

# Complaints, Issues and Concerns

Volunteering Department  
July 2006

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# Introduction to the guidance

Volunteers are a precious asset to the British Red Cross and it is grateful for their invaluable support. Most volunteers find helping the British Red Cross enjoyable and rewarding. Any problems or differences of opinion, which occur, are normally resolved quickly between the volunteer and their Line Manager by a spontaneous, reasonable and sympathetic discussion.

**Every effort should be made to avoid a situation where a more formal procedure is needed. In most instances an informal discussion between the volunteer and Line Manager can resolve the situation. However, very occasionally the problem is deemed more complex and the guidance is designed to make sure that the problem is investigated systematically and fairly.**

These Guidelines have been produced to help deal with problems involving volunteers to ensure:

- > High standards of performance in all aspects of volunteer work
- > That volunteers are treated fairly, objectively and consistently
- > That they are given adequate support; and
- > That a positive and amicable solution is arrived at where practicable and in the interest of the organisation.

Each complaint, issue or concern should be assessed on an individual basis, given its particular situation and should be dealt with and a decision made as soon as practicably possible.

In the attached document you will find the following to help deal with complaints, issues and concerns;

- 1. Policy – Complaints, Issues and Concerns**
- 2. Procedure – When a volunteer does not meet expectations**
- 3. Procedure – When a volunteer’s expectations are not met**
- 4. Appendices**
  - > **Appendix 1 - Temporary withdrawal of volunteering**
  - > **Appendix 2 - Volunteering brought to an end**
  - > **Appendix 3 - Decision Making Matrix**
  - > **Appendix 4 - Supplementary guidance for the Volunteering Adviser**
  - > **Appendix 5 – Interview checklist**
  - > **Appendix 6 – Supplementary documents**

For further good practice about dealing with difficult situations, please refer to the Good Practice Guide for Leaders and Managers of Volunteers p114-117. It also contains some useful case studies. Please also refer to the ‘Dealing with Difficult Situations’ workshop. For more information on this, please contact the Volunteering Adviser in your Area.

## Procedure - When a volunteer does not meet expectations

Dealing with problems with volunteers is not always a pleasant activity but important to the overall well being of the organisation and its correct application is vital.

Managers are ultimately responsible for the actions of their volunteers; if potential issues go unchecked the organisation will suffer the consequences and so will our service users. The potential impact could include, upset to a friendly working environment and disruption of day to day running of the organisation; demotivating and encouraging volunteers to leave; could cause injury; bring the organisation into disrepute; potential damage to organisation, service users, other volunteers, themselves.

No specific time scales are given in the approach but any issue should be dealt with as soon as practicably possible in all instances.

## Procedure - When a volunteer's expectations are not met

The British Red Cross recognises the importance of having a system whereby volunteers can resolve issues relating to their volunteering. It is important to have guidelines in place even if you never have to use them. This gives volunteers the security of knowing that if a difficult situation does arise, they understand how to carry the matter forward.

The guidelines should only be used if the issue cannot be aired and resolved quickly through informal discussion to the satisfaction of all concerned.

No specific time scales are given in the guidance but good practice states that any issue should be dealt with as soon as practicably possible in all instances.

**Please note that there are always going to be exceptional cases where parts of the guidance 'When a Volunteer does not meet Expectations' and 'When a Volunteer's Expectations are not Met' have to be adapted to meet the needs of the individual case. For example, there may be instances where the authority levels do not marry with the authority line for a particular volunteer. The Volunteering Adviser should be made aware of any issue involving a volunteer early in the process and they will be able to help and advise on best practice.**

**The procedures provide people working with volunteers and volunteers themselves with a process to follow if an issue involving a volunteer arises but it is important to highlight that each case should be dealt with on an individual basis.**

# Policy - Complaints, Issues and Concerns

## Background

There is a general expectation that all volunteers and staff will act in the best interests of the Society and, along with the organisation itself, in accordance with the Volunteer, Staff and Delegate Charter. It is inevitable that questions will sometimes arise as to whether these expectations have been met and this policy is for use where the actions or treatment of volunteers are questioned. It recognises that there are no current legal requirements governing the organisation's relationship with its volunteers (except in areas of Health and Safety). This policy was born of necessity – i.e. something to address the needs of volunteers was required.

## Statement

The British Red Cross is committed to ensuring that any issues arising from failure to meet expectations are dealt with fairly, consistently, openly and efficiently. As a general principle every effort will be made to deal with issues as informally as circumstances allow. Mediation and/or conflict resolution will always be considered first except when an unacceptable risk to the organisation, its clients, its volunteers, its staff exists or where such efforts have previously failed.

## Responsibilities arising from this policy

The dissemination, monitoring and updating of approaches to support this policy is the responsibility of the UK volunteering manager, Territory volunteering representatives and Volunteering advisers across the UK.

All managers of volunteers have a responsibility for the application of this policy and supporting approaches, in consultation with Volunteering Advisers, at all times reflecting:

- > The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross & Red Crescent movement
- > The charitable status of the organisation and consequent responsibilities to stakeholders
- > Responsibilities to service users and the communities in which we operate

## Use of supporting guidance

The application of this policy in various circumstances will be supported by the following documents:

- > When volunteer does not meet expectations
- > When volunteer's expectations are not met
- > Any other procedures arising from the management of volunteers
- > The Good Practice Guide for Managers and Leaders of Volunteers

## Implementation and management of this policy

The implementation and management of this policy is reliant on a number of factors.

This will include:

- 1 all volunteers being aware of this policy and having access to appropriate channels for addressing concerns
- 2 all managers of volunteers understanding this policy and capable of using the supporting guidance and receiving training where necessary
- 3 all Volunteers Councils being aware of the distinctions between group and individual concerns and able to signpost appropriately
- 4 provision of specialist advice and support from Volunteering Advisers, Territory Volunteering Representatives and the Volunteering Dept. at UK Office
- 5 review of current good practice and procedure on a regular basis. This should take place at least every three years and additionally when internal or external changes which may impact on procedures or guidance are identified
- 6 the updating of procedures and guidance when necessary (as identified by reviews in 5 above), dissemination, support and training as appropriate
- 7 the development and use of standard reporting procedures to monitor the use and outcomes of this policy

# Procedure - When a volunteer does not meet expectations

The following procedure outlines what managers should do if they feel that a volunteer is not meeting expectations and when the situation cannot be dealt with informally.

**The Volunteer, Staff and Delegate Charter outlines what the Red Cross expects from volunteers and what they can expect from the Red Cross. It is intended that volunteering with the Red Cross will be a happy and fulfilling experience. This makes it important that any differences of view or expectation are settled as quickly as possible. It is recognised, however, that a volunteer can withdraw their offer to help at any time and that the Red Cross is not obliged to continue offering the opportunity to volunteer.**

**Multi activity volunteers** Some volunteers may participate in a number of activities. When dealing with problems (involving multi-activity volunteers), the manager involved in the activity where the problem has arisen should take the responsibility for dealing with it. In dealing with problems, other management relationships need to be recognized in order to ensure that all relevant people are consulted or informed about any mitigating factors or action taken. For convenience, the manager with relevant responsibility for the volunteer will be called the 'Line Manager' in this document.

**The procedure is made up of four stages; Initial, Investigation, Actions and Appeals.**

## Initial stage

**1.** Complaint about a volunteer received by Volunteer's Line Manager (**go to 2**) or they observe unacceptable behaviour or actions (**go to 3**)

**2.** The Line Manager responsible clarifies the nature of the complaint, checking with complainant if necessary.

**3.** Volunteer's Line Manager to decide whether circumstances require that volunteering should temporarily cease (if yes, then the volunteer, the VA and DPU should be informed). See Appendix 1 on the temporary withdrawal of volunteering.

**4.** Volunteer's Line Manager to decide whether any further investigation, other than asking the volunteer, is necessary. If unsure, please consult with your Volunteering Adviser. If no further investigation needed, go to step 1 in the Action stage.

**5.** Volunteer's Line Manager meets with the volunteer to:

- > Advise them of the nature of the problem that has arisen
- > Ask them for any information or explanation they can provide
- > Let them know how the matter will be investigated. Inform them of any information and support available.

**6.** Where resulting from a complaint, the Volunteer's Line Manager should acknowledge the complaint in writing advising any follow up that can be expected as appropriate.

## Investigation stage (normally only used for concerns about conduct rather than about performance)

1. Volunteer's Line Manager appoints an Investigator (this should be someone different from the decision maker, who does not normally work with the volunteer on a regular basis)

2. Investigator reviews all reasonably available information and decides whether further information needs to be obtained from witnesses etc. and seeks to obtain that information by telephone, written request or interview as appropriate.

3. Investigator to arrange meeting with volunteer who is subject of complaint. This may be arranged by telephone but should be confirmed in writing. (A volunteer can be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, if they wish)

4. Investigator conducts interview with volunteer. This will include the Volunteering Adviser, the volunteer + fellow volunteer, if wanted. There may also be a need to gather relevant information from other sources i.e. from witnesses and to get further clarity from the

5. Investigator prepares report of all facts and circumstances and passes to the Volunteer's Line Manager.

6. Volunteer's Line Manager reads report and clarifies any points necessary with the Investigator.

7. Volunteer's Line Manager decides what action is appropriate.

### Tips

When arranging the meeting, the volunteer should be sent a letter including these main points;

- > Give the broad reasons for the meeting
- > Set out the date, time and location of the meeting
- > Give the name of the person leading the meeting
- > Point out that the volunteer can be accompanied by another volunteer.

If a volunteer refuses to attend the meeting, they should be informed that a decision will be made using what information is available.

**The investigation should be dealt with as quickly as practicably possible. Written notice of the meeting should be sent out at least a week in advance.**

## Action stage

**1.** Volunteer's Line Manager to review any previous problems if appropriate, actions available and authority required with Volunteering Adviser to determine likely outcome.

**2.** Report and recommendations passed to the Appropriate Manager (see below) for agreement/amendment.

Four possible outcomes and authority required;

1. Complaint unfounded. **(Volunteer's Line Manager)**
2. Action plan needed identifying changes needed along with support and development required to achieve this. **(Volunteer's Line Manager)**
3. Volunteering in specific activities may not be appropriate but transfer or continuation in others available. **(Volunteer's Line Manager in consultation with any other managers concerned)**
4. Volunteering opportunity withdrawn permanently from volunteer. In this instance, the volunteer will be no longer able to volunteer for the BRC and should be informed that their records will be updated to reflect this. **(Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager ) (See Appendix 2)**

**3.** Appropriate Manager to arrange meeting with volunteer (if appropriate). This may be arranged by telephone but should be confirmed in writing.

**4.** Appropriate Manager conducts meeting with volunteer and explains the decision (if appropriate). A fellow volunteer may be present, in addition to the Volunteer's Line Manager or Investigator and Volunteering Adviser (as appropriate).

**5.** Appropriate Manager writes to volunteer to confirm decision and advise on whether appeal available (only applicable when volunteering has been stopped in any activity or where the decision has been made to transfer the volunteer to other areas of activity) with name and contact details of Appeal Manager (who will be at the Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager level or above and not been involved in the investigation).

**6.** Write to complainant where appropriate.

**7.** Where action taken, inform DPU (to update Peoplesoft/records) and inform any other relevant managers (particularly where volunteer is in multi activities). The DPUs to inform the National Volunteering Officer of any volunteering withdrawn permanently. It is not appropriate to go into detail about the specific case but to make sure all parties are aware of the action taken.

### Tips

See the Good Practice Guide p114 for alternatives and action plans in this situation.

### Tips

The purpose of the interview is to convey the decision, explain the reasons for it and discuss the provision of relevant support (e.g. help to resume volunteering, action plan, training or, if stopping volunteering, details of the appeals process). The Volunteering Adviser in your Area will be able to help in terms of the wording of any letters.

## Appeals stage – only applies when volunteering has been stopped in any activity

1. Volunteer to consider whether handling was unfair or relevant evidence was not taken into account and state in writing to the Appeal Manager their grounds for appeal. If so, they should advise the Appeal Manager of their wish to appeal in writing. The Appeal Manager should be at the Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager level or above and not have been involved at any point in the earlier investigation.

2. Appeal Manager to review reasons for appeal with Territory Volunteering Representative or Volunteering Adviser from another Area.

3. Appeal Manager to write to volunteer to confirm whether appeal meeting will be needed and, if so, where and when and that they can be accompanied by a fellow volunteer.

4. Appeal Manager to chair appeal meeting.

5. Appeal Manager to advise volunteer of outcome of appeal and also put it in writing.

6. Where action taken arrange to record on Peoplesoft/records as appropriate and inform any other relevant managers (particularly where volunteer is multi skilled).

7. If appeal successful, learning outcomes translated into development programme as required for any individuals involved.

### Tips

**If Territory Volunteering Representative is unavailable, then a Volunteering Adviser from another Area should be involved.**

**The purpose of the appeal meeting is to establish whether guidance on handling was followed and/or whether all information was appropriately weighted in the decision. All members of the panel can raise questions and ask for additional witnesses in advance.**

**Informing others of the action taken should be on a strictly "need to know" basis where the precise reason for needing to know should be clearly identifiable and specific to the recipient of the information.**

# Procedure - When a volunteer's expectations are not met

The following procedure outlines what volunteers should do if they feel that the BRC has not met their expectations and when the situation cannot be dealt with informally.

**The Volunteer, Staff and Delegate Charter outlines what the Red Cross expects from volunteers and what they can expect from the Red Cross. It is intended that volunteering with the Red Cross will be a happy and fulfilling experience. This makes it important that any differences are settled as quickly as possible. It is recognised that a volunteer can withdraw their offer to help at any time and that the Red Cross is not obliged to continue offering the opportunity to volunteer.**

## Informal stage

**1.** Volunteer should consider whether the matter about which they are complaining has meant that the Red Cross is not meeting the expectations listed in the Volunteer, Staff and Delegate Charter. It would also be helpful for them to consider what redress they are seeking.

**2.** Whenever possible the volunteer should meet with their Line Manager to inform them of their concern and ask them to address the problem. If not able to do this (e.g. feel bullied by Manager). then go to the Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager (see formal stage).

**3.** Volunteer's Line Manager to decide whether the volunteer's complaint is justified:

- If not justified, they must explain why.
- If justified and can remedy the situation informally, the Volunteer's Line Manager should thank the volunteer for raising it, respond as appropriate and tell them how and when the situation will be remedied.
- If it is not an individual matter, rather a policy or procedure beyond the Volunteer's Line Manager's scope and affecting many, signpost to Volunteering Adviser. If justified but cannot remedy the situation themselves (or at that stage), the Volunteer's Line Manager should thank the volunteer for raising it, apologise if appropriate and tell them how they will be pursuing the problem. They should take up the matter on their behalf and keep them informed of progress.

## Tips

**As a general principle every effort will be made to deal with issues as informally as circumstances allow. Mediation and/or conflict resolution will always be considered first except when an unacceptable risk to the organisation, its clients, its volunteers or its staff exists. Ideally complaints should be dealt with face to face with the offer to confirm outcome in writing.**

## Formal stage (where step 3 (Informal stage) is not available or has not been effective)

**1.** The volunteer should provide details of their concern to their Line Manager's Manager ideally in writing and explain why they have not been able to deal with things informally.

**2.** Manager has to make a judgment as to whether conciliation should be attempted or the appropriate procedure invoked to deal with those apparently responsible for causing the complaint. Then take either option below.

Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager should arrange a meeting of all parties to discuss the concerns, which should ideally reach agreed outcomes/actions.  
Fellow volunteer can be present.

OR

Staff Disciplinary or When Volunteer does not meet expectations approach/guidance followed with their Line Manager and/or any other subject of complaint.

**3.** Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager should confirm all outcomes/actions/decision in writing to all relevant parties as appropriate.

**4.** Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager to consider whether any learning outcomes should be translated into development programmes for any individuals involved or more generally.

### Tips

**The Volunteering Adviser may be able to provide advice on wording of the various letters.**

**Ensure letter includes;**  
**Acceptance of initial cause of concern**  
**Action taken to investigate**  
**Action taken as a result**

## Appeals stage (only available when the above procedure has been exhausted.)

**The primary purpose of an appeals process being introduced is to allow the opportunity for an appropriate senior manager to hear the problem.**

**1.** Volunteer to consider whether procedure was unfair or relevant evidence was not taken into account. If so, they should advise the Appeal Manager of their continuing dissatisfaction in writing, providing any details available. The Appeal Manager should be at the Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager level or above and have not been involved in the earlier investigation.

**2.** Appeal Manager to check reasons for appeal are appropriate with Territory Volunteering Representative. If a Territory Volunteering Representative is not available, then a Volunteering Adviser from another Area should be involved.

**3.** Appeal Manager to obtain all previous records on the matter and consider with Territory Volunteering Representative to reach consensus on any further action required.

**4.** Appeal Manager to advise volunteer of outcome of appeal.

**5.** Appeal Manager to arrange to record on Peoplesoft/records as appropriate.

**6.** If appeal successful, learning outcomes translated into development programme as required for any individuals involved. This to be done by Appeal Manager and Territory Volunteering Representative.

# Appendix 1

## Temporary withdrawal of volunteering

Volunteering opportunities can be temporarily withdrawn from an individual. This may apply to all their activities and their attendance at Red Cross buildings or events or specific activities or contacts that they normally undertake. This is not a punishment. It is a safety measure for all concerned including the volunteer who may also be distressed and need your support. It should not go on for longer than necessary, which would normally be the time taken to investigate the allegations and come to a conclusion about their truthfulness and any action required.

### When is it appropriate?

The first consideration of the Leader or Manager must be to consider the safety of the service users/customers/donors, other volunteers or staff, the organisation and its reputation and to prevent the possibility of an incident involving the individual occurring again. If the volunteer continues in their activity, is it possible that injury, real distress, legal action or serious loss of reputation will result? If the answer is yes, then the volunteer should be prevented from taking part in relevant activities until this risk is removed.

### Who has the authority?

The decision can be taken by the Volunteer's Line Manager but they will be expected to have consulted the Volunteering Adviser on the details of the case for guidance to ensure standard practice. There may be occasions, particularly out of office hours, when this is not possible and the matter must be dealt with promptly e.g. an all weekend First Aid duty where the complaint has been received on the Saturday and the volunteer is expected on the Sunday. In this case the Event Officer should contact a Senior Manager via the Duty Officer system for support and guidance. It may be appropriate for a duty manager to send a volunteer home from duty, on the basis of avoiding further upset, pending their seeking further advice from the Service Manager.

### Making it effective

It is important to give some thought to whether stopping volunteering would have prevented the action complained of i.e. whether it took place in the normal course of duties. If a Home from Hospital volunteer has been accused of seriously inappropriate behaviour towards a client in their home it would be right to withdraw them from client contact. However, if a volunteer is accused of contacting the media inappropriately and such contact would not form part of their recognised role(s) then withdrawing them would not be effective and they should be informed what specifically they must not do.

The temporary withdrawal of volunteering must be timely to be effective i.e. before any further risk can take place, this may be immediate or prior to them undertaking a relevant activity.

It is therefore important to know that they are aware of their position. This in practice often means that they must be telephoned or visited to tell them:

- > That a problem has arisen
- > What volunteering activities have been temporarily withdrawn
- > Why this is to make a situation safe i.e. to protect all parties and avoid repetition

- > What will happen next
- > How they can access support including who will be aware and to what extent
- > It may be appropriate to agree “public” reasons for their unavailability, which will remain confidential

## Communicating the decision to withdraw volunteering

As already detailed above the volunteer must be informed verbally, this should be followed by written confirmation (which can be taken to any further meeting with them). The Volunteering Adviser will be able to assist with this.

It is the manager’s responsibility to ensure that any other relevant parties are made aware of the situation (not necessarily the detailed reasons) in order to ensure that activities can continue uninterrupted. This must be on a “need to know” basis.

The Data Processing Unit (Peoplesoft HR) should be informed by email with code and reason for the temporary withdrawal of a volunteer. Senior Managers in direct line upwards will normally wish to know of a volunteer’s withdrawal. However, some care must be taken that they are not given details that would prejudice their role in any further action or appeal process.

## Caring for those involved

Formal procedures necessitate professionalism in our approach. It is normally perfectly possible to act in the caring way for which we are famous without compromising this. Often there may be a fear to say anything to those affected in case it is wrong (damaging to the case) or that you may get an adverse reaction. Those included could be the complainant, the volunteer and their colleagues.

- > **Complainants** (whether service users, donors, customers or fellow volunteers) can commonly feel guilty about the trouble they have got someone into and/or angry to have been put in that position. They can be reassured that it was right to raise their concerns and show concern for their well being without admitting liability. Research on victims of crime has shown that they find it helpful to be kept in touch with a case’s progress (what stage it has reached, what is being done) without being given details of the investigation itself. The same principle can be applied in these circumstances.
- > The **volunteer** concerned also needs to be kept informed of their position and procedures with which they may well be unfamiliar. They may be hurt, angry, fearful, concerned about their social standing etc. It is appropriate to try to establish whether they have a support network (e.g. family and friends) available to draw on. It may be appropriate to offer to find someone completely unrelated (e.g. through Stress Management network) that they can talk to. Alternatively, they can access the Volunteer Support Line (0800 389 7820), which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- > **Colleagues** reactions should not be left un-managed. The complainant and volunteer concerned are entitled to confidentiality on details of the case including their identity as far as possible. Gossip and rumour should be challenged as inappropriate whilst recognising that there may be those with genuine concerns. These may arise from shock that a volunteer can be in this position, a need to see fairness as they could be in that position and/or fear of service users/customers/donors complaining about them. It is not appropriate to discuss the case but it may be helpful to explain the policy and procedures that are used to reassure them.

## Appendix 2

### Volunteering brought to an end

In cases where a volunteer fails to meet the required standard, after prior warning, or their conduct is of such a nature as to undermine the relationship between the BRC and the volunteer, the BRC will either temporarily withdraw the volunteering pending further enquiry, or permanently withdraw volunteering with the organisation.

Examples of such conduct would be:

1. Conduct in breach of, or inconsistent with, the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
2. Conduct in breach of, or inconsistent with, organisational policies for example equal opportunities;
3. Conduct in breach of, or inconsistent with, the rules applicable to individual volunteers; e.g. unauthorised contacts with the press (including letters to the editor), radio or television.
4. Serious breaches of the responsibilities of volunteers to the Society as set out in the charter of mutual responsibilities;
5. Any other conduct which may be likely to bring the Society into disrepute including: fraud, theft, wilful damage, serious negligence, insubordination, discrimination, wilful disregard of rules, setting up a business in competition with the Society which results in a conflict of interest, assault and harassment of other volunteers, staff or service recipients.
6. Inappropriate use of the Society's resources.

**These are only examples and it is not a definitive list. If you have any queries regarding bringing volunteering to an end, please contact your Volunteering Adviser, Territory Volunteering Representative or the Volunteering Department at UK Office. (020 7877 7075)**

## Appendix 3

## Decision Making Matrix

\* Please note that the formal procedure should be dealt with from start to finish as quickly as practicably possible. Where possible there should be some consistency in the people involved, so that new people are not brought in at the middle stage of the investigation.

Activity/Task/ Decision		Consulted with prior to decision	Recommends Decision	Makes Decision	Informed after Decision	Manages Process	Source of decision making
<p><b>5.7 Complaints, Issues and Concerns</b> – When a volunteer does not meet expectations</p>	<p>In branches, areas, territories and UK Office</p>	<p>Volunteering Adviser or equivalent</p>	<p>Investigator</p>	<p>Four possible outcomes and authority required;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complaint unfounded. <b>(Volunteer’s Line Manager)</b></li> <li>2. Action plan needed - identifying changes needed along with support and development required to achieve this. <b>(Volunteer’s Line Manager)</b></li> <li>3. Volunteering in specific activities may not be appropriate but transfer or continuation in others available. <b>(Volunteer’s Line Manager in consultation with any other managers concerned)</b></li> <li>4. Volunteering Opportunity withdrawn from volunteer. <b>(Volunteer’s Line Manager’s Manager)</b></li> </ol>	<p>Volunteer/ Volunteering Adviser (or equivalent) /DPUs/ Other managers (if multi-service volunteer)</p>	<p>Volunteer’s Line Manager (they should make sure that the investigation is dealt with without delay)</p>	<p>When a volunteer does not meet expectations</p>

\* Please note that the appeal should be dealt with from start to finish as quickly as practicably possible. Where possible there should be some consistency in the people involved, so that new people are not brought in at the middle stage of the appeal.

Activity/Task/ Decision		Consulted with prior to decision	Recommends Decision	Makes Decision	Informed after Decision	Manages Process	Source of decision making
<b>5.8 Complaints, Issues and Concerns –</b> When a volunteer does not meet expectations – <b>Appeal Stage</b>	In branches, areas, territories and UK Office	Territory Volunteering Rep or VA from another area (or equivalent), Investigator and any other relevant information.	(See Makes Decision)	Appeals Panel	Volunteer, Volunteering Adviser and Territory Volunteering Rep., DPUs, Volunteer's Line Manager, other managers (if multi-service volunteer.	Volunteer's Line Manager's Manager (they should make sure that the appeal is dealt with without delay)	When a volunteer does not meet expectations

\* Please note that the investigation should be dealt with from start to finish as quickly as practicably possible. Where possible there should be some consistency in the people involved, so that new people are not brought in at the middle stage of the investigation.

Activity/Task/ Decision		Consulted with prior to decision	Recommends Decision	Makes Decision	Informed after Decision	Manages Process	Source of decision making
5.9 <b>Complaints, Issues and Concerns</b> – When a volunteer’s expectations are not met	In branches, areas, territories and UK Office	Volunteering Adviser (or equivalent)	(Refer to the procedure) →	Authority levels for staff disciplinary and When a Volunteer does not Meet Expectations to be applied.	Please see authority levels for staff disciplinary and When a Volunteer does not Meet Expectations to be applied.	Volunteer’s Line Manager or Volunteer’s Line Manager’s Manager (where appropriate). This person should make sure that the investigation is dealt with without delay)	When a volunteer does not meet expectations or staff disciplinary procedures

\* Please note that the appeal should be dealt with from start to finish as quickly as practicably possible. Where possible there should be some consistency in the people involved, so that new people are not brought in at the middle stage of the appeal.

Activity/Task/ Decision		Consulted with prior to decision	Recommends Decision	Makes Decision	Informed after Decision	Manages Process	Source of decision making
5.10 <b>Complaints, Issues and Concerns</b> – When a volunteer’s expectations are not met - <b>Appeal Stage</b>	In branches, areas, territories and UK Office	Volunteering Adviser (or equivalent), Investigator and any other relevant information.	(See Makes Decision)	Appeals Panel	Volunteer, Volunteering Adviser and Territory Volunteering Rep., DPUs, Volunteer’s Line Manager, other managers (if multi-service volunteer.	Volunteer’s Line Manager’s Manager (where appropriate). This person should make sure that the appeal is dealt with without delay)	When a volunteer does not meet expectations or staff disciplinary procedures

# Appendix 4

## Notes for Volunteering Adviser

### Mediation – dealing with it informally

The overall purpose of an informal discussion is to establish what the issue is, what happened, how, when, where and who was involved and if the issue can be resolved amicably or does it require to be dealt with more formally. This doesn't always mean going directly to the formal process, sometimes a more structured route is needed. See below for some approaches that could be adopted in these instances.

First consider asking yourself the following:

1. The problem is.....
2. Effects of the problem are.....
3. I think it is important to do something because.....
4. Some causes of the problem are.....
5. Things I could do to deal with or help improve the situation.....
6. Things I think others should or could do.....
7. Things we should or could do as a team are.....
8. Things other people should or could do are.....
9. The first 3 steps to deal with this problem are.....

Use **facilitation** techniques to help people to communicate, listen and respect each other.

**Mediation:** do this face-to-face

**Negotiation:** discussion of each parties' needs, demands and interests, and agreement of which aspects should be incorporated into a solution.

**Resolution :** agreement on how conflict should be dealt with.

**Solution:** a specific stop or series of stops to end conflict.

**Reconciliation:** building or rebuilding a good relationship between parties, this is the responsibility of the people involved.

**Conciliation:** the process of working towards resolution.

**Crisis Intervention:** allowing time for people to calm down

**Conclusion:** issue brought to an end.

**Desired Outcomes:** determine whether these are reasonable or not

Where there is clearly an issue, founded or otherwise, how this is dealt with should be based on a realistic assessment of the broader picture. Context is key and an important point is to try and make the meeting/discussion a positive one. Where there are no obvious mitigating factors, discuss with your VA, ensure you have all the relevant facts, be seen to have approached and dealt with the issue fairly and quickly. List any points for discussion and identify desired outcomes. Draft what you want to say/ask/find out and consider the likely reaction and plan how you would respond to each possible outcome and do not react by over-promising or conversely, getting hostile.

Ask someone to join you in the meeting to provide balance, prepare how you will, if necessary, communicate the outcome and agree this with all parties involved, where possible. Consider any potential damage if things turn acrimonious and ensure you plan to mitigate that risk. The overall purpose is to establish what happened and how. You will need to identify how the respective parties view the actions and responses to claims and counter-claims. It is important that at all times you remember that you act impartially as you are there to gather the facts, and not be swayed by emotion, be it yours or other peoples.

## Notes to support the formal procedures

### Confidentiality

When dealing with complaints, issues and concerns, no one should know more than they need to know. However, matters which significantly affect work may need to be discussed with other line-managers working with the particular volunteer, so it is important not to state to the volunteer that all discussions will remain confidential.

Response to any request for confidentiality should be that the manager cannot promise this before they are aware of issues, but that they will use their judgement and discretion in deciding whether the matter needs to be discussed with anyone else and that they will consult with the volunteer as far as they can before they do so.

### Investigation stage – advice for interview

The Investigator's role is to:

- > Examine all available evidence and conduct interviews with all relevant parties.
- > Commence and conclude all investigations as quickly as possible.
- > Ensure the investigation is conducted impartially and discreetly.

- > Recommend appropriate action and discussion with the manager.
- > Prepare a written report of the outcome and with a summary stating the issue, who was involved, the main finding and the main recommendations.

All staff and volunteers involved in the investigation will be expected to respect the need for confidentiality. Failure to do so will be considered a disciplinary or a not 'meeting expectations' issue. The complainant may be accompanied to the meetings by a fellow volunteer to support them.

### **Preparation**

Dealing with issues of a volunteer not meeting expectations should never be dealt with "in the heat of the moment". If it is felt that an issue, needs to be investigated then an approach needs to be adopted to ensure that things are dealt with fairly and systematically.

### **Investigate**

Make sure you find out if there are any mitigating circumstances to be taken into account such as personal problems. Ensure that all relevant facts and records are available and have been studied, i.e. personal details, written statements from witnesses.

Prepare for the meeting carefully, ensuring you have fully investigated, prepared questions etc.

### **Make arrangements**

Make sure you have written to the volunteer advising them of the reason for the meeting and giving them sufficient time to prepare. Advise them that they can be accompanied by a fellow volunteer. Ensure you have plenty of time available, both for the meeting and to conduct further investigation if necessary.

Ensure that a quiet room is available where the interview can take place uninterrupted or overheard, think about having someone to take notes at the meeting, they will also be able to confirm events if these are challenged.

During the meeting ensure that there is adequate discussion and that the volunteer has the opportunity to put their case forward.

Consider all the evidence before making a decision, you should not make up your mind about the outcome before you have heard their side of the story.

- > Follow up – make sure that after the meeting the notes are placed on the personal file of the volunteer and that the decision is confirmed in writing

## Structure of the meeting

- > Introduce those present and explain their roles, this helps to define clearly the role of the accompanying person.
- > Explain the purpose of the interview – to consider whether action should be taken in accordance with the meeting expectations approach.
- > Explain the format of the meeting advising the volunteer that they will be given the opportunity to state their case.
- > The volunteer should be given the opportunity to reply and to state his/her case. They may also present any evidence they have.
- > Summarise the main points concerning the complaint(s), the main points raised by the volunteer and any matters that need to be checked. This will ensure that nothing has been missed and will help to demonstrate to the volunteer that he/she has been given a fair hearing. The volunteer must also be advised of when they will be notified of the decision and that they have the right of appeal (where appropriate).

## Information gathering

### Questioning techniques

- > Open questions cannot be answered with a yes or no but demand a fuller answer. They can be used to get the volunteer talking, and usually start with How, Why, What, Where, When, Who, Which or Tell me about ...
- > Closed questions tend to be answered with a yes or no. They can be used to summarise or bring the volunteer back to the subject if the conversation has wandered off track or to check if you have understood correctly.
- > Leading questions give the answer you want in the question. Answers you get to these questions are always suspect since the volunteer will tend to give the expected answers as it is difficult not to.

Encouraging people to talk can be done by using a variety of questioning techniques, which can also direct and guide the meeting.

Use open questions to encourage the volunteer to give information and then follow up with probing questions to clarify information or to home in on detail. Probing questions often include direct or supplementary questions.

### Listening

Make sure you concentrate throughout, analysing what is being said and not said and its significance. You should be able to pick up discrepancies and points for later discussion. Also listen for generalisms that may need to be questioned more specifically. You also need to be seen

to be listening, as it is an important part of establishing and maintaining rapport. Eye contact is also very important.

### Note taking

Advise the volunteer that notes of the meeting will be taken. These will probably not be verbatim but should include the main points for both sides. It is sometimes appropriate to provide a copy of these notes to the volunteer asking them to comment on them. This can prevent disagreement later on but it is not essential.

### Pace and control

Keep control of the interview and keep it moving forward by using good questioning techniques and summaries.

Remember pauses can be used effectively for probing. In some cases the volunteer may not be sure of the words to use but sometimes they may not feel certain whether to tell the truth. Silence usually encourages them to give more information.

If the volunteer becomes upset, silent or you feel that you or they are out of their depth, do not hesitate to adjourn the meeting. You may just want to take some time out for a few minutes or use the time to seek some support and advice from another member of staff.

## Appeal

Grounds for appeal may be any of the following:

- > Any inconsistencies
- > Inappropriate harsh penalties
- > Extenuating circumstances
- > Bias of Line Manager
- > Perceived unfairness of the initial hearing
- > New evidence that could not have reasonably been known at the time of hearing
- > Procedural irregularities

# Appendix 5

## Interview checklists (for the Investigator)

\*These are to be used as guidance not as templates. It should also be remembered that the notes that you write may need to be read by someone else at a later stage and so it's important that they are clear and concise.

### Checklist for interviews (with person that raises the complaint)

Initially, identify and allay any concerns over repercussions for them resulting from the interview.

#### **Establish:**

- > What is happening?
- > The respondent's role or relationship to the complainant.
- > The nature of the behaviour or actions.
- > The duration of the behaviour or actions.
- > The extent of the behaviour and its context.
- > What action they have already taken to address this matter.
- > Do other people experience the same behaviour from the respondent?
- > What outcome they want from this investigation?
- > Is there anything else they want from this investigation?
- > Is there anything else the complainant wishes to say?
- > Assess the emotional and physical state of the complainant.

## Checklist for interviews (Witness)

Initially, identify and allay any concerns over repercussions resulting from interview.

Establish:

- > Their relationship to the complainant.
- > Their relationship to the respondent.
- > What are their recollections of the incident or incidents?
- > Does the witness have anything to add?

## Checklist for interviews (with the volunteer who is the subject of the complaint)

Explain to the volunteer the nature and extent of the claim.

Establish:

- > Their response to the claim.
- > Their perception of their own behaviour.
- > Assess the emotional and physical state of the respondent.
- > Is there anything the respondent wishes to add?

**Remember to date your notes, note down your name, the full names of the people you are interviewing and the name of the volunteer the complaint is about.**

## Example letter to invite volunteer to investigation meeting

Dear.....,

You are required to attend a meeting on.....(date) at.....(time)  
at.....(location). The meeting is to consider a complaint made against you  
about.....

The meeting will be chaired by.....

You have the right to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, should you wish to.

At the meeting you will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint made against you.

Yours sincerely

## Example letter to explain outcome of investigation

Dear .....

Following the meeting on .....(date), I have carefully considered all the information put  
forward and.....(explain outcome). Your records will be updated to reflect this. (Only if  
volunteering has been permanently withdrawn)

Should you wish to appeal this decision, please state in writing to the Appeal Manager your  
grounds for appeal. The Appeal Manager is.....(name) and they can be contacted  
at.....(address). (This should only be included when volunteering has been withdrawn).

Yours sincerely

## Example letter to volunteer who has made the complaint

Dear.....

I am writing to you following the complaint you made against.....(name) on  
.....(date).

After careful and thorough investigation, .....(name) has been.....(outcome).

I am very grateful to you for bringing this situation to our attention.

Should you wish to appeal this decision, please state in writing to the Appeal Manager your  
grounds for appeal. The Appeal Manager is.....(name) and they can be contacted  
at.....(address).

Yours sincerely

## Appendix 6

### Supplementary documents (to be found on RedRoom)

- > Summary – When a volunteer does not meet expectations
- > Summary – When volunteer's expectations have not been met
- > Information sheet on Complaints, Issues and Concerns for volunteers
- > Volunteer, Staff and Delegate charter