

Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Policy on

Complaints

Who can I complain to?

For the purposes of this policy ringers can be treated as volunteers, working to fulfil the charitable aims of the Guild.

Volunteers are not covered by employment legislation but, as members of the public, they are covered by legislation covering health and safety law and data protection. Concerns relating to the governance of the organisation, health and safety, data protection or harassment, can be referred to external agencies.

Governance

The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. Its website explains that its primary focus as regulator 'is to work closely with charities to ensure that they are accountable, well run and meet their legal obligations in order to promote public trust and confidence'. The Charity Commission is not able to act on complaints related to disagreements between individuals, but it will investigate if a volunteer's concerns relate to the organisation's wider work or the fulfilment of its charitable aims.

Health and safety

If you have concerns regarding health and safety issues that you feel are not being addressed by the organisation, you can contact the Health and Safety Executive. You could also contact your local council.

Data protection

The Data Protection Act sets rules about the way organisations collect and use information about you (your personal information). If you have a complaint about the way an organisation has handled your personal information, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office, who may be able to help.

Discrimination and harassment

Anti-discrimination legislation applies to employment and the provision of goods and services, so doesn't cover volunteers because they are not employed under the relevant legal definitions. Volunteers may have some form of redress against the worst forms of bullying or similar behaviour, but this does not give them protections against discrimination as such.

In legal terms harassment differs from discrimination, and so although the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 doesn't specifically refer to volunteers, it appears that anyone found guilty of harassment could face imprisonment and/ or a fine, as well as civil action by the person subjected to the harassment.

If a volunteer were found guilty of harassment then they could face legal proceedings as well as civil action (although their status would be that of an individual, rather than a 'volunteer'). Similarly, if a volunteer were subject to harassment, then they (as an individual) would be covered by this legislation.