



# OUR PEOPLE, RACING'S FUTURE

A Workforce Strategy for the British Horseracing Industry



Horseracing Industry  
People Board

# CHAIR

## Foreword



**Julia Tyson**  
Chair

Horseracing Industry  
People Board

**“There are many significant contributors to the racing industry, but our sport is nothing without the passion and dedication of the people who work in it”**

This strategy is for them and for the future of our sport. Quite simply, this document is an opportunity to bring the industry together and set a direction to showcase why people should choose to join and remain working in the sport.

This strategy has been developed, on behalf of the industry, by the Horseracing Industry People Board (HIPB), a skills based operational board with a remit to approach this subject independently. HIPB comprises respected industry insiders alongside independent specialists in people practices creating a healthy mix of perspectives, ideas and experiences. We have worked together, alongside representatives of the industry, and have consulted widely to identify opportunities, building our recommendations to gain acceptance and adoption. We realise this is a vastly complex, and often emotive subject, in which everyone has a legitimate view. Navigating our way through has been formative.

HIPB was created to formulate, develop and oversee the implementation of an industry people strategy. Funders and stakeholders expect HIPB to ensure the people projects they fund are aligned with the strategy and represent value for the industry’s money. We have addressed both responsibilities thoughtfully and seriously and taken time, in building this strategy, to research and evaluate the current landscape, challenges and opportunities.

We have built an industry wide data analysis platform and learnt from other sectors facing similar challenges on relevant and workable solutions for the way forward. We are grateful to everyone who has shared their perspective, challenged our ambitions, supported and funded its development.

The production of this strategy represents a landmark for the sport. It is ambitious, far reaching and challenging to achieve. It will initiate foundational activity on which future impactful changes can be built and is relentlessly focussed on evolving the front-line experience as a priority. There is something for everyone, but more is targeted where the need is most critical. We have had to prioritise and it will take several years for the cumulative impact to be felt.

All the more reason for all to engage now with the planned programme and work together to achieve change. The merit of the strategy will be the extent to which it can orientate and align the many disparate providers and stakeholders into action by building collaborative delivery partnerships that adopt the ambitions of the strategy into their own work and that can be measured in their impact. 2025 represents our first year of implementation having set the foundations.

My sincere thanks to HIPB colleagues who brought their passion for racing and a different future to this project. They have worked tirelessly to develop this strategy, identify solutions and build connections. My thanks to Neil Hayward, my predecessor as Chair for initiating the strategy review process and to Lucy Attwood who as Programme Director has led the work to create this document and set the foundations for our future success.

This strategy represents an opportunity for the industry to grab with both hands. We are confident that if we all work towards its achievement, we can make a tangible difference for our people and to our industry.



## OVERVIEW

# Executive Summary



**Horseracing employs tens of thousands of people across the country, particularly in rural areas. The industry contributes £4 billion to the British economy every year. We are a strong and vibrant community of skilled professionals doing valuable and fulfilling work.**

*This Executive Summary provides an overview of the themes and recommended activities identified within the Industry Workforce Strategy. It is not intended as a substitute for the detailed analysis in the full version of the document.*



## Horseracing Industry People Board

The Horseracing Industry People Board was created in May 2023 by the British Horseracing Authority, with support from the Horserace Betting Levy Board, the Racing Foundation, and reporting to the Industry Programme Group, to create a Workforce Strategy to coordinate and develop a long-term approach to our people.

The People Board is independently chaired. It is made up of individuals with a balance of knowledge and experience from within and beyond the racing industry. The People Board's vision is that horseracing's workforce should become an enabler of the sport's strategic aims and a unique selling point for British racing.



## The Need for Change

A vast amount of activity has already been conducted to reduce horseracing's well recognised people-related challenges. Current programmes of activity play a critical role in racing's ability to provide a high quality and compelling product. The industry workforce is doing the best it can to operate within a complex and changing landscape.

Not all the identified challenges are unique to British racing. They are, in many respects, the result of economic, political, demographic and cultural changes that impact other sports and businesses, both in Britain and abroad. The UK's working age population is forecast to fall by 1.2 million by 2034, and the country is becoming increasingly urbanised. Mental health challenges are not restricted to the racing industry - one in four people experience mental health issues each year. Workforce challenges are also prevalent in other racing jurisdictions.

However, there is much that is within our capacity to control; and that will enable us to adapt to the external changes we can't necessarily influence.

The demands of a fixture list that operates almost every day of the year contribute to an 'always on' mentality for the whole of the workforce. The changes in mindset of 'Generation Z' require close attention to enable us to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

Concerns around equine welfare present challenges at many levels. More people are now joining the industry at an older age, and retention rates within the training yard sector are on a downward trajectory. We miss key skilled workers; over half of training yard staff are dissatisfied with pay and benefits; bullying and harassment are a critical concern.

We must continually reflect on our position and continue to evolve to meet the needs of our current and future workforce.

### Challenges Across the Sport

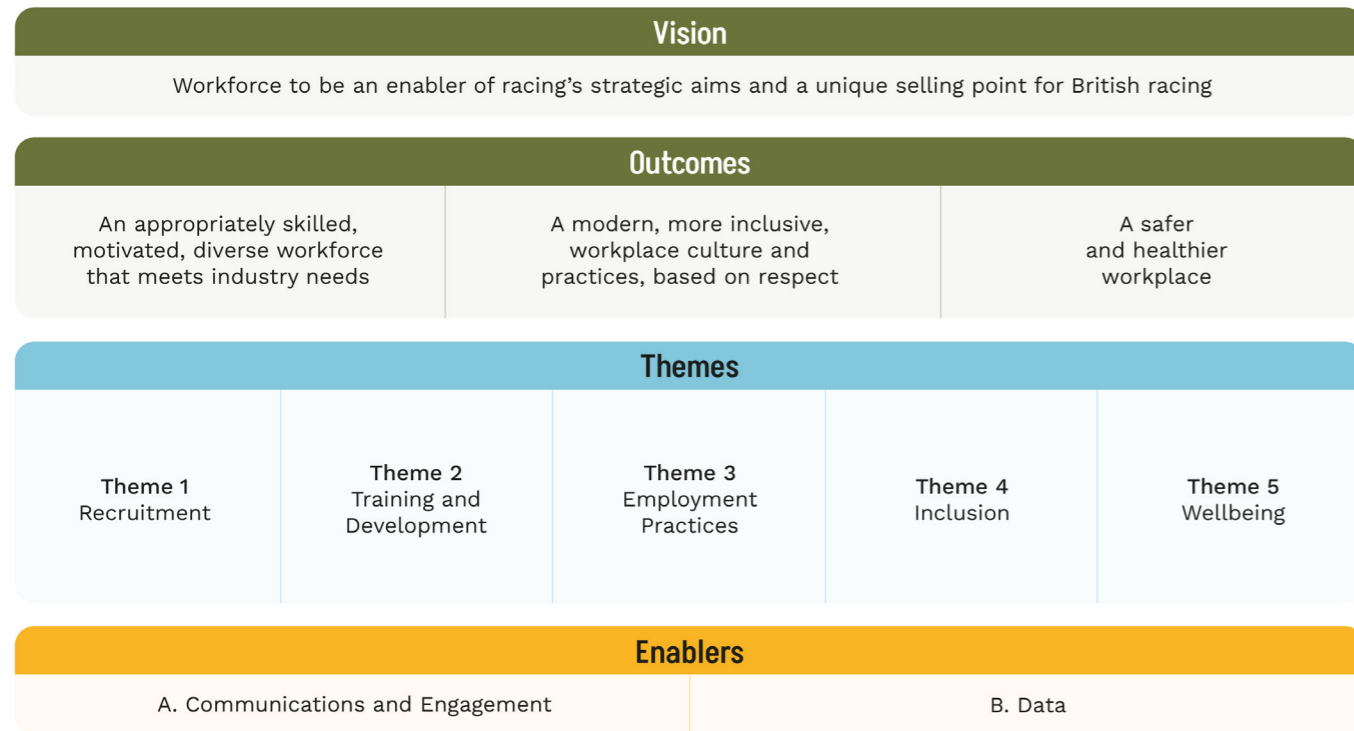
Our four-month consultation across the breadth of the racing industry identified several key themes. These included the relentless nature of the industry; long and unsociable hours; high work demand; workplace mental and physical health impacts. Alongside these the consultation identified a resounding passion for the work and for the racing industry, strong community spirit and a shared admiration for the horse.

The impact these themes present varies across different occupational groups. The pressures are most keenly felt in training yards and breeding operations, referenced throughout this document as 'horse-facing' roles.





# The Strategy Structure



The strategy is broken down into five core themes and two enablers:

- 1. Recruitment.** What is the current recruitment picture? How do we attract the right number of well-skilled people from a range of backgrounds?
  - 2. Training and Development.** How are we training our people? How can we improve the skills of new entrants and the existing workforce?
  - 3. Employment Practices.** How flexible are our workplaces? How can we adapt to modern expectations on work / life balance? What is our industry's current workplace standards? What should they be?
  - 4. Inclusion.** Does our industry have a respectful, inclusive culture? How can we improve this to make our sport a more attractive and welcoming career option?
  - 5. Wellbeing.** What are the current health, safety and wellbeing practices? Are we doing enough to protect and support our workforce, and how can we improve?
- A. Communications and Engagement.** How effectively do we communicate with our people, and beyond the industry, to promote horseracing as an employer? How can we better understand and respond to the needs of our workforce and ensure they have awareness of and access to development opportunities and support services?
- B. Data.** How can we best collect and analyse data to understand our workforce better, inform decision-making, demonstrate impact and measure value for money?

## Theme 1 - Recruitment

**Getting the right people, in the right numbers at the right time in the right place.**

Racing has many well-established pathways into the industry. These either raise the profile of racing among a younger generation; develop pathways for new entrants; or enable the retention of current staff.

Approximately 1,000 people join training yards every year. Around 50% of these people come from a formal training pathway developed by the British Racing School, National Horseracing College or Scottish Racing Academy. The National Stud provides a pathway into the Breeding sector.

Recruitment success can be defined as an increased supply of suitably skilled and diverse people; racing being considered as an attractive career option by young people; clearer, better communicated access routes into racing; and employers reporting no critical skills gaps.

**The activity required includes:**

1. Publishing a workforce analysis, forecast and plan
2. Piloting new entry routes into racing
3. Reviewing and building on existing pathways
4. Ensuring new entrants have the required qualities to succeed
5. Widening the appeal of the sport
6. Establishing links with employers, educators, governmental and other partners
7. Evaluating the impact of current activity

## Theme 2 - Training and Development

**Recognising and developing specialist skills in critical roles through innovating our industry training provision.**

We currently have a huge range of industry-specific qualifications. 58% of racing employers believe the training provided by our providers is either good or very good. We develop our workforce through innovative practices including specialist coaching and development and have several organisations supporting this.

Our employers find it challenging to release staff for training due to the current skill shortage. This results in fewer members of the workforce taking up ongoing training and development. We must continue to develop skill levels.

Success within training and development includes clear skill development pathways; increased employer involvement; a clear understanding of industry demand; and increased continuous learning and development underpinned by a simplified funding model.

**The activity required includes:**

1. Improving the employer and training provider relationship
2. Promoting and expanding apprenticeship take up
3. Simplifying funding model to ensure transparency
4. Introducing more flexible and work-based training
5. Redesigning the trainer training licence regime
6. Introducing minimum training requirements in licensing
7. Improving learning opportunities for Work Riders and Stud Grooms
8. Introducing skills passport into personal registration
9. Expanding mentoring



## Theme 3 - Employment Practices

### Creating workplaces that people can stay and thrive in.

Working in racing can be tough. Long, unsociable hours are exacerbated by staff shortages which challenge work-life balance. Many people find it hard to stay: 31% of stable staff and 22% of stud staff report planning to leave the industry within the next two years.

Employers find it difficult to recruit. Our research indicates there is a strong likelihood this will get tougher. The BHA's Safeguarding and Human Welfare strategy has begun to lay the foundations for change, but more needs to be done to ensure employers are supported to make the most appropriate decisions for the workforce.

Success within employment practices includes a reduction in excessive working hours; employers becoming better equipped with the relevant skills to manage the workforce; a motivated, productive and diverse workforce; and a zero tolerance of harassment, bullying or discrimination.

### The activity required includes:

1. Introducing an Employer Quality Standard
2. Expanding the scope of licensing
3. Supporting employers to adopt new policies and practises that meet expected standards
4. Promoting and incentivising new work patterns and flexible working

## Theme 4 - Inclusion

### Creating friendlier and welcoming workplaces for all, where everyone has equal opportunity to thrive.

There has recently been some concerning research about the lack of diversity in horseracing. This is limiting our industry's attractiveness. Action plans have been developed to make racing more inclusive. The Industry Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion has helped racing make progress in this area. Activity is delivered by organisations including Racing with Pride and Women in Racing. However, there is a critical need for more activity to ensure that workplaces are welcoming, and inclusive to all.

Success within inclusion includes tangible and visible positive action that leads to friendlier and more welcoming workplaces; increased confidence in reporting mechanisms resulting in a long-term reduction in the number of incidents of bullying and sexual harassment; higher employment retention rates for women; and an overall positive perception that racing is an inclusive employer.

### The activity required includes:

1. Developing an action plan to increase inclusion
2. Prioritising gender equality
3. Expanding the Industry Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
4. Developing and delivering an ethnically diverse communities action plan
5. Ensuring the industry Code of Conduct promotes positive behaviours and values



## Theme 5 - Wellbeing

### Providing a safe and healthy working environment that recognises the unique challenges of working in racing.

There is a lot of research on racing's mental and physical demands. Over 70% of each occupation group is reported to have experienced stress, anxiety or depression.

Every year over £10m is spent on workforce support from organisations including Racing Welfare and The Injured Jockeys Fund. However, the medium, small and micro-sized nature of many racing businesses means some struggle to provide adequate employee assistance or wellbeing programmes. There is broad awareness, across the industry, of the Workforce Wellbeing Programme, however utilisation is limited. Drug and alcohol misuse is a critical concern.

Success within wellbeing can be defined as including a strategic approach to safety, health and wellbeing; an increase in the level of health and safety data that sets an industry wide direction and increases the knowledge of root causes; and improved and simple access routes into support services.

### The activity required includes:

1. Reviewing health and safety measures and developing a refreshed approach
2. Developing funding model with appropriate balance of industry contribution
3. Designing and commissioning effective services against an agreed set of criteria
4. Extending drug and alcohol policies, including testing and support
5. Developing and embedding a safety and wellbeing culture
6. Conducting and coordinating regular surveys to assess quality of life





## Enabler A - Communications and Engagement

**Proactive communications, collaboration and industry wide engagement as the foundation stone for effective and impactful change.**

Although there is an array of workforce training and support opportunities, awareness of and engagement with these activities is limited. Resources and lack of member engagement prove challenging for representative bodies. The fact there is no one single organisation wholly focussed on communicating with the workforce results in duplication and contributes to a lack of cross-industry collaboration.

Success within communications and engagement includes the workforce being presented and promoted as an asset; people issues being included as part of decision-making processes that relate to the future evolution of the sport; increased awareness and uptake of relevant services such that racing's people feeling valued and respected, leading to an increased level of workforce satisfaction.

**The activity required includes:**

1. Reviewing mechanisms for representation and accountability for people issues
2. Publishing annually updated workforce plan and impact report
3. Creating a digital workforce hub
4. Delivering a communications and engagement plan
5. Utilising regional hubs as a vehicle for delivery

## Enabler B - Data

**A repository for people-related data across the industry enabling data-led decision-making, planning and evaluation of the impact of funding.**

Robust data is crucial to safeguarding racing's future. The Stable Employees Register collects key staffing data, and a dataset also exists for jockeys and trainers. Valuable research is also regularly conducted. However, there are large data gaps in non-regulated areas of racing, including breeding and pre-training, which are compounded by the micro and small-business nature of businesses in these areas.

Success within data includes having a clear understanding of the size and skill level of racing's workforce, creating a data-led approach to people issues, underpinned by a system which allows prompt and reliable answers to important questions.

**The activity required includes:**

1. Developing an agile data plan and securing investment into the longer-term ambition
2. Expanding datasets to include recruitment, skills and diversity
3. Continuing to run regular and coordinated employee surveys
4. Producing research, insights and annual reports to drive continuous improvement



# Bringing the Strategy to Life

To achieve success in these areas, the People Board has designed a prioritised list of activities by which the initial actions under the five themes and two enablers can be progressed over the next three years.

**These are:**

1. **Training Provision Review and Action Plan** - review current training to support in the further development of delivery approach and curriculum design.
2. **Workforce Wellbeing Review and Action Plan** - support the development of provision ensuring quality, impact and value for money.
3. **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns** - develop targeted campaigns to recruit riders and stud staff with the potential skill level to fulfil short-term needs.
4. **Review and Redesign of Trainers Licence Course** - better prepare potential Trainers for the role through developing current training.
5. **Review of Talent Pipeline Activity** - evaluate current activities designed to produce a pipeline of potential workforce recruits.
6. **Drug and Alcohol Testing in the Workplace** - support employers to implement drug and alcohol testing within their businesses.
7. **Gender Equality Activity** - encourage and support our female workforce by removing barriers to remaining in the sport.
8. **Anti-Sexual Misconduct Campaign** - deliver a visual awareness campaign to increase the knowledge of sexual misconduct issues and how to address them.
9. **Rider Competency Matrix** - develop and implement a matrix that outlines the level of skill required at each stage of a rider's career.
10. **Workforce Analysis and Forecast** - analyse the current workforce and identify and quantify current gaps.
11. **Employer Quality Standard** - introduce an employer accreditation/quality standard scheme.
12. **Industry Commitment Impact Review** - review the impact of the commitment and deliver a further programme of activity.
13. **Ethnically Diverse Action Plan** - develop an action plan to create a more inclusive sport for people from ethnically diverse communities.
14. **Workforce Survey** - gather data and insights into the working lives of the workforce.
15. **Mentoring Qualification and Training** - standardise industry mentoring by introducing a mentoring qualification and training.

The extended document contains details of future change initiatives to build on these foundational activities.





# Monitoring and Evaluation

**If this strategy is enacted in full - and is given appropriate support and funding - we believe the following ambitions are achievable over the next three years.**

1. The average vacancy rate across breeding and training yards will be reduced from 24% to 10%
2. Industry retention rates in the role of Work Rider will increase by 10%
3. The average skill shortage of 19% across the industry will be halved
4. The average number of people expressing an intention to leave the industry within the next two years will reduce from 27% to 20%
5. Over 50% of our workforce will be engaged in continuous development experiences (currently 15%)



# Strategy Programme Delivery

## December 2025

- Identified, quantified and forecasted activities that build the workforce pipeline into racing. Targeted recruitment campaigns focusing on recruiting from a pool of experienced equestrians are underway
- Trainer's licensing course has been redesigned to include more training and education around people practices. Rider Competency Matrix has been developed to identify the skills required at each level of a rider's career
- Framework has been developed to form the basis of an Employer Quality Standard across Training and Breeding sectors
- Review of the Industry Wellbeing Strategy has been conducted and an action plan has been developed. Drug and alcohol policies in place and a pilot testing programme has commenced
- People related activities advocated in BHA led centrally delivered activity funding review
- An industry-wide action plan has been expanded to increase inclusion across the sport

## December 2026

- Flexible working patterns are reviewed and promoted to share good practice. Views relating to the expansion of licensing across occupations are made to the BHA to align with its review
- Root causes of mental and physical wellbeing challenges are identified and are able to be mitigated through services that meet industry need
- Workforce engagement increasingly evident
- Key recommendations of the Vocational Training Review are implemented and a redesigned training regime for Trainers is being delivered
- Increased insights are developed and understood through the enhancement of data collected throughout the industry

## December 2027

- Recruitment services are designed and commissioned in line with other industry strategy initiatives to create a consistent pool of suitably capable entrants
- The Data Proof of Concept and extended data capture enables the development of a people data platform in Racing Digital
- An Employer Quality Standard is being delivered that supports employers and raises employment standards across the sport
- D&I as an enabler to the sustainability of the sport is understood and embraced through a proactive and impactful programme of activities

Themes/Enabler

- 1. Recruitment
- 2. Training & Development
- 3. Employment Standards
- 4. Inclusion
- 5. Wellbeing
- A. Communications and Engagement
- B. Data



# End of Executive Summary

The full Strategy Document is  
available for download [here](#)