



Volunteer Problem Solving Policy

August 2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Title	Volunteer Problem Solving Policy	
Version Number	001	
Publication Date	August 2026	
Policy Owner/Author	Faye Eldon	
Related Policies/Procedures		
Review Date	August 2028	
Approved/Ratified by	Board of Trustees	Date
Distribution	Volunteers and staff	

Please note that a record of the changes made to the original issue of this document can be found at Schedule 1 after any Appendices to the Policy/Procedure.

Version Number:	Publication Date:	Nature of, and Reason for, Change(s)
1	August 2026	Original

Problem solving procedures

It is hoped that when Howgill Family Centre take on volunteers that there will be no problems or complaints. While employees have grievance and disciplinary policies, volunteers are not covered by employment legislation. In fact, volunteers only have the same legal rights as the general public (e.g. Health and Safety and Data Protection), so such a policy helps to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly and are not discriminated against.

This problem solving procedure will ensure that Howgill Family Centre will know how to deal with problems if they arise. It can help Howgill Family Centre find the most appropriate solution to the problem, without necessarily resorting to dismissal. Such a policy is also useful for building a case for dismissal, where this is appropriate, so that this decision can be explained to members of the organisation as well as outsiders. It is good practice to avoid using the same grievance and disciplinary policy for both staff and volunteers, so the term 'problem solving procedures' helps to keep the two separate.

All complaints should be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:

- Protect Howgill Family Centre volunteers
- minimise any disruption to your staff, service users and other volunteers
- demonstrate that Howgill Family Centre respects its volunteers
- protect the reputation of Howgill Family Centre

All complaints must be treated confidentially, and should only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue.

Problem Solving Procedures

If a volunteer makes a complaint

This part of the problem solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to complain if they have been unfairly treated.

- **Stage 1 - Oral complaint**

Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, Howgill Family Centre or another volunteer, should be discussed with the volunteer by the Volunteer Line Manager. If the complaint is about the volunteer line manager, then the matter should be referred their Manager (CEO). During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the Chief Officer of Howgill Family Centre.

- **Stage 2 - In writing**

Volunteers making a complaint in writing should do so within two weeks of the initial complaint. Howgill Family Centre will aim to respond within 14 working days.

- **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal to a member of the trustee board of Howgill Family Centre by having a meeting. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair or trustee board member will need to respond within 14 working days, and their decision is final.

If someone complains about a volunteer

- **Stage 1 - discussion**

The first step is to discuss the complaint with the volunteer, e.g. volunteer has had aggressive behaviour with a member of staff. There could be external factors influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude, so this should be taken into consideration. The Volunteers Line Manager should identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil their role and offer extra support, guidelines, supervision and training where necessary. If the Volunteer Line Manager feels that they are unable to offer solutions then this could be discussed with their Line Manager. A deadline for reviewing the situation should be set, which could take place during supervision.

If the complaint was raised by someone else, keep them informed of the measures you are taking to rectify the situation.

- **Stage 2 – written warning**

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, then the Volunteers Line Manager can issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the volunteer manager and can be accompanied by a person of their choice. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set and help offered to the volunteer. However, if the organisation decides to dismiss the volunteer, then the volunteer has the right to appeal. The decision to dismiss a volunteer should be a last resort.

- **Stage 3 - Right to appeal**

If a volunteer has been dismissed then they should appeal in writing to a member of the trustee board, usually the Chair. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Chair or a member of the trustee board must respond within 14 working days and their decision is final.

Conducting the dismissal meeting

If Howgill Family Centre decide to dismiss the volunteer, there are a few good practice tips to remember:

- Make sure that the meeting takes place in a private setting.

- Be quick and direct. Do not back down. At this stage, the decision to dismiss a volunteer has already been made.
- Do not attempt to counsel the volunteer, as this will send confusing signals to them.
- Expect the volunteer to express their emotions, but keep your emotions in check.
- Follow up the meeting with a letter to re-iterate the decision to dismiss the volunteer, as well as outlining the reasons why. Include any information relating to their departure.
- Inform staff, clients and other volunteers of the outcome, but do not give reasons for the dismissal.

Exceptions

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct, e.g. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer ideally needs to be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.