

Problem Solving Process for Volunteers

The Wildlife Trust BCN seeks to promote good volunteer relation practices and one of the aims of this document is to ensure that matters can be resolved openly, fairly and quickly.

The Trust aims to:

- protect volunteers;
- minimise any disruption to staff, other volunteers and site visitors;
- demonstrate that the organisation respects its volunteers;
- protect the reputation of the organisation.

The Trust recognises that it is good practice to have a problem solving process in place, to deal with issues and complaints raised either by, or about volunteers.

While the Trust does not have the same legal duties towards volunteers and does not wish to create a contractual relationship with them, it recognises the importance of dealing with problems and complaints fairly, openly and consistently. To help with this the following procedures are in place and apply for complaints by volunteers, as well as complaints about volunteers.

Procedures

- All complaints will be treated confidentially and will only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue.
- Complaints will be recorded and kept on file for 3 years unless the nature or severity of the complaint warrants otherwise.
- All meetings will be conducted in a safe and private environment with sufficient time allocated.
- All complainants will be kept informed at every step of the process.
- We will endeavour to acknowledge all complaints within five working days and respond to complaints within 28 days.
- Volunteers have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or another volunteer in any meetings that form part of the problem solving process.

1. COMPLAINTS BY VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer may have a complaint about another volunteer, a member of staff or the Trust itself.

Volunteers and their Support Workers should make every effort to resolve issues informally and without recourse to the complaints procedure.

In cases where the volunteer does not feel able to do this, or if it has been tried without success, the volunteer should raise the matter informally with the Volunteer and Local Groups Manager, who will try to resolve matters.

If the complaint is against the Support Worker, then it should be referred to the Volunteer and Local Groups Manager who will raise with the next level of management if appropriate.

If the complaint is still not resolved, then it should be put in writing to HR and dealt with as a formal complaint under the Trust's complaints procedure. Any outcome/decision under the Trust's complaints procedure will be final and there will be no further right of review.

The Trust will provide a written outcome of an individual's complaint as soon as is practicable and within 28 days from the date of notification of the complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances. All parties will endeavour to resolve matters as soon as is reasonably practicable.

2. COMPLAINTS ABOUT VOLUNTEERS

Complaints that arise about volunteers may be as a result of their behaviour, or as a result of their inability to fulfil their role description. The Support Worker will consider the volunteer's training needs, the level of support they need and whether their current placement is appropriate. It is expected that most matters will be resolved informally through:

- Reasonable changes to the volunteer's role to enable them to carry it out effectively
- A change of volunteer placement, where appropriate and if available
- Development of a time-bound plan to address problems.

Where these measures do not work, the Volunteer and Local Groups Manager or another suitably appointed person, will investigate the matter and arrange a formal meeting with the volunteer in order for them to put forward their case.

If it is felt necessary, a formal letter from Human Resources will confirm the steps agreed to improve the situation.

If the issue is still not resolved, a meeting involving the volunteer, Human Resources and the Support Worker will be arranged. This may result in a further formal notification, with the understanding that the volunteer will be asked to leave if there is no improvement.

If a volunteer is asked to leave, an exit meeting will be held to explain the decision and tie up any loose ends. The meeting will be followed up with a letter which re-iterates the decision, as well as outlining the reasons for doing so and any information about their departure, the relevant time limits and details of the right to appeal.

Staff, clients and other volunteers will be made aware of the volunteer's departure where appropriate, but not provided with reasons for their leaving.

Exceptions.

Under some circumstances, volunteers can be asked to stop volunteering immediately while an investigation is carried out. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct, e.g. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive language or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.