Problem Solving Procedure

**Introduction**

Rudheath and Witton Together (RWT) values and respects its volunteers and we’re grateful for their invaluable support. We aim to make the volunteering experience an enjoyable and positive one, where support is available to all volunteers. We hope to resolve any issues that occur in an informal manner, however, very occasionally, there may be situations when this cannot be followed and this procedure seeks to outline the steps that RWT will take to resolve problems that are raised.
This procedure will be followed regarding any volunteer no matter what their capacity – group volunteer/ partnership member or both.

**Why do we have a problem solving procedure?**

We have a problem solving procedure in order to ensure that our volunteers are treated in a fair and equal manner. It is also in place as we seek to deliver a volunteer programme that demonstrates respect for our volunteers and to protect the reputation of RWT as a volunteer involving organisation. It is considered a measure of good practice in volunteer management that we will address poor performance or unacceptable behaviour through a specific policy. Our Problem-Solving Procedure covers what a staff member should do if they have a concern over a volunteer, and what a volunteer should do if they have a concern regarding a member of staff or another volunteer.

**The role of the RWT team**

The RWT team are responsible for providing advice and support to come to a solution for problems prior to moving to the informal or formal problem-solving procedure. They are also responsible for the provision of support and advice to volunteers involved in these situations. Wherever possible, we will seek to find an amicable resolution to problems.

**Informal problem Solving Procedure**

**What should a volunteer do if they have a concern or issue with another volunteer?**

If the volunteer feels able to do so, they should first discuss the matter with the volunteer in question and ideally resolve this in an informal manner. If they are uncomfortable with this and there is due cause they should raise the matter with the RWT team. They will then have an informal conversation with that volunteer. If the concern cannot be resolved informally then the concern will be dealt with through the procedure below.

**What should a member of staff do if they have a concern or issue with a volunteer?**

If a member of staff is concerned with a volunteer’s performance or behaviour and an attempt to address this directly is not appropriate, they should discuss the matter with other members of the RWT team.

If the volunteer is uncomfortable discussing the matter with their volunteer supervisor/ RWT staff they should approach the RWT Chair who may act as mediator. The team will seek to resolve problems through open and fair conversations, preferably in person. Any information gathered or raised during this discussion will be treated in confidence. The volunteer will be informed of all concerns by their volunteer supervisor and we will make every possible attempt to resolve the concern at this stage.

# Volunteer supervisors will ensure that:

# • The meeting takes place as soon as possible in a quiet place and in a convenient and neutral location where interruptions are unlikely

# • Any notes taken at this meeting are typed up and shared with the volunteer within 10 working days

#  • The volunteer is given sufficient time to talk and to give their perspective

# • Possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both parties

# • Any actions are agreed and a date is set to review the actions within 30 days of the meeting.

# It may be necessary to have more than one meeting in order to resolve the issue. If this is the case, the above points will be followed in subsequent meetings. The meeting(s) are a chance to identify any additional support or training for the volunteer within this role and for them to evaluate whether the volunteer role is no longer suitable or has left them unfulfilled. Wherever possible, an alternative volunteer role will be offered subject to discussion with the RWT team.

**What should a volunteer do if they have a concern or issue with a member of staff?**

If the volunteer feels able to do so, they should first discuss the matter with their volunteer supervisor. If they are uncomfortable with this, they should raise the matter with the RWT Chair. Wherever possible, the concern will be raised directly with the member of staff concerned and ideally resolved through the informal problem-solving procedure as outlined above. If the problem cannot be resolved through the informal problem-solving procedure and there is due cause, the matter will be escalated to a grievance procedure with the appropriate employing organisation/ Big Local Representative.

**Formal Problem-Solving Procedure**

It should be noted that in the cases of extreme unacceptable behaviour RWT reserves the right to move straight to step three of this process.

**Step One:** **Formal Meeting**
If there is no improvement to the previous concern raised regarding the volunteer, or where the concern is of a serious nature it will be necessary to invite the volunteer to a formal meeting in which the volunteer may be accompanied by a companion of their choice. Where mitigating circumstances have contributed to the concern raised, these should be discussed and may be taken into consideration. For the formal procedure to be followed, the RWT team/ Chair must be informed before any meetings are carried out.

 The RWT team/ Chair will:

• Write to the volunteer inviting them to a formal meeting

• Ensure that the volunteer receives a written statement of the issue along with a copy of this procedure and access to any relevant information relating to the concern • Ensure the volunteer is given enough time to prepare (a minimum of 3 working days) whilst also ensuring that the meeting takes place as soon as possible

• Ensure any possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by each party • Take notes during the meeting and ensure that these are shared within 10 working days

• Ensure that any actions agreed to resolve the situation are understood by all and a time is set to review the outcomes of these actions

• Ensure that the volunteer understands what will happen if agreed actions are not met

• Consider whether the volunteer should be temporarily suspended from volunteering for a period of further investigation

**Step Two: Written Warning**

If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, the RWT team will send the volunteer a written warning after first consulting with the RWT Chair. The warning will explain:

• What was discussed during the formal meeting and why the written warning has become necessary

• Any steps that the volunteer will be expected to make or improve on within a specified amount of time

If the volunteer does not agree to the next steps outlined within the written warning, they may no longer continue to volunteer for RWT.

**Step Three: Dismissal**

If there is no improvement to performance or change in behaviour after the agreed period set out in the written warning then the volunteer will be refused permission to continue to volunteer for RWT. The final decision to dismiss a volunteer will be made by the RWT Chair and RWT team. Where possible, the volunteer will be informed in person and this will be followed by written confirmation explaining why the volunteer will be dismissed.

# **Step Four: Appeal**

# If a volunteer is not content with their dismissal, they may appeal the decision. They must do this in writing within 10 working days to the RWT Partnership. The Partnership will then arrange an appeal meeting; each situation will be examined thoroughly. The dismissed volunteer can be accompanied by a companion of their choice. Once the appeal has been heard and the dismissed volunteer is given a full and fair opportunity to present their appeal, the Partnership will write to the dismissed volunteer informing them of the outcome of the appeal. If no appeal is raised within 10 working days of the decision to dismiss a volunteer, the team with whom the volunteer worked will be informed that the volunteer will not be returning. No information shared as part of the problem-solving procedure will be passed to others.

# **Returning to RWT**Should a volunteer wish to return to RWT any previous steps taken in the problem solving procedure will be considered before they are allowed to return. Should they be dismissed through either performance or behaviour concerns, or a case of misconduct/ breach of code of conduct they will not be able to return unless agreed by the Partnership. The Partnership’s decision is final and cannot be appealed.

# **Additional information**

# **Suspension**

# There may be occasions where a volunteer may be temporarily suspended from their role. This will allow RWT the opportunity to thoroughly carry out an investigation. The period of suspension will be clearly defined to the volunteer. Suspension will not be considered as confirmation of any wrong-doing.

# **The role of the RWT team** The RWT staff team will act as the first point of contact for any issues relating to the problem solving procedure and support the Partnership to investigate.

# **Severity of concerns** The RWT team is responsible for classifying the severity of a concern that has been raised. Where extremely serious concerns are raised it may be necessary to carry out an external investigation through Local Trust/ LTO. This will also be necessary for cases of theft, fraud or allegations of abuse, where police or local authority will need to be informed.

# **Appendix**

# An appendix is included which is not exhaustive but provides examples of what may be deemed unacceptable or extreme unacceptable behaviour.

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| **Severity** | **Description** |
| Minor | A minor concern with little impact to the work of RWT, staff or volunteers, usually a mistake or misunderstanding |
| Serious | A concern with impact to the organisation without loss of income, damage to RWT property or land, staff or volunteers or intellectual property |
| Extremely Serious | A concern relating to damage to staff, volunteers, land, property, income or reputation. These actions are likely to result in dismissal. |

# Example Behaviour:

# **Unacceptable Behaviour** – depending on the severity, these may be deemed as minor or serious; the following is a non-exhaustive list of examples

# • Unsatisfactory performance or failure to carry out reasonable volunteering activities as requested by the volunteer supervisor

# • Not fulfilling, or acting outside of a role description

# • Using inappropriate language which others may deem offensive

# • Unhelpful or discourteous behaviour towards others

# • Not following the policies, procedures, values or rules set by RWT

#  **Extreme unacceptable behaviour:**

# These will be considered as serious or extremely serious; the following is a non-exhaustive list of examples Acts of this nature will usually result in dismissal from volunteering:

# • Theft, fraud, dishonesty or deliberate falsification of RWT documentation

# • Violence or assault including abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour to others

# • Harassment of any RWT employees, volunteers, members, visitors, clients or partners

# • Repeated failure to comply with RWT policies and procedures

# • Reoccurrence of a minor issue, or a number of different minor incidents

# • Prolonged negative attitude towards others

# • Serious misrepresentation or negative representation of RWT

# • Malicious damage to property belonging to RWT, its staff, volunteers or visitors

# • Serious breach of confidence

# • Violation of RWT’s safeguarding policy

# • Acts of incitement or actual acts of discrimination or harassment or abuse or bullying (mental or physical) on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation against another Volunteer, member of staff or the public.

# • Being unfit for the role due to the effects of alcohol or illegal drugs or possession of drugs

# • Misuse of the RWT name

# • Failure to follow health & safety guidelines, or failing to report concerns relating to the health, safety and welfare of others

# Agreed by RWT Partnership: August 2020

Review Date: August 2021