



North Stoneham Community Group

Complaints and problem-solving procedure

March 2023

North Stoneham Community Group complaints procedure

We will do our best to ensure that everyone's experience of volunteering and attendance at events and initiatives is a positive one. However, occasionally things go wrong. A volunteer may have a complaint about another volunteer, a member of the public or NSCG itself. Similarly, someone might complain about a volunteer's work, attitude or conduct.

Volunteers are not covered by employment or equal opportunities legislation. In fact, volunteers only have the same legal rights as the general public (e.g. Health and Safety and Data Protection), so a problem solving procedure helps to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly and are not discriminated against.

This problem-solving procedure sets out how problems will be dealt with when they arise, and help to find the most appropriate solution to a problem.

If a volunteer makes a complaint

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives the volunteer the opportunity to complain if they have been unfairly treated or if they have an issue or a cause for concern.

- **Stage 1: Oral Complaint**

The volunteer should discuss their concerns with the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary. If this is not appropriate or the person finds it difficult to speak to the nominated individuals, the matter should be discussed with another Trustee. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should proceed to Stage 2.

- **Stage 2: In Writing**

The volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary, or if this is not appropriate/difficult to another Trustee. The volunteer should make the formal complaint within a month of the unresolved outcome of the oral complaint, to which the recipient will reply in writing within a month, to allow for investigations or absences.

- **Stage 3: Opportunity to Appeal**

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal to the Chair. The appeal to the Chair should be made within a month of receiving the written response. The Chair will arrange to see the volunteer within a month. The volunteer can have a person present with them at this meeting. The Chair will respond within a month of this meeting and their decision will be final.

If someone complains about a volunteer

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives the volunteer the opportunity to be told why a complaint has arisen, the opportunity to state their case and the chance to appeal.

- **Stage 1: Oral discussion**

The first step is for the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary to discuss the complaint with the volunteer and establish their view of the issue and whether any external factors are affecting the volunteer's ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. The NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary should identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil

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their role, and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary. A deadline should be agreed for reviewing the situation with the volunteer.

If the complaint was raised by someone else, the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary should keep them informed of the measures being taken to rectify the situation.

- **Stage 2: Written Warning**

If the matter hasn't been resolved by Stage 1, the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary will issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer will be invited to state their case. The volunteer can choose to be accompanied by a person of their choice. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may be used as an opportunity to set further objectives for the volunteer, or to offer training or other support. However, if at this stage the NSCG Chair/Safeguarding Lead/Secretary decides that the volunteer should be asked to leave, the volunteer will be given the chance to appeal.

- **Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal**

When a volunteer has been asked to leave, they may appeal in writing to the Chair within a month. The Chair will arrange to see the volunteer within a month. The volunteer can have a person present with them at this meeting. The Chair will respond within a month and their decision will be final.

Suspension

There are some occasions when volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, gross misconduct, eg theft, assault, acts of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment, being under the influence of drink or drugs, allegations relating to any safeguarding matter whether they take place within NSCG or not. The decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing and, in some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before the next step in the problem solving procedure may take place.

NSCG will:

- Treat all complaints confidentially
- Allow enough time for meetings to take place and set realistic timeframes
- Keep complainants informed at each step of the procedure
- Ensure that volunteers have the right to be accompanied by a friend or representative in any of the meetings.