

# Volunteer Complaint Procedure

## Introduction

While the involvement of volunteers is by and large a positive experience for everyone involved, it is important to bear in mind that sometimes things can go wrong. From time to time there may be instances where a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer, a member of staff or the organisation itself. Similarly, a member of staff, another volunteer or a member of the public may have a complaint about a volunteer's contribution, attitude or conduct.

It is good practice to avoid using the same grievance and disciplinary policy for both staff and volunteers and whereas there is a statutory requirement to follow a formal grievance and disciplinary policy for employees, the policy for volunteers is less formal in approach.

Whilst BBOWT does not wish to create a formal contractual relationship with volunteers, this Complaint Procedure will ensure that staff and volunteers know how to deal with problems in a consistent manner should they arise.

BBOWT has a collaborative approach to complaint handling. This procedure helps staff work closely with volunteers if problems arise. This document is split into two sections, the first being if a volunteer wants to complain, and the latter if a complaint is made against a volunteer.

## Guidelines

All complaints will be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to

- Protect volunteers & staff
- Minimise any disruption to staff and volunteers
- Demonstrate that BBOWT respects its volunteers
- Protect the reputation of the organisation

### If a volunteer makes a complaint

- Stage 1 Oral Complaint

Initial complaints, whether concerning a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, will first be discussed with the volunteer informally. If the complaint concerns the volunteer's manager the matter should be referred to the People Business Partner responsible for that directorate. The discussion will be followed up with an informal written summary to briefly outline the date/circumstances of the conversation. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should proceed to stage 2.

- Stage 2 Written Complaint

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, they may make a formal complaint in writing to the People Director.

The volunteer must make the written complaint within one month of the incident. BBOWT commits to responding to the complaint within two weeks. Depending on the circumstances of each situation, the People Director will respond to the complaint. The Chief Executive will be informed of the complaint and will be updated on progress by the People Director.

### **If someone complains about a volunteer**

Sometimes issues may arise during the course of volunteering and will usually be detected during regular supervision, and may be quite easy to resolve without resorting to formal procedures.

From time to time, members of staff may need to remind the volunteer of the policies, procedures and BBOWT values that are relevant within the organisation. Ideally this is dealt with at induction by use of the volunteer handbook along with a verbal outline of the role to be undertaken (written role description in the case of a Key Volunteer). The responsible member of staff must check if the volunteer has any training needs or if the volunteer feels they could benefit from extra support or supervision.

### **Minor issues**

For minor issues, the first step is for the volunteer's manager to discuss the complaint with the volunteer. There could be external factors influencing the volunteer's ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. This meeting will seek to identify goals that will help the volunteer fulfil their role, and to offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary. A deadline will be agreed for reviewing the situation with the volunteer. If the complaint has been raised by someone else, within reason, they will be kept informed of the measures being taken to rectify the situation.

If the issue isn't resolved through regular supervision, or if a complaint is raised by a third party, then the problem will be dealt with on a more formal basis and should be raised to a member of the Director Team.

### **Serious complaints**

In cases of serious complaints regarding volunteers including, but are not limited to, inappropriate behavior/conduct, theft, assault, acts of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the People Director, or in their absence a member of the Director Team and CEO must be informed immediately after the event.

We do not expect any member of staff to tolerate or endure any form of verbal or physical abuse or behaviour from a volunteer and every incident of this nature should be reported immediately.

After investigating the facts of the complaint, the People Director, or other Director Team member or People Team Business Partner will either:

1). Contact the volunteer directly to discuss the situation and a possible resolution. The discussion will be followed up with a written summary to outline the date/circumstances of the conversation and any review dates deemed necessary.

Or

2). Write to volunteer and prohibit them from any future volunteer duties at any BBOWT site with immediate effect.

## Further Information

- If employees dealing with volunteer issues need guidance or support in how to deal with a situation please contact the Head of Team and if further guidance is needed then to contact the relevant team's People Business Partner.
- All complaints are treated confidentially, and will only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue.
- Records of the incident and a log of communications are stored confidentially.

These guidelines are reviewed regularly in conjunction with the Volunteer Policy, Volunteering Procedures and other relevant BBOWT documents.