

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE

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Horse Riding Policy

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2. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

This policy document is based on the NPCC Mounted Rural Deployment Guidance framework relating to Police Support Volunteers riding privately owned horses in rural areas.

The police use of Police Service Volunteers on privately owned, trained and managed horses in rural and other low risk environments is covered by this guidance based upon their effective use in Avon & Somerset Constabulary and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Riders must either own their own horse or have full and regular use of a horse as if in their ownership and written permission from the owner for this activity. Riders must have suitable riding skills to patrol in rural areas when routinely exercising their animals.

The key elements relating to this scheme are:

- Low risk areas
- High visibility
- Patrol of areas not normally accessed by police
- Cost effective
- Increased public confidence
- Satisfaction and motivation of volunteers
- Not an FCR deployment or dispatch resource, except in assisting to locate missing persons in remote rural areas

The value and benefits of this additional resource are significant however it is important for police service reputation and duty of care (to staff and the general public) that an appropriate set of competences and standards are in place for the horse, rider and riding location to ensure they are safe, lawful and effective in their role.

This Guidance relates to the use of privately owned horses familiar to their riders, undertaking rural riding, including urban parkland areas. Riding in any other environment or circumstance will require additional risk assessment.

The implementation of new resources inevitably brings with it certain risks; it is therefore important that these are identified, assessed and mitigated wherever possible. This document offers policy guidance to reduce the following key risks:

- Suitability and competency of the horse –the nature, training and preparation of the animal
- The equestrian competency of the rider
- Upholding professional standards of the rider
- Inappropriate tasking and failing to meet expectations

LOW RISK

Ensuring activity undertaken by riders is low risk is a key element of the scheme. Low risk includes:

- Within the rider's comfort zone; what the rider is used to
- Within the rider's normal capabilities
- Non-confrontational
- Suitable weather conditions in which the rider would normally ride out
- with good visibility and road conditions
- Ensuring rider has booked on (via Duty Sheet)
- Riding in a pair with another competent rider or alone but not in a big group.
- In a manner that does not increase the risk (i.e. do not lead a child on a pony, ride out with a youngster or inexperienced rider or try out new equipment for the first time whilst participating in scheme activities)

Riders should take all reasonable steps to reduce the level of risk they face whilst participating in this scheme.

3. Legislative Compliance

This document has been drafted to comply with the principals of the Human Rights Act. Proportionality has been identified as the key to Human Rights compliance, this means striking a fair balance between the rights of the individuals and those of the rest of the community. There must be a reasonable relationship between the aim to be achieved and the means used.

Equality and Diversity issues have also been considered to ensure compliance with Equal Opportunities legislation and policies. In addition, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Health Safety issues have been considered. Adherence to this policy or procedure will therefore ensure compliance with all legislation and internal policies.

4. Policy Statement

STANDARDS OF COMPETENCY

To help manage risk and ensure that both riders and horses are operating to a suitable standard of competence for this scheme, the following standards must be maintained:

- Rider is competent on the highway, checking traffic, road positioning and hand signals up to the
- Pass level of what was the BHS road safety exam which is now obsolete
- Horse and rider to have passed the ACPO Mounted Rural Deployment Horse and Rider Skill Assessment (see **Police Volunteer on Horseback Assessment Form** in the following folder W:\HQ Wootton Hall\Rural Crime Team\Rural Watch), to be assessed by Volunteer on Horseback project Officer who must hold the BHS Riding and Stable Management Certificate Stage 4 or equivalent) . It is important that rider and horse combination are assessed together to minimise risk. A change of horse or adverse incident will require a further assessment prior to continuing with scheme activities.

Scheme members are encouraged to undertake Continual Professional Development (CPD) by increasing their riding competence or expanding their knowledge and engagement with the Police Service or its partners. This may include, for instance, attending regular briefings/meetings with your local policing team and taking training courses offered to them for example Search and Rescue Techniques.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Compliance with the Police Service Code of Ethics and the maintenance of professional standards of those riding horses in rural areas is important to protect the reputation and credibility of all concerned, including members of the public. These standards include:

- Behaviour
- Uniform and equipment
- Induction
- Riding out

BEHAVIOUR

Scheme members are representing the Police Service and its partners and should at all times behave in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics.

Scheme members should also consider who they ride out with when undertaking the scheme. Whilst undertaking scheme duties, scheme members should not ride out with anyone who might present increased risk to the scheme member or the reputation of the wider programme.

UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

Volunteers:

- Safety riding hat, to be provided by the rider to one of the following standards:
PAS 015; ASTM F1163; SNELLE2001;
Hats bearing EN1384 or BSED1384 are acceptable ONLY if they also carry one of the other standards listed above.
- Correct safe riding boots, breeches or jodhpurs supplied by the rider.
- Suitable high visibility jacket/blouson to BS EN 471 standard supplied by police uniform stores.
- Be in possession of a fully charged mobile phone whilst riding

Optional items available, subject to suitability for the horse:

- High visibility and reflective horse exercise sheet and reflective horse leg bands supplied by the rider

INDUCTION

Before commencing induction, the volunteers are checked for NPPV Level 1 vetting and will only continue into scheme on clearance from the vetting unit.

Inductions are undertaken by the volunteers on horseback project officer covering:

- Aims and Objectives of the scheme
- Code of Ethics
- Data Protection requirements and obligations
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity
- This policy and associated risk assessments
- Local awareness
- Other relevant policies and procedures
- Capturing intelligence
- Phone communication and contact procedures
- Principles of being a good witness

Police Service Volunteers (PSV) will require more time to cover these topics as some may be unfamiliar.

RIDING OUT

Riding under this scheme should support hi-visibility and public reassurance aims to help reduce crime, gather intelligence and provide a visible policing presence across communities that might otherwise see limited visible policing. Particular care should be taken when horse and rider are attending new locations (see risk assessments below); the final decision should always be with the rider in line with their horse capabilities and insurance. No riding under this scheme shall take place until the full induction is completed.

Before commencing duty, riders must book on as follows:

- **Volunteers:** Book on via Duty Sheet

Duty Sheet is a valuable internet-based communication tool that enables the local sergeant and the Volunteers Coordinator to communicate with Volunteers engaged with this programme. Duty Sheet can be used to communicate patrol information.

It is not intended that riders will deploy or dispatch to incidents or engage with any activity that may place them or their horse at risk. In the unlikely event of coming across an incident, riders should act as professional witnesses and make a prompt report to the Force Control Room (FCR), taking reasonable steps to safeguard themselves and others.

Key points to be considered in a patrol plan are:

Volunteers: In accordance with the risk assessments, volunteers can be asked to ride in a specified area. The final decision as to whether to ride a horse in these circumstances will ALWAYS rest with the individual; they will not be expected to carry out any activity on horseback, or ride in any area they are not entirely comfortable with or which the horse is unsuited to. It is anticipated that the majority of the duty will be carried out whilst exercising their horse in their local community, providing a highly visible presence in that area. Volunteers will not be deployed or dispatched to incidents by the FCR.

INSURANCE

All riders are covered by Force insurance in respect of injury to them or damage to property belonging to others resulting from involvement within this scheme. Members of the public are also covered by Force public liability insurance for incidents occurring whilst riding under this scheme. Riders are responsible for ensuring adequate insurance cover is in place for their horse and their own property if they hold a policy. Riders should sign the insurance acknowledgement prior to joining this scheme and should inform their insurers that they are joining the scheme

YOURS AND HORSE WELFARE

The welfare of the horse is the responsibility of the rider; the rider must take responsibility for the welfare of their horse before and during riding.

The amount of exercise your horse requires will depend on your horse's age, breed, discipline, etc. Discuss this with your instructor and vet to come up with an exercise program. Your horse must have at least one full day rest per week. It is recommended that riders do not exceed 2 hours riding per duty.

Check your horse for signs of injury and illness before you conduct your tour of duty, and only ride should your horse be fit and able to do so, consulting a vet if required.

Worm and vaccinate your horse against equine influenza and tetanus regularly this is compulsory if attending affiliated equine competitions but not otherwise. You may also consider vaccinating against equine herpes virus and strangles.

Riders need to be able to recognise lameness. If your horse becomes lame it should not be worked and you should consult your vet.

Inspect hooves and shoes before your tour of duty, including the underside of the foot. Overgrown or unbalanced hooves can cause severe discomfort and damage to the internal structure of the feet, legs and back.

Your horse should be seen by a farrier registered with the Farriers' Registration Council every four to six weeks, even if they are unshod.

Get teeth checked by an equine vet or qualified equine dental technician at least annually.

Poorly fitting tack can cause injury and pain. All tack should be checked before your tour of duty for proper fit and properly maintained.

If a horse is travelling it is suggested to make frequent stops (every two to three hours) to offer your horse water when travelling. This will help the horse not only stay hydrated but also tolerate travelling

for long periods of time.

Weather conditions –risk assess yours and your horse’s safety if considering riding in; extreme heat, ice/snow/freezing temps, fog/poor visibility, and do not ride when unsafe to do so.

POLICY OWNERSHIP AND CONSULTATION

The Prevention and Community Protection Department, with the expertise of the Rural Crime Team will have ownership and oversight of the scheme on behalf of the force, to ensure consistency, compliance and standards are maintained along with the Volunteers of Horseback coordinator within the Specials and Volunteers team

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Only the combination of horse and rider assessed under this scheme are covered by this policy. Other combinations are not permitted.

This scheme anticipates that the majority of riding hours will take place at times and locations the rider and horse routinely ride out and for durations that the horse and rider are used to. This ensures that rider and horse are familiar with the environment and any tasks required of them.

Where riding is to take place at times or locations unfamiliar to the horse and rider, specific risk assessments should be considered to identify and mitigate any particular risks that may be present.

The following generic risk assessments are in place to support this scheme:

- Volunteers on horseback

5. Monitoring and review

The senior owner will review the content of this guidance annually to ensure that this is relevant and up to date. The author has agreed that this document will be reviewed within 12 months of the effective date.

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