

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Grievance

Category: Volunteers



SoLO
Life
Opportunities

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England Company No.
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Introduction

SoLO Life Opportunities (SoLO) values and benefits from the contribution made by volunteers in many aspects of service delivery and aims to create an environment where volunteers feel valued. SoLO also recognises that there may be occasions when volunteers have concerns or grievances and this grievance procedure explains how such issues will be addressed.

Policy Statement

As volunteers are not employees, there is no statutory obligation for SoLO to provide a grievance procedure. However, it is in the interests of volunteers, staff, SoLO and its trustees that a grievance procedure for volunteers is in place in order that any grievances that volunteers have can be resolved fairly and in accordance with best practice. It is hoped that most grievances can be resolved informally in the manner set out below, but a formal procedure is available for those that cannot.

Stage 1 - Resolving grievances informally

If any volunteer has a grievance they should discuss it informally, as soon as possible, with their line manager. The volunteer may approach another manager if the grievance involves their own line manager or if the matter is sensitive for some reason. The manager receiving the grievance will take the grievance seriously and sensitively and will ensure that everything is done to try and resolve the issue informally.

1. The manager will meet with the volunteer to discuss the issue(s) and identify the desired outcome sought by the volunteer. Volunteers may have a friend present at any meetings relating to this grievance.
2. Notes should be made of the discussion and agreed as a correct record.
3. The manager should make discreet investigations in order to resolve the matter promptly and fairly. Where the grievance is about a member of staff or another volunteer, that individual should be given the opportunity to answer the grievance and put their side to the manager.

4. It may be appropriate for the manager to arrange a facilitated discussion between the two parties with a view to resolving the issue and agreeing a way forward.

5. As soon as possible after the discussions, the manager will write to the volunteer (and if appropriate to relevant parties) to confirm the outcome and any actions that have been agreed.

Stage 2 – Resolving grievances formally

1. Where the grievance has not been resolved informally with the manager, the volunteer may submit a formal grievance in writing to The Volunteer Manager within two weeks from the date of the manager's letter.

2. The Volunteer Manager receiving the grievance will: -

- a. gather all the necessary facts and obtain an account from witnesses if appropriate.
- b. update the volunteer with progress.
- c. Inform any person(s) who are subject to the grievance and give them the opportunity to respond to the allegations.

3. Once all of the facts have been established, the Volunteer Manager receiving the grievance will: -

- a. arrange a hearing. The date of the hearing should be agreed for a mutually convenient date, but if the volunteer does not attend, their grievance would normally be treated as withdrawn
- b. invite the volunteer to the hearing.

4. Present at the hearing will normally be the Volunteer Manager (who will chair the hearing); the volunteer, with a friend if they wish; a note taker to keep a record and any witnesses or other individuals whom the manager chairing the hearing believes should attend. This should include the manager involved in the informal stage, who will explain the reasons for the decision taken at that time.

5. At the hearing, the volunteer will be given the opportunity to explain the grievance and outline their desired outcome/resolution.

6. Once satisfied that they have sufficient information the Volunteer Manager will adjourn to consider the grievance and their response.

7. The Volunteer Manager will reconvene the hearing to communicate the outcome of the grievance, which will be followed up in a letter.

8. If the grievance is: -

- upheld, the potential action to be taken will be decided by the manager with reference to the appropriate SoLO policy.
- not upheld, the volunteer who submitted the grievance will be advised how to make an appeal.

9. If, within 10 working days of the date of receipt of the written decision, the volunteer has not appealed, the grievance will be deemed to have been settled.

Stage 3 – Appeal

1. A volunteer who is aggrieved with the outcome of the Stage 2 hearing should, within 10 days of receipt of the written decision, submit an appeal in writing to The Chair of the Trustee Board.
2. Upon receipt of the appeal, The Chair of the Trustee Board will, with advice from SoLO's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), arrange an appeal hearing within a reasonable period, giving notice to all concerned.
3. The volunteer should take all necessary steps to attend the hearing. The hearing will be arranged for a mutually convenient date. If the volunteer does not attend, their grievance would normally be treated as withdrawn.
4. The appeal hearing will take the form of a review of the formal stage and not a complete re-hearing. The Chair of the appeal hearing has the authority to overturn a decision made by the manager following the formal grievance hearing (Stage 2).
5. Paperwork supporting the grounds of appeal must be submitted by the volunteer to the Chair in good time before the appeal hearing, and the manager of the stage two grievance hearing will provide a response at the appeal hearing.
6. Present at the hearing will be: -
 - the Chair of the Trustee Board assisted by the CEO if appropriate
 - a person to act as note-taker.
 - the volunteer, who may be accompanied by a friend to support them.
 - any individuals whom the Chair considers to have information important/relevant to the case, usually the manager involved in the formal grievance hearing, who will respond to the volunteer's appeal and explain the decision they made.

7. The volunteer will be given the opportunity to explain the complaint and say how they would like it to be resolved. The Chair may adjourn the hearing to obtain further information if necessary, but will then close the hearing to consider their response.
8. The Chair should give their decision in writing within ten days of the hearing. Where requested, a copy of the meeting notes and supporting papers may be provided at the Chair's discretion.
9. If the appeal is: -
 - upheld, the potential action to be taken will be decided by the Chair of the appeal hearing with reference to the appropriate SoLO policy.
 - not upheld, the decision will be final and the matter will conclude.

The appeal stage of this procedure is the final stage of this process and the decision will be final.

Grievances and disciplinary cases

Where a volunteer raises a grievance during a disciplinary process the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.

Linked with Policies:

Volunteering
Recruitment
Capability
Disciplinary
Complaints
Standards of Behaviour