a unified [Charter for the Horse](#).

The Charter is a pledge to be adopted by across the equestrian sector to underpin our commitment to safeguarding the mental and physical wellbeing of our equids throughout their lives.

All 19 of the British Equestrian member bodies have signed up to the Charter and we collectively work towards the highest standards in the six key areas of:

- Empathy
- Care
- Respect
- Consideration
- Ethics
- Learning

British Equestrian

THE CHARTER FOR THE HORSE

As responsible members of the equestrian community, we pledge to this charter for the ethical and fair treatment of all horses and other equids under our care.

- Empathy**
Recognising horses are intelligent and emotional beings, we always prioritise their mental and physical health and overall wellbeing.
- Care**
Throughout their entire life, during exercise and rest, we offer horses a secure and suitable setting to create positive experiences that address their social, behavioural, nutritional and physical needs for a high quality of life.
- Respect**
Through compassionate, mindful, patient and empathetic interaction, we foster positive relationships with horses based on trust and respect.
- Consideration**
Each horse is an individual, and we strive to understand and meet their specific needs, including how they learn. We don't push horses beyond their health, fitness or ability levels, and we never let competitive or commercial influences compromise their welfare.
- Ethics**
In all our equine interactions, whether for leisure, training or sport, we adhere to the highest standards of equine welfare, safety, equipment, veterinary care and biosecurity, always guided by ethical principles.
- Learning**
Through continuously improving our equine knowledge, we evolve our behaviours based on education and informed advice from qualified professionals and the broader equestrian community.

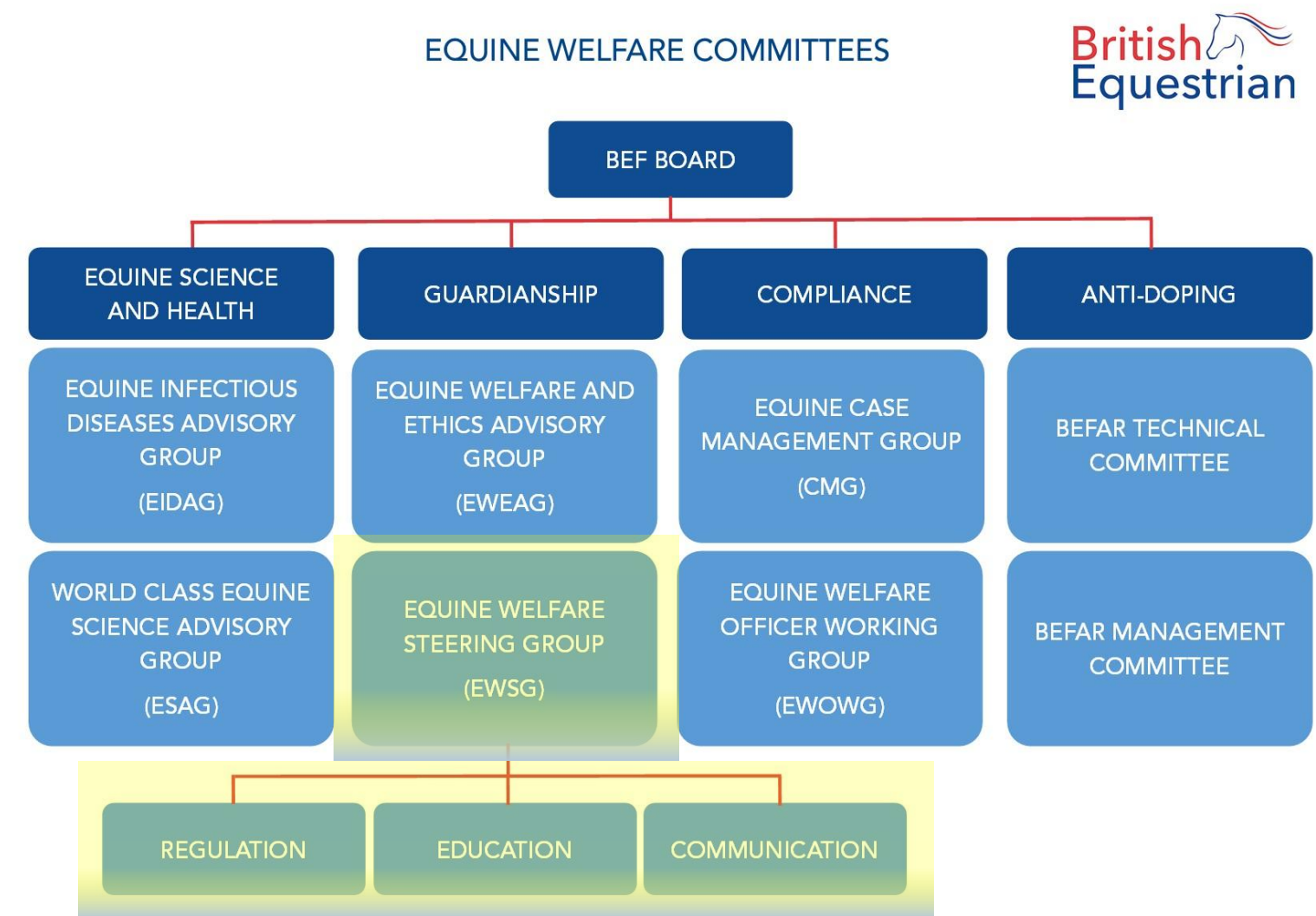
THE CHARTER IN ACTION

Under the [Charter for the Horse](#), we celebrate the positive horse-human interactions that equestrian sport and activity can offer. We also recognise that public acceptance is built on trust.

We are proud that the [2025-2030 British Equestrian Strategy](#) includes the strategic objective of **establishing Great Britain as a leading nation** where we are recognised for:

- our equine-centric approach
- high ethical and welfare standards
- zero tolerance towards abuse
- public trust to self-regulate.

To meet this objective, we operate a number of welfare groups benefitting from expertise across the equestrian sector, working on topics from equine disease to anti-doping.

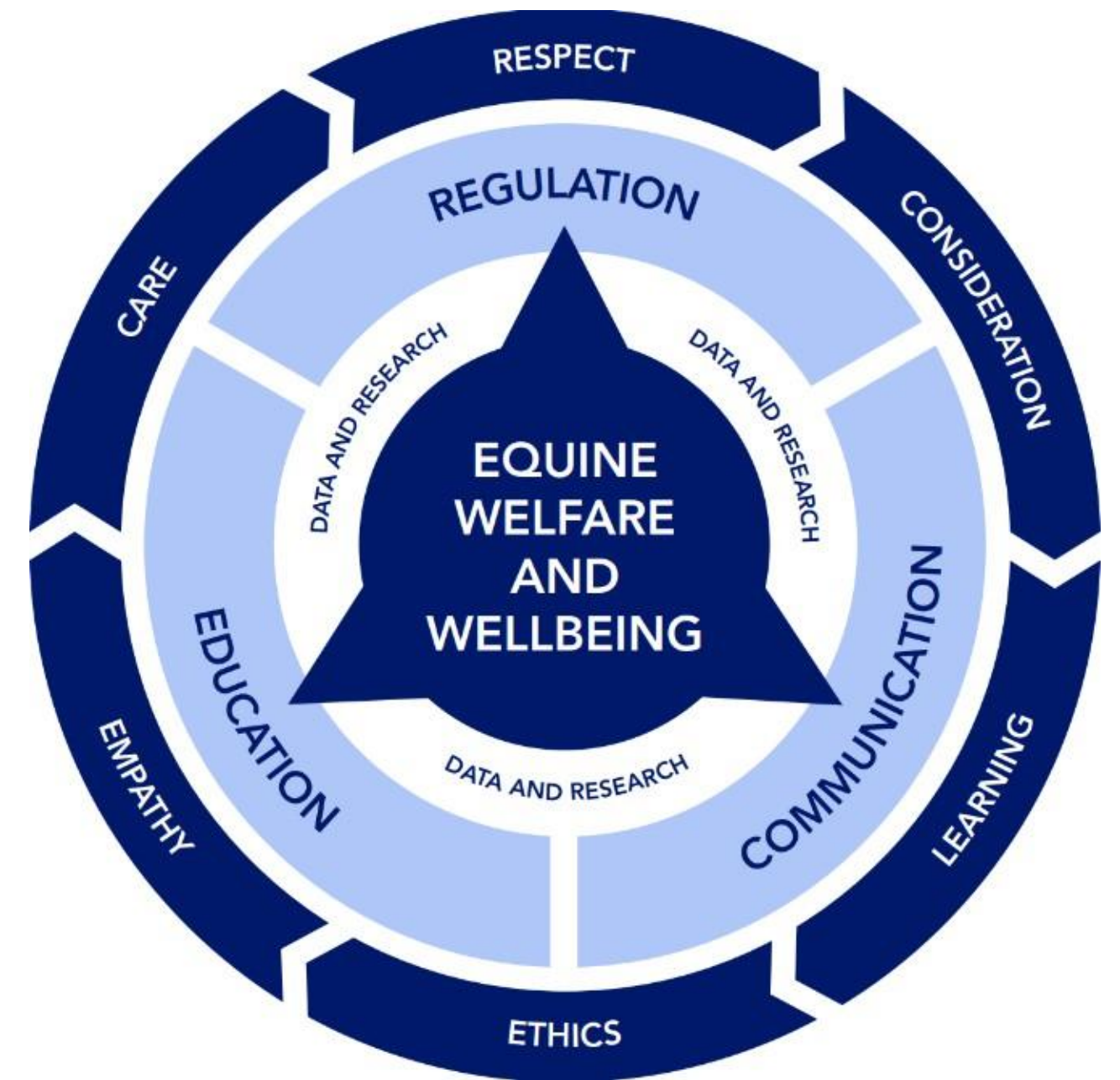


EQUINE WELFARE STEERING GROUP

The **Equine Welfare Steering Group** (EWSG) is the group responsible for this Action Plan. The EWSG runs three key workstreams; **regulation**, **education** and **communication**, with each stream having a dedicated taskforce made up of member body representatives and BEF staff.

This Action Plan shares the objectives and progress of those taskforces against our arching objectives to:

- Deliver good governance and regulation, upholding the highest standards of welfare in all equine activities under our jurisdiction.
- Ensure a continuous cycle of insight, evolution and education in our guardianship of horses.
- Build engagement, credibility and trust in the equestrian sector so we remain legitimate, relevant and sustainable.
- Demonstrate the social importance and relevance of horses to society in Great Britain.



EQUINE WELFARE STEERING GROUP

The **three steering group taskforces of regulation, education and communication** have set short/medium term priority aims which underpin this action plan.

REGULATION

- Embed the new rules, policies and Code of Conduct into member body disciplinary structures.
- Develop cross-federation case management for reported equine welfare concerns.
- Develop centralised reporting of equine fatalities.
- Ensure registration of competing horses.

EDUCATION

- Identify gaps in current equine welfare education via systemic mapping across member bodies.
- Consider stakeholder requirements (e.g. coaches, riders, owners).
- Interpret and share evidence-informed content across the federation.
- Monitor research on the equine positive affective state.

COMMUNICATION

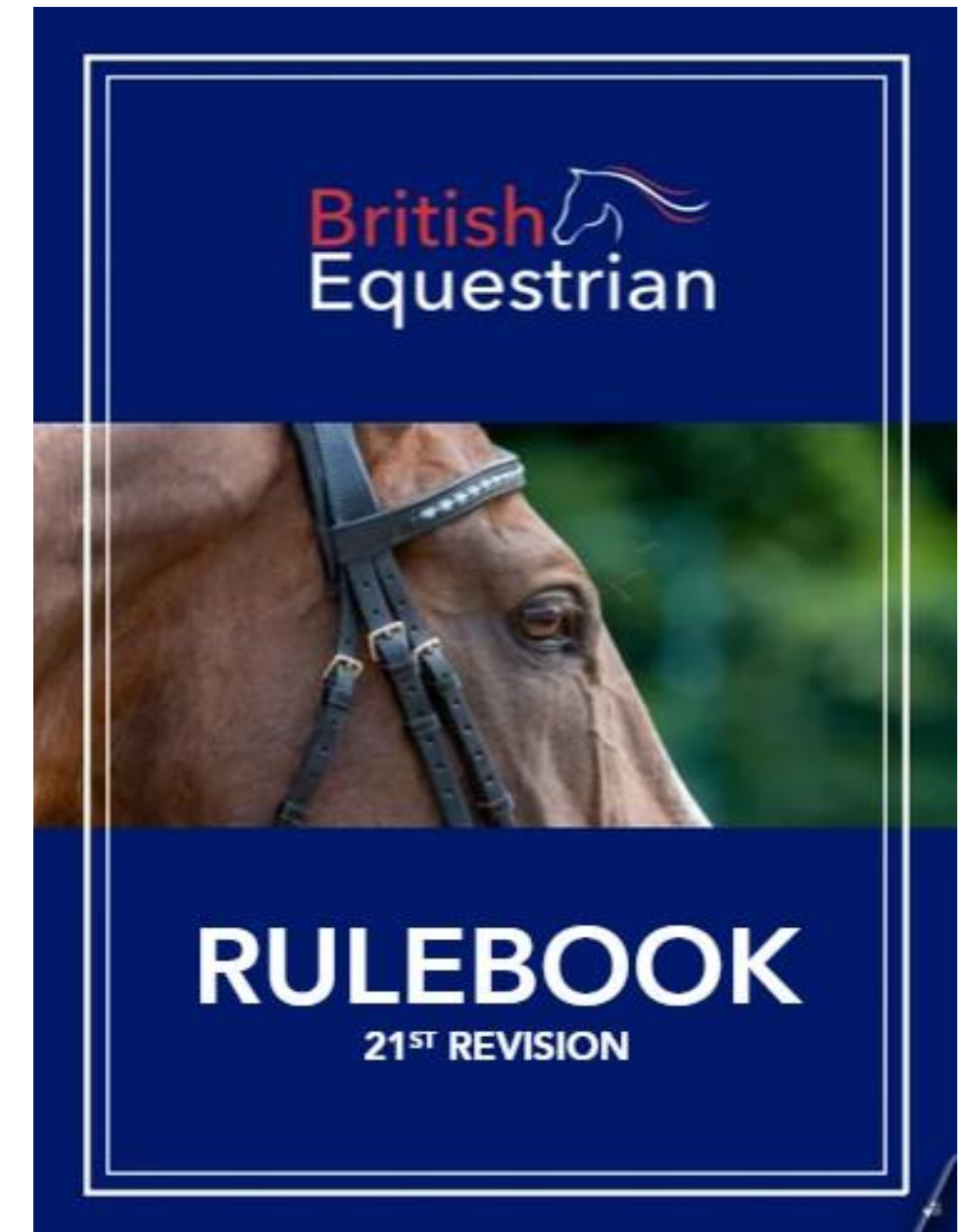
- Embed cross-federation harmonised approach to awareness, education and telling our stories.
- Develop crisis toolkits for member bodies including templates.
- Identify and empower member body representatives as advocates and spokespeople and support with resources and training.

WELFARE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Each member body of the BEF is responsible for their own specific equine welfare rules and disciplinary processes, including sanctioning any of their members (participants) who breach their rules.

By signing up to be a member body of the BEF, each organisation agrees to abide by the **BEF Rulebook**. This requires them to have equine welfare policies which are in substantial conformity with the BEF's own **equine welfare policy**.

If a member body fails to meet their requirements under the BEF Rulebook, they face sanctions which can include being removed from membership of the federation.



WELFARE FRAMEWORK

As part of the EWSG work, each relevant member body has a nominated **Equine Welfare Officer** who is their point of contact for reported breaches of the equine welfare rules. Equine Welfare Officers across the federation meet regularly to share best practice, supported by the BEF's Integrity Team.

When equine welfare concerns get reported, they can be logged on a secure and centralised database overseen by the BEF's Integrity Team and supported by their **Case Management Group (CMG)** which includes independent veterinary and intelligence experts.

This means that where a perpetrator of equine abuse is involved in more than one federation activity, member bodies can now work more closely together to uphold our commitment that being part of the federation means zero tolerance to abuse.



EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 – 28

This plan specifically charts the aims, actions and progress of the EWSG and its taskforces in our continuous mission to safeguard the equines in our care.

It forms an integral part of the wider equine welfare work across the federation, within the BEF and through our member bodies, as well as supporting the aims outlined in the **FEI's equine welfare strategy action plan**.

With regular review periods, this document will be updated at least annually, with additional items added as the groups progress their work and identify new aims.



EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
1. Embed the relevant equine welfare BEF rules, policies and code of conduct into all activity	1.1 Incorporate requirements on clear disciplinary processes as a condition of BEF membership, including providing for reciprocal sanctions.	Regulation	Q4 2026	Developing disciplinary procedures guidance
	1.2 Develop and implement self-assurance checklist for member bodies on embedding BEF equine welfare requirements.	Regulation	Q4 2025	Complete
2. Develop cross-federation case management procedures and tools for reported equine welfare concerns.	2.1 Develop and launch a centralised and cross-federation digital case management database.	Regulation	Q2 2025	Complete
	2.2 All member bodies to nominate an Equine Welfare Officer (EWO) to act as a first point of contact for case management.	Regulation	Q2 2025	Complete
	2.3 Agree Memorandum of Understanding and data sharing agreements for all member bodies for responding to equine welfare concerns/reports.	Regulation	Q2 2026	Ongoing with MBs
	2.4 Set up Case Management Group with independent expertise to support EWOs.	Regulation	Q2 2026	Complete

EWSG ACTION PLAN 2025 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
3. Registration of all competing horses under the auspices of the federation members.	3.1 Introduce mandatory registration of competing horses (as well as people) with MBs who host competition activities.	Regulation	Q4 2026	Working on process with MBs
	3.2 Encourage participants to meet with their legal requirements to update Passport Issuing Offices with ownership details to support the Central Equine Database.	Regulation	Q4 2026	Working on process with MBs
	3.3 Analyse data sets for trends (e.g. career duration) to inform risk register.	Regulation	Q4 2027	Implement once registration is in place
4. Develop centralised reporting of equine fatalities in all federation activity.	4.1 Develop and launch an online form to be completed in the event of an equine fatality in either competition or at a member body training event.	Regulation	Q2 2025	Completed soft launch in throughout 2025
	4.2 Trial and review the process with final launch for 2026 competition season.	Regulation/Comms	Trial 2025 Review Q4 2025 Launch Q1 2026	Completed
	4.3 Use data from reporting to analyse trends, shape mitigation strategies and inform risk register.	Regulation	Q4 2026	Ongoing through 2026

EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
5. Improve our understanding of the horse - behaviours, learning, wellbeing, basic needs.	5.1 Interpret and share verified research on key areas like equine learning theory, measures of welfare and the positive affective state in horses.	Education/ Comms	Q4 2026	Identifying and shaping currently available papers.
6. Expand equine anti-doping to promote ethical practice for the use of horses in activity.	6.1 Develop and launch a set of principles for MBs to be applied across all federation activities on the appropriate use of medications in horses.	Regulation	Q2 2026	Final draft now approved. Circulate among MBs.
	6.2 Develop a programme to allow non-FEI disciplines to take part in equine anti-doping testing under BEFAR rules.	Regulation	Q1 2027	In discussion with relevant MBs.
	6.3 Continue educational and awareness activity across the BEF channels with MBs.	Comms	Q1 - Q4 2026	Ongoing through 2026
7. Create an effective network to share best welfare practice to promote knowledge and understanding around current equine welfare.	7.1 Review materials from other jurisdictions and sports on welfare as they emerge to ensure Great Britain can benefit from the latest developments and innovations.	Education/ Comms	Q4 2026	Ongoing through 2026

EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
8. Support the integration of equine welfare /behaviour education across the federation for coaches, officials and volunteers.	8.1 Conduct a survey to understand the current education provision to coaches, including ethical training and equine welfare content.	Education	Q3 2025	Complete
	8.2 Conduct a survey to understand how each member body provides training and education to officials and coaches.	Education	Q3 2025	Complete
	8.3 Embed equine welfare principles into core qualifications for coaches.	Regulation	Q3 2026	Launched June with work ongoing with MBs
	8.4 Work with member bodies to ensure appropriate pathways between qualifications.		Q4 2026	Work ongoing with MBs
9. Create a library of communications resources for member bodies to promote strong, positive equine welfare in their comms and media relations.	9.1 Develop a practical language and style guide for copy writing, videography and photography.	Communications	Q2 2026	Final drafts in development
	9.2 Provide templates and key messaging lines, including shared policy positions.	Communications	Q2 2026	Final drafts in development
	9.3 Develop guidance on responding to negative interactions on social media in proactive, transparent manner.	Communications	Q2 2026	Final drafts in development

EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
10. Improve welfare storytelling and positive equine welfare developments across all media within the federation and wider industry.	10.1 Utilise the cross-federation communications group and wider 'Horses in Society' comms group to share and amplify positive welfare related stories across the network.	Communications	Q1 - Q4 2026	Work ongoing with MBs and relevant stakeholders
	10.2 Work with MBs on to best understand audiences, how to influence effectively and create audience appropriate comms.	Communications	Q3 - Q4 2026	Scoping workshops
	10.3 Develop and deliver a federation wide welfare specific planning document for communications to raise awareness and educate including collaborative content.	Communications	Q2 2026 (plan) Q4 2026 (delivery)	Work ongoing with MBs
11. Create a directory of spokespeople for the federation around welfare, veterinary, training and sport.	11.1 Compile a list of spokespeople with expert knowledge in key areas, provide media training where required and shape key messages /statistics /evidence /facts for their use.	Communications	Q2 2026	Ongoing development with potential budge requirement
	11.2 Explore the use of dedicated veterinary and welfare experts at large-scale events to act as media liaison. BHA has done this with good effect.	Communications	Q2 2026	Liaising with events and personnel - potential budget requirement

EWSG ACTION PLAN 2026 - 28

Aim	Action	Lead	Timeline	Status
12. Improve the federation's preparedness to manage a serious incident/crisis management (SICM) relating to equine welfare.	12.1 Establish and circulate protocols and communication flow for a SICM situation within the federation.	Communications	Q3 2025	Complete
	12.2 Develop a tool kit for member bodies to build crisis management plans and related communications plans including templates.	Communications	Q3 2026	Complete
	12.3 Provide webinars and follow up sessions to assist member bodies in developing their SICM plans and reviewing any incidents to share learnings.	Communications	Q4 2026	Work ongoing with MBs Initial webinar held in November 2025
	12.4 Run simulated SICM events as a desk exercise for member bodies to test out their crisis response plans and learn from one another.	Regulation/ Comms	Q4 2026	Annual event. Cross-federation event held in November 2025

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

BEF - British Equestrian

BEFAR - British Equestrian Federation anti-doping rules

BHA - British Horse Racing Authority

CMG - Case Management Group

EWSG - Equine Welfare Steering Group

EWO - Equine Welfare Officer

FEI - Fédération Équestre Internationale

MB - member body

SICM - serious incident and crisis management



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