

Volunteer Conflicts Procedure

1. Purpose of the procedure

- 1.1 To provide a clear procedure for dealing with conflicts between volunteers and other individuals within GMFA through informal channels.

2. Principles

- 2.1 It is the intention of GMFA to ensure that disagreements and conflicts between individuals involved in the organisation can be resolved in a fair, reasonable and open manner and that disagreements between individuals are addressed at the earliest opportunity. Employees and volunteers all have the right to be supported by the organisation in achieving a resolution to conflicts, though the legal framework is different for each group.
- 2.2 There are two ways in which a conflict can be dealt with: formally when a policy has not been complied with; informally when there is disagreement between individuals but no policy, process or agreement has been broken. The informal process for dealing with conflicts is described below.
- 2.3 Volunteers are encouraged to resolve conflicts informally at first, however this does not take away the rights of a volunteer to have their grievance dealt with in a formal manner straight away if a policy has not been complied with.
- 2.4 If a volunteer's conflict is with an employee, then GMFA's management can only formally intervene using the appropriate Staff policy.

3. The procedure for informal conflict resolution

- 3.1 The conflict should be discussed informally and privately between the people involved. Such a discussion should resolve most conflicts, particularly those arising from misunderstandings or an insufficient appreciation by one party of the other's response to their actions or behaviour.
- 3.2 The desired outcome of the discussion will be the resolution of the conflict. This can only be achieved through mutual understanding, negotiation and compromise. The process will not result in apportioning blame to either party and no disciplinary sanctions will occur.
- 3.3 In order to best enable each party to express how they feel over an issue and be heard, the discussion will be considered confidential. Confidentiality may be broken should gross misconduct occur during the discussion.
- 3.4 Parts of the discussion may be discussed outside of the meeting. However both parties must substantially agree which parts of the discussion can be discussed.
- 3.5 Neither party to the conflict has a right to force the other to change his/her behaviour.

- 3.6 Although this stage should be regarded as informal, it may be helpful for both parties, should the conflict be resolved, to agree ways of ensuring that similar conflicts do not arise between them again.
- 3.7 Either party may terminate the discussion at any point.

4. Further discussion and mediation

- 4.1 If this discussion does not resolve the matter, a member of staff should mediate a further discussion. If a conflict involves an employee, the employee's line manager should be the staff member that mediates the discussion.
- 4.2 Notes may be taken of this discussion by the person mediating. If notes are taken, they will be distributed to everyone involved in the discussion. A copy of the notes will be kept on the personnel records of any employee's involved in the conflict and a copy will be kept by the Chief Executive.
- 4.3 Generally speaking, the processes listed in section 3 above shall apply to this further discussion and mediation.

5. You can't always get what you want

- 5.1 All volunteers in GMFA have the same rights. Volunteers who are Directors have an additional Code of Conduct because of their position of authority at Board meetings (and responsibility outside meetings), and there is a stricter legal framework that they must adhere to when acting as Trustees of the charity. Volunteers and employees have similar rights inside GMFA, although employees have other rights under employment law.
- 5.2 All volunteers have the right to make reasonable requests from another party with whom they are in conflict. However, that person has the absolute right to refuse that request if they are not breaking any GMFA policies or procedures. Consequently a volunteer may not get what s/he wants from the person s/he is in conflict with.
- 5.3 If a volunteer fails to get what s/he wants from this conflict procedure, but feels as though s/he should have the right to expect it as a volunteer for GMFA, then s/he may proceed further by raising the problem as set out in the "Policy for reporting problems".
- 5.4 If a policy or procedure is changed or developed as a result, it should not be applied to a past conflict unless authorised by a resolution of the Board, except in exceptional circumstances.

6. Dissemination of policy

- 6.1 This policy will go to all staff and volunteers and be included in any staff and volunteer induction.

7. Review

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every four years.

7.2 This policy was passed on 13/03/03.

7.3 This policy was reviewed on 28/03/07.

7.4 This policy was amended on 27/08/08.