Volunteers Problem Solving Policy

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Introduction

Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST) aims to provide volunteers with an enjoyable and positive experience.
We aim to resolve any issues that occur in an informal manner however very occasionally there may be situations when there is a need for a more formal procedure.

This document explains the steps BOST will use to deal with problems, issues or concerns raised by Volunteers or Staff members about Volunteers, Staff Members or users of the space, in a fair, consistent and equitable way.

Definition

For the purposes of this procedure, a problem is considered to be when the general standards of behaviour that are expected from both staff, volunteers and users of our spaces are not adhered to. For example, a breaking of BOST policies laid out in the Volunteer Handbook, Policy and Agreement. A list of example behaviours are included at the end of this policy.

**Please note BOST recognises the importance of embracing diversity. Staff and volunteers have a mutual responsibility to make sure that all feel welcome. When participating at BOST we must be non-judgmental of different lifestyles, gender, abilities, disabilities, ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form. **

Things to remember

- Issues raised with BOST staff members will remain confidential and will only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to solve the issue. However, if there is a risk of harm to those involved or others, confidentiality may have to be broken for safeguarding purposes.

- Issues that relate to users of the space may need to be noted down in an incident book.

- Issues can be raised via a private meeting, in writing, emails, phone calls or in a volunteer supervision session.

- Volunteers can also raise a concern on another volunteer's behalf, if they witness inappropriate conduct.

<u>Informal Problem Solving</u>

Volunteers raising issues about other Volunteers, Staff or Users of the Space

- If the volunteer feels comfortable doing so, they should first discuss the matter with their Sessional Worker or Project Manager.
- If they are uncomfortable with this, they should raise the matter with the Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- If they are uncomfortable raising it with the sessional worker or Volunteer Coordinator, they should raise the matter with the Head of Parks and Community.
- Once the concern has been raised to a member of BOST staff, they will aim to resolve the issue informally by speaking with the member of staff, volunteer or where appropriate, the user of the space whom the complaint was made about.
- BOST will aim to address the problem and respond to the Volunteer either by Email, Phone Call or In Person within 5 working days.

If the issue is not resolved informally and the Volunteer Co-ordinator or Head of Parks and Community feels there is due cause, the matter will be escalated.

- If the matter is related to a staff member, the staff member's manager will be informed, and the staff grievance policy will be followed. The volunteer who raised the matter will be advised of the procedure relating to this.
- If the matter is related to a user of the space or another volunteer BOST's complaints procedure will be followed. The volunteer who raised the matter will be advised of the procedure relating to this.
- If the volunteer doesn't feel satisfied the issue has been dealt with, they should put their concern in writing to either the Volunteering Co-ordinator or Head of Parks and Community via

post or email (contact details are at the end of this document). Correspondence will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt. The concern will be investigated and normally replied to within 10 working days.

- If the volunteer feels unable to discuss the matter with the Volunteering Co-ordinator or Head of Parks and Community or they are not satisfied with their response they should contact the Head of Operations in writing via email or via post (contact details are at the end of this document). Correspondence will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt. The concern will be investigated, and normally a reply will be received within 10 working days.

Staff raising issues about a Volunteer

- If a member of staff is concerned with a volunteer's performance or behaviour, they should discuss the matter with the volunteer in question and try to resolve the issue in an informal manner (e.g, a meeting, a confidential conversation or in an email).
- If an attempt to address the issue directly is not appropriate or has failed, they should discuss the matter with the Volunteer Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator will aim to resolve problems with an informal chat / meeting.
- The Volunteer Co-ordinator will ensure that meetings with volunteers take place as soon as possible, in confidence and in a convenient place. Volunteers are welcome to bring a family member, friend or fellow volunteer along to this meeting.
- The volunteer will be informed of all concerns by the Volunteer Co-ordinator and every possible attempt will be made to resolve the concern at this stage. Any notes taken will be typed up and shared with the volunteer normally within 10 working days.
- The volunteer will be given the opportunity and time to talk and give their perspective. The meetings will identify any support, training or supervision the volunteer may need in their role and will evaluate whether the volunteer role is no longer suitable. An alternative volunteer role may be offered if appropriate.

Possible solutions will be discussed, any actions will be agreed, and a date set to review the actions normally within 30 days of the

meeting. If there is no improvement to the concerns raised or where the issue is of a serious nature it will be necessary to invite the volunteer to a formal meeting and follow the formal problem-solving procedure as below.

Formal Problem Solving

If an issue relating to a volunteer is unable to be solved informally the following steps will be followed:

Stage 1 – Formal meeting

- The volunteer will be invited to bring a companion of their choice for example, another Volunteer, friend or family member.
- The volunteer will be given a written statement of the issue along with a copy of this procedure at least 5 days prior to the meeting.
- The volunteer will be given the opportunity to state their case to the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Possible solutions will be discussed and clearly understood by the Volunteer and the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will 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, they will also ensure the volunteer understands what will happen if they are not met. Notes will be taken during the meeting by the Volunteer Coordinator and distributed normally within 7 working days.

A decision will be made as to whether the volunteer should be temporarily suspended for a period of investigation.

Stage 2 – Written warning

- If the issue is not resolved within the set time frame, the member of staff will send the volunteer a written warning.
- The warning will explain what was discussed in the formal meeting and why the written warning is now necessary. It will also explain any actions 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, then they may be dismissed from volunteering with BOST.

Stage 3 – Dismissal

- If there is no improvement to performance or behaviour after the time set out in the written warning, then the volunteer will be dismissed from volunteering with BOST.
- Where possible the volunteer will be informed in person, this will be followed by written confirmation explaining why the volunteer will be dismissed.

Step 4 – Appeal

- The volunteer may appeal their dismissal. They must do this in writing within 10 working days to the Head of Parks and Community of BOST (contact details are at the end of this document).
- The Head of Parks and Community will then arrange an appeal meeting. The volunteer will be invited to bring a companion of their choice.
- The volunteer will be given a full and fair opportunity to present their appeal.

Once the appeal has been heard the Head of Parks and Community will write to the dismissed volunteer informing them of the outcome of the appeal within 10 working days.
The Head of Parks and Community decision is final. The volunteer can request a copy of the BOST Complaints Policy if they wish to make a complaint.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour are as follows:

- Failure to carry out reasonable volunteering activities as detailed in BOST Volunteer Role Descriptions and as requested by BOST staff
- Using inappropriate language which others may deem offensive.
- Unhelpful or challenging behaviour towards others.
- Not following the policies, procedures and values of BOST.

Examples of extremely unacceptable behaviour which will be regarded as a serious problem are as follows:

- Persistent refusal to obey a reasonable and proper instruction.
- Serious or wilful breaches of Health and Safety Policy in such a way that the individual endangers themselves or others.
- Failure to report safeguarding concerns relating to the health, safety and welfare of others.
- Being unfit for the role due to the effects of alcohol or illegal drugs or possession of drugs
- Theft of, or purposeful damage to, property belonging to BOST, to employees, volunteers, visitors, clients, partners or members of the public
- Fraud, dishonesty or deliberate falsification of BOST documentation
- Serious misrepresentation or negative representation of the Trust
- Accepting or seeking to obtain money or possessions of any kind from other volunteers or staff.
- Sexual offences or sexual misconduct
- Violence or assault including abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour towards others
- Harassment of any Trust employees, volunteers, visitors, clients, partners or members of the public
- Acts of discrimination or abuse or bullying (mental or physical) on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, mental health, religion or ethnicity against Trust employees, volunteers, visitors, clients, partners or members of the public
- Prolonged negative attitude towards others
- Serious breach of confidentiality
- Repeated failure to comply with any of BOST's Policies

Certain serious misconduct offences may require reporting to a statutory agency for an external investigation to be carried out. For example, the police would investigate cases of theft, fraud or allegations of abuse.

Contact details
Volunteering Co-ordinator, Marta Pascual Argente,
marta@bost.org.uk

Head of Parks and Community, William Rallison, william@bost.org.uk
Head of Operations, Nicola Desmond, nicola@bost.org.uk