

HemingfordHub Problem Solving Procedure for volunteers 01.09.2025

Introduction

We'll try to make your volunteering experience enjoyable and worthwhile, but occasionally problems do occur. If you experience any issues, please don't hesitate to discuss these with your volunteer manager or the Chair. We'll ensure that any concerns you raise are reviewed fully, fairly and transparently

Our problem solving procedure will ensure that you know how to deal with problems if they arise. It will help you find the most appropriate solution to the problem.

All complaints and concerns should be dealt with openly, fairly and quickly to:

- protect you
- minimise any disruption to blind and partially sighted people, staff and other volunteers
- demonstrate that we respect our volunteers
- protect our reputation.

If a volunteer complains or has concerns we can resolve things informally:

- Very often discussions of the matter, perhaps with the help of an external person, for example a Trustee, is sufficient to clear things up to the satisfaction of all.
- If you have a concern or a complaint to make regarding the activities within your team, the behaviour of someone you volunteer with or, in fact, anything at all, you should raise the issue with your volunteer manager.
- If you're uncomfortable raising the issue directly with your volunteer manager – for example if your complaint is about them – you should speak to the Chair of Trustees on 07308 035416 or hemingfordhub@icloud.com
- Whoever you speak to will ensure that your complaint is looked into, and that any steps needed to rectify the situation are taken. They'll also ensure that you're given an explanation of what has happened.

It may also be that this stage is carried out by letter or email

- We're committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect. All complaints of bullying or harassment will be taken seriously and will be investigated fairly and independently.
- If your concern has a safeguarding element to it, your volunteer manager will refer to our Safeguarding policy for advice. You'll be kept informed at all times.

We can also use a Formal process:

- If you're not satisfied after raising a matter informally, or if you think the matter is too serious to deal with informally (for example ongoing harassment or a number of serious health risks), then you should

raise your concerns formally. To do this, either speak or write to your Volunteer Manager, explaining the issue, providing full details and asking for it to be dealt with formally. If appropriate, you can ask another person to do this on your behalf.

- Your concern/complaint will be picked up and investigated by the Volunteer Manager who will acknowledge your concern/complaint within seven working days and tell you the timescale for providing you with a response, normally within 21 working days from the date the concern/complaint is received.

Following their investigation, you'll receive a formal response to your concern/complaint, which will include:

- details of the investigation carried out
- a decision about whether or not your complaint was upheld or your concern was found to be valid
- the reason for the decision
- any appropriate redress that will be offered, e.g. an apology or help with accessing support from another source
- information about any other actions to be taken as a result of your concerns/complaint.

If, for any reason, more time is required to deal with the issue, the Volunteering Manager will tell you the reasons for this and give you a date by which they will respond.

You have the right to Review a decision

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint or concerns raised, you may ask for a review. You should write a letter setting out the reasons that you are dissatisfied and send it to the Chair of Trustees.

Their details will be made available in the formal response letter you'll receive from the Volunteering Manager investigating the complaint/concern.

They will either carry out the review of your case or appoint one or more Trustees to carry out a review. The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge your request for a review within seven working days and will inform you of the name and contact details of the person(s) who will be handling the review and the timescale for providing you with a response, normally within 21 working days from the date that the review request is received.

The review will examine:

- the original complaint or issue raised
- the way it has been investigated
- the decision made and any agreed actions.

When the review has been completed and they have considered their findings, the Chair of Trustees will write to you to:

- tell you the outcome of the review and the reasons for this
- inform you of any actions that we will be taking as a result.

The outcome of this review is final and no further action is allowed under the problem-solving procedures.

If someone complains about you as a volunteer

Resolving things informally:

Your Volunteer Manager will discuss the complaint with you.

They will:

- try to resolve the matter by talking to you
- find out more from you about the issue and what might be causing any problems
- identify any goals and any changes needed to help you
- offer you extra support and training where necessary
- agree a deadline to review the situation with you.

Your volunteer manager will maintain confidentiality regarding your personal experience and any private or sensitive information. Your Volunteer Manager will, however, keep the complainant informed of any measures taken to rectify a situation.

Or Formally:

If the issue has not been resolved through informal discussions - or where the volunteer manager thinks that the problem is too serious to deal with informally - they raise this with the Chair of Trustees who will ask another Trustee to formally investigate the concern/complaint.

The Trustee will:

- issue you with written details outlining the complaint
- give you the opportunity to state your case. You'll be allowed to be accompanied by a person of your choice, this can be a volunteer, a family member or friend.
- make recommendations depending on the nature of the concerns and what they find out about the issue, set further objectives, offer further help and/or make changes to the role and how you are managed
- involve the Chair of Trustees at this stage if appropriate.

In serious cases or where problems remain unresolved after the above attempts have been made, you will be asked to leave your volunteer role. If we decide to do this, you can ask for that decision to be reviewed.

You have the right to Review a decision:

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the handling of a complaint or problem concerning you, you may ask for a review.

Beginning with writing to the Chair of Trustees the review process is exactly the same as for a review of the handling of complaints and concerns raised by volunteers. *See above.*

Serious incidents - suspension

All complaints relating to safeguarding will be investigated formally.

There are some occasions when you may be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out.

Examples of these include:

- causing harm or abuse to anyone in our care
- dangerous, reckless or violent behaviour involving risk or injury to others
- behaviour likely to offend others, including insults relating to someone's physical or mental ability, race, sexual orientation etc.
- theft, malicious damage to our property or other criminal offences
- serious misuse of Information Technology e.g. accessing pornographic websites on the Internet
- serious incapacity due to use of alcohol or illegal drugs
- behaving in a way which may indicate you are unsuitable to work or volunteer with vulnerable people
- breaching our data protection guidelines.

The decision to suspend you must be confirmed to you in writing. Under the formal process, an investigation will take place and you will be informed of the results and decisions made.

If you wish, you may request a review of these decisions using the review process outlined above.

There may be occasions where it is necessary to suspend a volunteer. This should be seen as a neutral act that allows for an unimpeded investigation and protects the volunteer whilst any investigation takes place. This could be due to a formal complaint, serious criminal allegation, following a notification of a Police investigation, a serious safeguarding concern, and suspected misuse of data or other serious concern that requires a formal investigation. Depending on the nature of the suspension, the investigation or formal complaint will be carried out by your Volunteer Manager or the Chair of Trustees.

Any concern must be acted upon promptly and any suspensions must be done over the phone, where possible and followed up in writing with the volunteer. The suspension phone call is normally made by the volunteer manager or a trustee.

Process for suspension

If we need to suspend you from your role, a call will be made as soon as possible.

This will explain:

- That due to the nature of the complaint/investigation there is a need to suspend you while this is investigated.
- Confirm that you understand that you cannot continue to volunteer in this role and if appropriate other roles, while the investigation takes place.
- Confirm that contact with you will be necessary for further information during the investigating.
- Send an email with a letter attached to confirm everything that has been discussed. A copy will be kept by the volunteer manager or Trustee.
- At the end of the investigation, notes will be stored in a secure folder by the manager.
- Once the investigation or complaint is finalised, it may be necessary to carry out a risk assessment or further criminal record check if the/their suspension can be lifted. This must be discussed with the board of trustees.

Who to inform and update

This will depend on the reasons for the suspension and will be discussed and agreed with the Volunteer Manager. Whoever carries out the investigation is responsible for ensuring the relevant teams and individuals are informed and updated as appropriate. The list below is some of the key individuals that may need to be informed and updated:

- Volunteer Manager and Chair of Trustees.
- Designated Safeguarding Person.
- Any other staff or volunteers who are involved, for example if a complaint is made about a volunteer by another volunteer

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

As of 12 October 2009 we have a legal obligation to refer anyone removed or dismissed (as a result of a serious incident as described above), from working with vulnerable adults/children in a regulated or controlled activity to the Disclosure and Barring Service. This may result in the person being barred from working/volunteering with vulnerable adults or children indefinitely. This applies even when information comes to light after an individual has left the organisation. For further information please see the Disclosure and Barring Service referral information factsheets - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referral-and-barring-decision-making-process>.

If you have witnessed or have concerns about the possible abuse of children or vulnerable adults you must follow HemingfordHubs safeguarding policies for children and vulnerable adults. In the first instance, contact a Designated Safeguarding Person.

This policy and procedure will be reviewed in September 2027 or before if there are any changes in legislation, changes within HemingfordHub or concerns raised. Any changes to the policy will then be shared and read by all trustees and volunteers.

Trustee Signatures:

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is more complex and circular, while the one on the right is more linear and cursive.

Trustee Names: Riva Elliot and Christine Batter

Adopted by the HemingfordHub Trustees on: 01.09.2025

Next Review Date: September 2027