



PELVIC RADIATION DISEASE ASSOCIATION

Problem solving policy and procedure

The Pelvic Radiation Disease Association (PRDA) values and respects its volunteers and is grateful for their invaluable support. In most instances, volunteering at PRDA is an enjoyable and positive experience and we have processes in place to support volunteers in their roles. Any issues which occur are normally resolved quickly between the volunteer and their staff contact. Very occasionally, however, there may be situations that are more serious or require further investigation. This policy sets out the procedure that must be followed.

Policy

According to guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, it is best practice to have a clear, consistent process for volunteers and staff to follow to resolve any issues promptly. This policy is for anyone (volunteer, staff, or supporter) who wishes to raise a concern about a volunteer. It applies to all PRDA volunteers, including trustees.

It applies only to issues relating to volunteers – separate policies exist to resolve issues concerning staff members.

Why do we need a problem-solving policy?

- To protect our volunteers and ensure that they are treated in a fair and equal way.
- To demonstrate that we respect our volunteers and are committed to good practice.
- To minimise any disruption to the charity's work and the people involved.
- To resolve any concerns quickly.
- To protect the reputation of PRDA.
- To address unsatisfactory performance or unacceptable behaviour.

Procedure

If you are aware of an issue with a volunteer's performance or behaviour, you should discuss the situation with your staff contact. If a volunteer is uncomfortable discussing an issue with their staff contact, then they can contact one of the PRDA Board of Trustees (details are available on the website [Trustees and Patrons - PRDA](#))

Where extreme unacceptable behaviour is reported or suspected, PRDA would suspend the volunteer immediately while the allegations are investigated. If this is the case, please refer to the section on Suspension on page 4. An appendix is attached to this document giving examples of what would be considered extreme unacceptable behaviour.

Informal discussion

It is always best to try and resolve any issues informally and quickly by having a discussion. This discussion should be open, honest, and objective and all information should be treated confidentially. The volunteer should be fully informed about the issue by their staff contact and every attempt should be made to resolve a concern at this stage. The staff contact will ensure that:

- the meeting takes place as soon as possible
- the meeting takes place on neutral ground
- the volunteer is allowed sufficient time to talk and to give their perspective
- workable solutions are discussed, and they are clearly understood by both sides
- every effort should be made to ensure the discussion is calm and has a positive focus
- the discussion covers challenges the volunteer is creating by their action or inaction, and there needs to be a fair right to reply for the volunteer
- any actions are agreed, and a time is arranged to review the actions within 14 days of the meeting
- any notes resulting from the meeting are typed up and the volunteer is provided with a copy in advance of a follow-up meeting.

It may be necessary to have several review meetings if initial solutions are unsuccessful and other alternatives are identified. It is important to ensure both sides have agreed any outcomes. The meetings are also an opportunity to identify further support or training for a volunteer. In addition, if volunteers are finding it difficult to carry out their role, are feeling unfulfilled or their needs have changed, then an alternative role might be more appropriate.

Development meeting

If there is no improvement in the volunteer's behaviour or performance or a concern is not resolved, or if the original concern is serious, then the volunteer should be invited to a development meeting with their staff contact (or another member of staff/volunteer, if appropriate). The volunteer can bring someone along to support them at the meeting if they wish. At this stage, the Board of Trustees should be informed of the issue. Where mitigating circumstances may have contributed to a situation, they should be discussed at this point and could be taken into consideration. The volunteer's staff contact should:

- write to the volunteer inviting them to the meeting
- ensure the volunteer receives a written explanation of the issue along with a copy of the charity's Problem-solving policy
- send the volunteer a copy of the role description for their role and any documents detailing expectations or boundaries, including volunteer agreement, confidentiality agreement or role specific arrangements that you may refer to during the discussion
- ensure the volunteer is given enough time to prepare (a minimum of five working days) while also ensuring the meeting takes place as soon as possible
- allow the volunteer access to any relevant information relating to the concern
- ensure any workable solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both sides
- take notes during the meeting and suggest that the volunteer (or their companion) does too
- agree what actions are required to resolve the issue satisfactorily and arrange a suitable time to review the actions
- discuss clearly the next steps should the agreed actions not be met

If the meeting does not result in a plan or action points being agreed, then consider whether the volunteer should be suspended temporarily from volunteering for the charity for a specified period to allow for further investigation.

Development letter

If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, then the volunteer's staff contact will consult with the Board of Trustees and will send a letter to the volunteer. The letter should explain:

- what was discussed during the development meeting
- the steps or improvements the volunteer is expected to make within a certain period

There will be a review period of between three to six months (to be agreed by both sides) after the letter is sent. If the volunteer does not agree to the next steps outlined in the letter, then they may have their volunteering role withdrawn from them.

Suspension from volunteering

In some situations, PRDA may temporarily suspend a volunteer from their role. This will allow PRDA time to investigate the allegations thoroughly and establish the facts. It should not be considered as confirmation of any wrongdoing. The decision to suspend a volunteer can only be made by the Board of Trustees and the volunteer will be notified of this decision in writing. If an act of extreme unacceptable behaviour is suspected, then PRDA may suspend a volunteer immediately while an investigation is carried out. Depending on the nature of the concern, an external investigation may have to take place. In most cases this will not be necessary but will apply where the police or another external agency has a statutory duty to investigate – for example, theft, fraud, or allegations of abuse. If a volunteer or staff member is concerned about the safety of anyone connected with the charity, they should refer to PRDA's Safeguarding policy.

An appendix is attached to this document giving some examples of what would be considered unacceptable and extreme unacceptable behaviour.

Dismissing a volunteer

If there is no further improvement in performance or change in behaviour after the agreed review period set out in the development letter, then the volunteer will be dismissed from the charity.

The final decision to let a volunteer go can only be made by the Board of Trustees. Written confirmation of the situation explaining why the volunteer has been dismissed will be sent to the volunteer.

Dismissal procedures for trustees will follow the process outlined in the charity's constitution.

Appeals

If a volunteer is unhappy with the decision to dismiss them from their role, then they can appeal in writing within 14 days to the Board of Trustees, stating the reason for their appeal. An appeal meeting to take place within 14 days of the appeal letter being received. Each situation will be examined thoroughly and depending on the circumstances, the Trustees may appoint a panel to hear the appeal. The volunteer who has been dismissed can bring someone along to support them at the meeting.

The panel who hears the appeal will inform the volunteer of the decision in writing. This decision is final, and no further appeal will be considered.

Appendix

Unacceptable behaviour

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviour, which may result in further action being taken:

- Unsatisfactory performance or failure to carry out reasonable volunteering activities as requested by the volunteer's staff contact or expected as part of their role
- Acting outside of a role description
- Using inappropriate language that could be deemed offensive
- Unhelpful or discourteous behaviour towards others
- Not following PRDA's policies, procedures, values, or rules

Extreme unacceptable behaviour

If it is felt that a volunteer has committed an act of extreme unacceptable behaviour, then the volunteer is usually dismissed from the charity.

Extreme unacceptable behaviour may include the following:

- Theft, fraud, dishonesty, or deliberate falsification of PRDA's documents.
- Violence or assault, abusive or offensive behaviour towards others
- Serious or repeated failure to comply with the charity's policies and procedures, regulations, or rules
- Malicious damage to charity property or an individual's property
- Serious breach of confidence
- Any violation of the charity's Safeguarding policy
- Acts of sexual or racial abuse, discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Being unfit for the role because of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Misuse of the charity's name
- Inappropriate or unauthorised contact with the media including social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
- Conviction of a criminal offence relevant to the volunteer's role
- Failing to follow Health and safety policy, guidelines, or legislation and/or failing to report concerns affecting the health, safety, or welfare of others

These lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and behaviour of a similar nature may be included.