

Problem Solving-Volunteers Policy

Date approved by the Connected Together CIC Board	Ratified by email January 2023
Author/Responsible Person	Michelle Wright
Next revision due	January 2026
Staff/volunteer training delivered	Included in staff and volunteer induction and referred to as part of everyday practice
Date sent to staff	16 th January 2023
	This policy covers Connected Together CIC and <i>all</i> its contracts and managed organisations, for example Healthwatch North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) and Healthwatch Rutland (HWR).
Checked for rebranding	Michelle Wright – 24/03/2022
Signed off by CEO	Kate Holt – 14/09/2022
Checked By	Catherine Maryon (CTCIC Director) – 31/10/2022

Responsibilities

1 CTCIC board

Has overall responsibility for volunteers and staff within CTCIC

2 CTCIC Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

CTCIC board has delegated to the CTCIC CEO the responsibility for developing a strategy, policies and procedures for volunteering at CTCIC and to ensure these are implemented effectively.

3 CTCIC Staff and volunteers

Volunteers will liaise directly with either the volunteer lead officer or to a project lead, who will in turn report to the CEO.

All CTCIC staff and volunteers are required to read and implement the volunteer strategy, supporting policies and procedures.

Problem Solving Policy

Scope

Occasionally issues can arise when someone is volunteering with us. It is important to have procedures in place to help deal with any issues before they become bigger problems

Volunteers, although valued by CTCIC, are not employees and have no contractual obligation to the organisation. CTCIC will try to resolve fairly any problems that people who volunteer with CTCIC may experience. The aim is to offer the opportunity to discuss any issues and facilitate a solution. This may lead to agreements about changes in behaviour or expectations, which will be monitored and reviewed.

Process

- Volunteers or staff should raise any problems in a timely manner usually within 30 days of the incident occurring. This is in order to ensure organisational memory of the incident is not lost
- Where possible the problem should be raised with the person concerned (see below)
- All complaints will be treated confidentially, and should only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue
- Full written records will be kept of the problem, interviews and meetings and will be kept in sealed files with the CTCIC CEO. Copies will be provided for the complainant within 10 working days after first being checked for factual accuracy and agreed by the CTCIC CEO
- Meetings will be held confidentially and with adequate time allowed
- Complainants will be kept informed at every step of the procedure
- Volunteers have the right to be accompanied by a colleague, friend or representative in any meetings that form part of the problem-solving process

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

If possible, volunteers should in the first instance raise issues calmly and directly with the person concerned. (Staff should raise any issues with volunteers with their line manager/volunteer lead in the first instance). However, if volunteers do not feel this is possible or this first approach has not resolved the concerns then the concerns should be raised with the volunteer lead (or, if the matter involves the volunteer lead, with the CEO). The CEO or volunteer lead will talk through the issues and agree a course of action and timescales. If necessary, a follow up meeting will be arranged. Notes will be taken of conversations, including the nature of the problem and any actions taken.

Possible ways forward

If the difficulty relates to another Connected Together CIC volunteer or staff member, this might include setting up a meeting between both parties and the volunteer lead or for the volunteer lead to speak to that person and for written recommendations being copied to both parties.

Volunteers and staff have the option of taking the matter to stage two of the problem-solving procedure if they wish or if they are not satisfied with informal resolution. In certain circumstances where informal resolution is not appropriate the volunteer lead will refer the problem straight to stage 2.

Volunteers should try to address issues regarding any CTCIC staff member with the person concerned if they feel able. However, if the volunteer does not want to do this, the process can start at stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Those issues which cannot be resolved informally will move to stage two: the formal resolution stage of the process:

- A meeting will be arranged between the volunteer, the chair of CTCIC and the CEO. If the complaint refers to the chair of CTCIC, or the CEO, they will be replaced by an independent director/s.
- Written notes of the meeting will be taken of:
 - issues raised
 - areas of agreement/disagreement about the issues raised or any actions taken to resolve issues to date
 - if appropriate the chairperson will also talk to/meet with any other parties involved in the problem with a view to facilitating a resolution to the issue.
 - the volunteer/staff member will be informed about progress/the outcome within 10 working days

Stage 3: Appeal Process

Volunteers who are not happy with the outcome from stages 1 and 2 can use the appeals process. (Staff will need to refer to the Staff Grievance Policy too). For this, a special meeting, comprising at least three members of the CTCIC board nominated by the chairperson, will be called to consider the problem.

The volunteer will be asked to this meeting, which will take place within two weeks of the volunteer/staff member notifying CTCIC that they wish to use the appeals process.

The decision of this group is to be considered final and will be produced in writing within 10 working days of the meeting.

Stage 4: Exit Procedure

If an issue is identified that CTCIC and the volunteer/staff member cannot resolve in partnership, it is important that both parties feel able to withdraw from the problem. In this the volunteers circumstances will be asked to leave the organisation. If a serious issue (for example theft, violence or a safeguarding concern) arises, the volunteer may be asked to leave immediately. This is because they are no longer supporting the aims and core values of the organisation and will have breached the CTCIC Code of Conduct and supporting policies and procedures. (If the issue is one regarding a staff member and is considered serious then the Staff Disciplinary Policy will be referred to and may then also apply).

Conducting the exit interview for volunteers

1. The meeting will take place in a confidential setting
2. The meeting will be followed up with a letter to re-iterate the decision for dismissal as well as outlining the reasons why
3. Staff and other volunteers will be notified of the outcome, but no details given of the reasons for the dismissal

2.1 Ending your volunteer involvement

Feedback Process

Volunteers may wish to cease their volunteering role for many reasons. It is helpful if you could notify the staff team that you will no longer be volunteering for CTCIC or any of the organisations it manages (including CTCIC, HWR and HWNW). This will mean we are able to remove your details from our volunteer register and prevent you receiving further communications from us.

We also like to take the opportunity to thank you for the volunteer work you have carried out for us. It is also useful to understand why you are leaving, whether you would have stayed if things had been different, and what thoughts you have on how to improve the volunteering experience for others.

Volunteer Exit Forms

All volunteers who cease volunteering will be offered the opportunity to fill in a short Volunteer Exit Form. Your input is very valuable, and we welcome any information, suggestions and recommendations you are prepared to share about any aspect of your volunteering experience. CTCIC uses an exit form to enable us to compare feedback from other departing volunteers and to note any emerging patterns.

Exit Interview

If you are available to attend a brief exit interview, either on the phone or face-to-face, we can discuss your feedback with you in more depth.

Where issues come to light

If your completed exit interview form and/or face-to-face interview brings up issues that need addressing, we will endeavour to do something about it. If this involves others, it is important that we have your signed permission on the exit interview form to act upon your comments and suggestions without identifying the volunteer.