

Volunteer Grievance Policy & Procedure

Purpose

Whistlewood Common Limited (WCL) values all its volunteers. Whilst every effort is made to keep volunteers in roles that they find satisfying and fulfilling, we recognise that disputes and problems can arise between individual volunteers or groups of volunteers. This Volunteer Grievance Procedure is intended to address problems that arise, both quickly and fairly.

Scope

The Volunteer Grievance Policy & Procedure is designed to try to resolve volunteer issues as close to the source of the dispute as possible and as soon as they arise, so that small grievances do not escalate to become serious or formal complaints.

The Volunteer Grievance Procedure is intended to supplement the Complaints Procedure, which deals with complaints which do not relate to volunteer issues, such as maladministration; breaches of procedures, regulations or other governance documents of WCL, and acts which are injurious to the character or interests of WCL. Such complaints should follow WCL Complaints Policy & Procedure

What is a grievance?

A grievance is a concern, problem or issue between an individual or group and another individual or group within our organisation

Examples include:

- Personal or volunteer related disputes between volunteers.
- The breakdown of working relationships between volunteers due to personality conflicts.
- Misunderstandings about the nature or boundaries of a volunteer's role.
- Differing treatment, or perceptions of differing treatment, between volunteers.
- Comments, actions or behaviour that make another volunteer or volunteers feel uncomfortable, unwelcome or to consider giving up their role.
- Antagonism between a volunteer and the organisation for which he/she is

volunteering.

Dealing with a grievance

If a volunteer has a complaint about their volunteering or about another volunteer, they should raise it as soon as possible. Unresolved problems left to fester become bigger problems.

Wherever possible, follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1 – Direct Approach

If the dispute is with another person the volunteer should try and talk to the other person, explain why they are unhappy and see if the problem can be sorted out between themselves.

If the dispute is with a group (e.g. WCL Directors) then talking to the individuals first to get their own, rather than the group's, view or opinion may be worthwhile. There may be others who have the same concerns or who are also unhappy but who haven't said anything, or they may have suggestions about changes of roles or behaviours that would help.

If this step is approached with a willingness to be flexible and to compromise, if necessary, then an amicable solution can frequently be found.

In some cases, a direct approach may not be possible or advisable, in which case the volunteer should go straight to Step 2 but be prepared to explain why the direct approach was not attempted.

Step 2 – Informal Process

The volunteer should discuss their grievance informally, as soon as possible, with a designated lead volunteer or if it involves them, then the **nominated person** on the WCL Board of Directors should be contacted.

The person receiving the grievance, should take the grievance seriously and ensure that everything is done to try and resolve the issue informally.

- The lead volunteer or designated board member should meet with the volunteer/s as soon as possible to ask them to explain their grievance, to seek their view on the situation and establish what outcome they are seeking.
- The volunteer lead or designated board member should also meet with the person or group who is/are being complained about. This is to corroborate the facts, seek their view on the issue and to find out what outcome they would expect.

- If necessary, and without breaking any confidences, the lead volunteer or designated board member may need to talk to other volunteers to help shed light on the root cause of the problem.

Informal procedures aim to resolve behaviour or performance that gives cause for concern as soon as possible. Depending upon the nature of the grievance, possible solutions that may be explored are:

- Making sure those involved understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Defining clearer boundaries to the roles.
- Adjusting roles and responsibilities so they better suit the individuals' capabilities or preferences,
- Assigning different times or sessions.
- Advice about behaviour or conduct.

Regular support meetings may also be arranged with either party and a follow-up meeting should be arranged to discuss if the situation has improved or if further intervention is needed.

Most problems and issues should be resolved by the end of these informal procedures. If the grievance is resolved informally but its resolution has any direct or indirect implications for WCL, then WCL board of directors should be informed (if not already involved) as this may influence WCL governance.

Step 3 – Formal Process.

If, at the end of the agreed timetable, the informal procedures in Steps 1 and 2 do not result in agreement or a positive outcome, the volunteer should refer to WCL Complaints Policy & Procedures.

If the grievance is against another party, the designated board member will arrange a meeting with that other party to discuss the grievance being made against them (This/these person/s have the right to be accompanied by a friend or advisor)

Written notes of these meetings will be prepared and signed by all in attendance at each meeting as an accurate record.

Decisions on how to resolve the situation will be jointly agreed between the parties and given in writing. Possible solutions may be:

- Regular meetings until either or both volunteers understand their role, their responsibilities, and the relevant policies.
- Some training or mentoring.

- Division or separation of roles so that the parties do not have to work together.
- Re-assign either or both volunteers to a new role, perhaps better suited to their skills and motivations. This allows an enthusiastic volunteer to continue with the organisation, and the organisation to continue to benefit from their knowledge.
- Re-vitalise either or both volunteers, perhaps by giving them an opportunity to take a break. This is particularly relevant for very enthusiastic volunteers, who can sometimes over-commit themselves and suffer from burn out, or who are performing a very demanding role, or who have had a significant change to personal circumstances.
- A change to a different organisation or
- Retire/release with dignity if there is no alternative but make this a very positive exit with the volunteer leaving, feeling that they have been appreciated. Asking a volunteer to leave can be extremely difficult, but sometimes it is the best decision for both parties.

A volunteer has the right to withdraw their grievance complaint at any stage. They also have the right to end their volunteering when they wish.

Right of appeal

If a volunteer wishes to appeal against any grievance decision, they must do so, in writing, to the designated board member dealing with the formal procedure within 10 working days of the decision being communicated to them.

WCL will try appointing an independent person to hear the appeal, usually within 14 days of receipt of the appeal. This could be a respected person who does not necessarily have any management role. This could be another member or organisation. Both the volunteer and the person/s they have raised the grievance about have the right to attend the appeal hearing, which may be virtual or face-to-face.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing within 5 days of the appeal meeting.

The decision of the person hearing the appeal will be final.

Approved: WW Board

Date: 07/10/2025