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Managing problems policy

Volunteers are at the heart of ABC Animal Sanctuary's work and without them we simply couldn't do what we do. ABC Animal Sanctuary is committed to following volunteering good practice and ensuring our volunteers are supported.

The involvement of volunteers is almost always a positive and rewarding experience for both the volunteer and ABC Animal Sanctuary. However, there may be times where concerns or complaints are raised either by or about volunteers.

The objective of this policy is to set out a clear process for dealing with volunteer concerns and complaints quickly, objectively, openly and consistently, so that:

- our volunteers are treated fairly
- the reputation of ABC Animal Sanctuary is protected
- any disruption to volunteers is minimised

Scope

This policy applies to all ABC Animal Sanctuary volunteers regardless of role within the Sanctuary.

Policy statements

- most concerns and complaints will be resolved informally
- the formal procedure will only be used when there are significant risks or where previous attempts to solve the issue haven't worked
- all concerns and complaints will be dealt with quickly and fairly
- any volunteer who has had a concern or complaint raised against them will be given the opportunity to explain the situation from their perspective
- where a volunteer is asked to attend a meeting as part of the formal procedure, they will be offered the opportunity to bring one other person with them for support – this person must not be involved with the concern or complaint
- people involved in the concern or complaint (including the person who raised and witnesses it) will be kept informed of its progress
- the process will be treated confidentially, and information will only be shared with people who need to know about it
- all volunteers will be informed that they have the right to appeal the outcome of the formal process and will be given information on how to do this
- the aim will always be to find the best solution for the volunteer at the same time meeting the needs of the ABC Animal Sanctuary

Definition; concern or complaint

- A complaint or concern is any issue raised by or about a volunteer. For example, someone may make a complaint against a volunteer's actions or attitude.
- A concern or complaint could be raised in a number of ways;
 - A volunteer may make a complaint about another volunteer
 - A member of the public may raise a concern or complaint about a volunteer
 - A volunteer may not meet the expectations of their role as provided for in the applicable Behaviour Code

Dealing with problems procedure: complaint or concern about a volunteer

Most concerns and complaints will be resolved informally by a discussion between the volunteer and either the Team Leader or a Trustee. This will ideally be done in person, but in some circumstances this may not be possible. If the concern or complaint is in respect of a Team Leader or Trustee, a Trustee not involved will always manage the issue. The discussion should;

- outline details of the concern or complaint
- explore why the concern or complaint may have happened
- seek to identify a solution to resolve the issue e.g. does the volunteer need extra support or guidance
- set a deadline for reviewing the situation with the volunteer

Resolving complaints or concerns formally

- Where the concern or complaint cannot be resolved informally, or the concern or complaint is very serious then the formal process should be used. This process will always be managed by a Trustee.
- To make a formal complaint this must be made in writing to one or all of the Trustees.
- A Trustee will deal with and lead the review into the concern or complaint. If they are directly involved with the issue, then this will be passed to a Trustee that is not involved.
- The Trustee will investigate the concern or complaint and decide where it is valid. If the complaint is not justified, the Trustee must explain why to both the volunteer and the person raising the concern or complaint.
- If the concern or complaint is justified the steps contained in this policy will be followed.
- In exceptional circumstances, a volunteer may be asked to stop volunteering for ABC Animal Sanctuary immediately while a complaint or concern is explored. For example, if a volunteer is accused of theft assault or acts of aggression or anti-social behaviour. In some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before the next step of the dealing with problems procedure can be taken forward.
- The decision to ask a volunteer to stop volunteering while the complaint or concern is explored will be made by the Trustee leading the review of the

complaint or concern. The volunteer will be informed of this decision, by phone or in person, and this will then be confirmed in writing.

- Where the concern or complaint raised about a volunteer relates to a safeguarding issue this will be immediately referred our Safeguarding Officer. Please see the ABC Animal Sanctuary Safeguarding policy for more information.
- When dealing with the concern or complaint the person leading the review with the volunteer should:
 - organise a meeting with the volunteer involved to explain the complaint or concern and give them the opportunity to explain the situation from their perspective - this will ideally be done in person, but in some circumstances, this may not be possible
 - speak to the person who raised the concern or complaint to make sure they have the full details
 - speak to anyone else involved in the complaint or concern (e.g. witnesses, other staff and volunteers)
- When organising the meeting with the volunteer involved, the volunteer should be informed they can bring someone with them for support. That person should not be involved in the concern or complaint.
- If a volunteer refuses to attend this meeting, they should be informed that a decision will be made in their absence based on current information.
- Once the person leading the review has heard all the details of the concern or complaint, they will decide about the best outcome for the volunteer and ABC Animal Sanctuary.
- There are a number of different outcomes of the dealing with problems process:
 - The complaint or concern is not upheld, and no further action is needed
 - The volunteer is offered further training and support to address the concern or complaint
 - The volunteer decides the role is not right for them and decides to step down from their role
 - The volunteer is asked to stop volunteering in their current role, and where possible, subject to available options take on another role
 - A volunteer is asked to stop volunteering for ABC Animal Sanctuary altogether
- The Trustee leading the review should let the volunteer, and the person who raised the complaint, know the outcome - first by telephone and then followed up by a letter and or email.

Appeal

The person raising the concern or complaint or the volunteer it relates to can appeal if they feel;

- the Managing Problems process was not followed
- the outcome of the process was not in proportion to the concern or complaint

All volunteers will be informed that they have a right to appeal and how they can do this.



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Document Control		
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