

Volunteering – Trouble-Shooting Procedure

This procedure outlines the processes for managing and trouble-shooting challenging situations which arise within the context of volunteering within NHS Lothian. The aim is to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in supporting volunteers and addressing concerns which may arise throughout a volunteers' time volunteering in the organisation. Wherever possible NHS Lothian seeks to resolve issues with and relating to volunteers informally, through the provision of discussion and support but there are occasions where more formal processes may be necessary.

- There are four areas where this procedure can apply:
 - Capability: a volunteer's ability to undertake their volunteering role.
 - Performance: how well a volunteer is performing their volunteering role.
 - Conduct: a volunteers' behaviour when taking part in their volunteering.
 - Feedback and complaints: when a volunteer raises an issue about their experience volunteering.

1.0 Expectations

NHS Lothian seeks to create enjoyable and fulfilling volunteer roles which give meaning and purpose to the volunteers carrying them out. All volunteers are expected to adhere to a minimum commitment of volunteering within the organisation and to align with our values and behaviours. Expectations of volunteer conduct, capability and performance will be communicated throughout the volunteering journey via:

- Volunteer role descriptions will detail tasks and relevant quality standards.
- Interview discussions will be values and behaviours based and will focus on commitment expected from volunteers.
- Interview discussions will determine whether any adjustments are needed to support volunteers in their roles.
- Occupational Health referrals will be made where volunteers' declare a health condition which may impact on their ability to volunteer safely. This will be done in conversation with the Voluntary Services Manager.
- Induction training and associated handouts will set out and reinforce expectations.
- Placement and local induction discussions will revisit key concepts and check understanding.
- Volunteer agreement will be discussed and signed by each new volunteer ensuring comprehension of the commitment and expectations.

- Expectations will be reiterated where appropriate throughout training, reviews, and ongoing contact between volunteers and their Voluntary Service Manager.

2.0 Ongoing Support and Communication

- Volunteers will receive regular correspondence from their Voluntary Service Manager about relevant information to their role and their experience e.g., (regular reviews, site or ward information and updates, changes to processes or procedures impacting their volunteering, ward closures, staffing changes etc).
- Volunteers will also have access to support from their Voluntary Service Manager through email, SMS, Microsoft Teams, or face to face throughout their volunteering during the Voluntary Service Managers working hours.
- Voluntary Service Managers will keep a record of shifts volunteers cannot or do not attend so that concerns can be addressed promptly. Volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns about attending their volunteering with their manager as soon as possible.
- Reflection sessions and feedback mechanisms (e.g., QR codes, suggestion boxes) will be utilised to enhance communication.

3.0 Managing and trouble-shooting challenging situations

3.1. Informal process

Dealing with issues which relate to volunteers' conduct, performance or capability does not automatically mean that a formal process is required. We will always seek to address any concerns early and where possible, informally, to prevent the need for any further or more formal action.

For new or minor issues such as poor timekeeping, non-attendance, inappropriate or incorrect actions, infection control adherence, feedback from wards or departments etc, these will be addressed informally in the first instance. The Voluntary Service Manager may raise concerns with volunteers using their preferred contact method, referencing the issue, NHS values and expectations of our volunteers.

During this correspondence, the Voluntary Service Manager will seek to identify whether additional training, support or reasonable adjustments to the volunteering role or environment might help reduce the issues which are present. If health concerns or disability are identified, the Voluntary Service Manager may discuss a referral to NHS Lothian Occupational Health Service for further guidance and recommendations.

If the issues raised persist beyond this initial discussion, a second communication will be instigated with the volunteer, indicating that concerns remain and further action may be needed, including in some instances volunteers being asked to step down from their role if improvements cannot be made. A final opportunity for improvement will be offered with a review after four weeks.

In most instances this should be sufficient and no further action will be required. All correspondence in relation to conduct, capability and performance issues should be documented in the volunteer's record on the Volunteer Management System.

3.2. Formal process

Where there is a more serious issue (e.g., theft, fraud, harassment or bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour etc) or where there is no improvement in relation to issues previously addressed informally a more formal process will be instigated.

In these situations the volunteer will be informed at the earliest opportunity in writing of the issues raised as a concern. Depending on the circumstances, the Voluntary Service Manager may ask the volunteer to pause their volunteering until an investigation can be carried out and an outcome agreed.

Where this is a new issue the Voluntary Service Manager for the Volunteer will investigate the issue. Where this a continuation from the informal process to formal, another Voluntary Service Manager will investigate the issue. The volunteer will be informed of who this is during this initial communication.

Once the investigation is completed (this will be done as swiftly as possible but may take up to four weeks depending on the complexity of the situation and number of individuals involved) a review meeting will be scheduled. The review meeting will be attended by the investigating member of the Voluntary Service Team and the volunteer. The volunteer may bring a representative or support if they wish. The meeting can take place in person or via MS Teams.

During the review meeting, the findings from the investigation will be shared with the volunteer.

The following are possible outcomes of an investigation;

- No action – if allegations are not upheld
- Formal warning – accompanied by clear expectations of future conduct
- Formal warning – accompanied by clear expectations of future conduct, time bound improvement plan and review date and an indication that if improvement is not achieved then their volunteering will be terminated at the review meeting
- Termination of placement with immediate effect with written confirmation to follow

4.0 How to Make a Complaint

Complaints should be made within 6 months of the incident or awareness of the issue.

- Stage 1 – Early Resolution: Aim to resolve within 5 working days.
- Stage 2 – Investigation: Acknowledgement within 3 working days, full response within 20 working days.

Where there are significant service pressures or unplanned absence and this timeframe cannot be upheld, this will be clearly communicated with the volunteer.

Volunteers can raise complaints by:

- Speaking directly to their Voluntary Services Manager or another staff member.
- Emailing the Volunteering Service at Loth.VolunteerEnquiries@nhs.scot

Complaints should include:

- Full name and contact details.
- A clear description of the issue, including dates and locations.
- Desired outcome or resolution.

Stage 1 – Early Resolution

- The Voluntary Service Manager will attempt to resolve straightforward complaints quickly and informally.
- Outcomes may include an apology, explanation, or immediate corrective action.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

- For complex or unresolved complaints.
- Led by an alternative Voluntary Services Manager or a designated senior staff member.
- A written response will be provided, addressing all points raised.

Support for Volunteers making a complaint

Volunteers may seek support from an advocate or representative (this could include a member of staff, a family member or friend or another volunteer).

Where a complaint is raised and another policy or procedure applies e.g., Bullying and Harassment Policy this will be discussed with the Volunteer and an agreement made on how to proceed.

Appeals Process

Volunteers may appeal formal decisions by writing to the Head of Volunteering within 7 days.

If unsatisfied, they may escalate to the Associate Nurse Director for Patient Experience, whose decision is final.

5.0 Associated materials/references

- [Volunteering in NHS Lothian Policy](#)
- [Volunteer role creation procedure](#)
- [Volunteer recruitment procedure](#)
- Volunteer role description template
- [Volunteering Well – NHS Lothian Volunteering Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028](#)
- Volunteer Induction Training Materials

6.0 Appendix

NHS Lothian – Volunteer Code of Conduct and Agreement

All members of the NHS Lothian Team and representatives of the organisation, volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Volunteers will:

- Embrace and put into action NHS Lothian's values of Quality, Dignity and Respect, Care and Compassion, Openness, Honesty and Responsibility and Teamwork.
- Present themselves in a professional manner, with respect to appropriate clothing, **personal hygiene, body odour** and appearance.
- Ensure that they behave in a sensitive manner and not generate offense.
- Respect the privacy of patients, visitors, staff and volunteers.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times unless an individual is at risk of harm.
- Speak up if they are concerned about themselves or others.
- Adhere to hand washing/gel and infection control guidelines.
- Familiarise themselves with and adhere to all relevant policies and procedures.

Volunteers will not:

- Use profane, discriminatory or sexualised language.
 - Take drugs or alcohol on the premises, or arrive to volunteer under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - Provide medical or health advice or engage in any medical or clinical tasks.
 - Engage in any task for which they have not been appropriately trained.
 - Take photographs on NHS Lothian premises including outside spaces without permission.
 - Post anything on social media about volunteering with NHS Lothian without prior consent.
 - Commit theft by stealing from patients or from the organisation.
 - Bully or harass a patient, visitor, staff member or another volunteer.
 - Raise their voice in anger or behave in a violent or aggressive way at any time to anyone.
 - Breach confidentiality.
 - Commit gross negligence (the act of showing a severe and reckless disregard for the lives or safety of another person. It involves a conscious and reckless indifference to the well-being of others).
 - Commit gross insubordination (Insubordination is a deliberate act of defiance, disobedience, or refusal to follow a manager's instructions in relation to their volunteering).
- NHS Lothian has a Volunteer Trouble-Shooting Procedure which details both formal and informal processes to manage situations where volunteer conduct fails to meet the desired levels.
- As a Volunteer:
- I have read my volunteer role description and commit to work within the boundaries laid out in this and to carry out the tasks to the best of my ability. If I encounter issues which

make this challenging, I understand it is my responsibility to inform my Voluntary Services Manager at the earliest opportunity.

- I commit to preserving confidentiality at all times and relating to all aspects of my role.
- I commit to uphold NHS Lothian's values and behaviours.
- I commit to carrying out the tasks of my role in a non-judgmental way and to treating all individuals with respect and dignity.
- I understand that appropriate behaviour is essential at all times while volunteering at NHS Lothian. I understand that should my behaviour fall below the level expected the Managing Volunteer Conduct Procedure applies.
- I understand that I am volunteering in a health care setting and the associated risks involved.
- I will not willingly expose myself to danger. I will avoid contact with all chemical agents, blood or body fluids, and as well as ensuring I do not undertake any manual handling of patients.
- I understand that NHS Lothian expects me to volunteer for agreed minimum commitment of hours a week for a duration of 6 months. To the best of my ability, I agree to this commitment and to being reliable, punctual, and informing my Voluntary Service Manager at the earliest opportunity if I am unable to attend.
- I understand provision of a written reference is dependent on my ability to meet the minimum commitment to carry out my volunteering duties honestly and to the best of my ability. Should my conduct or attendance fall short, I understand NHS Lothian reserves the right to withhold references.
- I understand I have a responsibility to adhere to and comply with NHS Lothian Policies, procedures, and guidance where it is applicable to my volunteering.
- I understand I have a responsibility to adhere to and comply with health and safety instructions at all times. I commit to:
 - Taking care of my own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
 - Co-operating with NHS Lothian in health and safety matters.
 - Not misusing or interfering with anything provided for health and safety purposes.
 - Notifying my manager or person in charge of any area they visit where they identify any health and safety gaps or failings.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to inform NHS Lothian of any changes to my health during the period I am a volunteer. I understand this may include a referral to Occupational Health services to determine whether these changes may impact my ability to volunteer with NHS Lothian or may put others at risk.
- If I leave my volunteering role, I will return my ID badge and uniform.

By signing this document, you are confirming and accepting its content.

– Name (printed):	–
– Signature:	–
– Date:	–