

Royal Society of Chemistry Volunteer Problem Solving Policy

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Introduction

The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) values and respects its volunteers and is grateful for their invaluable support.

The involvement of volunteers is usually a positive experience for everyone involved, however there may be times when an issue about volunteering or a volunteer needs to be addressed. It is important that there is a quick, fair and transparent process for doing so in order to

- protect our volunteers and ensure that they are treated in a fair and equal way
- demonstrate that we respect our volunteers and are committed to good practice
- minimise any disruption to the charity's work and the people involved
- resolve any concerns quickly
- protect the reputation of the RSC

This policy sets out what happens when an issue is raised in relation to a volunteer or volunteering experience.

Should a volunteer wish to raise other issues about our products, services, policies or a member of staff, this should be done using our [Comments and Complaints Procedure](#).

1. Policy Scope

- 1.1. This policy applies to all RSC volunteers however the procedure will be different for our Board of Trustees.
- 1.2. Where an issue is raised by a volunteer in relation to a member of staff this should be raised through our Comments and Complaints Procedure.
- 1.3. Issues raised under this policy may also require other policies to be used. For example, where an issue relates to a safeguarding concern, the relevant Safeguarding Policy and Procedure will be applied.

2. What issues does the policy cover?

An issue may arise for a variety of reasons, whether about a volunteer's experience, or in relation to a volunteer. The problem solving policy may be applied for the following issues, but this list is not exhaustive:

- Behaving in a manner incompatible with our [Volunteer Principles](#) and the [Professional Practice and Code of Conduct](#).
- Not fulfilling, or acting outside of, their volunteer role.
- Not following RSC policies and procedures, for example misuse of data.

The Problem Solving Process

3. General Principles

- 3.1. Issues should be raised as soon as possible after the problem occurs, as any delay may mean that an effective resolution cannot be achieved.
- 3.2. The majority of issues should be resolved informally.
- 3.3. Issues will be dealt with fairly.

- 3.4. A volunteer with an issue raised about them will be able to offer an explanation before any decision is taken in relation to their role.
- 3.5. Everyone involved will be expected to cooperate and adhere with the decisions reached through this process.

2. Informal Discussions

- 2.1. Before taking further action, every effort should be made to resolve the matter by informal discussion.
- 2.2. Where issues are raised, the RSC contact (staff or volunteer) should hold an informal discussion with the volunteer to discuss this and decide on an appropriate course of action.
- 2.3. The volunteer's RSC contact (staff or volunteer) will work with the volunteer in a supportive and constructive way to understand the circumstances, identify areas for improvement, and agree and review next steps.

3. Formal Discussions

- 3.1. Where an issue has not been resolved informally, a formal process may be used to reach a resolution.
- 3.2. In exceptional circumstances a more formal approach will need to be taken straightaway, for example, when there are issues of safeguarding, or allegations of assault and harassment. This list is not exhaustive.
- 3.3. An issue can be escalated to a formal discussion by contacting volunteer@rsc.org where a member of RSC staff will be appointed to investigate the matter.
- 3.4. In exceptional circumstances, where there is an unacceptable level of risk to individuals or the organisation, it may be appropriate for a volunteer to be suspended whilst the issue is being investigated.
- 3.5. Depending on the nature of the complaint, either a senior manager or a member panel convened by the senior manager will hold a review meeting with the volunteer.
- 3.6. The volunteer will be advised in advance of the allegations against them and given time to answer the allegations.
- 3.7. A supporter may, if the volunteer wishes, accompany them to the meeting; this supporter could be a friend, family member, RSC member or colleague.
- 3.8. Following the review meeting, the senior manager or member panel will conclude the following:
 - The issue raised is unfounded.
 - The issue raised is founded, but now resolved.
 - The issue raised is founded and an action plan is to be drawn up. Changes to be implemented with the support of the relevant member of staff or volunteer (for example, the group officers).
 - The issue raised is founded and the volunteer should no longer continue in some or all of their current role or roles.

4. Appeals

- 4.1. The volunteer may appeal against formal action taken under this Procedure.
- 4.2. If the volunteer wishes to do so, they should put the grounds of appeal in writing to the chair of the relevant board within one week of receiving notification in writing of the penalty.
- 4.3. Appeals may be made on two grounds:
 - Process: when individuals involved are not satisfied that the process has been followed.
 - Outcome: when individuals involved feel the resolution is not appropriate to the issue raised.
- 4.4. In the event of an appeal, the chair of the relevant board will convene a volunteer appeals panel to consider the appeal and issue the decision in writing.
- 4.5. The decision of the volunteer appeals panel will be final.

5. Breach of RSC Code of Conduct and Criminal Activity

For allegations relating to a serious breach of the RSC Professional Practice and Code of Conduct please refer to the Disciplinary Regulations. We reserve the right to refer a case to the relevant board for Disciplinary proceedings at any point in the process. Allegations relating to criminal activity may, at any point, be referred directly to the police.

6. Other relevant policies:

- 6.1. Comments and complaints policy
- 6.2. Data Protection Policy
- 6.3. Professional Practice and Code of Conduct
- 6.4. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- 6.5. Volunteer Principles