Problem Solving Policy and Procedure

May 2023

Haemochromatosis UK values and respects its volunteers and is grateful for their invaluable support. We want volunteering with us to be an enjoyable and positive experience and we have processes in place to support volunteers in their roles. Any issues which occur are normally resolved quickly between the volunteer and their staff contact. Very occasionally, however, there may be situations that are more serious or require further investigation. This policy sets out the procedure that must be followed.

Policy

According to guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, it is best practice to have a clear, consistent process for volunteers and staff to follow in order to resolve any issues promptly. This policy is for anyone (volunteer, staff or supporter) who wishes to raise a concern about a volunteer. It applies to all Haemochromatosis UK volunteers, including trustees and those volunteering with local groups. It applies only to issues relating to volunteers – separate policies exist to resolve issues concerning staff members.

Feedback from people affected by Haemochromatosis

If a complaint or general feedback about a volunteer is received from a person affected by Haemochromatosis and/or a supporter, the member of staff should ensure this is logged with the CEO team by emailing the details to ceo@huk.org.uk.

A short glossary of definitions is attached to the end of this document.

Why do we need a problem solving policy?

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

Procedure

If you are aware of an issue with a volunteer's performance or behaviour, you should discuss the situation with your staff contact in the first instance. If a volunteer is uncomfortable discussing an issue with their staff contact then they can contact the Lead Volunteering Trustee via our office (office@huk.org.uk).

Where extreme unacceptable behaviour is reported or suspected, Haemochromatosis UK would suspend the volunteer immediately while the allegations are investigated. If this is the case, please refer to the section on Suspension on page 4. An appendix is attached to this document giving examples of what would be considered extreme unacceptable behaviour.

Informal discussion

It is always best to try and resolve any issues informally and quickly by having a discussion, preferably in person or by video conference. This 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 staff contact and every possible attempt should be made to resolve a concern at this stage.

The staff contact 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 by video conference or – if face-to-face - on neutral ground and in a convenient location
- 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
- every effort should be made to ensure the discussion is calm and has a positive focus
- the discussion covers challenges the volunteer is creating by their action or inaction, and there needs to be a fair right to reply for the volunteer
- any actions are agreed and a time is arranged to review the actions within 14 days of the meeting
- any notes resulting from the meeting are typed up and the volunteer is provided with a copy in advance of a follow-up meeting

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.

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. The charity's staff team is available to provide guidance and support for volunteers and staff.

Development 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 development meeting with their staff contact (or another member of staff/ volunteer, if appropriate). The volunteer can bring someone along to support them at the meeting, if they wish. At this stage, the CEO should be informed of the issue, if this has not already been done.

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

The volunteer's staff contact should:

- write to the volunteer inviting them to the meeting
- ensure the volunteer receives a written explanation of the issue along with a copy of the charity's Problem Solving Policy
- send the volunteer a copy of the role description for their role and any accompanying documents detailing expectations or boundaries, including volunteer agreement, confidentiality agreement or role specific arrangements that you may refer to during the discussion
- 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
- invite their line manager or board member to the meeting
- 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
- discuss clearly the next steps should the agreed actions not be met

If the meeting does not result in a plan or action points being agreed, then consider whether the volunteer should be suspended temporarily from volunteering for the charity for a specified period of time to allow for further investigation.

Development letter

If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, then the volunteer's staff contact will consult with the CEO or Lead Volunteering Trustee, and will send a letter to the volunteer.

The letter should explain:

- what was discussed during the development meeting and why a letter is now necessary – this process will already have been discussed as the next steps at the development meeting
- the steps or improvements the volunteer is expected to make within a certain period of time

There will be a review period of between four to twelve weeks (to be agreed by both sides) after the letter is sent.

If the volunteer does not agree to the next steps outlined in the letter then they may have their volunteering role withdrawn from them.

Suspension from volunteering

In some situations, Haemochromatosis UK may temporarily suspend a volunteer from their role. This will allow the charity to investigate the allegations thoroughly and establish the facts. It should not be considered as confirmation of any wrong-doing.

The decision to suspend a volunteer can only be made by the CEO or Lead Volunteering Trustee and the volunteer will be notified of this decision in writing.

If an act of extreme unacceptable behaviour is suspected then Haemochromatosis UK 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. In most cases this will not be necessary, 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 staff member is concerned about the safety of anyone connected with the charity, they should refer to the Haemochromatosis UK Safeguarding Policy (see https://www.haemochromatosis.org.uk/our-policies).

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

Dismissing a volunteer

If there is no further improvement in performance or change in behaviour after the agreed review period set out in the development letter then the volunteer will be dismissed from the charity.

The final decision to let a volunteer go can only be made by the CEO or Lead Volunteering Trustee. Where possible, the volunteer should be informed of this

decision in a face-to-face meeting with the CEO, and this should be followed by written confirmation of the situation explaining why the volunteer has been dismissed.

Dismissal procedures for trustees will follow the process outlined in the charity's constitution.

The staff contact (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.

A volunteer who is being investigated or a volunteer who has been asked to leave can still be a member of Haemochromatosis UK provided they comply with the terms of membership set out in the charity's constitution and is able to access its services whatever point they are at in the problem solving procedure, including after resolution.

Appeals

If a volunteer is unhappy with the decision to dismiss them from their role, then they can appeal in writing within 14 days to the Lead Volunteering Trustee, stating the reason for their appeal.

The Lead Volunteering Trustee will then arrange for an appeal meeting to take place within 14 days of the appeal letter being received. Each situation will be examined thoroughly and depending on the circumstances, the Lead Volunteering Trustee may appoint a panel to hear the appeal. If appropriate, the panel will consist of a senior manager and board member. The volunteer who has been dismissed can bring someone along to support them at the meeting.

The senior manager or board member who hears the appeal will inform the volunteer of the decision in writing as well as informing the team, department or local group where the volunteer was placed. This decision is final and no further appeal will be considered.

Additional guidance

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

Where possible, a volunteer's staff contact should communicate in writing any decisions or outcomes at any stage of the procedure within 14 days. The exception would be the appeal stage – when the senior manager or board member who heard the appeal will contact the volunteer within 14 days.

The Charity's Administrator team is responsible for ensuring suspensions and dismissals are recorded on the charity's database.

Contacts

- HUK office team : office@:huk.org.uk
- Any correspondence regarding problem solving should be

addressed to the CEO

Glossary

Volunteer:	someone who gives their time unpaid to undertake a clearly defined volunteer role to deliver the work of Haemochromatosis UK
Staff contact:	a paid member of staff who is responsible for supporting and supervising a volunteer – for example a fundraiser or social media moderator
Line manager:	a paid member of staff who directly manages other employees – for example the Advanced Nurse Practitioner
Senior manager:	a paid member of staff who is responsible for planning and directing the work of a group of employees – for example the CEO

Appendix

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 staff contact or expected as part of their role
- Acting outside of a role description
- Using inappropriate language that could be deemed offensive
- Unhelpful or discourteous behaviour towards others
- Not following Haemochromatosis UK 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 dismissed from the charity. Extreme unacceptable behaviour may include the following:

- Theft, fraud, dishonesty or deliberate falsification of Haemochromatosis UK 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 Haemochromatosis UK property or at Haemochromatosis UK events
- Misuse of the charity's name
- Inappropriate or unauthorised contact with the media including social media (eg Facebook, Twitter).
- Conviction of a criminal offence relevant to the volunteer's role
- Failing to follow Health and 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 CEO or Lead Volunteering Trustee.