

# The only way

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# About me and us



The British Grooms Association (BGA) was founded 17 years ago to support grooms in the UK.



The Equestrian Employers Association launched 7 years ago to provide affordable and equestrian bespoke HR tools and to educate employers in the UK.



The International Grooms Association (IGA) is the professional association for grooms working internationally in FEI disciplines.

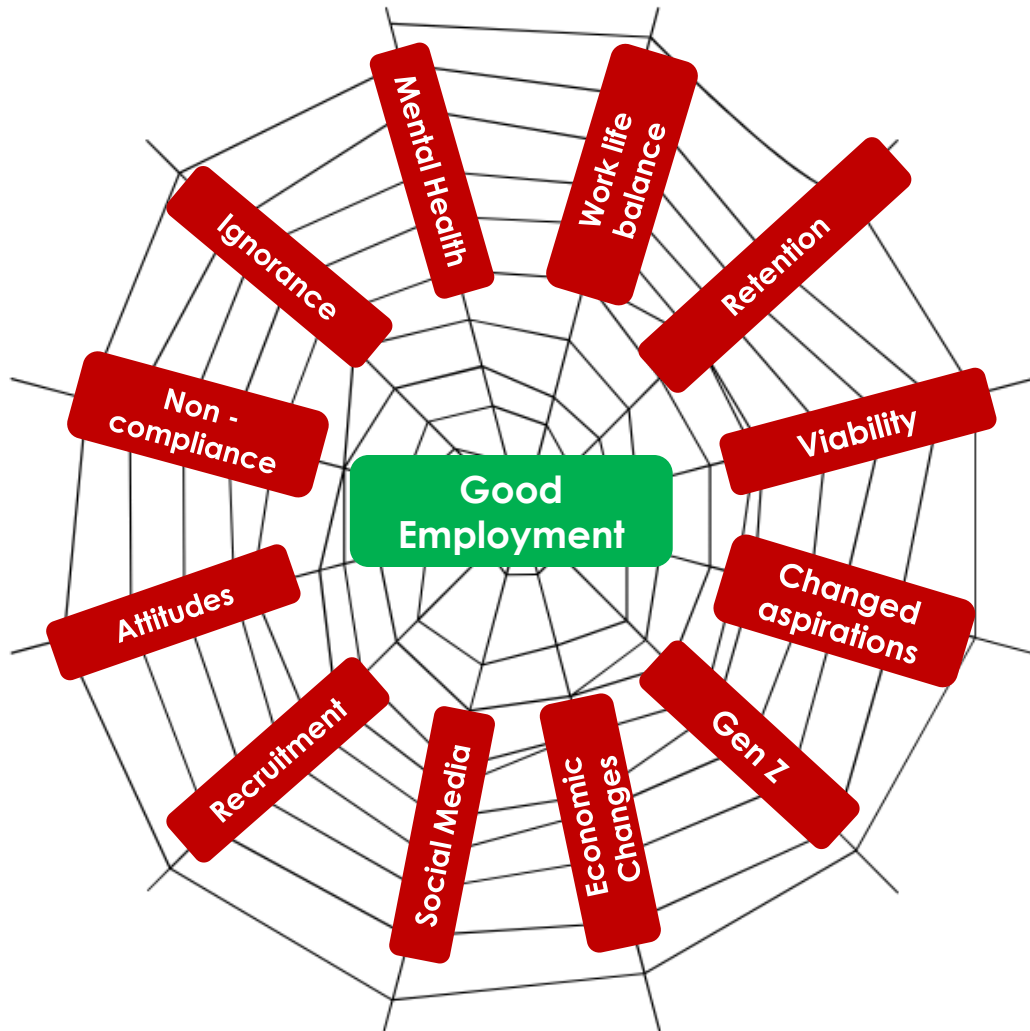


# The IGA

- The IGA was formed at the request of the FEI President to become the representative voice of the International grooms.
- An FEI start-up funding grant enabled the formation.
- Launched at the 2022 FEI Sports Forum where a MOU was signed with the FEI.
- At last, the grooms have a voice and are FEI Stakeholders, the same as the officials, riders, judges, show organisers etc.
- The FEI also formed the Grooms Consultative Group.



# The problems



- Riders struggle to recruit staff.
- Riders are not retaining their staff.
- Generation Z (16-25) does not have the same attitude to working as previous generations.
- Lack of flexible working offered which doesn't suit a family life.
- Highly demanding show schedule, with sole person responsibility.
- Lack of knowledge and skills in business management.
- Businesses are not viable and cannot afford the staff costs.
- Underpaying staff and not meeting National Minimum Wage laws.
- Not legally compliant employment practices:  
e.g. no contracts/incorrect employment status/illegal working hours/  
no health and safety standards.

Poor employment practices are the main reason that grooms are leaving the industry – worldwide.



# A recent story

Contacted by a worried parent. Daughter at an FEI tour show in Portugal, working for a British Team Showjumper. (18 months of employment – 22 years old)

- No contract of employment.
- Incorrect notice period demanded.
- Total disregard for her mental well-being.
- No annual leave permitted.
- No payslips.
- No pension paid.
- Paid below the National Minimum Wage.



# A recent story

- Illegal – not compliant with UK legislation.
- Form of 'Modern Slavery'.
- Unkind/uncaring/dangerous.
- Immoral.
- **Common occurrence.**

1. Reported to the HMRC.
2. Reported to the British Equestrian Federation.
3. Employer offered the groom £1,000 settlement.
4. Groom settled on £5,000 of unpaid wages.
5. Groom has since left working in the equestrian industry.



# The show groom

- Exceptionally long hours. Minimal work-life balance.
- Marked difference between 4\* & 5\* and 1\* 2\* & 3\* star shows. (5\*s aren't always perfect...and 1\*s can be amazing)
- Grooms have historically had no, or little voice.
- The IGA Grooms Voice and FEI Horse App reporting.

- ||| Poor facilities – showers and toilets are often not serviced sufficiently.
- ||| Food and beverages are rarely near the stables, and often have long queues and are expensive.
- ||| Opening times of catering outlets often don't match the groom's working day. "We don't get to eat enough during the day."
- ||| The show groom's welfare needs to be considered by both show organisers **and riders.**





**The solutions**

# 1. Attract. Recruit. Retain

- The industry and our sports needs grooms.
- We must attract the youth to work with horses. The career as a groom must become seen as a viable and great career option.
- Generation Z can't be changed. The workplace must be flexed to attract and subsequently retain them. Flexible working must become more common.
- The public recognition of the role of the groom has greatly improved. The FEI is making good steps.
- We all need to promote and celebrate. Belgium Federation, will you share your grooms selected for Paris 2024? Do you have a media plan for them?
- Riders need to play their part in even more public recognition of their staff.
- Grooms also need to recognise their important role of being role models.



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# 2. Good Employment

- Only **Good Employment** in every equestrian setting – worldwide.



- This **IS** a fixable issue in our industry.
- Too many are leaving the sector because of the work conditions.
- Our industry is not an attractive place to work – better off in a supermarket!
- Recruitment of new grooms will rely on changing the widespread perception of the role and its working conditions.
- Retaining staff depends on treating them well; Good Employment is the minimum expectation.
- **Why should the equestrian sector be any different to any other industry?**



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# 3. Modernise. Flexibility.

- Grooms should be like F1 mechanics – highly regarded for their skill, dedication, and knowledge.
- Modernisation needs to come from the FEI, NFs, riders/employers and the grooms themselves.
- NFs should include team grooms in everything, from education to social media to team meals.
- Riders/employers must embrace and accept change – as a **minimum** grooms must be paid correctly in line with the legislation of the country that they are working in and financially rewarded for their experience and knowledge.
- A flexible workplace must be developed to attract and retain Gen Z and those who have or wish for families.
- Grooms (and riders!) must accept shared working practices in the travelling show groom role via mentoring younger grooms or employing drivers to split the workload.
- Equestrian businesses must become viable or no longer operate.

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# 4. Perfect show facilities

- All shows and events need to ensure that their facilities for grooms (and horses) are perfect – why is anything less okay?
- 4\* and 5\* shows often have bigger budgets – but grooms should be able to expect safe lorry parks with clean toilets and showers at any level of show.
- If hotel accommodation is provided, why should the groom stay in a grubby 1 or 2\*, when officials are in the 4 or 5\* - this has to change.
- The procurement processes need to be interrupted eg. water provision.
- The smallest changes can be the big difference game changer for the grooms.



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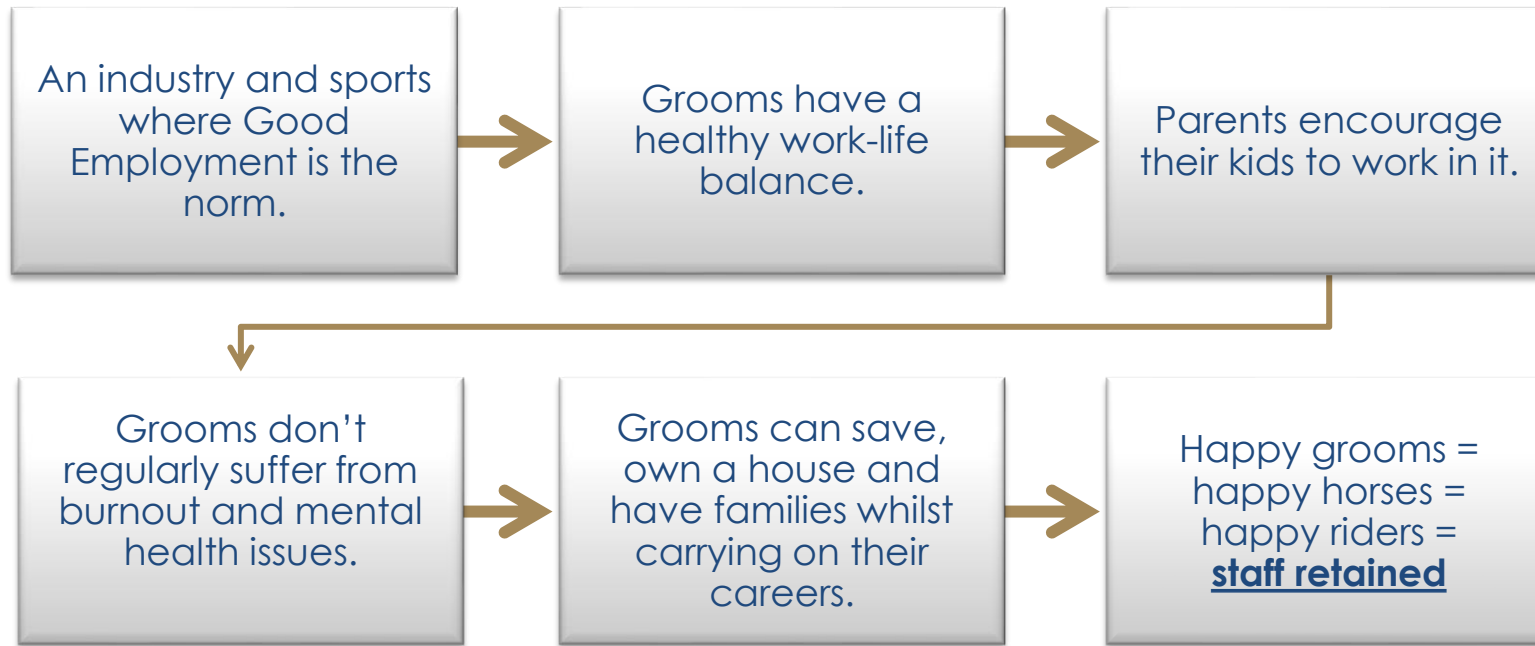
# The 'dream show'

- ★ Easy access to catering and provision during grooms' hours of work. Breakfast is provided, tea and coffee always available and a Grooms Lounge.
- ★ Showers and toilets are regularly serviced and clean from the moment the stables open.
- ★ Use of WA group messaging to provide grooms with all the information they need – good 2-way communication between the show and grooms.
- ★ Good, safe horse facilities – especially wash bays. A show-supported arrivals and departure process.
- ★ A named Grooms' Rep. who can raise any concerns the grooms have.
- ★ Groom recognition throughout the competition. For instance, names on start lists, grooms included in prize givings and named on social media.

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# Imagine...



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Thank you  
Dankjewel  
Merci



**BRITISH GROOMS  
ASSOCIATION**



**EQUESTRIAN  
EMPLOYERS  
ASSOCIATION**



**INTERNATIONAL  
GROOMS ASSOCIATION**