

BHS Volunteer Problems and Disputes Guidance Note

We hope that volunteering for the BHS is always a positive and enjoyable experience but every now and then things can go wrong. The majority of concerns relate to disputes or disagreements that can often be resolved with careful and honest discussion, this guidance note is to support this situation. If a situation is more serious or escalates further the '*Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure*' should be used.

This document provides some suggestions for how you might solve local disputes and problems. It should not be used in the following circumstances:

- Volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint – refer to the '*BHS Volunteer Complaints Procedure*'
- The issue is being investigated as a formal complaint
- The issue is a serious problem and you feel you need more support than this document provides
- You feel a volunteer's behaviour has negatively impacted the BHS or your committee, as defined by our Volunteer Policy and need additional support

If you're not sure how to proceed or you need support or advice at any point you can contact your Role Coordinator, National/Regional Manager or the Volunteer Manager.

What constitutes a dispute?

A dispute is when two or more people fall out or express disagreement over a specific matter which then affects an individual or the committee as a whole.

How should disputes be resolved?

When a dispute does arise it's important to deal with it as soon as possible and not to ignore the issue. It is generally the role of the Chairman supported by their National/Regional Manager to reinforce our expectation for respect between volunteers in all their undertakings on behalf of the BHS.

We ask that all volunteers read the '*BHS Volunteer Policy*' and endeavour to respect and support each other in their volunteering activities. Referring back to this document and reinforcing the importance of care and respect to each other may help people remain civil, on point and come to a consensus on the way forward, which might be enough to resolve minor disagreements.

If the dispute relates to a BHS volunteer policy or operational position, the Volunteer Manager should be contacted for clarification. Once clarification has been sought, all parties must adhere to the BHS position. These disputes may highlight that a volunteer or volunteer team needs further information, training or support or that the BHS needs to update their volunteer resources or training.

If the dispute cannot be resolved immediately, it may be appropriate to meet one or more of the involved parties to discuss the situation. It is advisable to contact the Volunteer Manager or your local National/Regional Manager for advice and support at this point. The person who is aiming to resolve the complaint should aim to resolve it quickly, informally and confidentially, not sharing details beyond those who are involved in its resolution, their National/Regional Manager and the Volunteer Manager.

If you have recognised that this dispute can't be resolved easily please don't try to manage it on your own, this could compound the problem or volunteers could see you as taking sides. Rather consult with the Volunteer Manager or your National/Regional Manager for support.

If you decide to meet with one or more of the involved parties, the Do's and Don'ts below could be beneficial.

Do:

- Meet in a neutral place that is acceptable to all attending (not a home)
- Ensure there is enough time to undertake the meeting
- Hold the meeting at a convenient time for all involved
- Introduce everyone at the meeting and be clear why they are attending
- State the nature of the dispute and any specific events or conversations
- Keep the meeting as informal as possible

Don't:

- Try to rush the meeting
- Hold it at a venue that somebody may feel uncomfortable attending
- Hold the meeting at a time that somebody cannot make
- Run the meeting like a legal hearing
- Stop people part way through giving information other than to clarify a point being made
- Allow incidents or concerns that are not part of the dispute to be discussed or raised

Once you have met with the parties involved if you are still not able to resolve the dispute it will need to be referred to your National/Regional Manager and Volunteer Manager. They will review the situation and determine the next steps.

If at any point you are unsure how to proceed with a challenging situation please contact the Volunteer Manager for advice.