



Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure

Introduction

This procedure should be shared and discussed as part of induction and should be referenced in the Volunteer Handbook.

We are very grateful for the incredible support of volunteers and aim to ensure volunteering is positive and enjoyable. We hope to resolve any issues in an informal manner. However, on those rare occasions when such isn't possible, as part of our duty of care to volunteers, the problem solving procedure outlines the steps we will take to resolve problems that have been raised.

When going through problem solving, the food bank will:

- endeavour to get it right from the start, by following guidance on good practice, having up to date policies and listening to the concerns of the individuals involved
- ensure complaints have a fair hearing
- ensure all complaints are treated professionally
- ensure that everyone involved in the process are kept informed at each stage ensure that decisions are based in the best interests of the food bank, in line with its aims, vision and objectives
- everyone involved in the process are kept informed at each stage
- reassure any complaints from somebody using the food bank's services that the complaint will not affect their right to use the service
- maintain records of complaints and details of each stage
- in the case of multi complaints, ensure each one is dealt with separately.

Terms of reference: Main contact

This is the volunteer's direct main contact (for example volunteer lead, supervisor, coordinator, or the food bank project manager).

If a volunteer is complaining about their main contact, then the complaint should go to their main contact's manager.

If the volunteer's main contact is the food bank manager, the complaint should go to the Chair of Trustees.

Accessibility

In line with best practice it is important the food bank keeps a written record of what has been said and agreed through the problem-solving process. It's equally important that they are clear and transparent with the volunteer throughout. Where a volunteer:

- has learning disabilities
- finds it hard to read written English
- has memory problems
- does not speak English as a first language

please read out the letter / written record of the meeting alongside providing a paper copy. A verbal and written record ensures that what has been said and agreed is understood.



If a volunteer makes a complaint / experiences a problem

The following stages should be following when a volunteer believes they have been unfairly treated or if they have a problem, cause for concern with or complaint against another volunteer, member of staff, or the charity.

Whistleblowing: Please note that volunteers are not covered by whistleblowing.

Stage 1: Verbal complaint

The volunteer should discuss their concerns with their main contact. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter at this stage. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, then the volunteer should proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

If the volunteer is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may make a formal complaint with their main contact. This should be done within 10 working days from the initial discussion. This can be given in writing or verbally. The main contact will reply in writing within 10 working days.

Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal

If the volunteer is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they can appeal in writing or verbally to the board of trustees. This should be done within 10 working days from the completion of stage 2. The board will respond in writing within 10 working days. The decision of the board is final.

If someone complains about / experiences a problem with a volunteer

The following stages should be following if a complaint has been made against a volunteer. This includes anything coming from another volunteer, member of staff, partner agency or user of the food bank.

Stage 1: Verbal complaint

The main contact must discuss the complaint with the volunteer and establish their view. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter at this stage, including identifying any opportunities for additional support. A review date must be agreed.

Stage 2: Written complaint

If the matter has not been resolved by Stage 1, the main contact will write to inform the volunteer of the nature of the complaint and next steps. The food bank may suspend the volunteer until the complaint has been resolved.

Stage 3: Meeting

Within 10 working days of the volunteer being notified of the complaint, a meeting date should be agreed between the volunteer and their main contact to discuss the issue. This should be a face-to-face meeting, in an appropriate setting.

The volunteer can have a person present with them at the discussion. This can be a friend, family member or another volunteer from the food bank. This cannot be a trustee of the charity.

The main contact may set further objectives for the volunteer and offer additional support, or they may change the volunteer's role. Alternatively, the main contact may decide that the volunteer should be asked to leave. In all cases, a clear timeline should be agreed for actions to be completed.



Stage 4: Written summary of the meeting

The main contact will provide a written summary of the meeting and confirmed actions within 10 working days of the meeting.

Stage 5: Review meeting

A review meeting should take place within 4 months of Stage 3. Where actions have been successfully carried out, the complaint can be filed as “resolved”.

Where actions haven’t been successfully carried out, the main contact may set further objectives, make changes to the volunteer’s role or they make ask the volunteer to leave.

Written summary of review meeting

The main contact will provide a written summary of the meeting and confirm either:

- the complaint has been “resolved” and no further action is needed
- the complaint is still being taken through the problem-solving procedure and the confirmed actions and date of the next review meeting.

Opportunity to appeal

If the volunteer is not happy with the outcome of stage 3 or 5, they can appeal in writing to the board of trustees within 10 working days of receiving the meeting summary. They can appeal in writing or verbally. The board will respond in writing within 10 working days and their decision will be final.

Permanent or temporary ending of volunteering

There are some occasions when volunteers will have to end volunteering, either permanently or on a temporary basis while an investigation is carried out e.g. in cases of gross misconduct. The decision to end or temporarily suspend a volunteer should be confirmed to the volunteer as soon as the incident occurs or when you next see the volunteer. This should be done verbally in the first instance and confirmed in writing.

Signed by: Diane Gordon
Signed by: B961B465719B4E3...

Position: Chair of Trustees

Date: 4/13/2025

TT Reviewed: July 2024.