

# Guidance for staff on Volunteer Concerns and Complaints Policy

Policy ID Number: V003

Policy Passed by Board of Trustees: September 2019

Review Date: September 2022

## 1. Policy Statement

1. RESTORE recognises that the most important resource we have to deliver effective services are our staff and volunteers.
  - 1.1. We aim to ensure that Volunteers feel supported to participate to the fullest extent they wish in the work of RESTORE and that if necessary, they feel able to raise concerns or complaints and feel assured that these will be addressed fairly and at the earliest opportunity.
  - 1.2. This Policy sets out how we will deal with such concerns or complaints.
  - 1.3. We are committed to supporting our Volunteers to ensure they enjoy a positive beneficial experience from their work with us and expect all staff to play an active part in delivery of this objective and this includes responsibility to raising any concerns they may have about Volunteers' work.
  - 1.4. This Policy sets out how staff should raise such concerns and how their concerns will be addressed
  - 1.5. Any actions we take to amend or cease individual Volunteer activity will be taken only with the intention of safeguarding Volunteers, Service users and Staff and/or in the interests of providing effective, safe and trusted services.
  - 1.6. This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant RESTORE Policies relating to Volunteer activity.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 RESTORE'S **Volunteer Support Policy** sets out the support systems we have in place to ensure that Volunteers are supported to participate in our work to the fullest extent they wish.
- 2.2 These systems include a comprehensive induction, allocation of a mentor, team meetings, training and the volunteer council.
- 2.3 Responsibility for the work of Volunteers will follow the normal line management chain, with the exception that ultimate (staff) responsibility will sit with the Head of Volunteering and Training.

## 3. Raising concerns and complaints by Volunteers

- 3.1 We recognise that from time to time in any organisation concerns may arise. Our aim is to support a culture that encourages any concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity so they can be addressed and resolved with the minimum of impact on those involved.
- 3.2 We encourage Volunteers to raise any concerns with their staff mentor as soon as they become an issue. These may include:
- The type of activity undertaken (too demanding/ not stretching enough)
  - The commitment time (too much/ too little)
  - The location of the activity
  - Support given (or the lack of it)
  - Any changes to the Volunteers ability or suitability and future availability to undertake the allocated activity (eg: changes in health or wellbeing, other commitments or DBS status)
  - Specific interactions with or concerns about service users, staff or other volunteers
  - Learning and Development opportunities
  - Or anything else that is relevant to the volunteering activity
- 3.3 It is usually easiest to address concerns where these are raised in person, but if preferred volunteers may wish to write down their concerns and send or email them to the relevant person.
- 3.4 Where this does not produce a satisfactory response, or the concern involves the Volunteers' staff mentor, Volunteers should raise the concern with the Head of Volunteering and Training or Volunteering Coordinator
- 3.5 In the event that a Volunteer wishes to raise a serious complaint which they believe requires immediate action they may wish to refer this instead to the Head of Volunteering and Training or Volunteering Coordinator
- 3.6 RESTORE will take any concerns or complaints raised by Volunteers seriously and will review the information presented, investigate as necessary, seek further clarification where required, and seek an appropriate solution.
- 3.7 Outcomes of these considerations will be fed back to and discussed with the Volunteer and we will seek to agree actions with the Volunteer where possible.
- 3.8 We will usually aim to resolve any concerns within two weeks, but this may vary dependent on the particular circumstances of the issue.

## **4. Staff Raising concerns or complaints regarding Volunteers**

- 4.1 Where staff mentors identify concerns about the work of Volunteers they must be addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.2 Unless otherwise indicated (see 4.4 Serious Concerns) the staff member should arrange to meet with the Volunteer to explain the nature of the organisation's concerns and to seek to understand the background to the concern from the Volunteer's perspective.
- 4.3 Depending on the severity of the concern and the Volunteer's response to the concern, the solutions

may include:

- A temporary or permanent change to the type of activity
- Further training
- A temporary or permanent change of location
- A temporary or permanent change of volunteering hours
- Closer support or a period of shadowing
- Termination of the Volunteering activity
- Referral to Restore services or other appropriate support
- Retraining i.e. reinforce Boundaries Training

4.4 Any proposed changes should be discussed with the Volunteer and where possible agreed with them and then communicated to the Volunteers Line Manager and to the Director of Volunteer and Training office for recording.

## **4.5 In the event of a serious concern:**

4.5.1 In the rare event of a serious concern arising about a Volunteer's activity action must be taken swiftly both for the protection of the Volunteer and of our Service users and the reputation of Restore. Examples of serious concerns are provided in the Appendices. These are not exclusive and staff are expected to exercise reasonable judgement taking into account the circumstances of the issues in deciding whether their concerns need to be escalated.

4.6 The Project Manager (or in their absence the Head of Volunteer and Training or Volunteering Coordinator) should be alerted immediately of a serious concern and a written record made of the events leading to the concern.

4.7 The Line Manager will remove the Volunteer from the allocated activity, advise them of the reason for the serious concern and ask them to refrain from the activity until the situation has been considered. Depending on the circumstances it may be necessary to ask the Volunteer not to attend RESTORE premises to allow a period for resolution.

4.8 Where a safeguarding issue has arisen the matter must be referred to the Senior Management Team who will advise on necessary actions in line with normal Safeguarding procedures as outlined in the **safeguarding policy and safeguarding guidelines**.

4.9 Where the matter is alleged to involve an illegal or Criminal act the Head of Volunteer and Training must be advised immediately and together with the Chief Executive or a member of the Board will manage referral to the appropriate authorities.

4.10 Where appropriate, consideration should also be given to referring the Volunteer back to Restore services to provide on-going support (or otherwise to another appropriate organisation).

## **5 Responsibilities and review**

5.1 The Head of Volunteer and Training is responsible for ensuring the regular review and maintenance of this Policy.

5.2 All staff acting as Volunteer mentors must ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and for providing consistent support to their Volunteers.

## **6 Appendices**

### **Volunteer work: Serious concerns guidelines**

1. Examples of serious concerns which must be escalated immediately to the Project Manager and where indicated to the Director of Volunteering and Training are given below. These are not exclusive and staff are expected to exercise reasonable judgement taking into account the circumstances of issues not listed here in deciding whether their concerns need to be escalated.
  - Safeguarding of the service user or volunteer \*\*
  - Criminal activity \*\*
  - Use of alcohol or drugs impacting on activity
  - Threats of harm (to self or others)\*\*
  - Misuse/ theft of organisations resources\*
  - Inappropriate behaviour – including comments/language/dress/
  - Not observing appropriate boundaries- personal disclosure, inappropriate relationships etc
  - Causing or potentially causing reputational harm to the organisation
  - Intentional breach of confidentiality\*
  - Serious abuse of RESTORE's IT system (e.g. accessing or downloading inappropriate material)\*
  - An act of direct discrimination, harassment or bullying
  - Deliberate or reckless acts which are prejudicial to health and safety at work.
2. Events indicated \*\* must always be referred to the Director of Volunteering and Training and external bodies.