



Grievance Procedure

Purpose and Scope of the Procedure

Volunteers should aim to settle most matters informally. Many problems can be raised and settled in this way. In some cases early use of an internal mediator may be a helpful alternative to the use of procedures. Mediation involves using a neutral third party to help 2 or more people talk through and resolve a difference or dispute. It is an entirely voluntary process and all parties need to agree to take part. Contact Complaints Group for more details. The mediator cannot compel anyone to take part and does not have the power or authority to impose solutions or make recommendations unless that is the wish of all parties involved.

The grievance procedure is designed for use where normal working relationships have failed to resolve a problem. Before a grievance procedure can be instigated every effort must be made to resolve the matter by talking with your Line Manager or with a member of Complaints Group. You may be able to agree a solution informally. Where this fails to result in a satisfactory conclusion, the volunteer can instigate the grievance procedure. It is important that all grievances are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

Examples of situations where a grievance procedure might be instigated (this list is not exhaustive) include:

- Complaints about trustees, volunteers or employees;
- Problems with working relationships;
- Bullying and harassment;
- Changes in working conditions.

At any stage the result of a grievance may lead to the disciplinary procedure being instigated against another person. Should the disciplinary procedure be instigated against an employee or volunteer, then the volunteer bringing the grievance would be informed of the outcome of the procedure. The volunteer would be under a duty to keep this information confidential. Failure to do so would lead to disciplinary action.

Before responding to a grievance the Line Manager should consult with EO's Complaints Group and the Trustee Complaints Committee.

Stage1

If a volunteer has concerns about an aspect of his/her voluntary role and the matter is still not settled they may progress the matter by writing to their Line Manager or Complaints Group. They should stick to the facts of the matter and avoid unsubstantiated accusations and any language that is insulting or abusive. Thinking through a grievance and putting it into writing can often help a volunteer clarify the issues. A panel of three or more individuals will be convened who would normally be the Line Manager and 2 members of

Complaints Group. The panel shall be convened as soon as possible and within 10 working days of receiving the written request to consider the grievance.

You will normally receive a written communication or phone call from the panel to ask you to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved. During a phone conversation notes of the relevant facts will be taken and a copy passed to you to check, amend if necessary and confirm your agreement that they're a true and fair record of the phone conversation.

Any other parties to the grievance will be contacted to ask for their understanding of the situation and after appropriate investigations have been made to establish the facts of the case, you will receive a written decision, normally within 30 working days of the panel being convened, and where appropriate this will set out what action we intend to take to resolve your grievance.

Stage 2 – Appeal

If you feel that your grievance has not been satisfactorily settled you may progress the matter by writing to the Complaints Group within 10 working days of receipt of the written decision. The trustees will convene an appeals panel who have not previously been involved in the grievance hearing. The appeals panel should meet within 20 working days of their appointment. Volunteers may lodge any objections to the composition of the Appeals Panel within 5 working days of being notified of the members.

Your reasons for disagreeing with the decision and any new information need to be put in writing for the appeal. The decision at stage 2 will be final. At any stage of the procedure Education Otherwise may deal with issues involving bullying, harassment and whistleblowing under the relevant policy.

Records

It is good practice to keep written records during grievance procedures. Records should be treated as confidential and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, which gives individuals the right to request and have access to certain personal data. The overriding principles of the Data Protection Act are that any personal data kept should be necessary, fairly and lawfully processed, adequate, relevant, accurate and secure. Consistent handling of grievance matters will be difficult unless simple records are kept of decisions and how they were made. These records should be confidential, detailing the nature of any grievance, action taken to resolve the grievance, whether an appeal was lodged, it's outcome and it's outcome and any subsequent developments. These records should be emailed to archive@education-otherwise.org when each stage of the grievance procedure is complete – with the volunteer's name and Grievance in the Subject line.