



Volunteer Complaints and Disputes Policy

Introduction

The general aim is that volunteering is a positive experience for everyone involved. There are occasions however when problems may arise. This policy covers what to do when a volunteer raises a concern or complaint and how to handle any concerns or complaints that ONE KEGWORTH may have about a volunteer.

Dealing with complaints and disputes

All complaints and disputes will be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:

- Protect our volunteers
- Minimise any risk of disruption to the members of the public, and other volunteers
- Demonstrate that ONE KEGWORTH respects its volunteers
- Protect the reputation of the ONE KEGWORTH

Complaints from volunteers

Volunteers have the right to complain if they feel that they have been unfairly treated. The procedure will follow the two stages below:

Verbal complaint

This is the initial discussion and may be informal in nature. Many complaints can be resolved at this stage. The initial complaint should be raised with the Volunteer Co-ordinator who supervises the volunteer and the matter will be brought to the attention of the Management Committee. If the complaint is about the Volunteer Co-ordinator, then it will be referred to the Management Committee.

Written complaint

If the problem is not satisfactorily resolved then it should be raised in writing. A response will be provided within 10 working days, if more time is needed then a holding letter will be sent with the reason for the delay and a date when the outcome should be received by.

Right to appeal

Volunteers who are not satisfied with the outcome of their written complaint will have the opportunity to address this to the ONE KEGWORTH management committee to review the case. The Management Committee's decision on the matter will be final.

The full procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes can be found in Appendix 1

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Review Date: _____

Appendix 1

Procedure for dealing with Volunteer Complaints and Disputes

The types of complaints and disputes that may need to be address with volunteers could include:

- Persistent bad time keeping
- Going beyond the boundaries of the agreed role
- Not respecting other users and other volunteers confidentiality/dignity/independence and individuality
- Breach of health and safety regulations or agreements
- Misuse of the organisations equipment or facilities
- Theft
- Discrimination on grounds of disability/ethnicity/religion/gender/sexuality/age
- Abuse or other offensive behaviour

Many issues such as not fitting in as well as expected with the team or being unreliable should be picked up and dealt with during regular supervision. It may be possible to resolve these without resorting to formal procedures.

Verbal discussion

- Start by chatting with the volunteer about a whole range of issues that may be influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. Often they may not realise that they are doing anything wrong and can't be expected to change if a particular issue isn't brought to their attention
- Supply volunteers with a well thought out induction pack, volunteer policy and role description. Remind them of the policies, ground rules, etc of the organisation
- Check if they have training needs
- Do they need extra support or supervision?
- Are they 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 area or develop a completely new role for them
- Is the volunteer suffering from burnout or unable to cope with the demands of the role anymore? They may need a break from volunteering for the organisation for a while
- Keep notes of any meetings where problems are discussed

Written warning

If the issue is not resolved at the verbal stage or review:

- Give the volunteer a written warning outlining your reason for the complaint
- Allow them to state their case, which could be to the Volunteer Co-ordinator or a senior member of staff and to 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
- If you decide to dismiss the volunteer they should have the right to appeal
- The decision to dismiss should be a last resort

Right to appeal

If a volunteer has been dismissed

- They should have the right to 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 should be allowed to have a nominated person present at any appeal meeting
- The Chair or sub-committee must respond within a time specified in the organisation's problem solving procedure and their decision is final

Dismissing a volunteer

By this stage the volunteer will have had opportunity to put their case forward. Further debate is unhelpful. An unequivocal message has to be imparted to the volunteer. For this reason it may be better if it comes from someone with a degree of seniority within the organisation.

Bear in mind the following good practice tips

- Make sure the dismissal meeting takes place in a private setting
- Be quick and direct
- Decide what you are going to say in advance and do not back down. At this stage the decision to dismiss a volunteer has already been made
- Do not attempt to counsel the volunteer as this will send confusing messages to them
- Expect the volunteer to express their emotions but keep your emotions in check
- Follow up the meeting with a letter, re-iterate the decision to dismiss the volunteer as well as outlining the reasons why. Include any information relating to their departure
- Inform staff, service users and other volunteers of the outcome but do not give reasons for the dismissal
- If the volunteer had responsibilities for certain clients make sure that the clients are informed of the new volunteer who will be assigned to them

Under what circumstances should volunteers be suspended immediately?

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately, while an investigation is carried out. These include but are not limited to acts that constitute gross misconduct such as

- Theft
- Assault
- Acts of violence
- Malicious damage
- Deliberate falsification of documents
- Harassment
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol