awen

Ymddiriedolaeth Ddiwylliannol Cultural Trust

Gweithdrn Datrys Problemau Gwirfoddol

Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure

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Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure

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Who can help?	The People and Organisational Development Team can provide support and advice with the application of this policy and answer any questions you may have. Please email support@awen-wales.com or call 01656 754825 If you are a member of a trade union Awen's recognised Trade Unions are Unison, GMB and Unite and you can receive support and advice from your trade union representative.
Other Support	Volunteer Policy Employee Expenses Policy Sexual Harassment Policy Social Media Policy Social Media Procedure
Please Note	This policy does not form part of your contract of employment with Awen and may be subject to change.

1. Introduction

1.1. Awen values and respects its volunteers and is grateful for their invaluable support. We have processes in place to support volunteers in their roles. In most instances, volunteering at Awen is an enjoyable and positive experience. Any issues which occur are normally resolved quickly between the volunteer and the Volunteer Lead. Very occasionally, however, there may be situations which are more serious or require further investigation. This policy sets out the procedure to be followed.

1.2. This procedure is for anyone who wishes to raise a concern about a volunteer and applies to all Awen volunteers. It is only for issues relating to volunteers; separate policies exist to resolve issues concerning employees.

1.3. We need a Problem Solving Procedure to:

- protect our volunteers and ensure that they are treated in a fair and equal way
- demonstrate that we respect our volunteers and are committed to good practice
- minimise any disruption to the charity's work and the people involved
- resolve any concerns quickly
- protect the reputation of Awen
- address poor performance or unacceptable behaviour

2. Procedure – Awen Led

2.1. Where extreme unacceptable behaviour is reported or suspected, Awen would suspend the volunteer immediately while the allegations are investigated. If there are suspected allegations the Head of People is to be contacted for advice. An appendix is attached to this document giving examples of what would be considered unacceptable or extreme unacceptable behaviour.

2.2. If another volunteer wishes to raise an issue about a fellow volunteer and is uncomfortable discussing an issue with their Volunteer Lead, they can raise it with another manager or the Head of People.

Informal Discussion

It is always best to try and resolve any issues informally and quickly by having a discussion, preferably in person. The discussion should be open, honest and objective and all information should be treated confidentially. The volunteer should be fully informed about the issue by their Volunteer Lead and every possible attempt should be made to resolve a concern at this stage.

The Volunteer Lead will ensure that:

- The meeting takes place as soon as possible in a quiet place where you are unlikely to be interrupted
- The meeting takes place on neutral ground and in a convenient location
- Any notes are typed up and the volunteer is provided with a copy, usually within 14 days
- The volunteer is allowed sufficient time to talk and to give their perspective
- Possible solutions are discussed, and they are clearly understood by both sides
- Any actions are agreed, and a time is arranged to review the actions, usually within 14 days of the meeting.

2.3. It may be necessary to have several review meetings if initial solutions are unsuccessful and other alternatives are identified. It is important to ensure both sides have agreed any outcomes.

2.4. The meetings are also an opportunity to identify further support or training for a volunteer. In addition, if volunteers are finding it difficult to carry out their role, are feeling unfulfilled or their needs have changed then an alternative role might be more appropriate.

2.5. Formal meeting

If there is no improvement in the volunteer's behaviour or performance or a concern is not resolved, or if the original concern is serious, then the volunteer should be invited to a formal meeting with their Volunteer Lead and the People Manager. The volunteer may be accompanied to the meeting by a companion of their choice.

Where mitigating circumstances may have contributed to a situation, they should be discussed at this stage and could be taken into consideration.

The volunteer's Supervisor / Project Manager should:

- Write to the volunteer inviting them to a formal meeting
- Ensure the volunteer receives a written explanation of the issue along with a copy of the charity's Problem-Solving Procedure
- Ensure the volunteer is given enough time to prepare (a minimum of five working days) while also ensuring the meeting takes place as soon as possible
- Allow the volunteer access to any relevant information relating to the concern
- Ensure any possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both sides
- Take notes during the meeting and suggest that the volunteer (or their companion) does too.
- Agree what actions are required to resolve the issue satisfactorily and arrange a suitable time to review the actions
- Ensure the volunteer understands what will happen if the agreed actions are not met
- Consider whether the volunteer should be suspended temporarily from volunteering for Awen for a specified period of time to allow for further investigation.

3. Suspension from volunteering

3.1. In some situations, Awen may temporarily suspend a volunteer from their role. This will allow Awen time to investigate the allegations thoroughly and establish any facts. It should not be considered as confirmation of any wrongdoing.

3.2. If an act of extreme unacceptable behaviour is suspected, then Awen may suspend a volunteer immediately while an investigation is carried out. Depending on the nature of the concern, an external investigation may have to take place. This will not be necessary for most cases but will apply where the police or another external agency has a statutory duty to investigate, for example, theft, fraud or allegations of abuse. If a volunteer or employee is concerned about the safety of anyone connected with the charity, they should refer to Awen's Safeguarding Policy or contact the Head of People who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

3.3. The decision to suspend a volunteer will normally be made by the Head of People, in discussion with the Head Position for the Business Unit. However, in certain circumstances e.g., when a volunteer is volunteering outside normal working hours and the Head of People is not available a Volunteer Lead may suspend a volunteer if an alleged serious breach of discipline occurs. The Volunteer Lead will inform the Head of People at the earliest opportunity.

3.4. An appendix is attached to this document giving some examples of what would be considered unacceptable and extreme unacceptable behaviour.

4. Bringing volunteering with us to a halt

4.1. If there is no further improvement in performance or change in behaviour after the agreed review period set out at the formal meeting, then it would be appropriate for the volunteer to stop volunteering with us.

4.2. The final decision to ask a volunteer to stop volunteering with us will be made by the Head of People.

4.3. Where possible, the volunteer should be informed face-to-face, and this should be followed by written confirmation of the situation explaining why the volunteer has been asked to stop volunteering for us.

4.4. Disqualification procedures for Trustees will follow the process outlined in Memorandum and Articles of Association.

4.5. The Volunteer Lead (or if appropriate another manager) may wish to have an exit meeting with the volunteer to explain the situation and tie up any loose ends.

4.6. Confidential records must be kept at each stage of the process.

5. Procedure – Volunteer Led

5.1. Awen's Complaints / Concerns Procedure is designed to enable volunteers who have a complaint or are dissatisfied with Awen, to have the matter dealt with in a speedy, fair and equitable manner.

5.2. Volunteers have a right to raise an issue, which is of concern to them. Volunteer Leads have a responsibility to act and respond to a problem positively and within a given time frame once a matter has been brought to their attention.

5.3. Definition

The following are some examples of the types of problems that Awen would consider could be dealt with through the Problem Solving Procedure. However, the list is not exhaustive.

- Supervisory practices
- Failure of a manager to respond satisfactorily to complaints
- Discrimination or victimisation
- Harassment or bullying
- Problems relating to the working environment

5.4. Procedure

In the first instance you should approach the Volunteer Lead or other relevant Manager informally (see rights below). It may be that the problem can be resolved without the need for a formal complaint / concern being raised. If all parties accept the solution agreed with the Volunteer Lead or other relevant Manager, then the matter will be closed.

If, however the problem is of a more serious or complex nature or cannot be resolved informally, the following procedure will apply.

5.5. Formal Procedure

Once an informal resolution cannot be agreed and you wish to raise a formal complaint / concern you must provide a written statement to the Volunteer Lead or other relevant Manager detailing the reasons for your complaint / concern.

A formal meeting will be arranged with you. This will normally take place within ten working days of the formal complaint / concern being notified. The Volunteer Lead or relevant manager dealing with the complaint and volunteer may choose to be accompanied at the meeting. The Head of People will provide advice to the Volunteer Lead/relevant manager.

At the formal meeting the complaint / concern will be discussed, and a resolution sought. The nature of the complaint / concern and its resolution will be recorded, and you will be asked to sign the written notes. If further investigation is required, the Volunteer Lead or relevant manager will seek advice from the Head of People and let you know how the process will progress.

If the problem remains unresolved to the satisfaction of those concerned, the matter may be referred to appeal to the Trustees. The decision of the Trustees will be final, and no further appeal will be considered.

Your rights
In all matters relating to complaint / concern you have a right:

- to raise a complaint / concern with a manager, other than the Programme / Project manager if it relates to a matter that you feel uncomfortable discussing with the / Programme / Project manager. This may include problems directly relating to your Supervisor, or a matter relating to harassment or bullying.
- to have your complaint / concern treated seriously, sensitively and in confidence at all times
- not to be subject to victimisation or harassment by managers or colleagues because you have a raised a complaint / concern
- to have the matter resolved as quickly as practicable
- to be accompanied by a colleague or other appropriate / agreed support at all formal complaint / concern interviews or meetings.

6. Document Control

Policy Owner: Head of People
Business Unit: People and Organisational Development Team
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22/07/2024	22/07/2025
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Unacceptable behaviour

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviour which may result in further action being taken:

- Unsatisfactory performance or failure to carry out reasonable volunteering activities as requested by the volunteer's team leader or Supervisor
- Not fulfilling or acting outside of a role description
- Using inappropriate language which could be deemed offensive
- Unhelpful or discourteous behaviour towards others
- Not following the Mustard Tree Foundation's policies, procedures, values or rules

Extreme unacceptable behaviour

If it is felt that a volunteer has committed an act of extreme unacceptable behaviour, then the volunteer is usually to be stopped from volunteering for the charity. Extreme unacceptable behaviour may include the following:

- Theft, fraud, dishonesty or deliberate falsification of Awen's documents
- Violence or assault, abusive or offensive behaviour towards others
- Serious or repeated failure to comply with the charity's policies and procedures, regulations or rules
- Malicious damage to charity property or an individual's property
- Serious breach of confidence
- Any violation of the charity's Safeguarding Policy
- Acts of sexual or racial abuse, discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Being unfit for the role due to the effects of alcohol or illegal drugs or possessing illegal drugs on Awen's property
- Misuse of the charity's name or acting in a manner that brings the charity into disrepute.
- Inappropriate or unauthorised contact with the media including social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- Conviction of a criminal office relevant to the volunteer's role
- Failing to follow Health & Safety policy, guidelines or legislation and/ or failing to report concerns affecting the health, safety or welfare of others

These lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and behaviour of a similar nature may be included.

If you are unsure about the definition of unacceptable and extreme unacceptable behaviour, please contact the Volunteer Lead or another manager of the project you volunteer with.

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