



## MARSH STREET ARCHES AND GARDEN COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

### VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURE

While we do not have legal duties towards volunteers, and do not wish to create a contractual relationship with them, we feel that it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with fairly, openly and consistently. To help with this we have put in place the following procedures.

#### **If a volunteer makes a complaint**

This problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to complain if they have been unfairly treated.

- **Stage 1 - Oral complaint**

Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, should be discussed with the volunteer. If the complaint is about the volunteer coordinator, then the matter should be referred to another member of the organisation. During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to a more senior member of the Company, generally the chairperson.

- **Stage 2 - In writing**

Volunteers making a complaint in writing should do so within a timeframe specified in the organisation's problem solving procedures. The organisation must also respond within 14 days.

- **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal to a member of the management committee, generally the Chair. In some situations a sub-committee may be formed specifically to deal with complaints. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair or sub-committee will need to respond within a 14 days, and their decision is final.

## **IF SOMEONE COMPLAINS ABOUT A VOLUNTEER**

This part of the problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to be told why they are being disciplined, the right to state their case and the right to appeal.

- **Stage 1 – Oral discussion**

Sometimes minor issues can arise during the course of volunteering, such as a volunteer not fitting into the team as well as expected, not meeting the required standards when undertaking tasks or being unreliable.

Such issues are usually detected during regular supervision, and may be quite easy to resolve without resorting to formal procedures. This checklist suggests how some issues can be dealt with:

- A well thought out induction pack, volunteer policy and volunteer role description should provide the volunteer with a good foundation on which to undertake their volunteering. However, we recognise that we may need to remind the volunteer of the policies, ground rules etc within your organisation.
- Check if the volunteer has training needs. Everyone learns at a different pace and in a different way. Do you need to adapt your training materials, or change the way in which you deliver training?
- Does the volunteer need extra support or supervision?
- Is the volunteer feeling unfulfilled in their current role? Have their needs changed, or would they like to use different skills to help the organisation? If so, you could modify their role description, ask them if they would like to work in another department or develop a completely new role for them.
- Is the volunteer unable to cope with the demands of the role anymore? They may need a break from volunteering, or may prefer to volunteer in another organisation for a while, as part of a volunteer swap. The volunteer may feel ready to retire from volunteering altogether. If your volunteer does decide to leave, thank them for their contribution. This demonstrates that they are valued by your organisation and enables them to leave with honour.

Remember, always aim to find the best solution for the volunteer.

The first step is to discuss the complaint with the volunteer. There could be external factors influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. Identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil their role and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary. Set a deadline for reviewing the situation. If there is insufficient improvement, then you may need to adopt a more formal approach, such as issuing a written warning.

If the complaint was raised by someone else, keep them informed of the measures you are taking to rectify the situation. You may prefer complaints to be put in writing.

- **Stage 2 – Written warning**

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, then the volunteer coordinator can issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the volunteer coordinator or a senior member of the organisation and be accompanied by a person of their choice. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set and help offered to the volunteer. However, if the organisation decides to dismiss the volunteer, then the volunteer has the right to appeal. The decision to dismiss a volunteer should be a last resort.

- **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

If a volunteer has been dismissed then they should appeal in writing to a member of the management committee, usually the Chair. Sometimes a sub-committee can be formed specifically to hear appeals. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair or sub-committee must respond within 14 days in the organisation's problem solving procedure, and their decision is final.