

Grievance

About this procedure

We recognise that grievances may sometimes arise. It is most important that these grievances are brought out into the open and resolved as quickly and as fairly as possible. In most cases this can be done on an entirely informal basis, however, there are occasions when a more formal approach may be needed.

It is our policy to ensure that all our volunteers have access to a process to help deal with any grievances relating to their work fairly and without unreasonable delay. We aim to investigate any formal grievance you raise, hold a meeting to discuss it with you, inform you in writing of the outcome, and give you a right of appeal if you are not satisfied.

This procedure applies to all volunteers regardless of length of service.

Using this procedure

Issues that could cause grievances may include:

- terms and conditions of volunteering
- health and safety
- work relations
- bullying and harassment
- new working practices
- working environment
- organisational change and
- discrimination.

This Grievance Procedure should not be used to complain about dismissal or disciplinary action. If you are dissatisfied with any disciplinary action, you should submit an appeal under the appropriate procedure. If a grievance is raised once the disciplinary process is underway it may be suspended in order for the grievance to be considered first. However, this would only occur if the grievance was related to the subject matter arising out of the disciplinary hearing, e.g. the behaviour of a manager during the course of a disciplinary case.

If a grievance is found to be malicious or to have been made in bad faith, then the volunteer will be subject to the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

Where disciplinary action against another volunteer results from a grievance, the grievance may be suspended whilst a disciplinary investigation is carried out, and, if necessary, the disciplinary process is completed. The suspension of the grievance procedure will be at the discretion of the organisation, taking into consideration both the interests of the organisation and of the individual who raised the grievance.

The individual who submitted the grievance has no right to be informed of the specific action taken under the disciplinary policy and procedure. However, in certain matters requiring particular sensitivity, such as bullying or harassment, the organisation may discuss with the volunteer who raised the grievance issues that directly affect them.

The organisation also has a formal Whistleblowing Policy, which should be used to disclose information which is in the public interest and relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the workplace.

Written grievances will be placed on your personnel file along with a record of any decisions taken and any notes or other documents compiled during the grievance process. These will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Policy.

Raising grievances informally

Most grievances can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with your line manager. If you feel unable to speak to your manager, for example, because the complaint concerns them, you should follow the formal procedure below.

A grievance should generally be raised at or around the time the incident which forms the substance of the grievance occurs. A grievance may not be dealt with by the organisation if the issue giving rise to it happened more than 3 months earlier, unless the volunteer can give a satisfactory reason or explanation for the delay in proceeding with such a matter.

This policy is in place to be fair to others who may be affected by a grievance issue, that evidence may become unreliable if the matter is not dealt with in a timely manner. However, organisation will consider this policy in relation to any specific grievance on a case by case basis as there may in some instances be reasonable reason for a delay such as, for example, where individual incidents may at the time they occur appear to be minor, but over time it becomes clear these form part of a continuing act of, for example, harassment or bullying.

Formal written grievances

If your grievance cannot be resolved informally you should put it in writing and submit it to one of the Directors, indicating that it is a formal grievance.

The written grievance should contain a brief description of the nature of your complaint, including any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved. In some situations, we may ask you to provide further information.

All complaints and grievances will be examined impartially and given serious consideration before any decision is reached. The organisation will always try to resolve grievances as quickly as is reasonably possible.

Not all grievances can be satisfactorily resolved, although every attempt will be made to achieve this. Where this is not possible, volunteer may be required to acknowledge that their grievance has been heard, but that they now have to accept the managers' decision and that some compromise may be necessary.

Investigations

It may be necessary for us to carry out an investigation into your grievance. The amount of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from you and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents. The investigation may be carried by either your line manager, the Directors or someone else appointed by us (for e.g. an external consultant).

You must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing us of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending interviews, as part of our investigation.

We may initiate an investigation before holding a grievance meeting where we consider this appropriate. In other cases, we may hold a grievance meeting before deciding what investigation (if any) to carry out. In those cases, we will hold a further grievance meeting with you after our investigation and before we reach a decision.

Right to be accompanied

You may bring a companion to any grievance meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure. You must tell the person holding the grievance meeting who your chosen companion is, in good time before the meeting.

At the meeting, your companion may make representations to us and ask questions but should not answer questions on your behalf. You may talk privately with them at any time during the meeting.

If your chosen companion is unavailable at the time a meeting is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days afterwards, we may ask you to choose someone else.

Where meetings are arranged to hear your grievance you must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. Failure to do so may result in a failure to resolve your grievance.

Grievance meetings

We will arrange a grievance meeting, normally within one week of receiving your written grievance.

You and your companion (if any) should make every effort to attend grievance meetings. If you or your companion cannot attend at the time specified, you should inform us immediately and we will try, within reason, to agree an alternative time.

The purpose of a grievance meeting is to enable you to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved, and to assist us to reach a decision based on the available evidence and the representations you have made.

After an initial grievance meeting, we may carry out further investigations and hold further grievance meetings, as we consider appropriate. Such meetings will be arranged without unreasonable delay.

We will write to you, usually within one week of the final grievance meeting, to inform you of the outcome of your grievance and any further action that we intend to take to resolve the grievance. We will also remind you of your right of appeal. Where appropriate we may hold a meeting to give you this information in person.

All complaints and grievances will be examined impartially and given serious consideration before any decision is reached.

Appeals

If the grievance has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may appeal in writing to the Directors stating your full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to you.

We will hold an appeal meeting, normally within one week of receiving your written appeal. This will be dealt with impartially by someone who has not previously been involved in the case (although they



may ask anyone previously involved to be present). You have a right to bring a companion to the meeting.

We will confirm our final decision in writing, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.

Version history

Review date	Review detail
October 2022	Version 2: General Review and further clarity on the process