



## **Fact Sheet: How to deal with difficult situations**

On some occasions Groups may face disagreements or difficulties with members. Where these do arise it is important for Group committees to deal with them practically and calmly.

### **Below are a few indicates that may help you resolve concerns:**

- Refer to the Area or Group constitution on this website
- Refer to the Area and Groups code of conduct on this website
- Explain the duties of the Role Description and what is expected from the volunteer role. Refer to the Role descriptions on this website
- Refer to the Group committee for support (who will follow the democratic group process)
- Refer to the Civil Liability Insurance (document is available on this website) in instances where members are organising their own activities and not following the requirements of the group or contact [insurance@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:insurance@ramblers.org.uk) for advice
- If the situation involves a vulnerable person, refer to the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy on this website, and follow the guidelines and procedures

### **If discussions do not resolve concerns, you should follow the below process:**

- Send a warning in writing, agreed by the Group committee. It should include an explanation of the person's behaviour, why their behaviour is unacceptable and what has been proposed to date, in an attempt to resolve the matter. This gives them a chance to improve their behaviour
- If the member's behaviour does not improve, a stronger second warning should follow, explaining the reasons why the Group cannot work with the member and suggesting possible resignation. Letter templates are available for this: refer to the rebranding kit on this website and the example below
- If the member objects to the second warning, they can go to the Area and complain about the decisions taken. The Area will investigate the actions and reasons that the Group committee has taken and feedback decisions made to the group and the individual concerned. If Central Office support is required, submit a report to [volsupport@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:volsupport@ramblers.org.uk) or, for issues on led walks, to [ledwalks@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:ledwalks@ramblers.org.uk) who will provide advice

### **Disciplinary sanctions available to Groups:**

It is important for Groups to remember that they should not expel or suspend individuals from the Ramblers, but consider the following sanctions.

- A warning – follow the above process
- Suspension for a period of time from participating in a particular Group activity. A suspension like this does not remove the individual's rights to be a member, to access Group information or to attend and vote at the AGM
- Permanent ban from participating in a particular Group activity

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- Disassociation from the Group. In this case, the individual remains a member of the Area and can attend and vote at Area AGMs, but is removed from Group membership
- Recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the individual is expelled from the Ramblers. Groups are encouraged to discuss serious matters with the Volunteer Support Team, volsupport@ramblers.org.uk who will provide expertise advice

### **Please note, below are some examples of concerns that may arise:**

- A committee member is not following the requirements of the constitution
- A member refuses to abide by committee decisions and/or organises activities their own way
- A walks leader is causing inconvenience or distress to members, which is a safety risk or threat to the group, such as: the walk is longer than advertised, leaders abandon the group during a walk, not checking weather conditions or not reconnoitering a walk prior to it taking place, resulting in the activity being unsuitable or dangerous for members to take part in
- Acting in a drunk and disorderly manner during an activity
- Rudeness, unacceptable language, bullying and boisterous behavior
- Vulnerable people attending without carers or taking part in activities which are unsuitable
- Identifying that a person is vulnerable part way through an activity and who may require extra support



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## **Example written warning letter - inappropriate behaviour on walks**

**This is stage 1** (stage 2 is a letter banning a person from further activities)

Dear *<insert name>*,

I am writing on behalf of *<insert name>* Group, more specifically on behalf of some of our volunteer Walk Leaders. It has been reported to me there have been a number of occasions lately where your behaviour on the group walks has caused the Leader some concern. The examples I have been given (or have witnessed myself???) are:

*<insert examples of behaviour, - dates of walks if possible ie>*

- Requiring assistance to walk from other walkers (appearing to be unsteady on your feet)
- Wandering away from the group, on your own, seemingly in a state of some confusion and group members needing to assist you

While I'm not in a position to say what may be causing this, we are concerned for your welfare whilst on the walks and, of course, for the safety of others in the group. As your conduct has often required one-to-one assistance from the walk leader - *<insert example of behaviour/incident, as above>* the walk leader is being distracted from leading the Group as a whole. This could possibly jeopardise the safety of everyone else and their enjoyment of the Group activity.

Everyone who goes on a Ramblers walk does so at their own risk. Our Walk Leader volunteers are not able to give one-to-one assistance to particular members, except perhaps in the rare case of an emergency. You are more than welcome to continue walking with our Group, providing that your conduct does not continue as described above, cause the Walk Leader any concern or cause the rest of the group any alarm. I should stress that if you seem ill-prepared or ill-suited for a particular walk, our Walk Leaders are fully within their rights to request that you don't come on the walk. The Leader would have the full support of the rest of the Group and Ramblers central office in taking this course of action.

Yours sincerely

*<Name>*

*<Title>*



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## **Example written warning letter - inappropriate behaviour while leading walks**

**This is stage 1** (stage 2 is a letter banning the person from leading walks)

Dear *<insert name>*,

I am writing on behalf of *<insert name>* Group, in response to reports I have received recently. It has been reported to me there have been a number of occasions lately where the way you have led walks has caused members of the Group some concern. The examples I have been given (or have witnessed myself???) are:

*<insert examples of behaviour, - dates of walks if possible ie>*

- appearing to be hungover while leading walks
- leading walks for longer than the advertised distance
- abandoning the Group halfway through the walk

As Chair of the Group, I must inform you that it is unacceptable for a Walks Leader to abandon the group half way through a walk as this constitutes a dereliction of duty and could result in a safety issue, i.e. the group has to then find its own way back, unguided and in perhaps unfamiliar territory. Similarly, if a walk takes a lot longer than advertised, it can lead to walkers being out in the dark or in cold conditions for longer than anticipated and prepared for, which is another safety issue.

*<or insert other examples>*

I do feel that the examples given above would understandably lead to some members on the walk finding the walk not to be enjoyable and therefore would not wish to walk with our Group again. The committee of *<insert name>* Group feels that this is an unacceptable state of affairs.

Whilst *<insert name>* Group appreciates your support as a volunteer in helping us to deliver our led walks programme, I hope you understand that we are responsible for the safety of everyone who goes on the walk. I must stress that if the Group receives further reports similar to those outlined above, then we will have no option but to turn down your offer to lead walks for the Group in future. I have full support of *<insert name>* Group committee and Ramblers Central Office in taking this course of action.

Yours sincerely

**Name**  
**Title**

