

Problem Solving Procedure

While the involvement of volunteers is by and large a positive experience for everyone involved, it is important to bear in mind that sometimes things can go wrong. From time to time there may be instances where a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer, a member of staff or the organisation itself.

Similarly, The Hamlet may find that a volunteer's performance has declined, or that someone else has complained about a volunteer's contribution, attitude or conduct.

It is hoped that by offering volunteers effective support and supervision, most issues and problems that arise can be resolved swiftly and informally. Should that not be possible, the following procedures can be used to ensure that matters are dealt with fairly and transparently.

If the volunteer wants to complain

This procedure gives the volunteer the opportunity to complain if they feel that they may have been unfairly treated or if they have an issue which they feel may be a cause for concern within The Hamlet.

Stage 1 - Oral complaint

- Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, The Hamlet or another volunteer, should be discussed with the volunteer's line manager. If the complaint is about the volunteer's line manager, then the matter should be referred to the centre manager. All complaints will be treated confidentially, and only discussed amongst those directly involved in resolving the issue.
- A meeting should be arranged with the manager, and the volunteer should be informed that they can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.
- If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should be informed that they can proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 - In writing

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, they may wish to make a formal complaint in writing to a more senior member of staff. The formal written complaint should be addressed to the centre manager and will be responded to within 10 working days.

Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, the volunteer may appeal to the CEO. The volunteer will receive a response from the CEO within 30 working days, and their decision is final. Volunteers have no legal rights unless they can prove that they are in fact employees, or that the organisation has been negligent in its duty of care towards them.

If someone complains about a volunteer

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives the volunteer the opportunity to be told why a complaint has arisen, the opportunity to state their case and the chance to appeal, if appropriate.

Stage 1 – Oral discussion

A meeting will be arranged for the volunteer and their line manager to discuss the complaint. They will identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil their role, and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary. A deadline will be agreed for reviewing the situation with the volunteer.

If the complaint was raised by someone else, they will be kept informed of the measures The Hamlet are taking to rectify the situation.

Stage 2 – Written warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, then the volunteer's line manager may issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer will be given the opportunity to state their case to their line manager or the centre manager. The volunteer will also be allowed to be accompanied by a person of their choice at this meeting.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set, and help offered to the volunteer. However, if The Hamlet decides to ask the volunteer to leave, then the volunteer should be given the opportunity to appeal.

Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, the volunteer may appeal to the CEO. The volunteer will receive a response from the CEO within 30 working days and their decision is final. If a meeting is arranged, the volunteer is invited to have a nominated person to be present.

Exceptions

There are some occasions when volunteers should be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct, such theft, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing. In some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before the next step of the problem-solving procedure can take place.

Volunteer Exit Meeting

A meeting will be arranged with the volunteer and appropriate person if The Hamlet asks a volunteer to leave. The volunteer will also receive a letter confirming The Hamlet's decision to ask them to leave and outlining the reasons for doing so.