

RAMBLERS COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy title:	Complaints Policy
Purpose / scope:	This policy sets out the Ramblers position regarding complaints made about the Ramblers as an organisation or how its representatives/ members have behaved. A complaint could be from a member, volunteer, member of staff or from the public.
Related policies:	Ramblers Code of Conduct Safeguarding policy Volunteering policy Problem Solving Policy
Staff policy owner:	Head of volunteering development
Approved by:	Finance and risk committee, on behalf of the Board of trustees
Date approved:	February 2021
Next review due:	February 2023
Version:	2
Applies to:	Volunteers, trustees, staff, members, third party contractors, consultants and so on

Version control

Version	Date	Activity
1	2016	Complaints and Disputes policy 2016
2	December 2020	Rewritten to the Complaints Policy

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

We hope everyone involved with the Ramblers has a rewarding and positive experience. However, we recognise there might be occasions when people have an issue or concern. When this happens, we want to hear about these concerns, deal with them as quickly as possible and prevent them happening in the future.

When someone believes we have fallen short of their reasonable expectations and wishes to express dissatisfaction with any aspect of the organisation, we call this a 'complaint'. A complaint could be about a Ramblers' member, volunteer or member of staff as well as the charity's policies, rules or regulations, or even something we have or have not done.

Ramblers is committed to having a clear, consistent process for everyone to follow so we can resolve complaints promptly, fairly and sensitively.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all Ramblers members, volunteers and staff. It is used for complaints raised by Ramblers members, volunteers, a member of the public or an organisation we have dealt with.

This policy might be used in conjunction with the Problem Solving Policy for volunteers, and the Grievance and Discipline policies for members of staff.

Principles

Why do we need a complaints policy?

- To resolve any complaints quickly and effectively
- To reduce any disruption to the charity's work and the people involved
- To protect the reputation and liability of Ramblers
- To make sure Ramblers members, volunteers and staff know how to deal with complaints
- To monitor and learn from complaints

The guidance in this policy is based on:

- Resolving issues:
 - o fairly, reasonably, and respecting the right to be heard
 - o in a timely way - as quickly as is possible, allowing for time to gather information and come to decisions
 - o locally and informally whenever possible, to avoid escalation
 - o with care, sensitivity and confidentiality
- Using our complaints procedure to resolve issues

- Involving only those people who are required by our procedure or whose input is needed for a fair resolution.

Definitions

Complaint - when someone considers we have fallen short of their reasonable expectations and they wish to express dissatisfaction with any aspect of the organisation, including how Ramblers' members or representatives have behaved.

Problem solving - this is the term used across the volunteering development sector which refers to the equivalent of an employee discipline and grievance policy/procedure but for volunteers. It applies when a volunteer has raised a grievance about some aspect of their volunteering, or a concern has been raised about how they have carried out their role.

Member – refers to someone who has paid an annual or lifetime fee to join the Ramblers.

Volunteer - a volunteer freely donates their skills and time, unpaid, to carry out authorised tasks or duties, on behalf of the Ramblers, that contribute to the overall charitable aims and objectives. Volunteers are required to meet expectations, standards, and be limited by the boundaries of their volunteer role description, with consequences if they do not.

Staff – refers to a paid employee of the Ramblers.

Areas/Groups – Groups usually cover a geographical area such as a town or district, but also focus on shorter, easier or family-friendly walks, as well as different ages. Groups co-operate together as Areas and they play a key role in communicating our work.

Informal procedure – the process local volunteers and staff follow to resolve issues at a local level.

Formal procedure – the process Ramblers follows if a serious or high-risk issue has been identified.

Serious or high-risk issue – is an issue which is against legislation (for example, criminal action or against the Equality Act), or a less serious issue where the informal procedure has been exhausted.

Investigating manager - is appointed to lead a formal investigation into a problem solving issue - this will be a Ramblers member of staff.

Accessibility and inclusion

The Ramblers is built on the belief that everyone deserves the right to experience the joy of walking outdoors. We strive to be diverse, inclusive and accessible in how we deal with any issues and concerns raised.

Further information

Related policies, procedures and supporting information are available on the Ramblers website: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

- Safeguarding procedure
- Problem solving policy
- Volunteering policy
- Code of Conduct

END