

## Cambridge City Foodbank Volunteer Complaints (Grievance) Policy

The Cambridge City Foodbank (CCfb) recognises that bringing a complaint (or grievance) to our attention may be difficult for volunteers. This policy sets out our process for ensuring that such complaints are handled correctly. It is important that if a volunteer feels dissatisfied with any matter relating to his or her activities within the charity, they should have an effective means by which such a grievance can be aired and, where appropriate, resolved. Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent a volunteer from informally discussing any matter he/she may wish to mention. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for a complaint (grievance) to be raised.

There are two stages for raising a complaint (grievance) as set out below.

### **Stage 1: Informal Complaint:**

If a volunteer has a grievance about any matter, it should first be raised with their Team Leader,

*CCfb recognises that complaints relating to discrimination, personal or sexual harassment can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature. If for any reason it is not appropriate to raise the issue through the Team Leader, volunteers are encouraged to contact the Volunteer Development Coordinator.*

who will invite the volunteer to a meeting at which the grievance can be discussed. Informal notes should be kept from such a meeting. It is hoped that most issues can be resolved at this early stage.

*Should a volunteer be the victim of minor harassment, he/she should make it clear to the offending person that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop. If the aggrieved volunteer is unable to do this verbally then he/she should hand a written request to the individual concerned and the Team Leader. The Team Leader will ask the individual to cease the offending behaviour.*

### **Stage 2: Formal complaint:**

Should an informal approach fail, or if the grievance or harassment is more serious, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Development Coordinator (*or if this is not appropriate, the Charity Administrator*) as a formal written complaint. The written complaint can include;

- the nature of the complaint or alleged discrimination/harassment.
- the name of the alleged offender.
- the dates and times when the alleged discrimination/harassment occurred.
- the names of any witnesses.
- any action already taken by the aggrieved volunteer to stop the alleged harassment.

On receipt of a formal complaint CCfb will start an investigation. If it involves harassment or discrimination CCfb will take action to separate the aggrieved volunteer from the alleged offender to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place, and with no fault being implied. This may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged offender to another working area until the matter has been resolved.

## **Investigation of Formal Complaint**

The Volunteer Development Coordinator (in liaison with the appropriate Senior Manager) will conduct the investigation, or an appropriate Team Leader or Manager will be appointed. The investigator will carry out a thorough investigation.

Anyone involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and the number of those involved will be kept as small as possible. This confidentiality protects both the aggrieved volunteer and the alleged harasser or discriminator should disciplinary procedures be necessary at a later stage. At no stage will details of any allegation be revealed at a meeting of the Core Team or Board of Trustees.

The investigation should be conducted as quickly as possible. The person investigating will make sure they:

- Establish what has happened so far
- Clarify the nature of the complaint
- Meet the aggrieved volunteer and allow them to be accompanied by a confidential helper if they wish (a fellow volunteer or staff member, who should not be otherwise involved in the alleged incident)
- establish what might put things right
- Interview those involved, those complained of, or any witnesses at separate meetings and allow them to be accompanied by a confidential helper if they wish (a fellow volunteer or staff member, who should not be otherwise involved in the alleged incident)
- Conduct interviews with an open mind
- Keep notes of the meetings

When the investigation has been concluded, a draft report of the findings and of the investigator's recommended course of action will be sent, in writing, to the aggrieved volunteer and to any alleged offender. If either person is dissatisfied with the draft report this should be raised with the investigator within five working days of receiving the draft. Any points of concern will be considered further.

The investigator will decide whether or not the issue should be handled via CCFb's Disciplinary Policy, and if so, will take advice from the Chief Executive Officer.

Once the process has been completed, whether it takes the form of a report only or requires a disciplinary sanction, a final written report will be sent to the aggrieved volunteer and the alleged offender. If the report concludes that the allegation is well founded, a decision about any restorative action, training, or (if under the disciplinary policy) disciplinary measures will be taken.

Where a volunteer has raised a complaint about harassment or discrimination he/she will not be victimised for having brought that complaint. However, if the report concludes that the complaint is untrue and has been brought with malicious intent CCFb will no longer accept any further voluntary assistance from the alleging volunteer.