



Lifeboats



VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING HANDBOOK

This handbook brings together the tools to support anyone involved in managing the volunteer problem solving process at each stage to effectively and fairly address any problems relating to volunteers at the RNLI. It will be useful for volunteer managers and for the investigation, hearing and challenge managers.

It provides guidance about what to do if a problem arises involving a volunteer and how to resolve this locally and, if necessary, by using the ***Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*** process.

References in this handbook that relate to a specific document or policy are marked in bold and italics. These documents, as well as guidelines, forms, policies and other relevant information to help you manage volunteers, can be found on the Volunteer Information Zone on Compass and at www.rnli.org/VolunteerManagerResources.

At the end of this handbook you will find appendices with the relevant policies in full, as well as a glossary which clarifies the different roles and responsibilities and some of the terms referred to in this document.

Throughout there will be reference to a volunteer manager – this can be a staff member or volunteer who has line management responsibilities for volunteers. For the purpose of differentiation in this handbook, staff members in this role will be referred to as staff volunteer managers.

A list of useful resources, links and contacts can also be found on page 30.

In addition to the written guidance you also have access to a volunteering adviser in your area who can give further advice and guidance on individual cases. To find out their contact details email volunteering@rnli.org.uk.



Photo: Nigel Millard

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING HANDBOOK

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1. INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING AT THE RNLI

Volunteering is central to the RNLI's ethos and our volunteers are vital to the RNLI's success. Over 95% of our people are volunteers so it is essential that we manage our volunteers well to ensure there is a long and sustainable future for the organisation.

An important part of good volunteer management is dealing with issues and problems involving volunteers in a respectful way. If we get everything right through volunteer recruitment, induction, ongoing management and through regular communication, we may find that problems will be greatly reduced. However, there will always be occasions where problems occur and it's important that these are dealt with in a fair and consistent way.

If an issue is raised, often the best and speediest resolution of low-level issues/concerns by local managers is through early intervention and good communication (see page 8). This could be achieved by having an honest conversation and/or by mediation.

If the problem cannot be resolved in this way, it continues or if there is a major problem, then it may be appropriate to follow the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** process – as outlined in this handbook. Before making this decision it's best to contact your local volunteering adviser as they will be able to advise on the policy and how to implement it.

2. THE VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY EXPLAINED

The RNLI has a **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** to support managers and volunteers in a fair and consistent way when problems arise. This section is a summary of the policy but the full policy can be found in Appendix 1 (see page 31).

PURPOSE

To be used by RNLI volunteers and staff to address any problems relating to volunteer conduct.

SCOPE

To be used in relation to all volunteers in all roles across the RNLI, when:

- a volunteer wishes to raise a problem relating to other volunteers
- the RNLI needs to address a problem with a volunteer
- a problem is raised to the RNLI from an external party about a volunteer.

POLICY STATEMENT

The RNLI is committed to:

- resolving problems as early as possible
- supporting volunteers and managers through difficult situations
- identifying and acting on opportunities for change and improvement.

Volunteering is central to the RNLI's ethos. The bond of trust between the RNLI and its volunteers is based on a voluntary two-way commitment - a relationship that is not a legally binding contract.

The RNLI's work is driven by its core values (trustworthy, courageous, selfless and dependable) which facilitate a collaborative and mutually positive relationship with our volunteers. Occasionally, however, a volunteer may have a problem that needs to be addressed. Similarly, the RNLI may need to address a problem with a volunteer.

The resolution of all issues should occur at a local management level outside of this policy whenever possible. Where a matter cannot be resolved in this way, the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** and guidance must be followed.

However, if the relationship between the RNLI and the volunteer breaks down and the problems prove irreconcilable, then either the volunteer or the RNLI can decide to bring the volunteer relationship to an end at any stage.

Equally, either the volunteer or the RNLI may decide to end the volunteer relationship at any time for any other reason. The RNLI will only make this decision when it is considered fair and reasonable to do so.

A staff volunteer manager will always be involved in making this decision and will seek guidance from the Triage Panel (see page 41 for more details on who this is) where there could be wider implications.

KEY PRINCIPLES

There are some key principles that underpin the whole process:

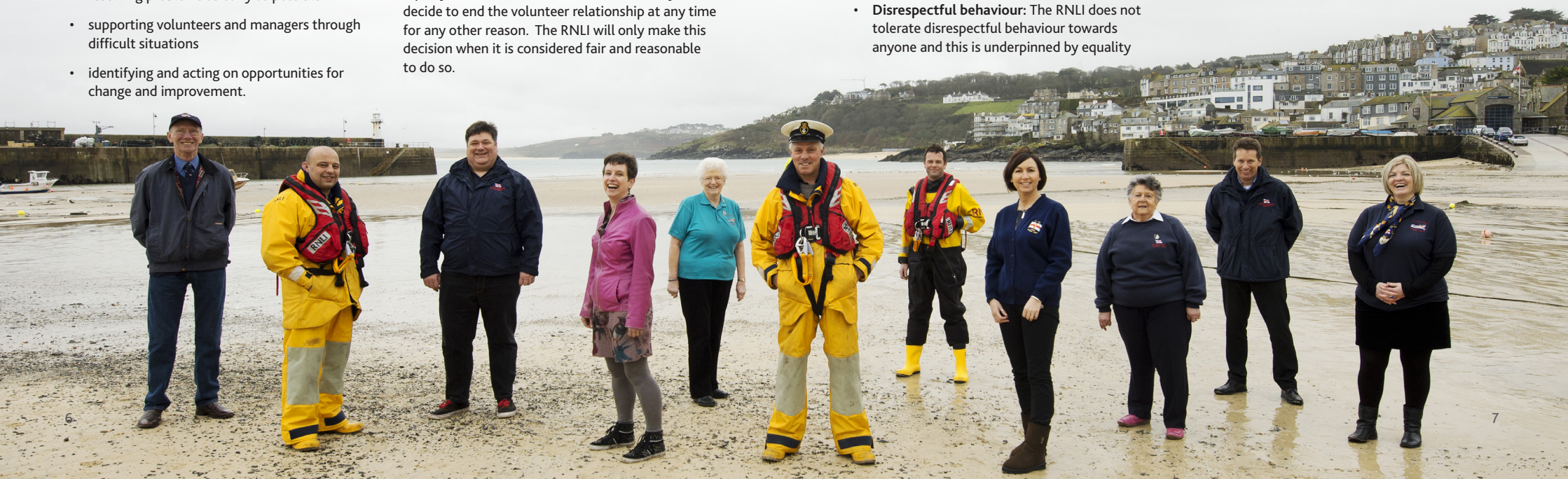
- **Fairness and equality:** Any problem raised will be responded to thoroughly and fairly ensuring that the **Volunteer Code of Conduct**; the **Volunteer Commitment** and the **RNLI Inclusion and Equality Policy** are upheld and that any actions, recommendations, outcomes or sanctions are fair and reasonable.
- **Confidentiality:** If the RNLI raises a problem with a volunteer it will endeavour to be discreet and only involve those who are necessary. In return the RNLI asks volunteers to treat the airing and resolution of problems in a discreet and confidential way. This includes communications occurring outside of the RNLI, eg use of social media networks.
- **Disrespectful behaviour:** The RNLI does not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards anyone and this is underpinned by equality

legislation and the **RNLI Inclusion and Equality Policy**. All volunteers should feel free to raise valid problems, will be listened to and will not be victimised for doing so.

- **Local management resolution:** In the first instance, concerns will be raised directly with the volunteer's manager. Resolution should occur at this local level whenever possible.
- **Timely resolution:** Problems will be raised and addressed at the earliest opportunity but taking into consideration the importance of involving the right people and their availability.

SUPPORT MECHANISMS

All managers involved at any stage of the volunteer problem solving process should, where appropriate, consider support mechanisms available to volunteers. Examples include Support 24/7, Mediation, Occupational Health and Learning and Development. More information, including how to access these, can be found on page 28.



3. DEALING WITH ISSUES AS THEY OCCUR

Whilst the RNLI has a **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** and process to support managers and volunteers in a fair and consistent way when things go wrong, many issues can be resolved locally without using the policy as outlined below.

RESOLVING THE ISSUE LOCALLY

- In many cases issues can be resolved without using the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** through timely, respectful, and honest conversations.
- Local volunteer managers (staff or volunteers) are often best placed to have these conversations but can also seek the support of their staff line manager and their volunteering adviser.
- In all cases good record keeping is recommended – this will provide a history to any issue or problem should there be a need to escalate in the future.
- After these conversations, it should be decided if the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** process is appropriate – please discuss this with your volunteering adviser.

Tips to help with having honest and difficult conversations

- Try to have these conversations face-to-face and privately – not in front of other people. It's best to have them as early and timely as possible rather than leaving the problem to escalate. Stick to the facts and keep personal feelings to yourself – try to be concise.
- There are various approaches available to help you have these conversations – one that may be useful is 'Feedback Formula' by Shari Harley which goes through 8 steps of how you may approach and frame a difficult conversation:
 1. Introduce the conversation – a description of what you plan to discuss and your purpose
 2. Empathise and state motive – consider the volunteer's feelings
 3. Describe the observed behaviour – 'I've noticed...'
 4. State the impact or result of the actions
 5. Ask for their perception/what they think about the issue at hand

6. Make a suggestion or request – state how you think the problem should be handled in the future
 7. Build an agreement on next steps
 8. Say 'thank you'.
- Volunteering advisers can advise on the content and structure of honest conversations.
 - The RNLI has an 'Honest Conversations' course available to help managers to have these kind of conversations (see Learning Zone or ask your staff manager for more information).

MEDIATION

- Mediation can be a constructive way of tackling problems and can often result in a quicker and more positive resolution than using the formal problem solving process. It can help people who are in conflict with each other to understand the other's perspective and sort out their differences quickly, respectfully and confidentially.
- The purpose is for the parties to have the opportunity to make a mutually acceptable agreement for moving forward and to bring a satisfactory resolution to the problem.
- Volunteer managers can facilitate mediatory conversations locally, however, the RNLI also has a more formal mediation facility available. You can request this through a volunteering adviser or people adviser who will request this from the mediation team leader. They will appoint an ACAS trained mediator who will normally be a member of staff.
- Mediation can be requested as a tool at a local level or at any stage within the volunteer problem solving process by the manager or the volunteer.

Examples of issues which can be dealt with outside of the policy or by using another policy

- Issues that can be addressed and resolved at a **local management level**, without going into the process of the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy**, may include:
 - issues that started outside of the volunteer role
 - minor internal disputes
 - low-level conduct issues
 - problems which arise relating to competence, performance and/or non-attendance (procedures for these, and for stepping down age and health assessments, can be found on Horizon - see page 30).
- **Problems not relating to RNLI business:** if a volunteer raises a problem not related to RNLI business and which doesn't impact the team (eg family issues), this should be explained, and the volunteer will be asked to resolve the problem in a different way outside of the RNLI.
- **Suspected wrongdoing or dangerous working practices:** volunteers who have concerns around any suspected illegal, unethical or bad practice within the RNLI, such as a suspicion of fraud or a serious health and safety concern, should refer to the **Raising Organisational Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy** (see page 30).
- **Problems involving staff members:** if the problem involves a staff member (as well as a volunteer) the people adviser must be informed, and the staff policy will take precedence. This includes when a problem is raised by a volunteer about a staff member.
- If you are in any doubt whether the issue should be dealt with using the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** process or not, discuss with your volunteering adviser (see contact list on page 30).



4. IMPLEMENTING THE VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

Before commencing this process, in most circumstances, local management resolution should be considered in the first instance outside of this policy (see page 8). Where a matter can't be resolved in this way, the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** and guidance must be followed.

The RNLI will use this policy to address any problems relating specifically to a volunteer's conduct and should not be used for problems which arise relating to competence, performance and/or non-attendance (procedures for these can be found on Horizon). For the purposes of this policy, 'problems' are breaches or alleged breaches of the **Volunteer Commitment** and/or **Volunteer Code of Conduct**.

Problems should always be aired as promptly as possible so they can be investigated or resolved in a timely manner.

There are 3 stages to the process, which are the same whether the problem is raised by the volunteer or the RNLI:

- Stage 1 – Informal
- Stage 2 – Formal
- Stage 3 – Opportunity for the subject of the complaint to challenge

Each stage is explained in this handbook – with flowcharts, guidance and examples given in each section.

- Within each flowchart you'll find references to templates which are available from your volunteering adviser – it is important that they are used to provide consistency across cases and to ensure volunteer appropriate wording is used.
- Examples are given to help assess whether problems should be addressed at Stage 1 – Informal or Stage 2 – Formal, or whether they should be referred back to local management for discussion (examples of issues which should be dealt with outside the policy are given on page 9).

- Your volunteering adviser should be informed throughout and can provide support and guidance with each stage of the process.

Before going into the detail of each stage, there are some general things to consider:

RAISING THE PROBLEM – HOW AND WHO TO?

- If a volunteer raises a problem:
 - they should do so with their line manager (as identified on their role description). If the line manager is also a volunteer they must inform their staff line manager who will determine the next steps. If the volunteer feels unable to discuss the matter with them the problem should be raised with their line manager's manager. If they don't know who this is, the volunteering adviser can assist in finding this information
 - they should do so with the relevant manager to which the problem relates (this is for volunteers with multiple volunteer roles ie they are a fundraising volunteer and also an education presenter).
- If the RNLI wishes to raise a problem with a volunteer:
 - their staff volunteer manager will be informed, and they will determine next steps
 - they will do so in a fair and reasonable way, making sure the volunteer understands what the problem is, giving the volunteer the opportunity to put across their views, and work towards a resolution.

KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED

- The staff volunteer manager will liaise with the volunteering adviser as required throughout the process. This will ensure the staff volunteer manager has access to the current templates; correct procedure is followed; and a consistent approach is applied across the wider RNLI.
- The staff volunteer manager, in liaison with the volunteering adviser, will also consider who needs to be informed and follow up with all stakeholders, including the complainant. The complainant may receive notification once the process has come to a close although full details should not be disclosed.
- If the volunteer has multiple volunteer roles, the staff volunteer manager involved should consider whether other teams require an update as this may have knock-on effects for their other roles.
- In each Stage 2 – Formal case the volunteer problem solving process will be guided by the Triage Panel. It is made up of the staff volunteer manager, the volunteering development manager and the volunteering adviser and it provides consistency across cases, advises on permanent stand downs and appoints the investigation, hearing and the challenge managers.
- Subject matter experts may be consulted dependent upon the problem raised. For example, when dealing with financial irregularities, an auditor may become involved.

MEETINGS

- Audio recordings:
 - These are not permitted by either party during the course of the volunteer problem solving process. This will be explained at the beginning of all meetings including the investigation, hearing and challenge meetings. The volunteer will be asked to confirm that they are not recording proceedings – this will be included within the meeting notes.

Meeting notes:

- An independent note taker may be assigned to meetings connected with the volunteer problem solving process; this must be somebody who is not associated with any person linked with the investigation. The notes from these meetings will be treated as a fair and accurate representation of the discussion.
 - All notes taken throughout the Stage 2 - Formal process including the investigation, the hearing and the challenge meetings are confidential and will not be shared with those being investigated or those supporting the investigation process. Many of our volunteers live in small communities and sharing this type of information may cause further disputes locally which we want to avoid. Therefore, these notes are to support those involved in the problem solving decision making process only.
 - The volunteer, or their companion, can take their own notes for their own purposes in any of the meetings should they wish to do so.
- Companion:
- During parts of the process a volunteer may be accompanied by a companion to provide support for the volunteer. The companion should be an RNLI volunteer unless there are special circumstances. They should not be a legal representative. They can ask but cannot answer questions on behalf of the volunteer.

Logistics:

- Consideration should always be given to the venue, accessibility, time of day and anything else which may apply when planning the investigation, the hearing and the challenge meetings.

ENDING A VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RNLI OR FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE ROLE

If there are very serious problems and the relationship seems irreconcilable or is no longer a collaborative one, then the RNLI will consider a range of options, which may include finding an alternative role for the volunteer or standing the volunteer down.

- **Permanent stand down:**

- If the problem is of a serious nature a volunteer may be stood down immediately and permanently (examples of this are below). In these situations an RNLI investigation is not required. The volunteering relationship that the RNLI has with the volunteer in question is ended, meaning that they no longer carry out their voluntary role(s) with the organisation (see *Volunteers Leaving the RNLI Guidelines* for the steps to follow).
- Before taking this action, a volunteer manager who is a volunteer must always seek guidance from a staff volunteer manager. This decision should not be made in isolation but in consultation with the Triage Panel, unless the risk is deemed such that immediate stand down without reference to the panel is essential. Each case should be assessed in consultation with a volunteering adviser. The staff volunteer manager will ensure that the appropriate stakeholders/management have been consulted before a final decision is taken and send a letter to the volunteer communicating the outcome.

- **Temporary stand down:**

- Standing down the volunteer pending the outcome of an investigation (either RNLI or external eg police investigation) is also an option. This decision will be taken by the staff volunteer manager with advice from the volunteering adviser and will be based upon the best interests of both the volunteer and the RNLI but does not suggest wrongdoing on the part of the volunteer.
- If a volunteer refuses to participate in the process the RNLI will decide whether to continue through the volunteer problem solving process or to end the volunteer relationship at this point.

Examples of situations which may warrant immediate permanent stand down of a volunteer (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Conviction of/being found guilty in a court of law of a serious criminal offence (including outside of volunteer role), which presents significant risk and has automatically breached the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*, eg arson, assaulting a minor, sexual offences, murder, drug offences, safeguarding offences
- Deliberately withholding information that affects the safety of self or others, eg failure to declare convictions
- Serious evidenced breach of the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*
- Aggressive conduct towards volunteers, staff or members of the public
- Overtly discriminatory conduct (in accordance with The Equality Act 2010)
- Theft
- Knowingly putting self and/or others in danger, eg volunteering under the influence of alcohol or drugs



5. THE STAGES OF THE POLICY

Stage 1 – Informal

This is the first stage of the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy**, during which a conduct related problem is addressed face-to-face, usually by the staff volunteer manager. This may be sufficient to resolve the problem or can, if required, be escalated to the formal stage.

All informal problems must be dealt with at the Stage 1 – Informal section of the policy and every effort should be made to resolve the problem at this stage. This stage of the policy should only be applied when it has not been possible to resolve the issue at a local management level.

The flowchart overleaf outlines the process that should be followed at this stage and who is responsible for each step.

Examples of problems which should be addressed at Stage 1 – informal

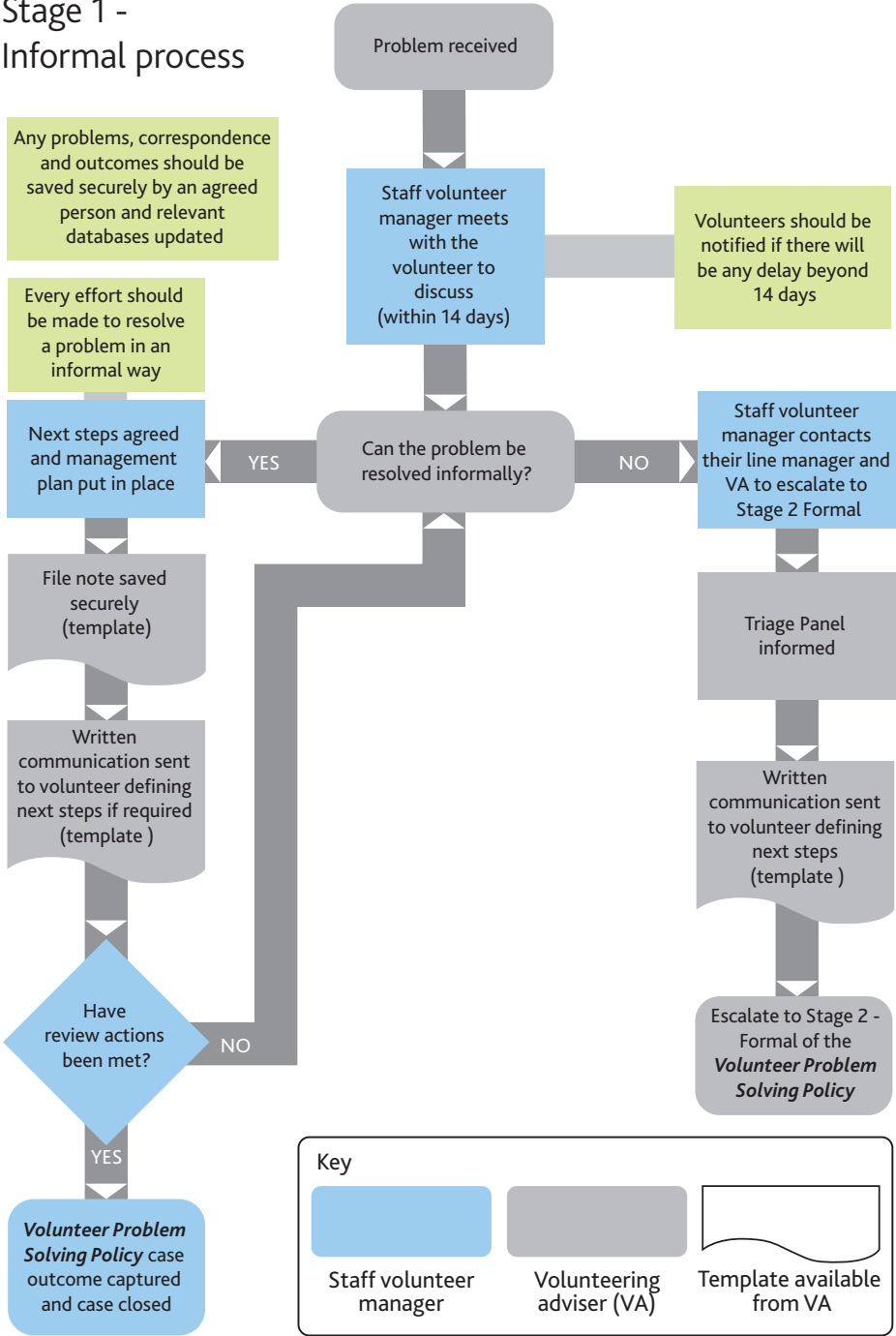
- Conduct – ie displaying behaviours not in line with the RNLI values, **Volunteer Code of Conduct** and the **Volunteer Commitment**
- Problems that started outside of volunteer role that impacts RNLI activities and/or reputation
- Internal dispute which may not have been resolved locally or one which is serious enough to move straight into the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** process
- **Social Media Policy** breach
- Breach of confidentiality
- Anything which is not in line with the **Volunteer Code of Conduct**, **Volunteer Commitment** and RNLI values.

Each example has a recommended approach and process – speak to your volunteering adviser to discuss.

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
The staff volunteer manager will meet with the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them as soon as possible, aiming to do so within 14 calendar days of the problem being raised, to clarify the nature of the problem and discuss how best it can be addressed.	If the staff volunteer manager cannot start the process within the 14 day timeframe due to work or other commitments, they must inform the volunteer of this and advise them of the new timeframe which can be achieved. It is expected that both parties will contribute constructively to this discussion. The volunteering adviser can be involved if needed.
If the problem has been resolved informally, the staff volunteer manager will ensure a record is saved (see page 29).	The staff volunteer manager is responsible for ensuring all notes and communications relating to informal problems are saved securely in accordance with our Data Protection Policy . This ensures the problems can be referred back to as required and a record is available for lessons learned moving forward.
The staff volunteer manager will send a written communication to the volunteer (if required) as a follow up to the informal discussion including a review date if applicable.	This might be by letter or email, the staff volunteer manager should select the most appropriate method dependent upon circumstances. This will confirm the key points and outcomes which have been agreed and set out a timetable for review if appropriate and should be saved securely.
If the problem has not been resolved through the informal process, the problem may progress to the Stage 2 - Formal stage.	This should only happen if discussions break down and the problem escalates. The staff volunteer manager should not make this decision in isolation but in consultation with their line manager and the volunteering adviser. A file note should be saved to reflect this decision. If a volunteer has cumulative evidenced problems raised against them at Stage 1 – Informal, any further problems may be escalated to Stage 2 – Formal. This decision will be at the discretion of the staff volunteer manager with advice from the volunteering adviser.



Stage 1 -
Informal process



Stage 2 – Formal

This is the second stage of the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy**, during which a conduct-related problem is addressed in a more structured way and sometimes results in sanctions.

All formal problems must be dealt with at this stage (see examples opposite). Problems which are unresolved at the Stage 1 – Informal stage, can, in some circumstances be escalated to this stage as well (see page 15).

In some cases, a problem may be escalated to Stage 2 - Formal due to the seriousness of the problem, bypassing Stage 1 - Informal. In these cases the Stage 2 - Formal process on page 20 will be followed.

Stage 2 – Formal is made up of two parts – the investigation and the hearing (if required).

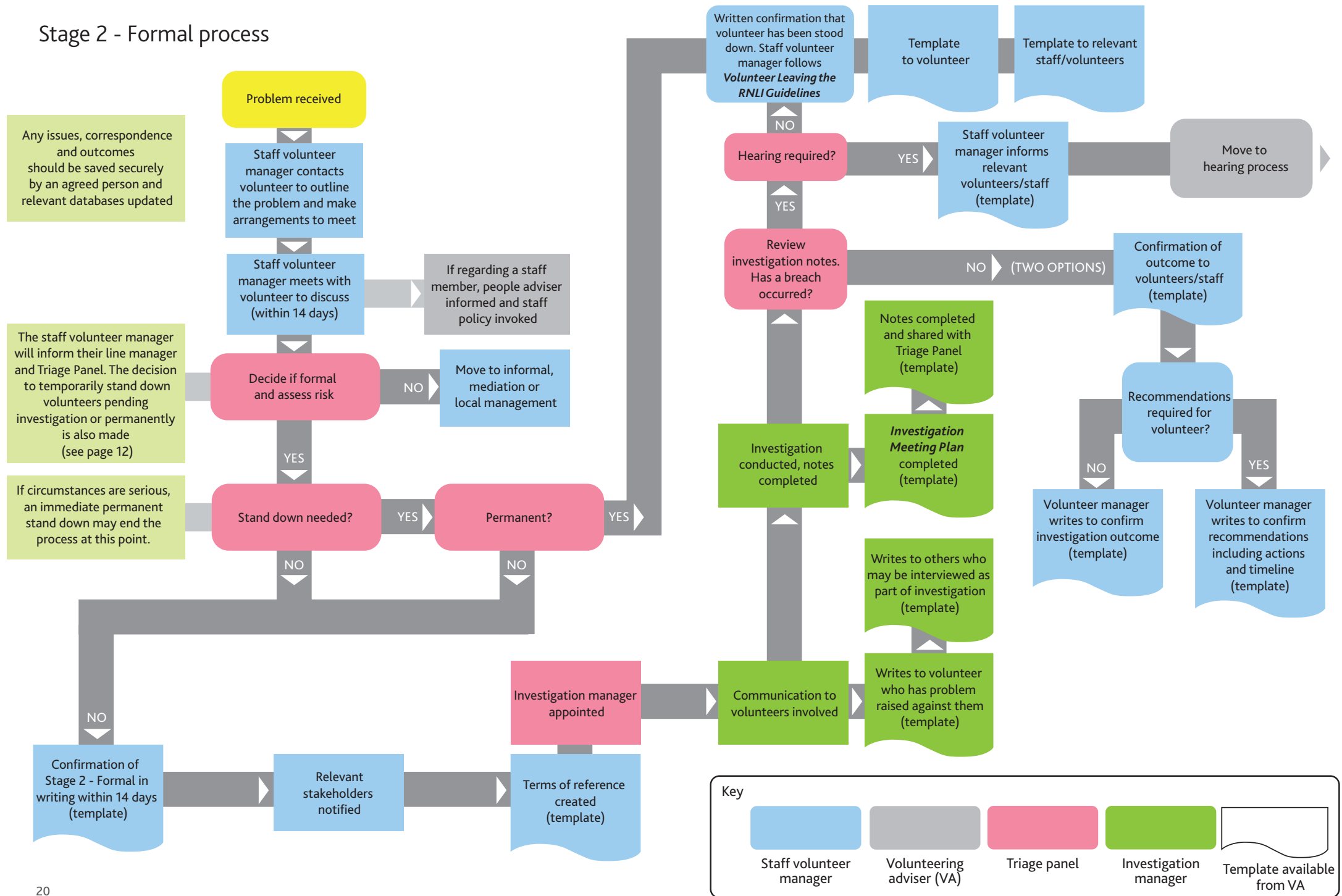
The flowchart overleaf outlines the process that should be followed at this stage and who is responsible for each step.

Examples of conduct problems that should be addressed at Stage 2 - formal

- Serious criminal offence (including outside of volunteer role) which does not warrant an immediate permanent stand down based on risk
- Deliberate falsification of an RNLI expense claim
- Serious breach of Volunteer Code of Conduct or any policy which applies to the volunteer role
- Failure to comply with vetting procedure
- Bullying
- Misappropriation of RNLI resources
- Any action which places the reputation of the RNLI at risk
- Internal dispute which impacts on wider team
- Failure to comply with traffic regulations whilst volunteering (including when responding to a service call).

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
If the problem is raised by a volunteer, the staff volunteer manager will acknowledge the problem by communicating with the volunteer who has raised the problem setting out the timeline for next steps. They should aim to do this within 14 calendar days of having received notification of the problem. The Triage Panel must be informed when any problem is raised at this stage – they will determine whether the problem is formal, or if it should be dealt with locally, at Stage 1 – Informal or whether mediation should be considered.	If the problem involves a staff member (as well as a volunteer) the people adviser must be informed and the staff policy will take precedence. The people adviser will keep the volunteering adviser informed throughout. The person raising the problem will need to specify all concerns in detail, giving the names of any other parties involved and with specific examples. When communicating with the volunteer who has raised a problem, the staff volunteer manager should advise that their identity and the problem raised may be made known to other parties involved.
When a volunteer has had a problem raised against them (by another volunteer, the RNLI or a member of the public) their staff volunteer manager will always be informed. They must communicate with the volunteer as a matter of urgency explaining the problem which has been raised against them and advise that the Stage 2 – Formal section of the Volunteer Problem Solving Policy will be followed.	This will ensure it is not a shock when they receive the letter/email from the investigation manager. The staff volunteer manager should explain the next steps.
A volunteer may be stood down temporarily pending the outcome of an investigation or, if the problem is of a serious nature, on a permanent basis (see page 12).	The decision to stand a volunteer down temporarily will be taken by the staff volunteer manager with advice from the volunteering adviser. This decision will be based upon the best interests of both the volunteer and the RNLI but does not suggest wrongdoing on the part of the volunteer.
In all cases the staff volunteer manager, in consultation with the volunteering adviser, will complete the Terms of Reference.	This is a template document which provides clarity for the investigation manager and the Triage Panel, and provides consistency of information for those involved in the problem solving process. It is not shared with the volunteer(s) involved. By exception the Terms of Reference may be amended if further information comes to light.

Stage 2 - Formal process



The investigation

The investigation is the process carried out by an RNLI manager in order to establish the facts of a case. This normally involves interviewing those involved, preparing investigation notes and making recommendations.

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
The investigation manager will always refer to the Terms of Reference during the investigation. The investigation manager will contact those involved in the investigation process in writing to arrange meetings, including the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them and others who may be able to provide information. The meetings may be face-to-face, via video call or telephone.	The Triage Panel will nominate an investigation manager. The investigation manager will be an RNLI member of staff and not be connected with the volunteer. The investigation manager should introduce themselves and the problem to the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them by email or letter. They may also wish to introduce themselves in a phone call and follow up in writing. The email/letter should: • explain the problem • explain that it may be necessary to speak with other people as part of the investigation • invite them to an investigation meeting as part of the information gathering process.
The investigation manager will gather relevant information using the Investigation Meeting Plan.	Generally, a companion is not required at these meetings; however, if a volunteer would like to be accompanied they should request this (see page 40 for more information on bringing a companion). If a volunteer who is supporting the investigation process specifically requests that they don't want their name to be revealed to the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them, the RNLI will endeavour to maintain their anonymity, but this cannot be guaranteed. They should be made aware of this.
Once the investigation manager has established all the facts, the Investigation Notes, which will include recommended outcomes, will be finalised and submitted to the Triage Panel.	It is not the investigation manager's role to decide upon a sanction but to make recommendations only based upon the information which has been gathered during the investigation.

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
The Triage Panel will review the Investigation Notes and recommendations and make a decision according to the following options: No breach to the Volunteer Code of Conduct • The staff volunteer manager will contact the volunteer who has been investigated, ideally face-to-face, confirming the outcome of the investigation, and follow up in writing. • This marks the end of the process and no further action will be considered. No breach to the Volunteer Code of Conduct but with recommendations for action to be taken • The staff volunteer manager will review the recommendations and will then meet with the volunteer to relay the outcome and agree the actions required with the volunteer. This will be followed up in writing confirming the next steps and the timeframe for completion of the agreed actions. • This marks the end of the process and no further action will be considered. Identified breach/es to the Volunteer Code of Conduct • A hearing manager will be appointed, unless evidence has been brought to light during the investigation that a serious offence has been committed which would warrant an immediate stand down. Under these circumstances, the staff volunteer manager will write to the volunteer to advise them of the decision. • If a hearing manager is required, an RNLI manager will be assigned to consider the findings presented in the Investigation Notes (see page 25 for hearing process).	Once the Investigation Notes have been reviewed by the Triage Panel, dependent upon the findings and recommendations, consideration should be made regarding who needs to be informed at this point in the process. If there are serious implications and risks within the notes, a wider communication should be considered including to the Chief Executive's Office and the Press Team.

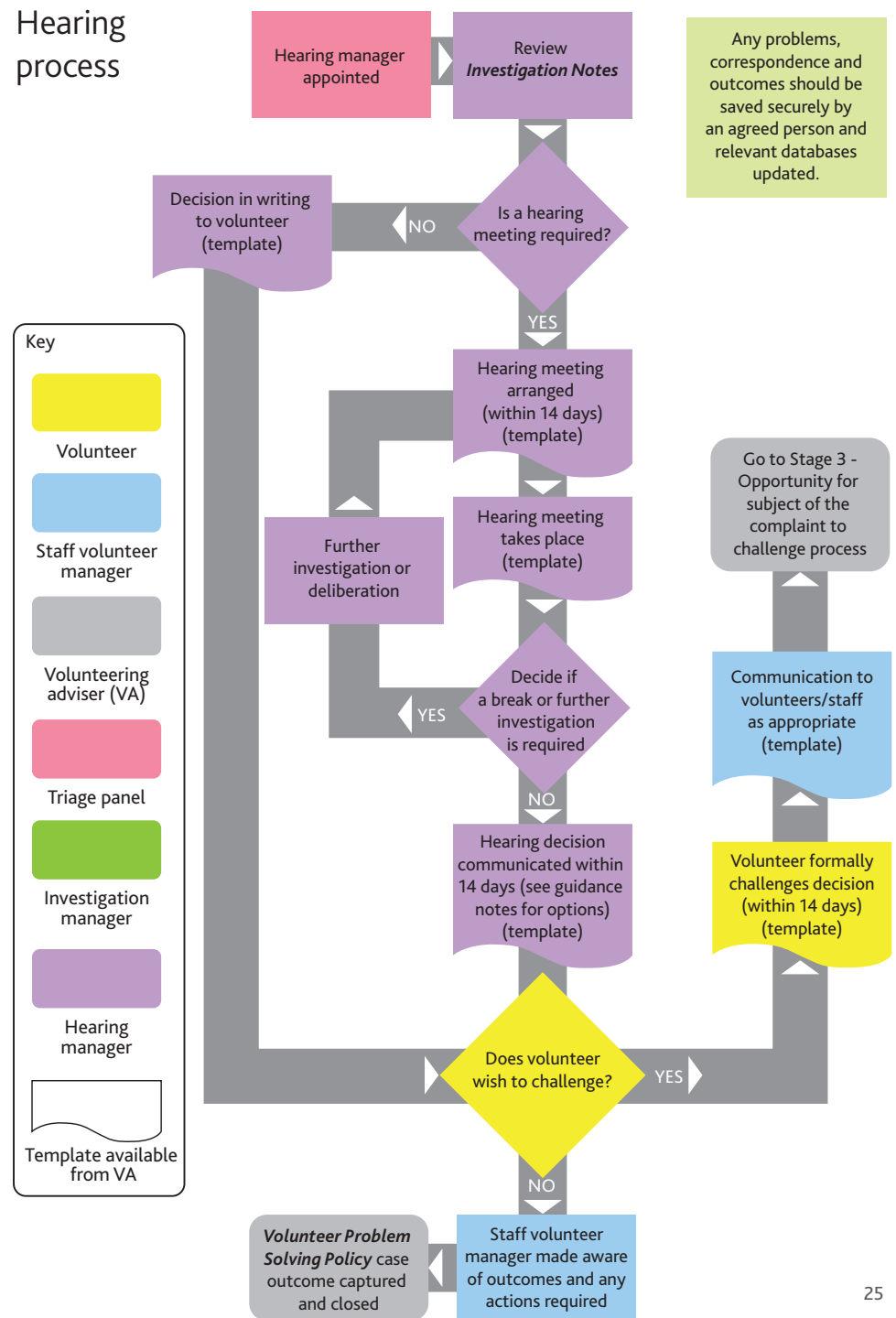
The hearing

The hearing is the consideration of the findings of a formal investigation. In some cases the outcome is clear and in these cases, a hearing meeting may not be required.

The flowchart opposite outlines the process that should be followed at this stage and who is responsible for each step.

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
If it is concluded that the Volunteer Code of Conduct has been breached, a hearing manager will be nominated to consider the findings presented in the Investigation Notes if required.	The Triage Panel will nominate a hearing manager, if required, at the earliest opportunity. They will be an RNLI manager and somebody who is not connected with the volunteer's role.
If a hearing meeting is not required , the hearing manager will write to the volunteer and advise of the decision.	In some cases the outcome is clear and in these cases a hearing meeting may not be required.
If a hearing meeting is required , the hearing manager will write to the volunteer to arrange a suitable date for the hearing meeting which ideally should take place within 14 days of the hearing manager being selected.	Alternative dates should be offered to the volunteer and, to avoid unnecessary worry during this period, the meeting should be carried out as soon as possible. The RNLI will advise the volunteer, in advance, if the concern is of such a nature that it may have to consider ending the volunteer relationship permanently as a result of the findings of the investigation. The volunteer should be given the option of being accompanied at the meeting by a companion.
The hearing manager will listen to the volunteer's response to the findings and any mitigating factors presented and once the discussions have concluded the hearing manager can: • introduce a short break to the meeting to consider the information presented or, if required, allow some further time to consider the decision, eg overnight. However, it is preferable to deliver the outcome as soon as possible and ideally, face-to-face explaining the rationale for the decision. This should be confirmed to the volunteer in writing within 14 calendar days of the meeting and the volunteer will also be notified of their right to challenge the decision in this letter; or • defer the decision pending further investigation if new information has been presented. In this situation, the hearing manager will write to the volunteer, indicating a timescale for completion. Once completed, the hearing manager may reconvene the hearing meeting to communicate the outcome. This will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing within 14 calendar days of the meeting. The volunteer will also be notified of their right to challenge the decision in this letter.	Once a decision has been taken by the hearing manager an appropriate sanction may be applied. The volunteering adviser can offer support by looking at similar breaches and/or suggesting alternative sanctions which may be appropriate, thereby ensuring equity across the organisation. However, other sanctions may also be introduced to ensure the policy is developed in line with good practice.

Hearing process



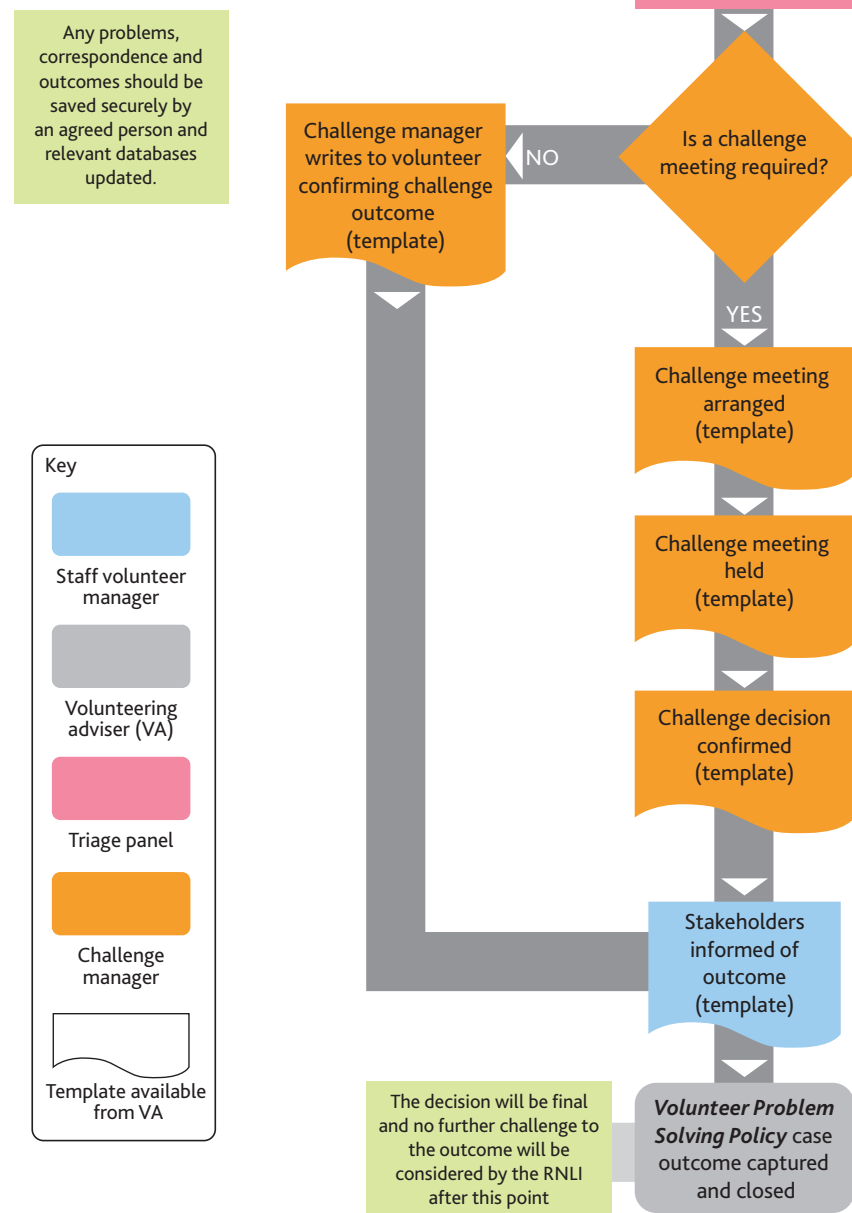
Stage 3 – Opportunity for the subject of the complaint to challenge

This stage is the process by which a volunteer can challenge the outcome of the Stage 2 - Formal process.

The flowchart opposite outlines the process that should be followed at this stage and who is responsible for each step.

Process steps to follow (taken from the policy)	Supporting guidelines
If the volunteer chooses to challenge the outcome of the hearing they must do so within 14 calendar days of the date of the letter confirming the outcome, providing reasons for the challenge.	They do this in writing to the Volunteering Team, giving clarity as to why they believe there are grounds for the challenge. In the absence of new information, it's possible that a challenge meeting will not be required and instead a review of the decision will be carried out.
If no challenge is received within 14 calendar days, the volunteer's manager is made aware of the outcome and the case is closed.	
If a challenge is received within 14 calendar days, the Triage Panel will consider the challenge and will appoint a challenge manager.	The challenge manager will review the Investigation Notes and, if necessary, carry out further investigations to clarify any points which are unclear and/or to investigate any new evidence which has been raised as part of the challenge.
In some circumstances, the challenge manager may ask the volunteer to attend a challenge meeting to discuss the challenge in more detail as part of their investigation	The challenge manager will decide if a meeting is required. Generally, a companion is not required at these meetings; however, if a volunteer would like to be accompanied, they should request this.
Once a decision has been made, the challenge manager will notify the volunteer of the decision. This decision will be final and no further challenge to the outcome will be considered by the RNLI after this point.	All outcomes will be confirmed in writing to the volunteer. All records will be updated accordingly to reflect the outcome.

Stage 3 – Opportunity for the subject of the complaint to challenge process



6. GETTING BACK ON TRACK

At any point during the volunteer problem solving process, there may be repercussions for the local team which will need consideration. Below are some things to consider throughout the process:

VOLUNTEER WELLBEING AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

A volunteer's line manager should check with the volunteer about their wellbeing following any sanction being applied which may have caused disappointment to that volunteer; specifically when a volunteer is stood down from their role. Likewise, the manager should consider the repercussions on the wider team.

Thought should be given to how the RNLI can offer support to the volunteer and/or members of the local team, to assist them in moving forwards in a positive manner. Depending on the nature of the issue and the process that has taken place, there may be volunteers requiring support over and above that which should be routinely provided by their line manager.

There are a range of services available to assist those in need as listed below:

- **Support 24/7** - This service can provide personal support for a volunteer, particularly if they are being stood down permanently from their role. In these circumstances, although they may not be a part of the RNLI moving forward, Support 24/7 can be offered for up to 6 months and provides practical support and advice around a range of topics. Freephone: 0800 1164362 (UK volunteers), 1800 303407 (Ireland volunteers), email: assistance@workplaceoptions.com, website: www.workplaceoptions.com, username: RNLI, password: volunteer.
- **Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) and network groups** - Advice and support is available on any matter associated with making the RNLI a more inclusive and diverse place to be, including challenging ongoing 'exclusive' behaviours; equality legislation and tools to help raise awareness of I&D in practice.

Support from a range of network groups is also available. You can contact the team by calling 01202 663338.

- **Mediation** - A mediation service is available to help people who are in conflict with each other sort out their differences quickly, respectfully and confidentially with the help of an ACAS trained mediator (see page 9). To access this service speak to your volunteering adviser by emailing volunteering@rnli.org.uk.
- **Volunteering advisers** - There are volunteering advisers based in every region who are available to provide support with all aspects of volunteer management including problem solving and getting back on track. They are here to ensure that our volunteers are treated consistently, fairly and inclusively and to promote good practice at all stages. Email volunteering@rnli.org.uk to find out who your volunteering adviser is.
- **Occupational Health** - This team can provide an impartial advisory service on matters relating to health and wellbeing. Email: OHServices@rnli.org.uk.
- **Learning and development** - There are a wide range of learning and development opportunities to support with any requirements which may have been identified. Look on Learning Zone or email Learning@rnli.org.uk.

VOLUNTEER DISSATISFACTION WITH OUTCOME

If the complaint against the volunteer has not been substantiated through the investigation process and the volunteer is reinstated, there is potential for dissatisfaction with the process itself; the complainant or the volunteer manager. Depending on the issue raised, the line manager may wish to consider the following:

- Reassure the volunteer that the process has been followed according to the **Volunteer Problem Solving Policy** in a fair and consistent way.

- Mediation (see page 9) can be considered if the volunteer has an issue reintegrating back into the team; this might be with a specific member of the local team, their line manager or another person. This would need to be agreed by all/ both parties.

MANAGING LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Any lack of or gaps in information can often be filled with speculation and hearsay. To avoid this, the volunteer manager should agree with the volunteering adviser what can and cannot be shared about the process that has taken place and then inform those who need to know. For example, a local team meeting may take place to make clear any outcomes that affect the wider team to bring closure to the process for them. The information provided should be balanced, maintaining confidentiality as required.
- As would be expected throughout the investigation, the local team should be reminded that confidentiality should be maintained moving forward, including use of social media.

FILLING THE GAPS – VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

- If the volunteer problem solving process has resulted in volunteer vacancies, the volunteer manager should begin an inclusive recruitment process as soon as possible, seeking support from the volunteering adviser as needed.
- Whilst recruitment will be important to ensure activities can continue as normal, an awareness of any local sensitivities should be borne in mind especially when this follows a stand down and replacement of the local team member.

UPDATING RECORDS

- Once the volunteer problem solving process has ended the staff volunteer manager should ensure that relevant databases are updated in relation to any changes that may have resulted.
- The relevant volunteering adviser should also be updated so that central volunteer problem solving records can be accurately maintained.
- Managers who have been involved in the volunteer problem solving process should:
 - ensure the volunteering adviser has a copy of all correspondence
 - delete associated documentation in line with the **GDPR Guidelines for Volunteer Managers**.

7. USEFUL RESOURCES, LINKS AND CONTACTS

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

This handbook contains references to other documents and policies which you may find useful depending on the nature of the problem. These can be found by searching on Compass (see link opposite) – if you don't have access to Compass you can ask for the document or policy from your staff volunteer manager.

- *RNLI Values* (see page 6)
- *Volunteer Code of Conduct Policy* (see page 36)
- *RNLI Volunteer Commitment* (see page 35)
- *Volunteers Leaving the RNLI Guidelines*
- *Safeguarding Policy*
- *RNLI Inclusion and Equality Policy*
- *Data Protection Policy*
- *Raising Organisational Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy*
- *A Guide to Social Media for RNLI Volunteers*
- *Safety, Health and Environment Policy*
- *GDPR Guidelines for Volunteer Managers*

There are also templates to help at each stage of the process - these can be requested from your volunteering adviser.

USEFUL CONTACTS AND LINKS

Volunteering Team/Volunteering advisers

Email: Volunteering@rnli.org.uk
Tel: 01202 663346 (UK) / 01 895 1831 (Ireland)

People advisers

Email: people_advisers@rnli.org.uk

Mediation

Email volunteering@rnli.org.uk and ask for your volunteering adviser who will request this from the mediation team leader

Occupational Health

Email: OHServices@rnli.org.uk

Learning and Development

Email: Learning@rnli.org.uk

Support 24/7

Tel: 0800 116 4362 (UK volunteers) / 1800 303 407 (Ireland volunteers)
Username: RNLI, Password: volunteer
Email: assistance@workplaceoptions.com
Website: www.workplaceoptions.com

Data Governance and GDPR

Email: Data_Gov@rnli.org.uk

Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Team and network groups

Tel: 01202 663338

Volunteer management resources

www.rnli.org/VolunteerManagerResources

Horizon

<https://mywork.rnli2.org.uk/sites/horizon>

Compass

<https://rnli.sharepoint.com/sites/compass>

RNLI policies

<https://rnli.org/support-us/become-a-volunteer/volunteer-zone/volunteer-resources/policies>

If you can't access Compass or Horizon please speak to your staff volunteer manager to access the information you need.

Appendix 1

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

Issued by the Volunteering Team

Effective date: February 2019 – Version No.2

Purpose

To be used by RNLI volunteers and staff to address any problems relating to volunteer conduct.

Scope

To be used in relation to all volunteers in all roles across the RNLI, when:

- a volunteer wishes to raise a problem relating to other volunteers
- the RNLI needs to address a problem with a volunteer
- when a problem is raised to the RNLI from an external party about a volunteer.

Policy Statement

The RNLI is committed to:

- resolving problems as early as possible
- supporting volunteers and managers through difficult situations
- identifying and acting on opportunities for change and improvement.

Volunteering is central to the RNLI's ethos. The bond of trust between the RNLI and its volunteers is based on a voluntary two-way commitment, a relationship that is not a legally binding contract.

The RNLI's work is driven by its core values (trustworthy, courageous, selfless and dependable) which facilitate a collaborative and mutually positive relationship with its volunteers. Occasionally however, a volunteer may have a problem that needs to be addressed. Similarly, the RNLI may need to address a problem with a volunteer.

The resolution of all issues should occur at a local management level outside of this policy whenever possible. Where a matter cannot be resolved in this way, the ***Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*** and guidance must be followed.

However, if the relationship between the RNLI and the volunteer breaks down and the problems prove irreconcilable, then, either the volunteer or the RNLI can decide to bring the volunteer relationship to an end at any stage.

Equally, either the volunteer or the RNLI may decide to end the volunteer relationship at any time for any other reason. The RNLI will only make this decision when it is considered fair and reasonable to do so. A staff volunteer manager will always be involved in making this decision and will seek guidance from the Triage Panel where there could be wider implications.

Principles

- **Fairness and equality:** any problem raised will be responded to thoroughly and fairly ensuring that the ***Volunteer Code of Conduct***, the ***Volunteer Commitment*** and the ***Inclusion and Equality Policy*** are upheld and that any actions, recommendations, outcomes or sanctions are fair and reasonable.
- **Confidentiality:** if the RNLI raises a problem with a volunteer it will endeavour to be discreet and only involve those who are necessary. In return the RNLI asks volunteers to treat the airing and resolution of problems in a discreet and confidential way. This includes communications occurring outside of the RNLI, eg use of social media networks.
- **Disrespectful behaviour:** the RNLI does not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards anyone and this is underpinned by equality legislation and the ***RNLI Inclusion and Equality Policy***. All volunteers should feel free to raise valid problems, will be listened to and will not be victimised for doing so.

- **Local management resolution:** in the first instance, concerns will be raised directly with the volunteer's manager (this may be a staff member or a volunteer), as identified on the volunteer's role description. Resolution should occur at this local level, outside of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*, whenever possible.
- **Timely resolution:** problems will be raised and addressed at the earliest opportunity but taking into consideration the importance of involving the right people and their availability.

Process

Before commencing this process, in most circumstances, local management resolution should be considered in the first instance; this falls outside of this policy.

There are 3 stages to this process and flowcharts are available to support each of these.

A volunteer must raise a problem with their line manager (as identified on the role description) and if the line manager is also a volunteer, they must inform their staff line manager who will determine next steps.

If the RNLI wishes to raise a problem with a volunteer, their staff volunteer manager will be informed and they will determine next steps.

It is important to note that a decision can be taken to end the volunteer relationship with immediate effect dependent upon the seriousness of the problem. A volunteer manager must always seek guidance from a staff volunteer manager before taking this action and, further guidance must be sought from the Triage Panel where circumstances require an organisational decision.

Assessment Tools are available to help assess whether problems should be addressed at Stage 1 – Informal or Stage 2 – Formal, or whether they should be referred back to local management for further discussion.

The *Glossary of Terms and Responsibilities* should be referred to alongside this document to clarify terms used throughout the document.

Stage 1 – Informal

All informal problems must be dealt with using the Stage 1 – Informal section of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*.

- The staff volunteer manager will meet with the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them as soon as possible, aiming to do so within 14 calendar days of the problem being raised, to clarify the nature of the problem and discuss how best it can be addressed.
- If the problem has been resolved informally, the staff volunteer manager will ensure a record is saved.
- The staff volunteer manager will send a written communication to the volunteer (if required) as a follow up to the informal discussion including a review date if applicable.
- If the problem has not been resolved through the informal process, the problem may progress to the formal stage.

Stage 2 – Formal

All formal problems must be dealt with using the Stage 2 – Formal section of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*.

- **If the problem is raised by a volunteer**, the staff volunteer manager will acknowledge the problem by communicating with the volunteer who has raised the problem setting out the timeline for next steps. They should aim to do this within 14 calendar days of having received notification of the problem.
- When any problem is raised at the formal stage the Triage Panel must be informed and they will determine if the problem is formal or if it should be dealt with locally, at Stage 1 – Informal, or whether mediation should be considered.

- **When a volunteer has had a problem raised against them** (whether that be by another volunteer, the RNLI or a member of the public) their staff volunteer manager will always be informed. They must communicate with the volunteer as a matter of urgency explaining the problem which has been raised against them and advise that the Stage 2 – Formal section of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy* will be followed.
- A volunteer may be stood down temporarily pending the outcome of an investigation or, if the problem is of a serious nature, on a permanent basis.
- In all cases the staff volunteer manager in consultation with the volunteering adviser will complete the *Terms of Reference*.

The investigation

- The investigation manager will always refer to the *Terms of Reference* during the investigation.
- The investigation manager will contact those involved in the investigation process in writing, including the volunteer who has had the problem raised against them and others who may be able to provide information, to arrange meetings. These may be face-to-face, telephone or video calls in order to conduct the investigation.
- The investigation manager will gather relevant information using the *Investigation Meeting Plan*.
- Once the investigation manager has established all of the facts, the *Investigation Notes*, which will include recommended outcomes, will be finalised and submitted to the Triage Panel.
- The Triage Panel will review the *Investigation Notes* and recommendations and make a decision according to the following options:

No breach to the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*

- The staff volunteer manager will make contact with the volunteer who has been

investigated, ideally face to face, confirming the outcome of the investigation. This will be followed up in writing.

- This marks the end of the process and no further action will be considered.

No breach to the *Volunteer Code of Conduct* but with recommendations for action to be taken

- The staff volunteer manager will review the recommendations; they will then meet with the volunteer to relay the outcome and agree the actions required with the volunteer. This will be followed up in writing confirming the next steps and the timeframe for completion of the agreed actions.

- This marks the end of the process and no further action will be considered.

Identified breach/es to the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*

- A hearing manager will not be appointed if evidence has been brought to light during the investigation that a serious offence has been committed which would warrant an immediate stand down. Under these circumstances, the staff volunteer manager will write to the volunteer to advise them of the decision.

- If a hearing manager is required, an RNLI manager will be assigned to consider the findings presented in the *Investigation Notes*.

- A hearing meeting will generally take place unless the outcome is very clear and under these circumstances, the hearing manager will write to the volunteer to advise of the decision.

The hearing

- If it is concluded that the **Volunteer Code of Conduct** has been breached, a hearing manager will be nominated to consider the findings presented in the **Investigation Notes** if required.
- If a hearing meeting is not required, the hearing manager will write to the volunteer and advise of the decision.
- If a hearing meeting is required, the hearing manager will write to the volunteer to arrange a suitable date for the hearing meeting which ideally should take place within 14 days of the hearing manager being selected.
- The hearing manager will listen to the volunteer's response to the findings and any mitigating factors presented and once the discussions have concluded the hearing manager can:
 - introduce a short break to the meeting to consider the information presented or, if required, allow some further time to consider the decision eg overnight. However, it is preferable to deliver the outcome as soon as possible and ideally, face to face explaining the rationale for the decision. This should be confirmed to the volunteer in writing within 14 calendar days of the meeting and the volunteer will also be notified of their right to challenge the decision in this letter; or
 - defer the decision pending further investigation if new information has been presented. In this situation, the hearing manager will write to the volunteer, indicating a timescale for completion. Once completed, the hearing manager may reconvene the hearing meeting to communicate the outcome. This will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing within 14 calendar days of the meeting. The volunteer will also be notified of their right to challenge the decision in this letter.

Stage 3 – Opportunity for the subject of the complaint to challenge

- If the volunteer chooses to challenge the outcome of the hearing they must do so within 14 calendar days of the date of the letter confirming the outcome, providing reasons for the challenge.
- If no challenge is received within 14 calendar days the volunteer's manager is made aware of the outcome and the case is closed.
- If a challenge is received within 14 calendar days, the Triage Panel will consider the challenge and will appoint a challenge manager.
- In some circumstances, the challenge manager may ask the volunteer to attend a challenge meeting to discuss the challenge in more detail as part of their investigation.
- Once a decision has been made, the challenge manager will notify the volunteer of the decision. This decision will be final and no further challenge to the outcome will be considered by the RNLI after this point.

Appendix 2

THE RNLI VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

The RNLI will:

- carry out its activities in accordance with the RNLI's Purpose, Vision and Values
- create a welcoming environment where everyone is treated equally, fairly and with respect
- provide you with appropriate training, opportunities and equipment for your volunteer role
- give guidance and support your development in your volunteer role
- ensure you are volunteering in a safe environment so far as is reasonably practicable
- listen to your concerns if things aren't going well
- recognise that you are a volunteer and have other commitments
- be inclusive and value everyone for their individual contribution
- respect people's views, interests and uniqueness
- comply with agreed standards, policies and processes
- not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards each other, supporters or members of the public.

In return we ask you to:

- carry out your volunteering activities, as agreed, in accordance with the RNLI's Purpose, Vision and Values
- promote a welcoming environment and treat everybody equally, fairly and with respect
- respect people's views, interests and uniqueness
- give us your time willingly and participate in any training required for your role
- comply with agreed standards, policies and processes including the **Volunteer Commitment** and **Volunteer Code of Conduct**
- represent the RNLI in a professional, trustworthy and loyal way
- not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards each other, supporters or members of the public
- talk to your line manager as identified on your role description first, if you have a problem.

Appendix 3

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

1. Purpose

To provide a Code of Conduct which is applicable to all RNLI volunteers, whatever their role. It is not an exhaustive list, but sets out clear expectations of the conduct required of all volunteers by the RNLI.

2. Scope

2.1 Who does this policy apply to?

All persons engaged in volunteering for the RNLI in any voluntary role.

2.2 Who uses this policy?

Any staff or volunteers who manage other volunteers; all volunteers must be aware of the Code of Conduct.

2.3 When does this Code of Conduct apply?

This Code of Conduct applies to all volunteers when:

- carrying out volunteering activities (including when attending events, training and other RNLI volunteer activities over multiple days) for the duration of the event, including socialising in the evening where applicable
- travelling to and from any RNLI volunteering activity, including when responding to a pager
- being identifiable as an RNLI volunteer, this includes:
 - when carrying out volunteering activity
 - when wearing RNLI branded clothing
 - when known in the community as an RNLI volunteer.

3. Code of Conduct

At the heart of our policies is the '**Volunteer Commitment**'. This statement outlines the spirit in which the RNLI and volunteers will act together to achieve the RNLI's objectives.

ALL VOLUNTEERS MUST:

Role and Policy

- have read, understood and agree with the **Volunteer Commitment**
- have read and be familiar with their volunteer role description
- have read and be familiar with the generic **Volunteer Handbook** (and related induction materials)
- accept RNLI policy and the authority of those entrusted by the RNLI to manage RNLI activities and accept decisions that are taken
- be aware of and comply with the generic and role specific RNLI policies and procedures
- follow all reasonable requests by staff or volunteers who support and manage their volunteer role activities
- participate in any necessary training related to the role and maintain any relevant competency based training
- when reporting RNLI activities via social media, ensure the **Guide to Social Media for RNLI Volunteers** has been read and understood, any appropriate training has been undertaken and at all times, that social media content promotes and protects the reputation of the RNLI

RNLI Property and assets (resources)

- recognise that all public monies received belong to the RNLI and must be processed in line with issued policy and guidance
- report any loss or damage to personal or RNLI property to their volunteer manager whilst volunteering
- return all property belonging to the RNLI on or before the last date of their volunteering
- respect, maintain and care for any property belonging to or paid for by the RNLI

Safety, Health and Environment

- carry out their volunteer role activities with due care and diligence for themselves and others
- be aware of Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) guidance seeking clarification if necessary
- wear any protective clothing/equipment provided for their volunteer role
- immediately report all injuries, incidents, near misses and accidents which occur whilst volunteering for the RNLI by updating the relevant database or reporting to their volunteer manager
- notify the organisation immediately of any illness or change in health relevant to the role, by advising their volunteer manager
- comply with any health assessment/s and or health surveillance activities required in line with their voluntary role/s
- ensure the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults at all times making sure they are adequately supervised within their area of responsibility – see **Safeguarding Policy & Procedures**
- only bring children, vulnerable adults and other people when participating in volunteer activities at locations, including lifeboat stations, with the specific authorisation from their volunteer manager

- seek approval from their volunteer manager before bringing pets to volunteer activities and locations including lifeboat stations
- minimise waste production and disposal by using RNLI resources responsibly

Behaviours

- uphold the RNLI Values and Behaviours
- act within the law at all times. This includes complying with the Road Traffic Act, adhering to drink or drug related regulations and speed limits. In relation to operational volunteers, these are equally applicable when responding to a call out
- maintain the trust and confidence of the RNLI and their colleagues at all times
- uphold the reputation of the RNLI and set a positive example to other volunteers
- be courteous and respect other people's views, interests and uniqueness
- behave in ways that value diversity and promote inclusion – see the **Inclusion and Equality Policy**
- challenge inappropriate behaviour, discrimination and/or unfair treatment appropriately
- discuss any problems or issues in a reasonable, constructive manner without aggression
- ask for guidance and support when they don't understand
- be reliable and considerate to their team
- take responsibility for their own actions and acknowledge when mistakes are made
- speak up and use appropriate channels when providing feedback and views.

VOLUNTEERS MUST NOT:

- act outside the spirit of the *Code of Conduct* and the *Volunteer Commitment*
- participate in any form of inappropriate behaviour or act in any way that brings the organisation into disrepute when volunteering, when wearing RNLI clothing or when identifiable as an RNLI volunteer
- put the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others at unnecessary or unassessed risk
- ignore policies, procedures or standards
- bully, harass or unlawfully discriminate against anyone
- tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards each other, supporters or members of the public (this is underpinned by equality legislation and RNLI Policy)
- falsify records, expenses or defraud or attempt to defraud the RNLI in any manner
- smoke when on RNLI property, afloat, ashore or when actively supporting events. The definition of smoking includes all tobacco based products as well as all forms of electronic cigarettes. (In extraordinary circumstances smoking may be permitted at sea, at the discretion of the coxswain and in accordance with current RNLI policy and guidance)
- carry out volunteer duties when in an unfit state due to the influence of alcohol, or other drugs or substances
- be in possession of firearms or any offensive weapon whilst undertaking volunteer activities
- carry out private trading on RNLI premises or use the RNLI 'brand' or equipment to promote private trading
- participate in RNLI volunteering activities whilst signed off sick from paid employment, unless express permission from the RNLI has been given
- damage or misuse RNLI property, money or assets.

4. Breaches of the *Code of Conduct* and *Volunteer Commitment*

Breaches of the *Code of Conduct* and/or the *Volunteer Commitment* will be addressed using the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy* at either stage 1 or stage 2 depending upon the nature and seriousness of the breach.

A serious breach will go straight to stage 2 of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*; this may be as a result of one significant incident which in itself requires formal action to be taken, or, this stage can be invoked following a number of incidents which together make it necessary to take formal action. A serious breach can result in an immediate end to the volunteer agreement.

5. Responsibility

All staff and volunteers referred to within the scope of this policy are required to be familiar with the terms of this policy.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer manager to ensure that this policy is included within the RNLI induction when a volunteer first commences with the RNLI.

Individual volunteers, staff members and managers are required to keep within the spirit and intent of the policy. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy must be discussed first with the relevant volunteer manager in the area concerned.

5.1 Who can change or adapt this policy?

The Volunteering Development Team has the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy and supporting appendices can only be implemented following consideration and approval by the Volunteering Development Manager in close liaison with senior management.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Volunteering Development Team at the first meeting of the year.

Appendix 4:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TERMS

Local management

The resolution of low level issues/concerns by local managers (either staff or volunteers) through early intervention and good communication, outside of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*.

Problems

For the purposes of this policy, 'problems' are breaches or alleged breaches of the *Volunteer Commitment* and/or *Volunteer Code of Conduct*.

Stage 1 - Informal

The first stage of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*, during which a conduct related problem is addressed face-to-face, usually by the staff volunteer manager. This may be sufficient to resolve the problem or may be a precursor to the formal stage.

Stage 2 - Formal

The second stage of the *Volunteer Problem Solving Policy*, during which a conduct related problem is addressed in a more structured and recorded way, and sometimes results in sanctions.

Stage 3 – Opportunity for the subject of the complaint to challenge

The process by which a volunteer can challenge the outcome of the formal stage above.

Investigation

The process carried out by an RNLI manager in order to establish the facts of a case. This normally involves interviewing those involved; preparing investigation notes and making recommendations.

Hearing

Consideration of the findings of a formal investigation.

Temporary stand down

During the problem solving process the RNLI may decide that a volunteer must temporarily cease volunteering for a number of reasons. The volunteer is not involved in any volunteering duties or activities relating to the role(s) that they have been temporarily stood down from during this time. It will be based upon the best interests of both the volunteer and the RNLI but does not suggest wrongdoing on the part of the volunteer.

Permanent stand down

One possible outcome of the volunteer problem solving process is that the volunteering relationship that the RNLI has with the volunteer in question is ended, meaning that they no longer carry out their voluntary role(s) with the organisation.

Terms of Reference

This is a template document which provides clarity in the formal stage for the investigation manager and the Triage Panel. It is not shared with the volunteer(s) involved.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

A policy applicable to all RNLI volunteers setting out expectations with regard to conduct.

Volunteer Commitment

An agreement between the RNLI and its volunteers outlining the spirit in which they will act together to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Conduct

The manner in which a person behaves. The RNLI expects all volunteers to display behaviours that demonstrate the organisation's values and are aligned to the *Volunteer Code of Conduct* and the *Volunteer Commitment*.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Title	Role	Responsibilities and limitations
Companion	During parts of the process a volunteer may be accompanied. The companion should be an RNLI volunteer unless there are special circumstances. They should not be a legal representative.	- To provide general support for the volunteer - The companion can ask but cannot answer questions on behalf of the volunteer - The companion can take notes of the meeting.
Note taker	For some parts of the process a note taker may be present.	- To support the investigation manager by keeping an accurate record of meetings - The note taker cannot participate in the meetings - The notes are for the purposes of managing the investigation and will not be shared with the volunteer(s) - Whilst the manager may discuss the case during the adjournment with the note taker, the manager is the decision maker and the note taker should not take part in the decision making process.
Volunteer manager	Staff members or volunteers who have line management responsibilities for volunteers. For the purpose of differentiation in this handbook, staff members in this role will be referred to as staff volunteer managers.	- To ensure that any problems raised are taken seriously and dealt with in a fair, timely, reasonable and constructive way - To seek resolution whilst ensuring that the RNLI ethos and values are upheld - Staff volunteer managers to ensure that the area's volunteering adviser is kept up to date with issues relating to problem solving cases on an ongoing basis and to form part of the Triage Panel when required - Staff volunteer manager to draft the Terms of Reference with support from the volunteering adviser.
Volunteering adviser	To provide support and advice to volunteer managers on all aspects of volunteer management, including problem solving. Based regionally in each lifesaving area.	- To take the lead advisory role on problems relating to volunteers - To offer support to ensure that the Volunteer Problem Solving Policy and process is understood by all stakeholders and is consistently applied across all areas - To provide advice and guidance to volunteer managers throughout the volunteer problem solving process - To ensure that the confidential problem solving log is maintained as up to date as possible at any given time - To form part of the Triage Panel.

Title	Role	Responsibilities and limitations
People adviser	To provide support and advice in relation to the RNLI's paid staff and retained volunteers.	- To take the lead advisory role on problems relating to staff, and to volunteers who receive retainer and relief payments if the problem relates to any payment - To take the lead advisory role when problems arise which involve a staff member and a volunteer, with support from the volunteering adviser as required - To update the volunteering adviser on any matter with a volunteering element.
Volunteers	Those who carry out RNLI activities by choice, for no financial reward in support of the cause of reducing drowning.	To conduct themselves in accordance with RNLI values, the Volunteer Code of Conduct, the Volunteer Commitment and all generic and role specific volunteer related policies (volunteers should be made aware of these documents during their induction).
Triage Panel	- Staff volunteer manager - Volunteering development manager - Volunteering adviser.	- To guide the volunteer problem solving process in each formal case - To provide consistency across cases - To advise on permanent stand downs - To appoint investigation, hearing and challenge managers.
Stakeholders	Anyone else who is or should be involved, either locally or centrally. Relevant subject matter experts.	- To maintain confidentiality throughout - To follow the Volunteer Problem Solving Policy and guidance - To accept the final outcome.
Investigation manager	A trained, independent and impartial RNLI manager who has no connection with the parties involved to date. Appointed by the Triage Panel.	- To familiarise themselves with the Terms of Reference - To ensure that the correct process is followed, including all planning and preparation required for the coordination of meetings - To speak with relevant parties to collect information in relation to a case in order to establish the facts - To organise a note taker - To produce the Investigation Notes presenting a summary of the gathered information and making recommendations as to next steps, but not to decide on the outcome.

Title	Role	Responsibilities and limitations
Hearing manager	A trained, independent and impartial RNLI manager who has no connection with the parties involved to date. Appointed by the Triage Panel.	• To familiarise themselves with the Terms of Reference • To review the Investigation Notes, recommendations and related documents and take all of the findings into consideration before making a decision as to whether a hearing meeting is necessary • To ensure that the correct process is followed, including all planning and preparation required for the coordination of meetings • If no hearing meeting is required, to advise the volunteer in writing of the outcome of the investigation • If a hearing meeting is required, to allow the volunteer to respond to the findings of the investigation at the hearing meeting • To make a decision as to outcomes and any sanctions that should be applied, seeking advice from the volunteering adviser and any subject matter experts as required • To confirm the outcome of the investigation in writing to the volunteer and the relevant staff volunteer manager, within 14 days of the hearing meeting • To advise the volunteer of the right to challenge within a 14 day period of receipt of the letter and of the process for this.
Challenge manager	A trained RNLI manager who has no connection with the parties involved to date. Appointed by the Triage Panel.	• To familiarise themselves with the Terms of Reference • To review the Investigation Notes and hearing outcome, including the recommendations and any related paperwork • To consider any new information provided in the challenge • To ensure that the correct process is followed, including all planning and preparation required for the coordination of any meetings that may be needed • To make a decision about the final outcome, seeking advice from the volunteering adviser and any subject matter experts as required • To confirm the final outcome in writing to the volunteer and the relevant staff volunteer manager.



The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea
A charity registered in England and Wales (209603), Scotland (SC037736),
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Lifeboats