

Policy For Reporting Problems

1. Purpose of the policy

- 1.1 To provide clear guidelines to volunteers for reporting any problems they may have, or know about, at any level or area of GMFA.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The Board of Directors is committed to pre-empting problems that volunteers may encounter, though inevitably issues will occur. In order to be fair to all volunteers and employees, GMFA will handle reported problems in a structured way using the policies and process described herein.
- 2.2 The process for solving problems is:
 - 2.2.1 A volunteer reports a problem.
 - 2.2.2 The issue is dealt with according to either staff or volunteer policies in existence at the time, or if there is a problem with the way GMFA does something, the staff or the Board of Directors will attempt to find solutions to the problem.
 - 2.2.3 If the problem concerns disagreements between people, but no rules have been broken, GMFA will try to rectify the problem through discussion among the concerned parties and will not attempt to apportion blame.
 - 2.2.4 All interpersonal problems will be dealt with by GMFA managers unless the problem involves the Chief Executive. In this instance, the problem will be dealt with by the Chair.
 - 2.2.5 Volunteers will be informed of any outcome relating to an issue s/he has raised except the details of any volunteer or staff disciplinary procedure.

3. Types of problems that may be reported

- 3.1 It is impossible to give an exhaustive list of potential problems that a volunteer may encounter whilst at GMFA but, broadly speaking, these would fall into three categories – problems which effect a volunteer, issues or problems that a volunteer witnesses, and problems caused by the way GMFA does things. Types of problems reported may include but are not limited to:
 - 3.1.1 *Problems which effect a volunteer*
 - 3.1.1.1 A volunteer has a disagreement with either another volunteer or a staff member in GMFA

3.1.1.2 Someone has not complied with a policy, procedure or agreement and that has caused a problem to a volunteer. This includes issues like bullying, discrimination or an employee not doing his/her job in the way that has been agreed.

3.1.2 *Problems that a volunteer witnesses*

3.1.2.1 Failure to comply with legal obligations

3.1.2.2 Failure to comply with GMFA policies and procedures

3.1.2.3 Actions which endanger the health and safety of staff, volunteers or the public

3.1.2.5 Actions which are intended to conceal any of the above

3.1.3 *Problems caused by the way GMFA does things*

3.1.3.1 GMFA has a policy that does not work or seem fair

3.1.3.2 GMFA doesn't have a policy on something, and that is causing a problem

4. Making a report

4.1 A volunteer can make a report orally or in writing depending on who the problem is with.

4.1.1 If the problem is with another volunteer, then report is made to the Chief Executive

4.1.2 If the problem is with a member of staff, then report is made to his/her line manager (this will be either the Head of Programmes, the Chief Executive or the Chair)

4.1.3 If the problem is with the way GMFA does things, the report is made to the Chief Executive (if the issue is strategic) or the Head of Programmes (if the issue is operational). If a volunteer is unsure as to whether the problem is operational or strategic, s/he should first get in contact with the Head of Programmes who will pass the problem onto the Chief Executive if the issue is strategic.

4.2 When a volunteer makes a report s/he will be need to:

4.2.1 state what the problem or issue is

4.2.2 specify whether or not a policy has not been complied with

4.2.3 state who is involved

4.2.4 give reasons why the volunteer believes the report to be true

4.2.5 be clear that the report is a complaint and the volunteer expects the person to whom the report is made to deal with it.

5. Investigating a report

- 5.1 The person to whom the volunteer made the report will, if possible, get back to the volunteer within five working days to acknowledge the complaint and possibly request further information or clarification. If a volunteer has made a report to the Chair, s/he will normally get back to the volunteer within ten days.
- 5.2 There are, of course, two sides to every story and the person to whom the report was made will need to ensure that preliminary enquiries are made to decide how to proceed. These preliminary enquiries will consist of discussions with individuals named in the report and may include discussions with other individuals. If the preliminary enquiries show that further action is needed, the volunteer's report will be:
 - 5.3.1 Processed using Staff Disciplinary Policy or Volunteer Code of Conduct if a policy has not been complied with, or an agreement has been broken.
 - 5.3.2 Processed using the volunteer or staff Conflicts Procedures if a volunteer has a disagreement with someone but no policy has been broken. The 'Dealing with Conflict' procedures are used when no policy has been broken, neither party in the dispute has a right to force the other into a behaviour change. The process is there to enable each party to express how they feel over an issue and be heard. The desired outcome 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.
 - 5.3.3 Discussed by the Board of Directors (if the issue relates to strategy or involves policy or a lack of policy) or by the staff team (if the issue is operational) if the report is a problem with the way GMFA does something. This may take a while to deal with. However either the staff team or the Board of Directors will provide the results of the discussion to the volunteer as soon as possible. The process will not result in apportioning blame, and no disciplinary sanctions will occur. If a new policy or a change to a policy is needed as a result of the issue raised, this may take several months depending on the workload of the Board, and the availability of its members to develop a policy.

6. Evidence that problems you raised are true

- 6.1 GMFA does not expect the volunteer to have absolute proof regarding any problem reported. However, the volunteer will need to be able to show the reasons for his/her concern.
- 6.2 If a volunteer makes a report in good faith, even if it is not confirmed by an investigation, his/her concern will be valued and appreciated and s/he will not be liable to disciplinary action. However if a volunteer made a false report maliciously, in bad faith or for personal gain, then s/he may face disciplinary action. If a volunteer makes malicious or repeated unfounded allegations against a person or group, this is bullying or harassment and as such will be treated as gross misconduct.

7. External Agencies

- 7.1 There may be circumstances (for example, if a report becomes the subject of a criminal investigation by the Police) wherein the volunteer making a report may be needed as a witness in another forum (for example, a court), in which case GMFA may have no further involvement. Should this be the case the person to whom a report was made will inform that volunteer at the earliest opportunity.

8. Reporting back to you

- 8.1 Subject to any legal constraints, GMFA will inform the volunteer making the report of the outcome of the preliminary enquiries, full investigation and any further action that has been taken. However, the details of volunteer and staff Disciplinary Procedures are confidential.

9. Dissemination of this policy

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

10. Review

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed every four years.
- 10.2 This policy was passed on 13/03/03.
- 10.3 This policy was reviewed on 28/03/07.
- 10.4 This policy was amended on 27/08/08.