

Problem Solving Procedure

Introduction

Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) values and respects its volunteers and we're grateful for their invaluable support. We aim to make the volunteering experience an enjoyable and positive one, where support is available to all volunteers. We hope to resolve any issues that occur in an informal manner, however, very occasionally, there may be situations when this process cannot be followed and this procedure seeks to outline the steps that Surrey Wildlife Trust will take to resolve problems that are raised.

This procedure can be raised regarding any volunteer no matter what their capacity.

Why do we have a problem solving procedure?

We have a problem solving procedure in order to ensure that our volunteers are treated in a fair and equal manner. It is also in place as we seek to deliver a volunteer programme that demonstrates respect for our volunteers and to protect the reputation of SWT as a volunteer-involving organisation. It is considered a measure of good practice in volunteer management that we will address poor performance or unacceptable behaviour through a specific policy. Our Problem-Solving Procedure covers what a staff member should do if they have a concern over a volunteer, and what a volunteer should do if they have a concern regarding a member of staff or another volunteer.

The role of the Volunteer Development team

The Volunteer Development team are responsible for providing advice and support to volunteer supervisors to help them come to a solution for problems prior to moving to the informal or formal problem-solving procedure. They are also responsible for the provision of support and advice to volunteers involved in these situations. Wherever possible, we will seek to find an amicable resolution to problems. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer Development team to ensure that the problem-solving procedure is used appropriately. In the case of a member of the Volunteer Development team having a complaint raised against them, the Director of Education and People & Wildlife will appoint a representative who will take on this role.

Informal Problem-Solving Procedure

What should a volunteer do if they have a concern or issue with another volunteer?

If the volunteer feels able to do so, they should first discuss the matter with the volunteer in question and ideally resolve this in an informal manner. If they are uncomfortable with this and there is due cause they should raise the matter with their volunteer supervisor or the Volunteer Development team and the concern will be dealt with through the procedure below.

What should a member of staff do if they have a concern or issue with a volunteer?

If a member of staff is concerned with a volunteer's performance or behaviour and an attempt to address this directly is not appropriate, they should discuss the matter with the Volunteer Development team. If the volunteer is uncomfortable discussing the matter with their volunteer supervisor they should approach the Volunteer Development team who may act as mediator. The team will seek to resolve problems through open and fair conversations, preferably in person. Any information gathered or raised during this intervention will be treated in confidence. The volunteer

will be informed of all concerns by their volunteer supervisor and we will make every possible attempt to resolve the concern at this stage.

Volunteer supervisors will ensure that:

- The meeting takes place as soon as possible in a quiet place and in a convenient and neutral location where interruptions are unlikely
- Any notes taken at this meeting are typed up and shared with the volunteer within 10 working days
- The volunteer is given sufficient time to talk and to give their perspective
- Possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by both parties
- Any actions are agreed and a date is set to review the actions within 30 days of the meeting

It may be necessary to have more than one meeting in order to resolve the issue. If this is the case, the above points will be followed in subsequent meetings.

The meeting(s) are a chance to identify any additional support or training for the volunteer within this role and for them to evaluate whether the volunteer role is no longer suitable or has left them unfulfilled. Wherever possible, an alternative volunteer role will be offered subject to discussion with the Volunteer Development team.

What should a volunteer do if they have a concern or issue with a member of staff?

If the volunteer feels able to do so, they should first discuss the matter with their volunteer supervisor. If they are uncomfortable with this, they should raise the matter with the Volunteer Development team. Wherever possible, the concern will be raised directly with the member of staff concerned and ideally resolved through the informal problem-solving procedure as outlined above. If the problem cannot be resolved through the informal problem-solving procedure and there is due cause, the matter will be escalated to a grievance procedure as detailed in the staff handbook and the volunteer will be advised of the procedure relating to this.

Formal Problem-Solving Procedure

It should be noted that in the cases of extreme unacceptable behaviour, SWT reserves the right to move straight to step three of this process.

Step One: Formal Meeting

If there is no improvement to the previous concern raised regarding the volunteer, or where the concern is of a serious nature it will be necessary to invite the volunteer to a formal meeting in which the volunteer may be accompanied by a companion of their choice. Where mitigating circumstances have contributed to the concern raised, these should be discussed and may be taken into consideration.

For the formal procedure to be followed, the Volunteer Development team must be informed before any meetings are carried out. The Volunteer Development team will:

- Write to the volunteer inviting them to a formal meeting
- Ensure that the volunteer receives a written statement of the issue along with a copy of this procedure and access to any relevant information relating to the concern
- Ensure the volunteer is given enough time to prepare (a minimum of 5 working days) whilst also ensuring that the meeting takes place as soon as possible
- Ensure any possible solutions are discussed and clearly understood by each party
- Take notes during the meeting and ensure that these are shared within 10 working days
- Ensure that any actions agreed to resolve the situation are understood by all and a time is set to review the outcomes of these actions
- Ensure that the volunteer understands what will happen if agreed actions are not met

- Consider whether the volunteer should be temporarily suspended from volunteering for a period of further investigation

Step Two: Written Warning

If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, the Volunteer Development team will send the volunteer a written warning after first consulting with the volunteer supervisor.

The warning will explain:

- What was discussed during the formal meeting and why the written warning has become necessary
- Any steps that the volunteer will be expected to make or improve on within a specified amount of time

If the volunteer does not agree to the next steps outlined within the written warning, they may be dismissed from being a volunteer at Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Step Three: Dismissal

If there is no improvement to performance or change in behaviour after the agreed period set out in the written warning then the volunteer will be refused permission to continue to volunteer with Surrey Wildlife Trust. The final decision to dismiss a volunteer will be made by the Volunteer Development team. Where possible, the volunteer will be informed in person and this will be followed by written confirmation explaining why the volunteer will be dismissed.

A volunteer who has been dismissed may still be a member of Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Step Four: Appeal

If a volunteer is not content with their dismissal, they may appeal the decision. They must do this in writing within 10 working days to the Director of Education and People & Wildlife. The Director of Education and People & Wildlife will then arrange an appeal meeting; each situation will be examined thoroughly. The dismissed volunteer can be accompanied by a companion of their choice.

Once the appeal has been heard and the dismissed volunteer is given a full and fair opportunity to present their appeal, the Director of Education and People & Wildlife will write to the dismissed volunteer informing them of the outcome of the appeal.

If no appeal is raised within 10 working days of the decision to dismiss a volunteer, the team with whom the volunteer worked will be informed that the volunteer will not be returning. No information shared as part of the problem-solving procedure will be passed to others.

Additional information

Suspension

There may be occasions where a volunteer may be temporarily suspended from their role. This will allow Surrey Wildlife Trust the opportunity to thoroughly carry out an investigation. The period of suspension will be clearly defined to the volunteer. Suspension will not be considered as confirmation of any wrong-doing.

The role of the Volunteer Development team

The Volunteer Development team will act as the first point of contact for any issues relating to the problem solving procedure.

Severity of concerns

The Volunteer Development team is responsible for classifying the severity of a concern that has

been raised. Where extremely serious concerns are raised it may be necessary to carry out an external investigation. This will not be necessary for most cases but will apply where a statutory agency e.g. the police, would investigate, for example in the cases of theft, fraud or allegations of abuse.

Appendix

An appendix is included which is not exhaustive but provides examples of what may be deemed unacceptable or extreme unacceptable behaviour

Severity	Description
Minor	A minor concern with little impact to the work of SWT, staff or volunteers, usually a mistake or misunderstanding
Serious	A concern with impact to the organisation without loss of income, damage to SWT property or land, staff or volunteers or intellectual property
Extremely Serious	A concern relating to damage to staff, volunteers, land, property, income or reputation. These actions are likely to result in the dismissal

Example Behaviour Categorisation

Unacceptable Behaviour – depending on the severity, these may be deemed as minor or serious; the following is a non-exhaustive list of examples

- Unsatisfactory performance or failure to carry out reasonable volunteering activities as requested by the volunteer supervisor
- Not fulfilling, or acting outside of a role description
- Using inappropriate language which others may deem offensive
- Unhelpful or discourteous behaviour towards others
- Not following the policies, procedures, values or rules set by Surrey Wildlife Trust

Extreme unacceptable behaviour: These will be considered as serious or extremely serious; the following is a non-exhaustive list of examples

Acts of this nature will usually result in dismissal from volunteering:

- Theft, fraud, dishonesty or deliberate falsification of Surrey Wildlife Trust documentation
- Violence or assault including abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour to others
- Harassment of any Trust employees, volunteers, members, visitors, clients or partners
- Lack of control of animals such as dogs which may pose a risk to others
- Repeated failure to comply with the charity’s policies and procedures
- Reoccurrence of a minor issue, or a number of different minor incidents
- Prolonged negative attitude towards others
- Serious misrepresentation or negative representation of the Trust
- Malicious damage to property belonging to Surrey Wildlife Trust, its staff, volunteers or visitors
- Serious breach of confidence
- Violation of Surrey Wildlife Trust’s safeguarding policy
- Acts of incitement or actual acts of discrimination or harassment or abuse or bullying (mental or physical) on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation against another Volunteer, member of staff or the public.
- Being unfit for the role due to the effects of alcohol or illegal drugs or possession of drugs
- Misuse of the charity’s name
- Failure to follow health & safety guidelines, or failing to report concerns relating to the health, safety and welfare of others