The King's Award for Voluntary Service

Newbury RDA
Newbury Riding for the Disabled
Charity Number: 1121113

Newbury RDA Complaints Policy and Guidance

This policy has been set in place to make sure that complaints received by the organisation about RDA UK volunteers or staff are taken seriously and are dealt with in an appropriate way. Newbury RDA (NRDA) adheres to this Policy.

If anyone wishes to raise a formal complaint regarding the actions or behaviour of any RDA UK Volunteer, member of RDA National Office staff, or RDA UK Trustee (Board Member) they must do so following this policy and guidance.

RDA is committed to enriching the lives of all disabled people through the use of horses, and to ensuring that all of our participants receive an excellent service with RDA, according to their specific needs. This.would not be possible without our network of committed volunteers and staff, who all work together to achieve this aim.

Our Values:
1. RDA is a community of people who believe it is what you can do that counts, and who enable participants and volunteers to achieve their goals
2. RDA values the input of all people who are involved – participants, volunteers and paid staff
3. RDA ensures that development and achievement is recognised and celebrated across the organisation
4. RDA aims to deliver an excellent service and experience for all participants and volunteers
5. RDA recognises the central part that horses play in everything we do

RDA will always seek to handle concerns or dissatisfaction expressed by members of its community, including parents and guardians/carers of RDA child participants, adults at risk (vulnerable adults) other stakeholders and members of the public, in line with its values and responsibilities.

When dealing with any complaint, RDA's values should always form the basis for any action taken or decisions made, and all involved must be reminded of these values and their individual responsibilities in line with the RDA UK Codes of Conduct and Agreements, including the RDA Working Together Code of Conduct which is available on the RDA National Website.

Informal Resolution

RDA would always ask that informal resolution between parties is attempted before any formal complaint is made. In many cases, those who have cause to raise issue may simply wish to have the opportunity to be listened to, to put their opinions forward, and to feel that their concerns or issues have been taken seriously.

If informal resolution has been attempted and no solution or satisfaction found, formal complaints about the conduct of RDA UK Volunteers or RDA National Office Staff should be submitted in writing (either physically or digitally), and must contain the following information:

• The full name of the person making the complaint
• The name and contact details of the person making the complaint (telephone number and email address)
• The person making the complaint's link to RDA (e.g. participant, volunteer, member of staff or public)
• Whether the person making the complaint is submitting it on their own behalf, or as a designated representative of a third party (e.g. parent, guardian, carer – confirmation of consent may be required)
• A summary of the nature of the complaint, including details of those involved and any witnesses, including steps already taken to try to resolve the issue
• Details of what may be an acceptable outcome or resolution.

Types of formal complaints accepted:

• RDA will not deal with those complaints reasonably deemed by the organisation to be vexatious, malicious, or spurious. In any of these cases RDA UK reserves the right to take further action as necessary.
• Complaints will only be accepted within three months of the last occurrence of the matter being complained about, or within three months of the date that the complainant first reasonably knew of the issues leading to the complaint being raised

• Complaints deemed by RDA as being related to or generally the same as a complaint previously raised by the same individual under any of RDA UK's policies will not be taken forward.
• RDA will not respond to anonymous complaints. However it may be deemed appropriate by RDA to conduct further investigations, dependent on the nature of the complaint
• Allegations involving Safeguarding will always be progressed in line with **Newbury RDA's Safeguarding Policy** and procedures and any legal obligations
• It may be necessary for RDA to refer complaints to external bodies for external investigation, which may include but would not be limited to, the Police, Charity Commission, financial or fundraising regulatory bodies
• **Anti-bullying:** RDA recognises that this is an emotive issue, and it can be hard to define whether poor behaviour being experienced or witnessed amounts to harassment or bullying. In such cases, swift action should always be taken to report this, using the steps outlined in this document
• **Whistleblowing: The Newbury RDA Whistleblowing Policy** should be followed where there is serious concern for a breach in RDA UK standards and conduct, and is set in place to ensure those who wish to do so can raise issue as soon as possible

Who to send a formal complaint to

1. **Complaints at Group, or local-level experience**

- We would always hope that disagreements could be settled between individuals involved where possible. If this is not possible concerns regarding the behaviour of a group volunteer or staff member should be made to the Group Chair of Trustees.

- Complaints made to RDA National Office which relate to Newbury RDA will be referred to the Newbury Group Chair of Trustees, if the complainant has not already approached them.

- Newbury RDA will not act upon complaints made on behalf of third parties, with the exception of parents or a designated representative of Newbury RDA participants or volunteers. Newbury RDA will not act on any anonymous complaints.

- Complaints to Newbury RDA should be made as soon as possible after the incident has taken place.

  The Newbury RDA Group Chair of the Trustees is **Lucy Atherton** and may be contacted at 07747 610650 / chairman@newburyrda.co.uk.

- Any complaints which have not been possible to resolve at Newbury RDA Group level should be made to the County/Regional Chairman.

  The County/Regional Chairman is Diane Lee and may be contacted at 01491 682583 / diane_lee@hotmail.com.

2. **Complaints about National RDA UK Volunteers:**

RDA UK Volunteers are defined as holding one or more of the following roles:

- County Chair or County Coach
- Regional Chair, Regional Coach or other members of the Regional Committee
- National Volunteers, such as National Discipline Leads, Coach Developers

Complaints relating to County-level volunteers must first be directed for the attention of the **Network Support Manager at RDA National Office** at info@rda.org.uk who will work with the relevant Regional Chair to investigate and support a resolution.

Complaints about a **Regional Chair** or member of the **Regional Committee,** or **National-level volunteers** should be sent for the attention of the Network Support Manager at RDA National Office for investigation.

3. **Complaints about RDA National Office Staff**

Any complaints about RDA National Office Staff and matters relating to RDA National Office should be submitted to the appropriate line manager and/or Head of Department or Director, in line with this and/or other employee and HR policies. If unsure, such complaints should first be sent to ceo@rda.org.uk.

4. **Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or members of the RDA UK Board of Trustees**

Complaints relating to the CEO or members of the RDA UK Board of Trustees should be sent to chair@rda.org.uk.

No one individual or group will be put in a position of conflict where they are governing a complaint against themselves.

Response to complaints, and stages in the process

When submitting a complaint, it is important to note that RDA UK volunteers and staff have other demands on their time and it may on occasion take a little longer to resolve your complaint, although you can expect to be periodically kept up to date with progress and developments, including a simple acknowledgment of receipt of a formal complaint **within 5 working days.**

Please be aware that it may be necessary for the person investigating the complaint to contact you or others involved in the complaint during the investigation process, to clarify and understand the facts surrounding the complaint.

The person assigned to investigate the complaint will decide on the outcome and will advise you as to whether your complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld, and any actions to be taken as a result. Actions taken may vary, depending on the nature of the complaint received. RDA will aim to respond with the outcome of the complaint within one calendar month of confirmation of receipt. However, in some cases where further investigation or information is needed, the process may take longer, although you will be kept informed as to progress.

What to do if you are not satisfied with the outcome
If you or those you have represented in making the complaint are unhappy with the outcome or the process followed, you will have the opportunity to appeal. RDA will only accept one appeal, and any such appeal must be submitted within **ten working days** of receiving notification of the outcome of the complaint. If more than one person has been directly affected by the complaint, RDA will treat multiple appeals received as one appeal. Details of the person to whom the appeal must be submitted will be provided at the time of receipt of outcome of the complaint investigation.

Conflict of interest, transparency and equity of complaint handling,

• **Conflict of Interest:** If the designated member of staff or volunteer in receipt of the complaint is unable to investigate the complaint for any reason, including a potential or known conflict of interest, RDA may pass the complaint on to another member of staff of equivalent seniority, to be progressed

• RDA will treat all complainants with discretion and respect and would ask for this courtesy in return. In the event of harassment, abuse, or behaviour otherwise contrary to Newbury RDA's Code of Conduct Policy, RDA will reserve the right to close the complaint immediately, without further correspondence or right to appeal.

• RDA is committed to providing equal opportunities. Our complaints process ensures all complaints are dealt with equitably and fairly, regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership.

• RDA will always endeavour to respond to complaints in a proactive way and to value the input of all people who are involved with the charity's work, which includes an expectation that we listen to feedback and where necessary learn to improve where we can and when we need to, for continuous improvement.

• It is of key importance when dealing with expressions of concern, poor service, or more formal complaints that the wellbeing and mental health of all involved is taken into consideration during the process. Visit MyRDA https://myrda.org.uk/ for more information on wellbeing support.

• The outcome of a complaint will be communicated to the complainant, as outlined above. However, the full report and any supporting material collected for the purposes of the investigation will not be made available.