

EQUUSTRONG UK INFORMATION, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Welcome! Equustrong UK has developed the following policies and procedures.

OUR MISSION

Equustrong UK embraces the power of the horse, through Equine-assisted Services, to promote well-being and community inclusion for current and former Uniformed Public Service Workers.

OUR VISION

A community where everyone has equal and immediate access to the power of equine-assisted services and the lifelong benefits this provides to individuals, families, and their networks. This is achieved through a dynamic and harmonious relationship between people and horses.

OUR POLICY REGARDING PARTICIPATION IN / DISCHARGE FROM EQUINE-ASSISTED SERVICES

Recognising that equine related activities hold inherent risks. All prospective participants will be evaluated to ensure a safe and beneficial experience. The following criteria must be met:

- Participants for ridden or ground lessons must be at least 4 years of age.
- Participants / parents / guardians / volunteers / staff must complete, sign, and date all paperwork including releases, prior to participation. These forms must be updated annually. Note: Complete paperwork, containing all required signatures must be received and approved by Equustrong UK before the first day of an activity or lesson. Participants who turn in paperwork on the first day of lessons may not be allowed to participate that week. Lessons will be forfeited if paperwork is late or incomplete.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Equustrong UK considers / accepts participants or volunteers regardless of income, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic origin, gender identity or sexual orientation.

ELIGIBILITY

EAS (Equine-assisted Services) may not be suitable for all individuals with or without disabilities. Upon reviewing completed paperwork and evaluating prospective participants,

the Equustrong UK Programme Director / Equustrong Staff will decide regarding participation in Equine-assisted services. Returning participants will be re-evaluated annually or as necessary for changes in medical, physical, cognitive and behavioural status, and Equustrong UK must be notified of any changes. Our professional staff will assess participant involvement with a risk / benefit analysis (benefit to participant exceeds any potential risk associated with EAS) during an intake evaluation.

Requirements for EAS include, but are not limited to:

- Physically able to sit independently, symmetrically with torso upright and legs astride the horse during dynamic movement; this includes adequate head and neck control to maintain proper alignment.
- Tolerate a safety hat / helmet which meets one of the standards approved by the BHS (British Horse Society). A copy of the approved standards is available on request.
- Behave in a manner that is safe for self, horses and others.
- Ability to accommodate the movement of the horse without pain or risk of harm.

Equustrong UK instructors / staff will make final determination for participation based on the intake evaluation and on available resources such as: class availability, volunteer availability, and instructor expertise or horse suitability.

If an individual is discharged from participation, Equustrong UK will provide a reason for discharge. Reasons for discharge might include, but are not limited to the following:

- Participant progresses to a level of skill such that they may be better served by a riding school for individuals without disabilities or special needs.
- Participant's mobility or weight prevents centre personnel from serving client safely.
- Participant's status or behaviour becomes a threat to the safety of self, horses or others.
- Centre does not have suitable horse or pony for participant.
- Centre personnel cannot safely manage the participant in any situation including an emergency dismount or transfer from wheelchair or ramp / block.

Alternatives to mounted lessons may be offered to individuals who may not be best served by ridden lessons. These might include participating in ground lessons or yard activities. Equustrong UK reserves the right to discontinue an individual's participation in any program should it be deemed to be in the best interest of either the participant or Equustrong UK.

OUR CENTRE SERVICES

Partnering with our horses, services and programmes are developed to foster a community environment that promotes learning, inclusion, respect & independence.

- **Riding** - Student goals include grooming, horsemanship, tacking skills (yard lesson), and horseback riding skills.
- **Unmounted Horsemanship** – ground lessons in grooming, horse care and behaviour, stable management, horsemanship, etc. These lessons or sessions typically take place on the yard and sometimes the arena.

LESSON DESCRIPTION

All equine-assisted services are planned for safety and therapeutic benefit with the individual's educational, physical, social, emotional and / or recreational goals in mind. Participants with similar goals may be grouped together. Lessons may include warm-up exercises, skill development, activities or games to reinforce goals, and hacking. Some lessons / activities may take place on the yard or on the ground, thus are unmounted. Upon arrival for a lesson or session, participants should wait in the designated waiting area. A staff member will greet participants before moving onto the yard. This is for the safety of humans and equines.

Classes may be individual (up to 30-40 minutes) or group (up to 60 minutes) depending on participant needs and schedule availability.

Weight Considerations: Weight is generally limited to 185 pounds (84 kilogrammes) for adaptive riding, but decisions regarding participation will be based on current resources including the availability of a suitable horse relative to the height, cognition, balance and / or behaviour of the participant. The results of a risk / benefit analysis will also be considered. Due to the nature of therapeutic (adaptive) riding and associated activities, it may be deemed inappropriate for some individuals.

Equine-assisted services are contraindicated (inadvisable):

- 1) If staff / volunteers are unable to safely manage the participant in any situation, including an emergency dismount or transfer from a wheelchair or mounting ramp.
- 2) If staff / volunteers cannot manage participant behaviours (including any mal-adaptive or extreme behaviours) with verbal prompts and / or light touch.
- 3) If safety, comfort or well-being of staff, volunteers or the horse is compromised in any way for any reason.
- 4) If medically inappropriate based on PATH Intl. guidelines, precautions, contraindications.

CURRENT FEE SCHEDULE

Our current fee schedule may be viewed by logging in to your ECPPro account. Payment is due prior to the start of each session unless the participant has a Fee Exemption approved by Equustrong UK's Finance Department. Fees are subject to change. The actual cost per student considerably higher than the Fees charged, however participants are asked to pay only a portion of this amount. See Fee Assistance for more information in cases of financial hardship.

ADDITIONAL FEE ASSISTANCE

Our policy at Equustrong UK is never to turn anyone away because of the inability to pay session fees. To help ensure this, our session fees are reduced from their actual cost for every participant. Equustrong UK is extremely thankful that reduced fees and additional fee assistance are made possible by gifts and grants from individuals, businesses and corporations, and foundations. Thanks to the generosity of these donors, we can provide additional fee assistance to a limited number of participants.

Additional fee assistance applications must be submitted and approved before a participant's first session. If you no longer need fee assistance, please notify us. To qualify for additional fee assistance, you must meet both of the following criteria:

- You must claim one of the following benefits:
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
 - Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Income Support
 - Universal credit (and earn less than £6,000 per year)
 - Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
- Have less than £4,250 in savings.

DRESS CODE

A safety hat / helmet which meets one of the standards approved by the BHS (British Horse Society). A copy of the approved standards is available on request. Hats / helmets may be available for participants to borrow but this cannot be guaranteed, and participants are advised to check ahead of each session. Each hat / helmet is sanitised after every use.

Participants should wear long trousers (no shorts or jeans!) and sturdy shoes with a ¼" heel or riding boots. NO sandals. Trainers are not recommended but permitted if using safety stirrups. All participants using English saddles will use safety stirrups.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING / MENTORSHIP

Equustrong UK is committed to providing education and training to individuals interested in Equine-assisted Services. Equustrong UK may offer mentorship opportunities to qualified

individuals seeking PATH Intl. Instructor Certification. Sessions may be taught by one of these candidates. All lessons are directly supervised by a PATH Intl. CTRI (Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor). There are separate policies regarding mentoring and are available upon request.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Equustrong UK is governed by a voluntary board of directors. The Board meets regularly online via Microsoft Teams or Zoom and in person at least twice a year. Please contact us, via e-mail or the contact form on our website, if you would like to serve on the board or are interested in centre development.

CANCELLATIONS

Equustrong UK may cancel riding in the event of extreme weather in consideration of all centre personnel, participants, parents and equines (e.g., thunderstorms, heat > 95°/weather advisories, extreme cold < 30°, etc.). Equustrong UK will attempt to reach participants by phone / email in the event of a cancellation. If a participant must cancel, please send an email to equustronguk@hotmail.com or call as soon as possible, so that our volunteers / horses will not be waiting. Equustrong UK reserves the right to cancel lessons in the event the safety of all personnel, participants and horses is compromised. We will attempt to notify participants of a cancellation at least 2 hours prior to cancellation. Lessons cancelled by Equustrong UK may or may not be made up depending on available resources, i.e. yard or arena space, instructor and / or volunteer staff.

PARTICIPANT CANCELLATION

Please contact us ASAP if you are unable to attend your lesson. Call us on 0300 102 3566 to speak to a member of our team or to leave a message. You may check the Equustrong UK Facebook page for cancellation information.

LATE ARRIVALS

To conduct a beneficial and productive group lesson, students arriving late (after all riders are mounted) will not be mounted. If mounting is still in progress, you will be permitted to participate in the lesson. Final decisions will be left to the discretion of the instructor in the case of a private lesson. Lessons will be forfeited if volunteers have returned the horse to the yard.

REFUND / MAKE-UP POLICY

Regular attendance is expected of participants. In the event Equustrong UK must cancel a lesson we will attempt to reschedule at the earliest possible opportunity. Equustrong UK cannot offer refunds or make up classes for lessons missed due to incomplete paperwork, vacations, or scheduling conflicts on the part of participants or for lessons that we are unable to re-schedule within a reasonable period from the missed lesson. Lesson fees cover only a small part of operating expenses.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information pertaining to Equustrong UK participants must be held in strict confidentiality. It is critical that we respect the privacy of each participant and their families. This is considered one of the most important responsibilities of our staff and volunteers. A copy of Equustrong UK's Confidentiality Policy is available on request. All records are securely stored indefinitely in the Equustrong UK office both physically and electronically via secure web-based platform. Failure to comply with this policy may result in dismissal from centre activities. All information regarding participants is confidential and will not be shared with outside sources unless the participant / participant's guardian requests this information in writing. A Release of Information form is available in the event participants request that personal information be shared.

COMMUNICATION

Equustrong periodically sends an electronic newsletter via email. The centre website will also contain important information including a calendar of events.

SPECTATORS AND GUESTS:

Siblings, parents, guests should wait in areas designated by the instructors so that lessons are not disrupted. Children may not climb on the arena fencing, and parents / caregivers are responsible for monitoring siblings, friends and other family members during sessions. Any staff, participant, parent, sibling, or volunteer who demonstrates behaviour deemed inappropriate, disruptive or unsafe by any Equustrong UK Instructor may be asked to leave the premises and dismissed permanently from centre activities. No one is allowed in the yard area unless accompanied by Equustrong UK staff or designated trained volunteer. Guests / visitors are welcome by appointment.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are the backbone of our centre! If you or someone you know would like to assist with lessons, fund-raising, centre development, office work, or even doing yard work please contact our volunteer coordinator at by email at equustronguk@hotmail.com.

Attending a volunteer orientation is required. Volunteer orientation is held as needed. Contact us for more information regarding training session dates. Orientation and training are required and are ongoing during each year. Schooling of centre horses by experienced and screened riders / carriage drivers is scheduled by the Head of Animal Welfare as needed.

SAFETY AND FIRST AID

The safety of all centre participants, staff, & volunteers is paramount. All Equustrong UK Certified Instructors are trained in CPR / First Aid / AED (Automated External Defibrillator) and at least one certified instructor, who is in charge during an emergency, is onsite during all centre activities. In an emergency an Equustrong UK instructor will give directions based on the Equustrong UK Risk Management Plan and Emergency Procedures – call 999 as necessary. Emergency numbers are posted in the tack room. Complete written policies are available on request and are reviewed annually. OTHER: SAMARITANS: Dial 116 123. If you are in crisis, you have options.

WAITING LIST

Due to the numbers of individuals seeking services Equustrong UK may carry a waiting list. Wait times vary depending on resources such as: instructor expertise / availability, horse suitability, participant availability and/or need for private instruction. Please contact us for more information or to request a visit.

EQUUSTRONG UK EQUINES

The well-being of our horses and ponies is of utmost importance to our centre. Written policies regarding their care are available on request.

RELEASE OF LIABILITY WAIVER

It is expressly agreed by Rider and any parent or guardian whose signature appears on this document that this Agreement shall be governed and construed as being sufficient to satisfy the assumption of risk and waiver requirements necessary to relieve Equustrong UK, and all of its agents, directors, officers, shareholders, employees, volunteers, consultants, partners, successor and assigns from any liability arising from their actions so long as said actions were carried out in accordance with Equustrong UK's policies and procedures. This Agreement shall be governed and construed by the laws of England and Wales, regardless of where any

accident, damage, loss, injury, illness or death shall occur. If any portion of this Agreement shall be declared unenforceable, such declaration shall not affect the remaining terms of this Agreement, which shall survive intact.

The following policies and rules apply to all staff, participants, volunteers, and visitors:

- **All staff, participants, and volunteers must have completed, signed, dated, current paperwork on file that is updated annually.**
- **All staff, volunteers, participants and guests will treat one another with kindness and respect. No abusive, threatening or violent behaviour will be tolerated on the premises.**
- **Behaviour deemed inappropriate by Equustrong UK staff may result in removal from the premises and dismissal from centre activities permanently.**
- **Horses must be treated with kindness and respect by using gentle hands and feet.**
- **All volunteers must use the “Buddy System” (2 people approved by instructor) to turn out / bring in horses to / from fields or paddocks. No volunteer should enter a field or paddock alone.**
- **Never tie horses / ponies to fence boards or other movable objects, and never tie by using the lead rope attached to the bridle. Please tie using safety halters / headcollars only with a break-away feature. Consult a staff member about appropriate methods for tying horses. Never wrap lead rope around hand or body.**
- **Follow tacking procedures carefully: staff only bridle horses, do not leave saddle on horse without securing girth, keep reins from touching ground, bring concerns regarding tack (including worn equipment) to staff’s attention, do not kneel, or sit on ground near horse while grooming / tacking.**
- **All participants / personnel must wear helmets / hats which meet BHS (British Horse Society) standards while mounted. This may be provided if needed.**
- **All participants will use safety stirrups and / or have appropriate hard-soled shoe with ¼” heel. No sandals on the yard. Shorts or sneakers are not recommended.**
- **No participant (or participant’s family member / caregiver) or guest is permitted on the yard, including paddocks, unless a staff member or trained volunteer is present.**
- **No one may feed horses from their hands. All feeding, petting, and horse handling must be supervised by a staff member. Use a feed bowl, feed scoop or bucket to feed treats.**
- **A staff member / credentialed instructor must be present for any program activity.**
- **Alcohol misuse and / or illegal drug use is strictly prohibited on the premises. No weapons, firearms permitted. Failure to comply may result in removal from all centre activities.**
- **Absolutely NO smoking on or around the yard.**
- **No running on the yard or around horses.**
- **No pets on the yard, in the arena or Equustrong UK activity areas please. Service dogs permitted on a leash or under the control of owner / handler.**

- **Yard must be kept clear and free of obstructions.**
- **Siblings, guests, family members must be supervised at all times. No climbing on fencing surrounding the arena.**
- **All incidents, accidents, injuries, occurrences or hazardous conditions should be reported immediately to a staff member. An accident form or incident report must be filed and reviewed by the Board of Directors.**
- **No photography or videography without permission of a staff member.**
- **Only Equustrong UK staff may operate centre equipment**

Public Health Emergency Procedures and Policies:

- Equustrong UK will follow all procedures and policies as required by Department of Health (including the NHS) and the local Environmental Health Department, however final decisions regarding the safety of participants, horses, volunteers, staff and guests rest with Equustrong UK.
- Volunteers, participants and staff will follow all rules for personal hygiene, personal safety and public safety as required by Equustrong UK for the safety of Participants, Volunteers, Guests and Staff.
- Volunteers, Staff and Participants will complete any additional paperwork as requested by Equustrong UK.
- Equustrong UK will keep Volunteers and Participants informed regarding changes or updates to procedures and policies. Separate policies / procedures may be necessary and will be shared with the Equustrong UK community.

Thank you for reviewing these policies which have been developed to provide a positive, safe and enjoyable environment for all members of the Equustrong UK community. If you have concerns, questions or comments please email the office at equustronguk@hotmail.com.