

RDA National Volunteers Policy

Introduction

RDA is a voluntary organisation and acknowledges that volunteers are vital to its past, ongoing and future success. Volunteers at every level of the organisation contribute their energy and enthusiasm to make sure that we deliver a service to our participants and both acknowledging and celebrating this is a core value for the association.

This policy sets out some of the key areas of support and back up for volunteers working on behalf of RDA UK [note – it does not apply to volunteers of Member Groups, with respect to their support for that Group]. It clarifies what RDA sets out to do for its volunteers and what the charity expects in return. At the heart of our policy is “Our Commitment to Volunteers”, which is a statement of hopes and expectations owed both ways. This commitment applies equally to all RDA UK Volunteers including Board Members and National Officials along with Regional and County volunteers.

THE RDA COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERS

RDA UK values every volunteer and is committed to giving each volunteer the best experience possible.

RDA UK will:

- welcome you, as a volunteer and provide appropriate opportunities for you to make a worthwhile contribution to the objectives of RDA
- provide you with the appropriate support, training and right equipment for the task
- provide public liability, personal accident and Trustee indemnity insurance cover as appropriate
- respect you as a volunteer, listen and learn from what you have to say, consistently encouraging two way communication

In return we ask you to:

- be reliable and to let us know in good time if you cannot attend meetings or appointments
- talk to your colleagues (volunteers or staff) first if you have a problem
- take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others
- respect the need for confidentiality whenever you have access to restricted charity information

RDA UK Volunteers Policy

1. *Why RDA has Volunteers*

Fundamentally, RDA has volunteers to deliver our services to riders, carriage drivers and vaulters. Without them, we simply could not achieve what we do and they are the backbone of the organisation. Volunteers carry out a vast range of tasks for RDA and they are all vital to the smooth running of the organisation and valued equally. Additionally volunteers have been and remain fundamental to the reputation of RDA, which is, above all a voluntary organisation.

2. *The RDA Volunteer*

RDA volunteers are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to help deliver RDA's objectives.

RDA volunteers may perform a variety of tasks and duties, in liaison with and/or under direction and guidance of other volunteers or staff. RDA volunteers use their skills, knowledge and time to help RDA best achieve its aims.

RDA respects and honours our volunteers by building trust and understanding. Such a partnership is not intended to be a legally binding contract or to have mutuality of obligation, but instead express a voluntary two-way commitment where everyone gains satisfaction from being part of RDA.

3. *RDA's Aspirations for Volunteers*

RDA aspires to:

- welcome and encourage all volunteers
- foster an environment where volunteers can contribute fully to RDA's purpose
- be clear on RDA's expectations of volunteers and look for these to be met
- wherever possible RDA will match the volunteering opportunities available with the skills, experience and/or needs of individuals to ensure that the volunteering experience is both fulfilling to the volunteer and of value to RDA
- support all RDA volunteers so that they are working to achieve the organisation's objectives and, where possible, for volunteers to achieve theirs
- listen to volunteers and give them a role and a voice in the running and planning of the organisation

4. *Becoming an RDA Volunteer*

RDA will actively promote volunteering opportunities and be clear on the benefits each role brings and the task(s) to be undertaken.

RDA ensures that, where practical, all potential, active and past volunteers' details, and any other relevant information, are recorded accurately, securely and used in line with our Data Protection Policy. Where appropriate and possible, volunteers will have their skills matched to RDA's needs in order to harness the available talent. RDA will ensure we do not waste potential volunteers' time, by making sure we only take on volunteers who can help us. RDA aims to process every request to volunteer as promptly and professionally as possible.

All volunteers will, on joining, receive general information and guidance. This will be further developed with appropriate training and development. RDA asks that volunteers then help us by participating within our current policies and procedures.

5. *Communication and Feedback*

RDA will ensure all volunteers have the opportunity to give and receive information relevant to their role. The methods of communication and feedback will be appropriate in style, frequency, tone and source to individuals and groups of volunteers.

RDA is keen that volunteers remain with the organisation and aims to achieve this through good communication, by recognising volunteers' efforts and by maximising their contribution. RDA welcomes feedback on how things could be done better and how to improve our systems.

All our volunteers will have access to support and guidance from National Office, plus opportunities to gain mutual support from attending other volunteer group functions and conferences

6. *Training and Development*

For each formal volunteer role tasks that need to be performed will be defined. RDA will develop appropriate systems to ensure that volunteers can gain the skills and development required to achieve the role. In some cases, this will be formal training, in others it may be through coaching and peer support from others.

7. *IT Systems and Usage*

RDA is a modern and progressive organisation, and we increasingly rely on IT systems to carry out our work. RDA will provide appropriate support for those volunteers who have to use such systems. RDA will require volunteers to treat such systems and information in confidence and with sensitivity.

8. *Expenses*

It is RDA's policy that no volunteer should be required to spend their own money in the pursuit of the organisation's objectives. Volunteers will be entitled to the reimbursement of all reasonable out of pocket expenses subject to the guidelines in the RDA Expenses Policy.

9. *Working in Partnership with other Organisations*

RDA recognises that volunteers may be found from partnerships with other organisations. Such partnerships include employee schemes, young persons groups and other organisations. In such partnerships, RDA will provide the following:

- objectives of the partnership
- responsibilities
- communication and feedback
- what guidance, procedures and support will be available

10. *Equal Opportunities and Diversity*

RDA encourages a fair and open environment in which all volunteers can contribute and participate. RDA encourages people from all backgrounds and ages to volunteer. RDA adheres to the British Equestrian Federations' policy on equity – for both volunteers and participants.

11. *Health & Safety, Insurance*

All volunteers carrying out tasks for RDA UK are covered by appropriate insurance policies:-
Public, (Products and Pollution) Liability Insurance
Personal Accident Insurance

RDA has a comprehensive Health & Safety policy which is made available to volunteers when they join. Volunteers are required to sign to acknowledge they have read and understood the policy.

On joining, volunteers will be given information on all relevant policies and legislation that may affect them in their role.

12. Medical Needs

RDA has a duty of care for the safety of its volunteers; RDA therefore requires volunteers to be fit to carry out the role being asked of them. This is a shared responsibility and either RDA or the volunteer have the right to raise this issue where appropriate.

13. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

RDA takes all practicable steps to safeguard the welfare and safety of young and vulnerable people while they are in contact with RDA, observing any legislation and adhering to the British Equestrian Federations code of conduct.

Due to the nature of RDA's services, all volunteers who are involved in RDA sessions are asked to complete a Disclosure Check. RDA will follow and use specific procedures and standards when dealing with any disclosure check.

14. Confidentiality, Data Protection

Volunteers will have access to their records and all data will be kept in line with the Data Protection Act and RDA's Data Protection Policy. RDA requires that all volunteers respect and treat in confidence the information that they may be party to within their role. This includes written, oral or electronic information.

15. When Things aren't Right

RDA makes every effort to ensure that any experience of volunteering is positive and rewarding. However, we recognise that there are occasions when you may wish to raise grievances or concerns relating to your volunteering activities. In this respect, our policy is to encourage free communication between volunteers and staff.

The welfare of our volunteers is of paramount importance. The Fair Treatment Procedure is in place to ensure that all volunteers are dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner. Please note, this procedure refers only to those volunteering with RDA National. Volunteers for individual RDA Member Groups are subject to procedures in place at these Groups.

Procedure

In the first instance, you should discuss any concerns informally with the other person(s) involved and your Line Manager, in an attempt to resolve the matter. It may also be appropriate or useful to discuss the matter with the Volunteer Development Coordinator and/or the Chief Executive.

In the event that the matter cannot be resolved informally as suggested above, individuals or RDA National Office may invoke the Dispute Resolution Procedure – which is a formal process that has been agreed by the RDA UK Board of Trustees. The purpose of the process is to find as fair an outcome as possible and to ensure that all sides to a dispute are heard. Full details of the process are available from National Office.

16. Staff/Volunteer Relationships

RDA is committed to making sure that the contribution of every person – both staff and volunteer is maximised. As salaried members of the team, RDA National staff members have a greater responsibility to ensure this is the case for volunteers. As such, we will invest appropriate resources into the planning and development of volunteers and volunteering.

This policy is part of a clear and consistent approach to making best use of our valuable volunteer resource.

In order to clarify the responsibilities of staff and volunteers, every key role will have a clear description. The roles allocated to volunteers will allow the organisation to increase its capability and complement the work carried out by staff. Every key voluntary role will have a clear task description.

17. Recognition

RDA recognises the valuable contribution made by all its volunteers.

RDA volunteers who have made a substantial difference or commitment to RDA in any way will be recognised for their particular effort. This may take a variety of forms – long service awards, rewards annual recognition etc. Recognition will be dependant on the role, level of involvement and the activity.

18. Leaving the Organisation

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that volunteers are thanked for their services appropriately.

RDA asks that any volunteer who no longer wishes to be actively part of RDA to let us know directly by speaking with their Regional or County Chairman or a member of staff at National Office and informing us in writing, if appropriate. We will work with volunteers to find the most appropriate person to take on their role, although this can be a lengthy process and therefore we ask for as much notice as people feel able to give.

On occasions, it may be necessary for RDA to end a volunteer's involvement. This may be because the role is no longer needed, or because the volunteer is no longer able to satisfactorily carry out a particular role. When this happens RDA will endeavour to give due notice to the volunteer, where appropriate try to find an acceptable alternative role, and in all cases will treat the volunteer fairly and with dignity and respect. In cases where the volunteer feels that this action is unwarranted or inappropriate, they have recourse to the grievance procedure

19. Further Information

This policy should be read in conjunction with RDA's National policies with particular reference to the following documents:

- Health & Safety Policy
- BEF Equity Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- RDA's Commitment to Volunteers
- Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy Statement
- Child Protection Policy Statement
- "Dealing with Problems" Document
- Data Protection Policy

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the information in this policy please contact the Volunteer Development Coordinator. volunteer@rda.org.uk or 01926 492 915