



Houghton Regis Helpers  
07587 004514

## **Houghton Regis Helpers Complaints Policy and Procedure**

November 2024

### **1. General Statement**

Houghton Regis Helpers aim to provide a good quality voluntary service which meets the needs of the local community. If we are achieving our aim we hope you will tell us, however if either a volunteer or client feels dissatisfied in any way we hope you will let us know so that we can investigate the reasons and make every effort to improve our service.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by a volunteer or client, whether justified or not.

Unlike employees, volunteers do not have particular rights in law but are covered by the same legal rights as members of the general public. Whilst the organisation has no legal obligation to offer volunteers a role, or keep them in the role, volunteers can equally stop working at any time and are under no obligation to carry out work if they choose not to.

By complying with the Equality Act 2010 this organisation ensures that volunteers and clients are protected from discrimination and are treated fairly.

### **2. Good Practice**

Houghton Regis Helpers endeavour to achieve good practice for volunteers and clients by:

- Having up to date policies
- Accepting responsibility to treat volunteers and clients with fairness
- Listening to concerns of volunteers and clients
- Having an open and transparent procedure for dealing with situations where things go wrong

### **3. Serious complaints**

Any complaint thought to be of a serious nature – such as fraud or sexual offences - will be passed immediately to an officer of Houghton Regis Helpers and will be reported to the Police if a criminal act is suspected. Other serious complaints may be referred to the parent organisation, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BedsRCC), for advice and guidance.

### **4. What to do if you need to make a complaint**

#### **Stage 1 – Informal complaint made verbally**

If a volunteer or client has cause to make a complaint, either against the organisation or an individual, this should first be discussed informally to see if the issue can be resolved amicably.

The complainant should first raise their concern with the phone-holder or another member of the organising committee. If the complaint cannot be discussed and resolved immediately, a meeting to discuss the issue informally will be arranged within 5 working days.

## **Stage 2 – Formal written complaint**

If the volunteer or client is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal discussion, the complaint should be made formally in writing to the Secretary of Houghton Regis Helpers, within 10 working days of the informal complaint being raised.

If the complaint is against the Secretary, the written complaint should be forwarded to the Vice-Chair.

A written acknowledgement of the complaint will be made within 5 working days, outlining how the complaint will be investigated. The outcome of the investigation will be notified to the complainant within a further 10 working days.

## **Stage 3 – Appeal against decision**

If the volunteer or client is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, an appeal can be made in writing to the Chair of Houghton Regis Helpers.

A written acknowledgement of the appeal will be made within 5 working days.

The Chair will report to the Honorary Officers and, if the decision is made to take further steps to resolve the situation, the complainant will be invited to a meeting with the Honorary Officers to discuss the complaint further. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting by a person of their own choice.

The Chair will respond to the appeal within 10 working days and their decision is final.

**The postal address for all written complaints is:  
Secretary/Chair/Vice-Chair (as appropriate) Houghton Regis Helpers  
c/o Houghton Regis Town Council, Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY**

## **5. What will happen if the complaint is against a volunteer**

If a client or volunteer makes a complaint against another volunteer the procedure will follow the Stages as outlined in (4) above. If the situation cannot be resolved informally in Stage 1 the volunteer will be issued with a written statement outlining the reason for the complaint.

In some cases a volunteer may be asked to stop volunteering immediately while an investigation is carried out, particularly if the complaint relates to harassment, theft, verbal abuse or violent behaviour.

## **6. Investigating complaints**

- Investigations will be conducted appropriately and fairly
- Investigators will seek to establish whether or not the complaint is fully justified, partially justified, or not justified, with reasons
- Investigators should identify whether redress is suitable or possible and within Houghton Regis Helper's capacity to redress, seeking advice from BRCC if necessary
- Appropriate remedies for improvement will be suggested by investigators
- If further investigation is deemed necessary the organising committee will work in conjunction with BedsRCC

All written complaints and outcomes of investigations will be logged.

This policy will be reviewed biennially

Chair's Signature:



Print Name

Yvonne Farrell

Adopted on:

8 November 2024

Review date:

November 2026