

Volunteer Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

Here at Tenovus Cancer Care we bring treatment, emotional support and practical advice to where it matters most; the heart of your community. Although supported by paid staff, Tenovus Cancer Care recognises its volunteers as being essential to its success and highly values the support and expertise they bring.

Tenovus Cancer Care recognises the right that people have to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering. It also acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit users of services, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves.

While we hope that our volunteers will be happy in their roles, sometimes problems can arise. Volunteers like employees may feel aggrieved at times with situations in their role and Tenovus Cancer Care believes that there should be a mechanism in place to address such circumstances. Equally, a disciplinary may need to be raised against the volunteer should their supervisor or colleague have an issue against them.

Unresolved grievances can lead to bad feelings and adversely affect relationships and performance. It is therefore essential to examine and deal with these situations as quickly as possible.

All complaints will be considered carefully and investigated fully.

Key Points

Grievance procedures may sound rather formal but they are intended to promote fairness in the treatment of volunteers and ensure that as far as possible volunteers have the same rights as paid staff.

It is hoped that settlements of any difficulties can be achieved through the normal channels of communication. Where this is not possible, the purpose of these procedures is to provide for the orderly resolution of joint problems in a fair and open way.

Grievance Procedure for Volunteers

Informal Discussions

In the first instance, if any volunteer has a grievance about their volunteering or a colleague they should discuss it informally, as soon as possible, with their supervisor or their supervisor's line manager if the grievance involves the supervisor.

The supervisor should take the grievance seriously and ensure that everything is done to try and resolve the issue informally. It is hoped that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

If the issue is not resolved please proceed with the following procedure.

Formal Procedure

Stage 1:

If a volunteer feels that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, they should put the complaint in writing to the Volunteer Development Manager. The Volunteer Development Manager will acknowledge the request within 3 working days and send the complaint to a relevant Manager to investigate. This may include meeting with the volunteer to clarify on any issues raised in the grievance. They will also meet with the supervisor, or person concerned, to discuss the complaint.

The person responsible for the complaint should investigate it and then send a concluding letter ideally within 10 working days, copying in the Volunteer Development Manager. There will be reference made to the right of appeal in this letter.

If this isn't possible they should send a holding letter explaining the delay and letting them know when they will receive an outcome from us.

If the volunteer is satisfied with the outcome, they may continue in their role or ask to be moved to another department.

Stage 2:

If the volunteer feels the issue has still not been resolved satisfactorily, the volunteer must raise the matter, in writing, with the Head/Director of the department. They will invite the volunteer to a meeting where they can discuss the matter and establish how best to resolve the situation. The volunteer has a right to be accompanied to the meeting.

Following the meeting, the volunteer will be given a written response within *10 working days of the meeting with an outcome*. If we need to carry out further meetings or investigations we may need to extend this and in this case we'll send a letter advising of the delay.

Right to appeal:

If the volunteer wishes to appeal against any grievance decision, they must appeal, in writing within *five working days* of the decision being communicated to them to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. A committee meeting will be held to hear the appeal and the staff member will be invited to a meeting with the committee. The volunteer will have the right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting.

The outcome of this meeting will be final.

At all stages and in all discussions a volunteer may be accompanied by a colleague or advocate of their choosing. If you need any clarification on the grievance procedure, please ask to speak with the Volunteer Development Manager.

Complaints Procedure for Supervisors

We value the contribution made by our volunteers and we do not expect there to be any problems. However, if an issue does arise, we need a procedure to deal with these problems in a fair and consistent way.

We recognise that it can be difficult to raise an issue with a volunteer, but it is better for all concerned to raise concerns and issues than to let them worsen. The Volunteer Development Manager can support supervisors/managers through this process.

To ensure that this aim is fulfilled, Tenovus Cancer Care has adopted a problem solving procedure. This procedure is designed to help and encourage all our volunteers to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and performance, and to provide the opportunity for improvement where necessary.

We will work together to solve any problems that can arise. This procedure helps us work closely with the volunteer if problems arise. The following procedures will apply to allegations of unsatisfactory performance or conduct that may arise.

Informal procedure

Where minor problems of performance or conduct is alleged (e.g. poor timekeeping/unreliability, mistakes in the tasks being undertaken etc.), the supervisor/manager will hold an informal discussion with the volunteer to discuss this and decide on an appropriate course of action. This will most probably be discussed at a monthly one to one or catch up but a separate meeting can be arranged to solve the problem if it is more urgent.

It could be that the volunteer does not enjoy their role and therefore other options should be discussed with them.

The supervisor/manager should inform the volunteer of their future expectations, set clear goals and tell them about future action that will be taken if expectations are not met.

Where the issue is related to the volunteer's ability to undertake the role, the supervisor will address this during supervision and support sessions.

Appropriate expectations and goals will be set. If there is no improvement in conduct or performance, then inform the volunteer that the formal procedure will be followed. Please contact the Volunteer Development team for advice and support.

The following courses of action will then be available:

- Reasonable changes to the role to enable the volunteer to carry it out;
- Change of the placement, where appropriate and available, including moving volunteer to another department;
- Developing a time-bound plan to address problems. The supervisor will evaluate whether problems are addressed and carry out a review at the end of the time-bound period; and
- The formal procedure and instigation of this if necessary.

Most problems should be addressed by using this informal process.

Formal procedure

Where more serious problems of performance or conduct are alleged, or there is no improvement in relation to any earlier issues dealt with informally, the following procedure will be followed:

Step 1

The Supervisor will investigate the matter and prepare a report.

Step 2

The supervisor will hold a review meeting with the volunteer. The volunteer will be advised in advance of what concerns have been raised and given time to answer these concerns. The volunteer may, if they wish, be accompanied to the meeting by a colleague or advocate of their choosing.

Stage 3

If, following the review meeting, the supervisor finds the allegations to be upheld then they will decide an appropriate course of action depending on the seriousness of the performance problems or misconduct. The following courses of action will be available, although these are not limited:

- To issue a formal warning (to be confirmed in writing) advising the volunteer of future expectations, a specified review period if appropriate and an indication that the placement will be terminated if expectations are not met; and
- To terminate the placement with immediate effect and to confirm this in writing to the volunteer.

Serious concerns

If a very serious problem is alleged, Tenovus Cancer Care may suspend the volunteer from

their role immediately while the case is being investigated. Where the Supervisor/Volunteer Development Manager considers the allegation to be upheld, the volunteer placement will be ended with immediate effect.

Right to appeal

The volunteer may appeal against formal action taken under this procedure. If the volunteer wishes to do so, they should put the grounds of appeal in writing to the Volunteer Development Manager and the Chair of the Board of Trustees within one week of receiving notification in writing of the penalty.

The Volunteer Development Manager will identify appropriate people to consider the appeal and issue their decision in writing. This decision will be final.

Types of problems

Outlined below are examples of action that Tenovus Cancer Care classifies as general, serious and very serious problems.

While it is not possible to set down all the specific problems where action may be necessary, the examples listed below give some guidance. The list is neither comprehensive nor exclusive. We reserve the right to determine which breaches fall into which category.

General problems:

- a. Poor timekeeping and unreliability;
- b. Failure to carry out reasonable instructions;
- c. Work below an acceptable standard where poor performance is considered to be attributed to the unwillingness of the volunteer to carry out the role effectively;
- d. Wilful or negligent disruption of the work of other staff or volunteers;
- e. Uncooperative/subordinate attitude or rudeness to supervisor, colleagues, volunteers or clients;
- f. Any breach of our Standard for Volunteers

Serious problems:

- a. Aggravated offences listed under general problems;
- b. Action(s) of a nature that verges on very serious problems.

Very serious concerns:

- a. Acts of dishonesty;
- b. Acts of violence;

- c. Serious acts of discrimination or harassment;
- d. Serious misuse of facilities, equipment or time;
- e. Verbal abuse or extreme rudeness/discourtesy towards managers or other colleagues, clients or working contacts;
- f. Being in an intoxicated and offensive or intoxicated and incapable condition whilst carrying out work for us, unless caused by drugs prescribed by a medical practitioner and properly administered;
- g. Serious breaches of our Standard for volunteers;
- h. Serious breaches of confidentiality relating to Tenovus Cancer Care, its employees, Board Members or clients;
- i. Smoking when representing Tenovus Cancer Care;
- j. Acts of indecency in relation to volunteering work, volunteer-related events, clients, colleagues or working contacts.