



Volunteer Grievance Procedure

Purpose

Croquet England values all its volunteers, throughout the organisation. Whilst every effort is made to try and keep volunteers in roles that they find satisfying and fulfilling, we recognise that disputes and problems can arise between individual volunteers or groups of volunteers. This Volunteer Grievance Procedure is intended to address problems that arise, both quickly and fairly.

Scope

The Volunteer Grievance Procedure is designed to try to resolve volunteer issues as close to the source of the dispute as possible and as soon as they arise, so that small grievances do not escalate to become serious or formal complaints. It is suitable for use at Club, Federation and Croquet England level.

The Volunteer Grievance Procedure is intended to supplement the Complaints Procedure, which deals with complaints which do not relate to volunteer issues, such as maladministration; breaches of the Constitution, procedures, regulations or other governance documents of Croquet England, and acts which are injurious to the character or interests of Croquet England. Such complaints should be referred to the Complaints Administrator.

What is a grievance?

A grievance is a concern, problem or issue between an individual or group and another individual or group within our organisation. This may occur at club or national level.

Examples include:

- Personal or work-related disputes between volunteers, or between volunteers and employees.
- The breakdown of working relationships between volunteers due to personality conflicts.
- Misunderstandings about the nature or boundaries of a volunteer's role.
- Differing treatment, or perceptions of differing treatment, between volunteers.
- Comments, actions or behaviour that make another volunteer or volunteers feel uncomfortable, unwelcome or to consider giving up their role.
- Antagonism between a volunteer and the organisation for which he/she is volunteering.

The Volunteer Grievance Procedure is also appropriate for matters that are the sole concern of a Club or Federation.

Dealing with a grievance

If a volunteer has a complaint about their volunteering or about a colleague, they should raise it as soon as possible. Unresolved problems left to fester become bigger problems. Wherever possible, follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1 – Direct Approach

If the dispute is with another person the volunteer should try and talk to the other person, explain why they are unhappy and see if the problem can be sorted out between themselves.

If the dispute is with a group (e.g. a committee) then talking to the individuals first to get their own, rather than the group's, view or opinion may be worthwhile. There may be others who have the same concerns or who are also unhappy but who haven't said anything, or they may have suggestions about changes of roles or behaviours that would help.

If this step is approached with a willingness to be flexible and to compromise, if necessary, then an amicable solution can frequently be found.

In some cases, a direct approach may not be possible or advisable, in which case the volunteer should go straight to Step 2 but be prepared to explain why the direct approach was not attempted.

Step 2 – Informal Process

The volunteer should discuss their grievance informally, as soon as possible, with their 'line manager' or if it involves the line manager, with someone with the next most senior position. In the context of a club the management hierarchy could be a club committee member, then club chairman, then club President, or at national level it could be a committee chairman, Executive Director, CEO, Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The manager should take the complaint seriously and ensure that everything is done to try and resolve the issue informally.

- The manager should meet with the volunteer/s as soon as possible to ask them to explain their grievance, to seek their view on the situation and establish what outcome they are seeking.
- The manager should also meet with the person or group who is being complained about. This is to corroborate the facts, seek their view on the issue and to find out what outcome they would expect.
- If necessary, and without breaking any confidences, the manager may need to talk to other volunteers to help shed light on the root cause of the problem.

Informal procedures aim to resolve behaviour or performance that gives cause for concern as soon as possible. Depending upon the nature of the grievance, possible solutions that may be explored are:

- Making sure those involved understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Defining clearer boundaries to the roles.
- Adjusting roles and responsibilities so they better suit the individuals' capabilities or preferences,
- Assigning different times or sessions.
- Advice about behaviour or conduct.

Regular support meetings may also be arranged with either party and a follow-up meeting should be arranged to discuss if the situation has improved or if further intervention is needed. A timetable should be agreed for these meetings.

The majority of problems and issues will be resolved by the end of these informal procedures.

If the grievance is resolved informally but its resolution has any direct or indirect implications for Croquet England, the complainant should inform the Complaints Administrator accordingly in writing.

Step 3 – Formal Process.

If, at the end of the agreed timetable, the informal procedures in Step 1 and 2 do not result in agreement or a positive outcome, the volunteer should initiate Step 3 - the formal process.

The grievance should be set out in writing, including specific details and evidence if applicable, and it should be sent to the next most senior manager in the organisation. It should stick to the facts and avoid language that is inflammatory, insulting or abusive.

Grievance meeting

This manager will arrange a meeting with the volunteer, either in person or virtually, as soon as possible, to discuss their grievance. This will usually be within 10 days of receiving the grievance. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied by a friend at this meeting.

If the grievance is against another party, the manager will also arrange a meeting with that other party to discuss the complaint being made against them. They also have the right to be accompanied by a friend.

Written notes of these meetings will be prepared and signed by all in attendance at each meeting as an accurate record.

Outcome

The manager will look at what attempts have been made to resolve the issue in steps 1 and 2. If it is necessary to gather further information before coming to a conclusion, the manager will inform all parties of this and the likely timescale involved. He/she may advise referral to mediation, in which case a decision will be deferred until the mediation process has completed.

Decisions on how to resolve the situation will be jointly agreed between the parties and given in writing. Possible solutions may be:

- Regular meetings until either or both volunteers understand their role, their responsibilities, and the relevant policies.
- Some training or mentoring.
- Division or separation of roles so that the parties do not have to work together.
- Re-assign either or both volunteers to a new role, perhaps better suited to their skills and motivations. This allows an enthusiastic volunteer to continue with the organisation, and the organisation to continue to benefit from their knowledge.
- Re-vitalise either or both volunteers, perhaps by giving them an opportunity to take a break. This is particularly relevant for very enthusiastic volunteers, who can sometimes over-commit themselves and suffer from burn out, or who are performing a very demanding role, or who have had a significant change to personal circumstances such as a bereavement, birth of a child or house move.
- A change to a different club or committee, if the situation is right.
- Retire/release with dignity if there is no alternative but make this a very positive exit with the volunteer leaving, feeling that they have been appreciated. Asking a volunteer to leave can be extremely difficult, but sometimes it is the best decision for both parties.

A volunteer has the right to withdraw their grievance complaint at any stage. They also have the right to end their volunteering when they wish.

Right of appeal

If a volunteer wishes to appeal against any grievance decision, they must do so, in writing, to the manager dealing with the formal procedure within 10 working days of the decision being communicated to them.

The organisation to which the appeal has been referred will appoint an independent person to hear the appeal, usually within 10 days of receipt of the appeal. This independent person could be the next manager in the club's or Croquet England's hierarchy, assuming they have had no involvement in earlier stages of the grievance process, or it could be a respected person within the club or organisation who does not necessarily have any line management role. The Vice-Presidents and President of Croquet England would be examples of appropriate 'respected persons' at the national level. Both the volunteer and the person/organisation they have raised the grievance about have the right to attend the appeal hearing, which may be virtual or face-to-face.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing within 5 days of the appeal meeting. The decision of the person hearing the appeal will be final, subject to the right of either party to refer the matter to arbitration.

Arbitration

If a party is dissatisfied with the way in which an appeal has been reached, they may refer the matter within one month of the publication of the appeal decision to arbitration by Sport Resolutions (UK), the trading name of The Sports Dispute Resolution Panel Limited, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under company number 3351039. It is a condition of Croquet England membership that any such arbitration shall be binding on all parties.

References

Complaints Procedure
Anti-bullying Policy
Croquet Online Policy
Codes of Conduct
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Issuing Authority: Board of Trustees

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date approved: 09 December 2023

Next review date: 09 December 2026

Version: v1.0

Reason for Change: New