

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure for Volunteers

This document lays out our procedures for dealing with situations between the organisation and its volunteers, when things go wrong. For the purpose of this document volunteers include Champion Board Members, Enter and View Volunteers and all other volunteers involved with the organisation. It covers how we will approach issues of conduct or performance with volunteers and how volunteers can seek to have their grievances with Healthwatch Reading addressed.

Disciplinary Procedure

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that volunteers are treated in a fair and consistent way if there is a concern about their performance of voluntary work. It is hoped that most concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with through informal discussions based on honesty and respect. However there may be times when the following guidelines are needed.

Examples of times when the procedure might be needed are: volunteer breaches of health and safety arrangements, volunteer is unreliable; volunteer does something outside of agreed role. More serious examples are: volunteer displays prejudice or sexual harassment, breaches of confidentiality, volunteer does something outside volunteer time which could have a detrimental effect on the future of their voluntary work (e.g. commits criminal act).

Procedure

At any stage of this procedure the volunteer's named supervisor will seek to be clear about the concerns and about what change or improvement is necessary. A range of options may be explored to help and support the volunteer such as retraining, a leave of absence etc. The volunteer will be asked what would help them to change or improve their performance.

Informal stage

If at any time a volunteer is causing concern, the supervisor will raise the matter clearly with them, explaining what the volunteer needs to do in future.

Verbal Warning

If the volunteer has not attended to concerns already discussed or if there is a major concern then the supervisor having ascertained the facts will put the findings in writing to the volunteer. The supervisor will meet with the volunteer (who will be given a chance to state their case) and if necessary give the volunteer a verbal warning that his/her performance is a cause for concern. Another volunteer or a friend may accompany the volunteer to this meeting if they wish. The supervisor will be clear about how aspects of the volunteer's performance could improve. A date will be set to review the situation within one month. Another volunteer or a friend may accompany the volunteer to this meeting if they wish. The warning will remain on file

for three months. The volunteer will be given a copy of the disciplinary and grievance procedure as soon as the procedure is invoked, and has the right to appeal to the Chief Executive.

Written Warning

At the time set for review, or earlier if there is further breach of conduct, the supervisor will meet with the volunteer, who again can be accompanied by another volunteer or friend. If there has been insufficient improvement the supervisor may give a written warning at the end of the meeting stating the problem, indicating the improvement needed and setting a date for review within one month together with the warning that the volunteer may be asked to leave if there is no improvement. Again, the volunteer may appeal against this to the Chief Executive. The warning will remain on file for 12 months.

Termination of Volunteer's Services

At the time set for the review or earlier if there is a further breach of conduct, the Chief Executive or Chairman will meet with the volunteer. If there has been insufficient improvement the volunteer will be asked to leave immediately. The supervisor will give a reason for the decision and detail their right of appeal and will put this in writing to them within a week. The volunteer will be allowed to continue their voluntary work pending this appeal. The decision to suspend a volunteer is highly confidential and in order to protect the volunteer's privacy only those staff directly concerned will be told.

Appeals

All appeals to the Chief Executive need to be requested within seven days of any stage in the disciplinary action (as long as he/she is not involved at an earlier stage) in which case the appeal would go to the Chairman. The appeal will be attended by the volunteer, a friend if they wish, the Chief Executive or Chairman whose decision will be put in writing within seven days and will be final.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

In most circumstances the procedure detailed above will be adhered to. However in cases of serious misconduct suspension of the volunteer may be considered so that an investigation can be carried out without prejudice at the discretion of the supervisor. The reasons for taking such action will be put to the volunteer in writing who would then have the opportunity to state their case. Examples of such serious offences are as follows:

- Theft
- Assault
- Breach of Healthwatch Readings Equal Opportunities Policy
- Sexual abuse or harassment
- Breach of confidentiality
- Reckless/malicious damage

The Chief Executive would be involved in such a case. The volunteer has a right to appeal to the Trustees at any stage.

Grievance Procedure

Healthwatch Reading recognises that from time to time volunteers may wish to seek redress for grievances relating to their work. In this respect the organisation's policy is to encourage free communication so that any problems may be aired and where possible resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of all concerned. In many cases it will be possible to resolve problems through informal conversation and negotiations. All volunteers are encouraged to raise problems at this level before seeking more formal solutions. The following procedure is for volunteers who feel that the informal routes have failed and that their grievance needs to be tackled in a more structured and formal way.

1. If a volunteer or a group of volunteers have a grievance they should first raise this in writing or verbally with their supervisor who will record details of their concerns and seek the views of other people involved in the complaint and arrange a meeting to make suggestions about the resolution of the grievance.

If the grievance is against the volunteer's supervisor the matter may be raised directly with the Chief Executive who will seek the views of other people involved in the complaint, record and relevant additional information. In either case a decision will be given within seven working days.

2. At this point the supervisor will arrange a meeting to make suggestions about the resolution of the grievance. All parties will either agree on a way forward and a date will be set for a month's time to review progress or the matter will be raised with the Chief Executive who will make a decision on what further action if any is required. This will be put writing for all concerned.

Appeals

If the volunteer is dissatisfied with the decision he/she may ask for the grievance to be heard by the Chairman who will consider the record made in stage 1, seek the views of other people involved in the complaint, record any relevant additional information and give a decision within seven working days of the matter being raised.