

Safety and conduct at Royal College of Podiatry events



This policy supports the safety of participants at RCPod events in relation to conduct and behaviour.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Royal College of Podiatry (RCPod) holds a range of in-person, online and hybrid (in-person and online) events such as conferences, awards ceremonies, talks, training events, seminars, webinars and workshops. It also holds an annual Conference and Annual General Meeting which are open to all members, as well as small events and meetings at a branch and local level. This policy applies to all such events and the definition of events is not limited to those described above.
- 1.2 The RCPod is committed to providing a safe environment for all participants. The scope of this policy extends to the safety of participants at events in relation to conduct and behaviour including that of a most serious nature. This document does not cover general Health and Safety issues which are found elsewhere.
- 1.3 The RCPod supports and promotes a culture of reciprocal respect and will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or any form of misconduct across all of its activities. This policy sets out the approach to this specifically about events.
- 1.4 The policy applies to all participants in RCPod events including, but not limited to, delegates, members, staff, volunteers, speakers, contractors, exhibitors, and sponsors. The word “participant” is used throughout this policy as an inclusive term for the sake of brevity.

Any complaint made against a member of staff under this policy will be dealt with using the existing employee procedures. Any complaint made against a participant who is neither an employee nor a member will be referred to either the relevant employer or the police.

2. Principles

2.1 The RCPod's three guiding principles concerning conduct and behaviour are:

- That all participants are kept safe, treated with respect and without disadvantage, and behave accordingly to others
- Anyone who needs to report any incident relating to conduct and behaviour which, in their sincere belief, breaches the above is given suitable means of doing so, is listened to in good faith and their report is treated seriously
- Appropriate and proportionate action will be taken against anyone found to have behaved towards others below the standards expected in the RCPod's [Inclusivity Statement](#) and this policy.

All event arrangements will ensure that the above principles are adhered to. Offsite events are considered an extension of the RCPod workplace and all associated activities and behaviours must align with this – see 3.1 below.

3. RCPod Responsibilities

3.1 Events and associated activities (such as site visits and travel to and from events) at the RCPod or external locations are subject to all RCPod policies and regulations along with venue policies.

3.2 As part of the RCPod's responsibilities in organising and running events, as well as the conduct and behaviour issues covered in section 4, the RCPod will also ensure that the following aspects are covered:

- Planning - plans for the event will consider how to deal with conduct, behaviour, and the safety of participants in a relevant way for the event. Plans will always include a mechanism for reporting complaints or incidents (see section 6)
- Roles and responsibilities - within such plans the roles of participants are clearly stated, including those who are designated as being available to deal with complaints/incident reporting (see sections 5 and 6 below)

- Co-ordination with external parties, such as the venue's management, to ensure arrangements are clear in respect of the safety and conduct of all participants
- Clear communication and provision of proportionate information to all participants, including documentation and briefings, to ensure all are fully aware of arrangements and responsibilities including responsibilities which fall under this policy
- Monitoring and reporting on events, leading to reflection/review and implementing improvements to enable the best possible event experience for all participants
- Risk assessment, ensuring that all risks associated with the event are properly assessed and appropriately mitigated
- Equality impact assessed, the event's impact on those with protected characteristics in equality legislation is properly assessed, and reasonable adjustments are made accordingly
- Ensure the RCPod's position on alcohol is clearly understood – as part of our responsibilities to provide a safe environment the RCPod policy is that the RCPod will not purchase alcohol for participants during normal office hours of 9am – 5pm. Alcohol will only be purchased at other times with the express agreement in advance of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Director. For example, there will be no provision by the RCPod of alcoholic drinks at receptions or dinners that take place during these hours, such as a conference. For evening events the purchase of alcohol by the RCPod will be obtained, in writing, before the event. This position will be clearly communicated when appropriate
- Consent - consent of participants to being filmed, photographed, or recorded must be obtained. This can be done by use of appropriate notices in communications before and during the event asking participants to inform the organisers if they do not wish to be filmed, recorded, or photographed. Speakers will be invited to provide consent at the point of invitation
- Incident/complaints reporting – ensure incident/complaints reporting measures are in place and there is a clear process for reporting incidents and complaints at the event.

4. Code of Conduct for RCPod Events

4.1 Conduct is key to ensuring the safety of all participants as well as the reputation of the RCPod.

4.2 All participants should behave courteously and respectfully towards others at all times in both social and professional settings at events.

4.3 Participants should abide by the RCPod *Inclusivity Statement*.

4.4 If appropriate, participants should also remember their requirement to adhere to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or other professional regulators' Code of Conduct.

4.5 The RCPod takes a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour, incivilities, discrimination and poor conduct at its events including:

- Engaging in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
- Offensive or undermining comments or non-verbal behaviours related to personal characteristics and lifestyle choices
- Excessive consumption of alcohol or other intoxicants leading to professional and appropriate boundaries and behaviours not being maintained
- Inappropriate physical contact and unwelcome sexual attention (physically, verbally, in writing or via other media eg text, social media)
- Stalking/following including continued communication after a request to cease doing so
- Harassing photography or recording
- Sustained disruption and noise
- Display of sexual or offensive imagery or materials, use of sexualised clothing/uniforms/costumes, use of sexual references, or otherwise creation of a sexualised environment
- Threats or incitements of violence
- Publication of confidential or sensitive information about other persons present or not
- Consumption or possession of illegal narcotics of any form under any circumstances
- Behaviour which compromises health and safety arrangements, putting yourself and others at risk

- Conduct which may seem harmless, well-meant, or humorous but which is not taken as such by others and their objections not respected
- Deliberate and persistent pressure on staff to “bend rules” or “make exceptions” in policies such as the *Expenses* or *Alcohol* policies, for no valid reason.

4.6 Participants who are asked to stop any of the above behaviours (or others not listed) are expected to comply immediately. If they do not, then the actions outlined in section 5 might be applied.

4.7 Inappropriate conduct towards venue staff/representatives or members of the public at an RCPod event will not be tolerated. Participants should also respect other venues’ policies in respect of safety and conduct.

4.8 Behaviour by participants during travel to and from a venue and at site visits is subject to this policy.

5. Consequences of unacceptable behaviour

5.1 The following is a list of actions which might be taken because of breaches of the above Code of Conduct for RCPod Events:

- Immediate verbal and/or written warning
- Removal of some or all event privileges (e.g., attendance at social events)
- Banning from any sessions for the remainder of the event at which the alleged offender and the person reporting would both be present
- Immediate expulsion from the event with (where applicable) no refund
- Immediate cessation of an event session if the incident is associated with it (e.g., if inappropriate/offensive material is presented as part of the session or disruption takes place during a session)
- Referral to mediation or other processes to achieve a joint outcome
- Escalation of the matter for consideration to the RCPod’s complaints process for further investigation or straight to internal disciplinary measures or the RCPod’s volunteers charter member resolution processes if the offender is an RCPod employee or member (noting that

further sanctions such as barring from all future RCPod events or removal from membership might be applied)

- Escalation of the matter to another authority, e.g. regulator or the police.

6. Managing incidents, complaints, and incident reporting at RCPod events

- 6.1 RCPod staff at events must ensure they are familiar with the RCPod guidelines on managing unacceptable behaviour plus any advice or guidance which relates specifically to the event. In circumstances where RCPod staff are not in attendance, for example, at a branch event, the organising body of the event is responsible for implementing this policy.
- 6.2 All complaints/incidents at an event (including events such as branch, regional or other meetings where a member of staff is not present at the time) must be reported to a member of RCPod staff and investigated as soon as possible.
- 6.3 It is important that when incidents or complaints occur between two or more parties all those involved are listened to as part of the initial assessment of the situation and that everyone's perspective is acknowledged and recorded.
- 6.4 For larger events (more than 50 people) a staff member (or a representative of the organising body if no staff are present) must be specifically designated as the 'Responsible Person' for handling complaints/incidents - those individuals must be properly supported and trained as appropriate. Their role will be to ensure that complaints/incidents are recorded, to undertake an initial investigation, and to escalate the management of them appropriately if it is necessary.
- 6.5 The escalation process itself will vary from event to event depending on the scale of the event. The important thing is to ensure that there is one and that it is properly followed.
- 6.6 Incidents must be reported as soon as possible either via the RCPod complaints process or on a form designed specifically for that event. Sometimes it is only after the event that someone impacted by the behaviour of a third party reflects and decides to raise this. This is to be expected and respected. Complaints must be reported to the RCPod's CEO who will record the complaint and the actions taken. In the event of a complaint being about the CEO, it should be reported to the Chair of Council.
- 6.7 A draft template for a complaints/incident form is included in Appendix A of this document.

- 6.8 Participants at the event, other than staff, can also use the RCPod's complaints process on the RCPod website. Staff have their own policies and procedures that can be followed.
- 6.9 The person making the complaint/reporting the incident must be advised to keep the information confidential until RCPod staff have had sufficient time to investigate and address the situation. This is as much for their safety and protection as it is for other participants.
- 6.10 The person making the complaint/reporting the incident should be encouraged to report it regardless of whether the alleged offender is a participant at the event or external, such as a venue representative. The individual might be subject to the conduct policies of other organisations, but the RCPod would want to work with all bodies associated with the event to address issues of conduct.
- 6.11 If required, staff and/or the Responsible Person should assist in completing the form and collecting information and provide a quiet place to do so.
- 6.12 Depending on the immediate circumstances and following the initial investigation, the Responsible Person dealing with complaints/incident(s) onsite should decide whether other parties, e.g., security staff or the police, should also be notified. Where appropriate, such referrals will be made in discussion with the person making the complaint/reporting the incident. However, depending on circumstances the Responsible Person might need to make the referral themselves.
- 6.13 Staff and/or the Responsible Person should also compile their own report on actions taken. Where possible, the alleged offender should be contacted and their response noted in the report. That person may also wish to make a separate report or complete an incident form with their version of events and should be offered the opportunity to do so.
- 6.14 If staff and/or the Responsible Person need to take any actions as listed in 5.1 above, the report should note the alleged offender's response, including any refuting of the allegation or appeal against the decision made. Note that, depending on the circumstances and details of the incident and in the interests of fairness and transparency, it may not be possible to withhold names.
- 6.15 If the incident relates to a young person or vulnerable adult, staff must refer to the RCPod's safeguarding guidance.



6.16 Complaints/incidents reports will be stored as confidential documents by the RCPod's Assistant Company Secretary in line with normal document retention policies.

6.17 All complaints, incidents and resulting action taken must also be reported to the Management Team member(s) responsible for the event as soon as possible.

7. Communications and public relations

7.1 All parties aware of the incident should be informed that it has been reported and action taken, while respecting the privacy of individuals concerned and keeping revealing details to a minimum.

7.2 Depending on the impact of the incident and its aftermath, a senior officer of the event may wish to make an announcement – for example, as part of a closing plenary. While (as advised above) details and identities are to be kept confidential, rumours and hearsay can spread quickly so it may be prudent to make a discretionary announcement that an incident occurred, and appropriate action taken. Such an announcement should only be made by a suitably senior figure such as a conference chair or equivalent, or someone with delegated authority.

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Table of abbreviations used

RCPod	Royal College of Podiatry
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council