

Volunteer Guidance Note – Raising Concerns

This guidance note covers:

- If you have a concern about a volunteer
- If someone else has a concern about a volunteer

Introduction

We want volunteering for the BHS to be a positive and enjoyable experience but occasionally things can go wrong. If they do it is our responsibility to investigate any concerns about a volunteer that are raised and address these as necessary. Our duty is to make sure that those representing the BHS and our charitable objectives have the charity's best interests at heart.

The BHS recognises volunteers as people who choose to commit their time, expertise and passion to the charity and its objectives without expectation of a financial reward, except actual out of pocket expenses. As volunteers are not employees of the Society, they are not under any binding contract, are exempt from employment legislation and are not covered by BHS employee disciplinary procedure.

We appreciate the time, skills and knowledge that our volunteers commit to the BHS and understand how frustrating it can be when a concern is raised. We will always support the volunteer through this process; however, every concern will be taken seriously.

All volunteers are required to read the *Volunteer Policy* and any other policies or guidance notes relevant to their role. These documents encourage a safe, positive and supportive environment for all BHS volunteers.

In most cases, if a concern is raised as soon as it becomes apparent it can be resolved and a positive relationship can continue between the parties involved. If issues are not addressed swiftly and effectively, they may escalate, lowering morale and even damaging the reputation of the BHS. Please refer to the '*Raising a Concern Policy*' and enlist the support of a member of staff to help resolve problems as soon as they arise.

Concerns about Volunteers

If a concern is made about you, please be patient. We do understand how upsetting and frustrating this can be. During an investigation you will be provided with a direct line of support. Action against a volunteer will only be taken if the investigation shows evidence of inappropriate behaviour or wrongdoing.

If an informal concern is raised ([Step 1 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)), we will attempt to resolve the problem without an investigation. If it is more serious, then a formal complaint ([Step 2 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)) should be raised.

When a formal concern is received, the relevant BHS Team will investigate your complaint and review any evidence and documentation supplied.

Examples of more serious complaints include but are not limited to:

- actions that prejudice the reputation of the Society
- actions that put the health or safety of others at risk
- inappropriate behaviour
- self-promotion/conflict of interest
- disregard for BHS volunteer policies or procedures
- bullying and harassment

Volunteers will be offered support from the Volunteer Support Team and can have a family member, friend, or other volunteer with them at any meetings for additional support throughout this process. We may need to record phone conversations or meetings in addition to taking notes. We will ask for permission before making any recordings. These recordings will only be used to support the investigation.

A volunteer may be suspended whilst an investigation is taking place. For example, a Welfare Adviser may be removed from a case that has resulted in a complaint; other volunteers may be asked not to attend events or meetings or to refrain from other volunteering activities during the investigation.

Outcome

Once an investigation is complete the findings and recommendations will be shared with the appropriate Director and resolutions decided. An investigation may result in no action being taken, alternatively it may determine that action must be taken. Any actions will be carefully communicated to the volunteer involved in a timely manner. Any investigation may highlight areas where the Society could improve and inform changes that could prevent a reoccurrence.

Actions

Where an investigation finds that a volunteer has acted inappropriately or in conflict with the *Volunteer Policy*, action may need to be taken.

Actions may include, but are not limited to;

- Discussing the outcome with the volunteer and asking for a change in behaviour.
- Requiring the volunteer to undertake further training.
- Removing a volunteer from a specific role.
- Ceasing the volunteering relationship.
- Removing the volunteer as a member of the Society. This action will be ratified by the Trustees.

Appealing an Outcome

Should anyone be unsatisfied with the outcome they can appeal the decision ([Step 3 of the Raising a Concern Policy](#)).