



Policy Control Sheet

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Author	Kyle Palmer
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RDA Group Complaints Policy

Complaints about RDA Member Groups

Policy Introduction:

At RDA UK, we are committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct, care, and service across all our Member Groups, Centres, volunteers, and staff. We recognise that, from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise. This policy sets out how formal complaints will be handled to ensure they are taken seriously, addressed promptly, and resolved fairly.

The RDA Group Complaints Policy ensures that any formal complaints concerning Member Groups, or individuals involved - whether sent to the RDA UK Office or directly to the relevant Member Groups - are treated seriously and addressed in a fair and appropriate manner.

Policy Scope:

Anyone wishing to make a formal complaint about the actions or behavior of a volunteer, staff member or participant at an RDA Group or who has concerns about their experience or activities at an RDA Member Group must follow this policy and the accompanying guidance.

Complaints relating to County, Regional, or National volunteers, RDA UK Office or National Training Centre staff, or members of the RDA UK Board should be made through the RDA UK Complaints Policy and Guidance process.

RDA UK will not get involved in HR complaints or disputes. Support in these matters should be directed to ACAS or the Labour Relations Agency in Northern Ireland. In addition, employers may seek support from the Equestrian Employers Association and employees from the British Grooms Association.

Complaints that are identified as safeguarding concerns or involve a concern for a person's welfare will be escalated to the RDA Safeguarding Team under the 'Managing Concerns' Policy for appropriate action.



Stage One - Informal Resolution: Raising issues at the Group first

RDA UK encourages informal resolution wherever possible.

We believe many concerns can be resolved more effectively if handled early, through open, respectful conversation at a local level. Often, individuals simply want to be heard, share their perspective, and feel confident that their concerns are taken seriously. Informal resolution also gives Groups the opportunity to listen to feedback, engage constructively, and take prompt action where appropriate, helping to achieve positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Stage Two - Making a Formal Complaint:

If an informal resolution has been tried but hasn't worked for any reason, **formal complaints** must be submitted in writing (either on paper or digitally).

The **RDA Group Complaint Template** should be used, where possible, and the complaint must include the following information:

- Full name of the person making the complaint
- Member Group the complaint relates to
- Contact details of the person making the complaint (phone number and email, if possible)
- Their connection to RDA (e.g. participant, volunteer, staff member, or member of the public)
- Whether they are submitting the complaint for themselves or on behalf of someone else (e.g. parent, guardian, carer – consent may be needed)
- A description of the complaint and how this has affected you, please include details of when the issue happened, witnesses and any steps that were carried out already following the informal route.
- What they feel would be a suitable outcome or resolution (e.g. an apology, a change in process or assurance of improvements that may be made)

The complaint should be addressed to the Group Chair of the Trustees, where either the Group Chair or designated person will handle the complaint. If the complaint is about the Group Chair, then the complaint should be made to the full Board of Trustees.

Complaints submitted directly to RDA UK, without first being raised with the group, will be referred back to the Group Chair or Board of Trustees for investigation and response.

Following the closing of the complaint, an RDA UK Complaint reporting form should be submitted by the Group. This enables RDA UK better oversight of complaint themes across the federation and the opportunity to provide further support including training and guidance etc.



Handling of Formal Complaints:

Acknowledgement:

Complaints about Member Groups received by the RDA UK Office that have not yet been raised locally will be forwarded to the Group Chair or, if there is no Chair or the Chair is implicated in the complaint, a designated person from the Group involved. The complainant will receive confirmation from RDA UK Office that this has been forwarded to the Group, within **three working days**.

The Group will provide acknowledgment of receipt for your complaint, within **ten working days (this will be longer for those complaints that were directed to RDA UK initially)**.

Investigation:

In some cases, RDA may be legally required to contact external organisations as part of the complaints investigation process, such as statutory bodies in safeguarding cases (e.g. Local Authority Child or Adult Social Services), or the Police, or other law enforcement agencies.

An appropriate individual or panel will be assigned to investigate the complaint from the group and will normally include the Group Chair or other designated person where the Chair is subject of the complaint.

This will be an exercise to establish all of the facts and you may be approached to provide further information about your complaint and you should be prepared to provide any information or individuals' names who can corroborate your complaint. All parties will be given the opportunity to present their views if not already covered in the initial complaint.

The person investigating will provide regular updates on the status of your complaint and will confirm the outcome upon closure of the complaint informing you whether your complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld, along with any actions to be taken.

The response time may vary but will usually be within **twenty-five to forty** working days of receiving the complaint. If further investigation or information is needed, it may occasionally take the group longer and you should expect to be informed of the progress.



Appeals and Escalations:

If you or the person you are representing are unhappy with the outcome or process followed, you can escalate the complaint to a RDA UK Regional Chair.

Once you receive the investigation outcome from the Group, you must forward the original complaint and the investigation outcome, within **fifteen working days** of being notified of the outcome from the Group. There is an optional **Appeals template** you may also wish to complete.

You should direct your complaint and correspondence from the group to info@rda.org.uk or by post to **RDA National Office, Lowlands Equestrian Centre, Old Warwick Rd, Shrewley CV35 7AX** and RDA UK will then appoint an appropriate Regional Chair and ensure they receive all information.

The Regional Chair will review the complaint and investigation with the Group and consider any further steps, if needed.

RDA UK allows only one escalation to an RDA UK Regional Chair. If multiple people have been directly affected, the RDA UK Regional Chair or their designated representative will treat all escalations as a single appeal.

Involvement of RDA UK for Escalation:

In exceptional circumstances, RDA UK may carry out or support additional investigations to help close a complaint. However, this will only occur after all appropriate steps under this policy have been followed, including local resolution and regional escalation where relevant.

If a complaint has not first been raised with the relevant Group —or if RDA UK determines from the outset that local resolution is not possible—it will consult with the Group involved, along with the regional team, before proceeding with any investigation. You will be kept informed throughout the process and updated on the actions being taken.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the regional escalation, then you are able to escalate this for further review by the RDA UK team. In this case please forward the original complaint, the outcomes of group response and the outcome of the regional escalation to either info@rda.org.uk or by post to **RDA National Office, Lowlands Equestrian Centre, Old Warwick Rd, Shrewley CV35 7AX** within **fifteen working days** of being notified of the outcome from the Regional Chair Escalation.

Please note that some information, particularly in relation to safeguarding concerns, may be confidential and cannot be shared with the complainant.



Support available when wishing to make a complaint

If anyone needs support, accessibility assistance, or guidance to be able to submit a formal complaint in writing, they can contact the Membership Services Team at the RDA UK Office for help:

- **Email:** info@rda.org.uk
- **Telephone:** 01926 492915

(Please note that this phone number is available during the RDA UK Office working hours only, from 9:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Thursday, and from 9:00am – 4:00pm on Fridays).

Types of formal complaints accepted

- RDA will not handle complaints that are considered vexatious (intended to cause problems or annoyance), malicious, or without merit. This means that complaints submitted without evidence or corroborating witnesses may not be processed.
- Complaints must be made within **three months** of the last incident or within **three months** of when the complainant first became aware of the issue.
- Complaints that are the same or closely related to a previously raised complaint under any RDA UK policy will not be considered.
- RDA will not respond to anonymous complaints. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, further investigations may still be carried out.
- **Anti-bullying:** RDA understands that bullying can be difficult to define. If someone experiences or witnesses poor behaviour that may be considered harassment or bullying, it should be reported as outlined in this document.
- Allegations involving safeguarding or those that may relate to safeguarding will always be handled according to the **RDA Safeguarding Policies**, procedures, and any legal requirements.
- **Whistleblowing:** If there is a serious concern about a breach of RDA standards or conduct, the **RDA Whistleblowing Policy** should be followed. This ensures that concerns can be raised as soon as possible.



Conflict of Interest, transparency, and fair complaint handling

- There will be no escalation process beyond what is outlined in this policy
 - **Conflict of Interest:** If the volunteer or staff member assigned to investigate a complaint cannot investigate due to a conflict of interest or another valid reason, RDA UK may assign the complaint to another, of equivalent seniority or experience.
 - **Respectful Communication:** RDA treats all complainants with discretion and respect and expects the same in return. If there is harassment, abuse, or behaviour that goes against RDA UK's Codes of Conduct, the complaint may be closed immediately without further correspondence or right to appeal
 - **Equal Opportunities:** RDA UK ensures that all complaints are handled fairly and equitably, regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership.
 - **Commitment to Improvement:** RDA UK values feedback and aims to respond to complaints proactively, using them as opportunities for continuous improvement.
 - **Wellbeing Consideration:** The wellbeing and mental health of all involved will be considered throughout the complaints process.
 - **Data Protection:** Complaints and investigations will be stored and managed in accordance with GDPR regulations.
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