



Our Special Friends

Solving Problems Together Policy

A guide for volunteers and staff

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1. Why We Developed This Guide

We want our volunteers to have a fulfilling and positive experience. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be some problems that affect how you feel about your volunteering activity and maybe your relationship with the charity. When this happens, we will work with you to try and resolve this and bring it to a positive outcome making sure you feel the matter has been dealt with.

Volunteers are not covered by Employment Legislation as this only applies to paid staff. This means the recognised grievance process set out for paid staff is not relevant for volunteers. With this in mind we feel it is important that we outline our approach and commitment to our volunteers.

This guide makes clear the informal process we adopt when listening to volunteers' complaints and our commitment to take all complaints seriously; dealing with any issues in a fair, consistent and timely manner.

Ideally, we want to prevent problems before they happen and certainly before they get worse. This document outlines:

- a. our general approach to dealing with feedback, issues or concerns raised by volunteers
- b. the procedure for volunteers to raise concerns and complaints and how we will deal with these
- c. what happens when a concern or complaint is raised about a volunteer.

2. How to Raise an Issue, Concern or Complaint & The Process

This section outlines how volunteers can make complaints about their experience with Our Special Friends, a member of staff or a fellow volunteer. Alternatively, we may have to speak with a volunteer about their performance or attitude.

We welcome feedback and encourage volunteers to raise any concerns in the first instance with their immediate contact so that it can be discussed promptly and locally in the first instance. We encourage open and honest dialogue delivered in a caring and thoughtful way.

We have developed three simple stages:

Step 1. Informal Local Discussion

Most complaints raised by or involving volunteers can be quickly resolved at a local level talking through the concern and reaching a mutually acceptable solution. It's easy to misunderstand or make assumptions so having the opportunity to chat these through hopefully enables you to see the bigger picture and clear up any misunderstandings.

Remember our aim is to always seek a mutually acceptable solution. This process should happen within five days of the complaint being raised.

Step 2. Investigation

If an informal discussion does not resolve the issue the next step is to approach the Volunteer s

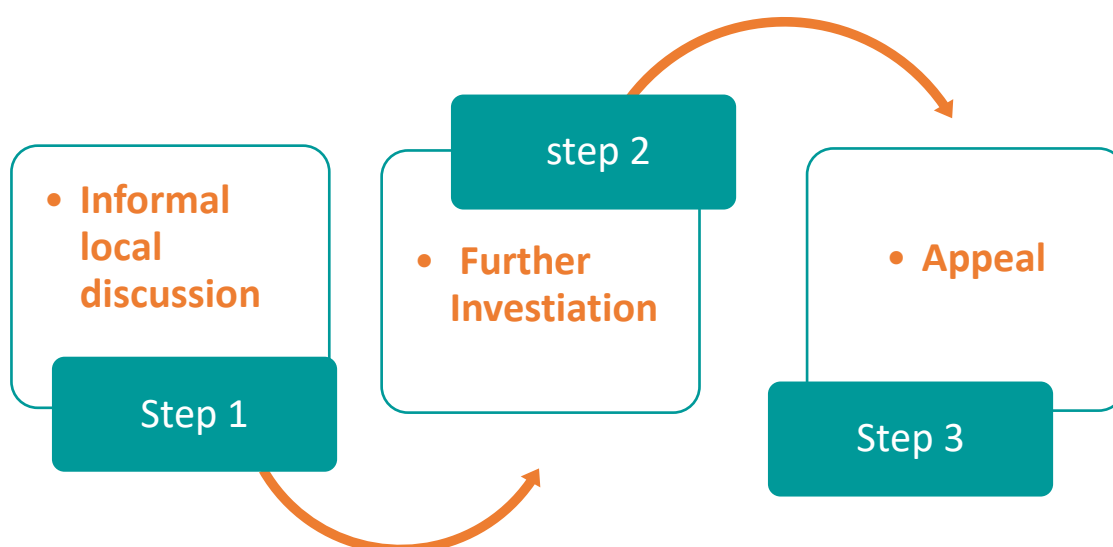
Support Manager, Frances Day frances.day@ourspecialfriends.org. This should be done in writing outlining your complaint and what has been done to resolve it already. She will investigate the issue,

talk to those involved and offer a solution with the intention of bringing the matter to an agreeable outcome and closing the complaint. We aim to acknowledge your decision to have the issue investigated within five days of receipt of your email. However, the investigation process often takes longer; we hope to conclude the process within fourteen days.

Step 3. Appeal

If unsatisfied by the conclusions of stage 2, a volunteer can decide to appeal against the decision. This must be done in writing to the Chief Executive Belinda Johnston bin.johnston@ourspecialfriends.org. Appeals are rare as we have a thorough process at stage 2.

Further investigations and discussions may be arranged by phone or in person with the volunteer. The chief executive will respond to the appeal within fourteen days with the final decision. The chief executive's decision is final and ends Our Special Friends complaint procedure.



Whilst we are committed to working to resolve all situation and achieve a positive outcome; there may be occasions where we are unable to achieve this. In these situations, there may be no other alternative than to discontinue the volunteer relationship and cease the activity.

Exceptions

Sometimes more immediate action may be taken. This could include suspending a volunteer from any activity whilst an investigation is carried out, or asking a volunteer to permanently stop volunteering with us.

Some examples of when this might happen:

- Gross misconduct or illegal activity relating to safeguarding, theft or malicious damage.
- Intentionally ignoring our policies or endangering others like abusing volunteer expenses.
- If a volunteer refuses to meet the Values & Behaviours as set out in our policies or is harming our reputation, like using Racist, Sexist or Homophobic language.

- A breakdown in our relationship with a volunteer which cannot be fixed. Any decision to suspend a volunteer or to ask them to step down from their role as a volunteer will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing and is subject to an appeal as outlined in section

Situations like these are incredibly rare, and most of the time we hope to solve any issues as quickly as possible.

3. Monitoring and Storing Complaints and Concerns Raised by Volunteers

The Volunteering team is responsible for monitoring volunteer complaints.

Volunteer complaints will be reviewed at a senior level on a regular basis.

We will keep all information on complaints and issues raised by volunteers confidential. They will be stored securely in line with our Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies. This information will be kept on record for at least six years.

Date of review: 18/11/2025

Date of next review: 18/11/2027

Owner: Frances Day

Signed: F.Day

Dated: 18/11/2025