

Dealing with problems

If volunteers know what is expected of them, and are properly trained and supervised, it is less likely that things will go wrong. Good management also helps to ensure that any problems that do arise are dealt with quickly and effectively.

However it is a good idea to consider:

- What a volunteer should do if they have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer
- What you will do if you are unhappy with the behaviour of a volunteer

Complaints made by volunteers

Volunteers need to know who they go to if they have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer, and to be confident that their complaint will be taken seriously and handled sensitively.

Making a complaint – an example of a procedure

____ (name of organisation) is concerned about the welfare of its volunteers and takes any complaints seriously. If you have a complaint about the organisation, a member of staff or another volunteer, the following procedure should be used to make the organisation aware of the problem.

Stage 1: You should first of all raise the matter with your supervisor.

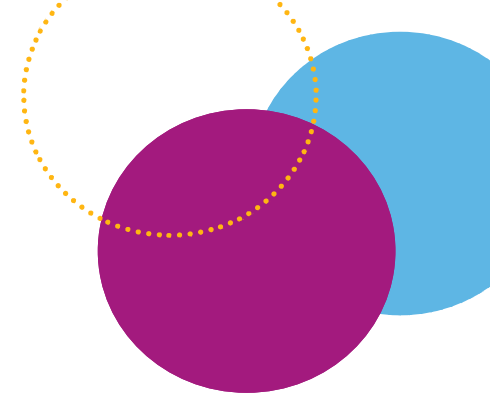
Stage 2: If this does not improve matters, or if the complaint is against your supervisor, you should request a meeting with ____ (a senior manager or trustee) and put your complaint to them. The person you are complaining about will have the opportunity to respond, and to take steps to improve the situation if necessary.

Stage 3: If after ____ days there is still reason for complaint, then you should put the complaint in writing to ____ (a senior person such as the chief executive or chair of the trustees). They will investigate the problem and let you know the outcome, and any further steps that will be taken, in writing within ____ days of receiving your complaint.

Problems with the behaviour of a volunteer

It is good practice to have a clear and transparent procedure for making sure that if there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour, it is handled fairly. You will need to make sure volunteers are aware of this and have access to a written copy of the procedure.

The first step is always to try to resolve the issue informally, by talking to the volunteer. They may be unaware that there is a problem, or they may be unsuited to the role in some way. Further training or a change of role may resolve the problem. If not, then having a clear process for dealing with these situations fairly and consistently is important. A sample procedure for dealing with this is overleaf.



An example of a procedure for dealing with problems involving volunteers

_____ (name of the organisation) is committed to treating volunteers fairly and to making sure that any problems are dealt with in a fair and transparent way, giving volunteers the opportunity to put their case.

If a complaint is made, or there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour, the following procedure will take place.

Stage 1: In the first instance, the volunteer's immediate supervisor will discuss the matter informally with the volunteer to try and resolve the problem.

Stage 2: If this does not solve the problem, the volunteer's supervisor will arrange a formal meeting with the volunteer to discuss the problem, giving the volunteer the chance to respond. An informal warning may be made and steps agreed to change the volunteer's behaviour.

Stage 3: If there are further grounds for complaint, a formal meeting will be arranged between the volunteer, volunteer supervisor and _____ (a senior person within the organisation, for example the manager or a trustee). A formal warning may be issued, and the volunteer made aware that if the volunteer repeats the behaviour they will be asked to leave.

Stage 4: If the offending behaviour is repeated, the volunteer will be asked to leave.

In the case of serious misconduct (for example violence or theft) the volunteer may be suspended immediately while an investigation takes place. The investigation will be carried out by the volunteer's supervisor and _____ (a senior person in the organisation). A decision will be made within ___ days and the volunteer informed of the decision (state how they will be informed). If the complaint is upheld, the volunteer will be asked to leave.

Volunteers will have the right:

- To be accompanied at meetings at any stage by a friend, volunteer or staff member of their choice.
- To appeal against any decision made.

The appeal should be made in writing to _____ (a senior person such as the chief executive or chair) and the volunteer will have the opportunity to put their case in person to them. A decision will be made within ___ days, and this decision will be final.