

# UK PonyCon Complaints Policy and Procedure

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# Introduction

UK PonyCon is committed to providing an inclusive, engaging and fun space for all fans of My Little Pony, from our in-person convention to the online spaces we support. In order to do this we need you to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

We handle any expression of dissatisfaction with our services which calls for a response as a complaint. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously and learn from them so that we can continuously improve.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

### **Our policy covers complaints about:**

- The standard of the services you should expect from us
- The behaviour of our staff and volunteers in delivering those services
- Any action, or lack of action, by our staff, volunteers or others engaged on UK PonyCon business

### **Our complaints policy does not cover:**

- Matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure
- Anonymous complaints

## Our standards for handling complaints

- We can receive complaints by email or letter, or alternatively if required by virtue of reasonable adjustments. We treat all complaints seriously.
- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat those dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within UK PonyCon
- We will deal with your complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days where we have a return address and you can expect to have a full reply within 20 working days. In a few cases we will not be able to send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt, for example if your complaint is very complex. IF this happens, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full, keeping you fully informed of progress.
- We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment (whether proposed, commenced or completed)
  - Marriage or civil partnership status
  - Pregnancy or maternity status

- Race
- Religion or belief
- Political or trade union affiliations
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

### **Third party reporting**

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. For example, third parties may include:

- Advice organisations
- Professionals, such as social workers, doctors or solicitors
- Family members or friends

Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint, we need written consent to that effect. Where we have this authority, we will endeavour to take all possible steps to keep the third party informed of progress on the complaint.

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, subject to the need to disclose information as required by statutory authorities and/or as a result of legal obligations placed on UK PonyCon.

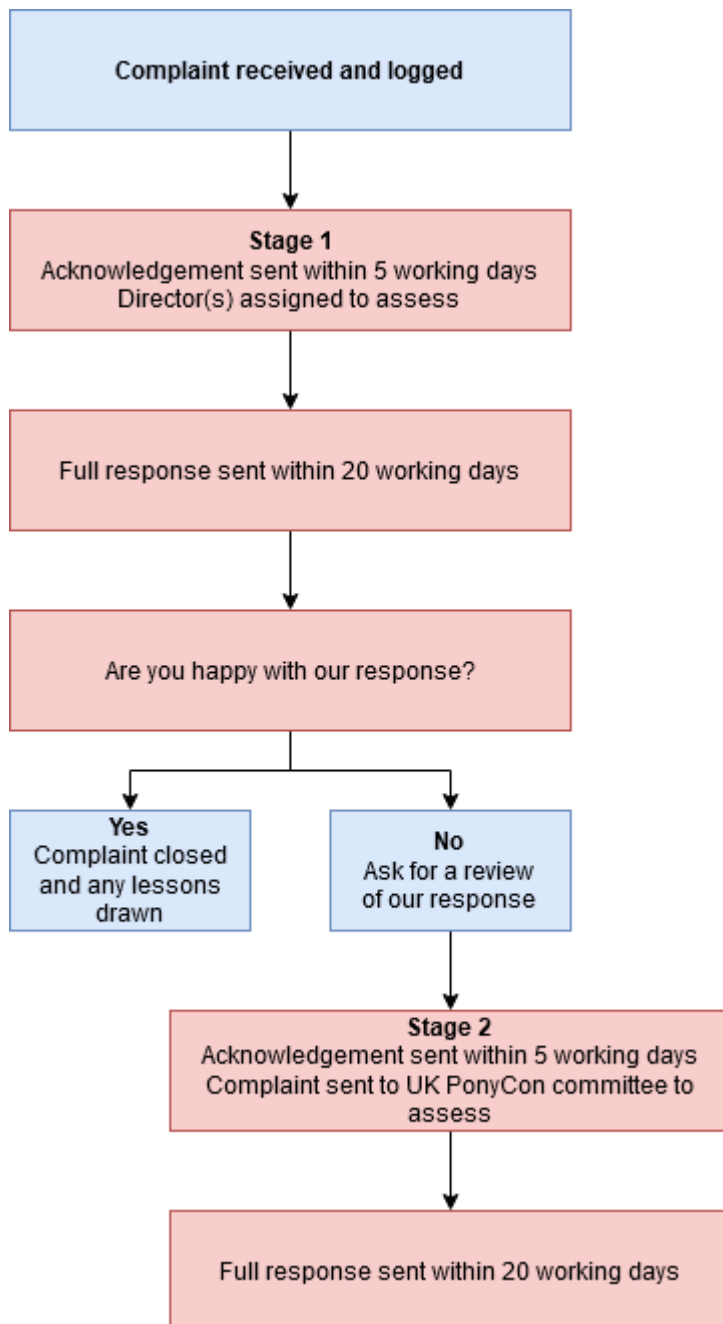
## **How to complain to us**

If you wish to make a complaint, you can do so by email or letter.

If you are disabled, and need a reasonable adjustment to ensure you can register your complaint, you can contact us alternatively via one of our social media accounts to arrange a telephone call or video call at a mutually convenient time, where we can help you by writing out your complaint.

Our contact details are in the Contacting Us section below. If you require different adjustments, let us know and we will try and put those arrangements in place where we can.

# How we will respond to your complaint



# Complaints procedure

We have a two-stage complaints handling procedure, explained above. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible, including providing any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint. If we do not have all the details required to deal with the complaint, we may contact you and ask you for further information.

## **Stage 1**

This is the first opportunity for us to resolve your dissatisfaction. We expect the majority of complaints to be resolved at this stage. On receipt of your complaint we will assign one or more directors to your complaint and ask them to respond. Director(s) will be assigned to avoid conflict of interest wherever possible, for example family or personal relationships. They will investigate the circumstances of your complaint, which may include discussing it with applicable staff or volunteers.

## **Stage 2**

If you are dissatisfied with the response at stage 1, you may request a review. This will be carried out by the UK PonyCon committee as a whole. Your complaint, documents and correspondence will be made available to the committee for resolution of your complaint.

# Timescales

We aim to respond to complaints in a timely manner.

## **Stage 1**

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days of receiving each complaint. We will send a full response within 20 working days of receiving each complaint.

If you make a complaint in person to a member of staff (at an event or meeting), we will record your complaint in writing within 3 working days, and acknowledge it within 5 working days thereafter. We will then deal with your complaint in accordance with our policy for written complaints.

## **Stage 2**

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days of receiving each complaint. We will send a full response within 20 working days of receiving each complaint.

## **Extending time limits**

We aim to complete our investigation into all complaints received within the timescales set out above. However, in a limited number of cases - for example, if a complaint is very complex or requires further breakdown, it may be necessary to extend the time limit to ensure we have all the information necessary to deal with it. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and inform you of the next steps.

# Remedies

When we get things wrong we will act to:

- Accept responsibility and apologise
- Explain what went wrong and why
- Put things right by making any changes required
- Learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate and sensible to do so

The action we take to put matters right (i.e. redress) in response to a complaint can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below. The general principle we follow is that complainants should, so far as possible, be put in the position they would have been in, had things not gone wrong.

The remedy applied needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure, and take into account what redress people seek when they complain. The contractual relationship between us and the complainant will also be taken into account. An apology is generally the most appropriate action, but other action may also be necessary in some circumstances.

## List of remedies

- A full apology, explaining what happened and/or what went wrong (an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006)
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision affecting an individual complainant
- Putting things right (for example a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others)
- Training or supervising staff or volunteers; or a combination of both

# Vexatious and repetitive complaints, and unreasonable or abusive behaviour

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. However, unreasonable or abusive complaint behaviour does happen from time to time. Difficulties in handling vexatious and repetitive situations can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff who have to deal with these complex and challenging issues.

We define unreasonably persistent complainants as “those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with us, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints”.

## Vexatious and repetitive complaints

Complaints that could be considered ‘vexatious’ or ‘repetitive’ may be costly to handle, or responding to them may be a disproportionate use of our time.

Deciding whether a complaint is vexatious requires that we take into consideration the context and history of the complaint. We will consider whether the complaint is likely to cause unjustified distress, disruption or irritation. We will consider the following issues:

- Could the complaint fairly be seen as obsessive?
- Is the complaint harassing or causing distress to staff or volunteers?
- Does the complaint appear to be designed to cause disruption or annoyance?
- Does the complaint lack any serious purpose or value?

The concern we will address is whether a complaint is vexatious in terms of the effect of the request on us and not whether the applicant is personally vexatious. By its ordinary meaning, the term 'vexatious' refers to activity that "is likely to cause distress or irritation, literally to vex a person to whom it is directed".

For a complaint to be vexatious, we will consider whether there is a proper or justified cause for it. We will not only examine the complaint itself, but also its context and history. That context may include other complaints made by the applicant to us (whether complied with or refused), the number and subject matter of the complaints, as well as the history of other dealings between the complainant and ourselves. The effect a complaint will have may be determined as much, or indeed more, by that context as by the complaint itself.

Complaints can sometimes become a vehicle for individuals to try to reopen previous issues. Although we recognise that people are not always satisfied with the responses they receive, the raising of complaints is not a panacea for problems that have not been resolved through other channels. Continued complaints after the underlying complaint has been addressed, go beyond the reasonable pursuit of resolution.

Where complaints are deemed vexatious, the complainant will be notified in writing that no further correspondence will be entered into on the matter in question.

### **Unreasonable and abusive behaviour**

We understand that people may act out of character in times of distress or due to frustration. We do not view behaviour as unreasonable just because a complainant is forceful or determined. Our staff and volunteers make reasonable allowances for complainants' behaviour.

However, sometimes the situation between a complaint and our staff or volunteers can escalate and the behaviour of the complainant becomes unacceptable, for example becoming abusive, aggressive or threatening. Such abusive, aggressive, threatening or vexatious complaints are in the very small minority but we sometimes find ourselves in the position where we need to restrict or bring to an end communication and access to our spaces, staff or volunteers.

Our staff and volunteers have the right to undertake their work free from abuse, threats and harassment, or vexatious and repetitive complaints. We expect our staff and volunteers to be treated with courtesy and respect. We have a duty to protect the welfare and safety of them and consider that violence, threats or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. Staff and volunteers are also expected to treat complainants with courtesy, respect and fairness.

Complainants who harass, or have been abusive, aggressive or threatening on one or more occasions towards our staff - or their families or associates - directly or indirectly, will be considered unreasonable.

Where unreasonable or abusive behaviour is determined, the complainant will be notified in writing that no further contact will be undertaken, and this will apply to all contacts. A copy of this policy will be included and, if and where appropriate, a no-contact period specified. A decision to restrict contact will be reconsidered if the complainant subsequently demonstrates more reasonable behaviour.

All incidents of harassment or aggression will be documented and referred to senior staff. In appropriate circumstances these matters may be referred to the police and we may consider taking appropriate legal action against the complainant, if necessary, without prior warning.

## Recording complaints

Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken are recorded by us and used for improvement. We record all complaints we receive and collate data from them to help us understand what types of problems are most prevalent and how well we are doing to resolve them.

We value your feedback and expect to use it to help us to:

- Get things right in the future if we have not done so already
- Become more focused on customer experience
- Be more open and accountable
- Act fairly and proportionately
- Seek continuous improvement

We will handle your information so that it is only processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with data protection legislation.



## Contacting us

All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedure should be sent as below. We prefer contact by email where possible.

By email: [info@ukponycon.co.uk](mailto:info@ukponycon.co.uk)

By post: The Directors  
UKPC Events Ltd  
Jubilee House  
East Beach  
Lytham St. Annes  
England  
FY8 5FT

If you contact staff or volunteers through other channels, they should refer you to contact us through the official published channels.

If you are unable to contact us in writing as above, and require a reasonable adjustment because you are a disabled person, you may contact us as below, for example to arrange a telephone or video call.

Facebook:	Page Name:	UK PonyCon
	Profile URL:	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ponycon">https://www.facebook.com/ponycon</a>
Twitter:	Username:	@UKPonyCon
	Profile URL:	<a href="https://www.twitter.com/ukponycon">https://www.twitter.com/ukponycon</a>

## Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats

We are committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our complaints policy easy to use and accessible to all. We will take reasonable steps to accommodate any reasonable adjustments you may have to enable you to access this policy or receive responses to complaints in other formats, and provide such assistance as you may reasonably require.

If you would like the policy or a response to a complaint in another format, please contact us.

## Comments

As well as learning from your complaints we are also interested in ideas you may have on how we might do things better. We would also like you to tell us when we do things well.

Your comments will be passed on to the relevant team and we will use them to help improve the way we do things. You can make your comments by contacting us using any of the previously mentioned contact methods.