

# Building Circles in Gloucestershire Solving Problems – grievance and disciplinary procedures

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## Introduction

From time to time in any organisation, there will be problems that have to be dealt with. Most 'problems' can be resolved informally, through supervision meetings or meeting with the people being affected by the issue. This allows areas of potential hazard to be discussed. Often, people do not realise that they are about to step outside the accepted parameters of their role, or they have stopped being aware of potential dangers in their relationships with others and their way of working. It may be that there is a training need or the need for a change of role or move to another type of work. This may be within the present organisation or in another, so that their skills can be used productively.

It is important to have transparent procedures in place, so that everyone connected with the organisation knows how to make a formal complaint or air their grievance about something that they think is wrong.

The procedure also ensures that everyone is treated fairly and not discriminated against, irrespective of who they are or what their connection with the organisation is. It allows volunteers to know how to carry forward any problems and also reassures them that they will not be treated in an arbitrary manner.

It is the aim of Building Circles in Gloucestershire to provide written information and definite timescales for action within these procedures. This includes information regarding the right of any volunteer to appeal about any decision reached by Building Circles in Gloucestershire.

Currently, volunteers are not covered by employment or equal opportunity legislation. They have only the same legal rights as the general public (eg

Health & Safety and Data Protection). Because of this, Building Circles in Gloucestershire sees the need to have such policy and procedures in place, to safeguard volunteers against discrimination and to offer fair treatment.

### **A. If a volunteer has a complaint**

Any volunteer has the right to complain if they have been unfairly treated.

#### **Stage One – Verbal complaint**

Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, the organisation, another volunteer or someone with whom they have had contact with in connection with their circle, should be discussed with the volunteer coordinator. If the complaint is about the volunteers coordinator, the matter should be referred in the first place to the general manager.

1. A meeting will be arranged between all parties. This will be within five working days of the complaint being received by the volunteers coordinator (or general manager). During this meeting, the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.
2. The volunteers coordinator (or general manager) will arbitrate between the parties involved. An agreed plan of appropriate action will be taken.
3. The volunteers coordinator (or general manager) will write a report on the findings and the conclusion of the complaint.
4. The volunteers coordinator (or general manager) will review all complaints with the management committee to minimise future occurrences and to note any future training needs.

#### **Stage Two – Complaint in writing**

If the issue cannot be resolved under Stage One, then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the general manager within five days of the last meeting with the volunteers coordinator. If the general manager investigated the initial complaint, the volunteer should make the written complaint to the Chair of Trustees.

1. The volunteers coordinator will send a copy of the report on the findings, the actions taken and the conclusions reached so far to the general manager within five days.

2. The general manager, after consultation with the organisation, will respond within five days of receiving the volunteer's written complaint.

### **Stage Three - Right to appeal**

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage Two, then they can appeal to the Chair of the Trustees.

1. A meeting may be convened by the Chair to discuss the issue. During this meeting, the volunteer can have a nominated person present.
2. The Chair will respond within five days.
3. The Chair's decision is final.

### **B. If someone complains about a Volunteer**

All focus persons and circles members should be informed, when a circle is set up, that there is a complaints procedure in place. They will be assured that use of such a procedure will not result in censure being taken against them.

### **Stage One - Verbal complaint**

1. The volunteers coordinator will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing, to the complainant within five working days.
2. The volunteers coordinator will discuss the complaint with the volunteer.
3. The volunteers coordinator will investigate the complaint with all parties involved but maintain confidentiality, so that only those directly involved in trying to resolve the issue discuss the issue.
4. The volunteers coordinator will identify goals that will help the volunteer fulfil their role and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary
5. The volunteers coordinator will set a deadline for reviewing the situation and write up a report on the findings of the investigation, and inform the complainant, in writing, of any action taken.

## **Stage Two – Written warning**

If there is insufficient improvement by the deadline set, then a more formal approach will be taken and a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint will be issued.

1. The volunteer has the right to state their case, either to the volunteers coordinator or a senior member of staff, and to be accompanied by a person of their choice.
2. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set and help offered to the volunteer.
3. If Building Circles in Gloucestershire decide to dismiss the volunteer, then the volunteer has the right to appeal.
4. The decision to dismiss a volunteer should be a last resort.

## **Stage Three – Right to appeal**

If a volunteer is dismissed and wishes to appeal, they can do so in writing to a member of the management committee, usually the Chair.

1. A sub-committee may be convened specifically to hear the appeal, usually within five days of the appeal being received. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting.
2. The Chair will respond to the appeal within five days of the meeting; their decision is final.

## **Exceptions**

There are some circumstances in which a volunteer will be suspended immediately, while an investigation is carried out. This is for serious misconduct (i.e theft, acts of violence, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol etc). Any decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.

## **Review of Complaints**

All complaints will be reviewed by the management committee to minimise future occurrences.