

Template Problem Solving Procedure (Volunteers)

Introduction

We value individuals' willingness to volunteer with us and generally it is a positive experience for everyone involved. However, occasionally problems may arise, and therefore this procedure is designed to help and encourage all our volunteers to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and performance, whilst also giving the volunteer the opportunity to complain if they feel they have an issue or cause for concern within the parish.

The following procedure concerns volunteers in two circumstances and provides a consistent method of dealing with such matters;

- When the individual is the complainant
- If the individual is the subject of the complaint

If a volunteer makes a complaint

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. Problems should therefore be brought direct to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved in this way. A complaint or grievance may include an allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way.

If a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult, it must be responded to through the Diocesan procedures for handling allegations of abuse, outlined in Section 3 of the Safeguarding Guide.

Stage One

Any complaint should be discussed verbally in the first instance with _____.

If the complaint is about the volunteer's manager/group leader, then the matter should be referred to the Churchwardens. During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied if they wish by a friend or other supporter. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should proceed to Stage 2.

Stage Two

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, they should make a formal complaint in writing to the churchwardens who will take the complaint to the PCC. A Panel of at least three PCC members will consider the complaint and appropriate documentation, and undertake meetings as required, i.e. the complainant, manager, etc. The Panel will then inform the complainant of the outcome, normally within a month of the complaint being made at Stage 2.

The decision of the panel representing the PCC will be final.

As a result of an investigation into a complaint or grievance, it may be necessary to address the matter through the procedure outlined below.

If a volunteer is the subject of the complaint

Sometimes minor issues arise during the course of volunteering, such as a volunteer not fitting into the team as well as expected, not meeting the required standards when undertaking tasks, or being unreliable. Such issues should normally be detected through regular supervision and be quite easy to resolve without resorting to formal procedures. All volunteers should have received a job description and volunteer agreement beforehand which will provide them with a good foundation on which to undertake their volunteering, and the aim is to try and find a solution to any problems with the volunteer before issues become worse. However, if the issues aren't resolved through regular supervision, or if a complaint is raised by a third party, then the problem may need to be dealt with on a more formal basis.

The following procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with any disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action should be taken until the matter has been fully investigated.

At every stage the volunteer who is the subject of the disciplinary procedure will have the opportunity to state his or her case, and to be represented, if they wish, at the hearings by a friend or other supporter. The subject of the procedure has the right to appeal against any disciplinary penalty.

Stage One

The first step is to discuss the complaint with the volunteer. The volunteer should be encouraged to make the necessary improvement and offered additional guidance, support, training and supervision as appropriate.

Stage Two

If the issue hasn't been resolved through the above, the manager/leader can issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer must be given the opportunity to state their case, and can be accompanied to the meeting by a friend or other supporter. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives may be set and help offered to the volunteer. The written warning should include the reason for the warning and a note that if there is insufficient improvement within the designated timescale (usually no more than 6 months) the volunteer may be asked to leave.

There are some occasions when volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These 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 or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer needs to be confirmed to the volunteer in writing. In some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before the next step of your problem solving procedure can take place

Stage Three

If a volunteer is ultimately asked to leave (and the decision to do this should be a last resort), they should be given the opportunity to appeal in writing, within one week of the decision, to the PCC. The appeal should be heard by a panel of no less than three members of the PCC, one of which should be a churchwarden or the Incumbent.

The Panel will consider the case, including any documentation, and undertake meetings as required, i.e. with the volunteer, manager/leader, etc. The Panel will then form a judgement and make a decision regarding the dismissal normally within one month from receipt of the appeal.

The decision of the panel representing the PCC will be final.

Records

In all cases, it is important to keep accurate written records of any discussions and meetings undertaken through the problem solving procedure. These should be retained for at least six years after the volunteer has left, (See the Diocesan safeguarding guide Section 2F for more details). In all cases, complete confidentiality must be observed during this process and information only shared with those who need to know.