

not because they're fed up with you. Basically you want some feedback from them and this is the time to get it.

- Write up questions you would like them to answer such e.g. Did they feel valued/supported while they worked for you?
- Make a list of their achievements and tell them what these have meant to the organisation.
- Agree that the interview can be conducted orally or on paper.
- Be prepared to take constructive criticism as the volunteer may be more honest than usual!
- Reassure them that what they tell you will be treated in strict confidence, although any improvements they may suggest may be acted upon.
- Give them time to make general comments.
- If you don't agree with what they say, don't let it show and end up arguing.
- If relevant, ask if there was anything you could have done to keep them.
- Hand over a reference if they've asked for one.

#### Useful links:

##### Problem solving templates:

[www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/dealingwithproblems/sampleproblemsolvingprocedures.htm](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/dealingwithproblems/sampleproblemsolvingprocedures.htm)

##### Accessible complaints policy

[www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/dealingwithproblems/example+complaints+procedures.htm](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/dealingwithproblems/example+complaints+procedures.htm)

##### Trade Unions who will help volunteers

Community and Youth workers union:

[www.cywu.org.uk](http://www.cywu.org.uk)

Unison:

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

## Contact us

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*Good practice guides for*

*Volunteer-involving*

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*This snapshot on saying goodbye to Volunteers was kindly written by Monique Munroe on behalf of Poole & Bournemouth Volunteer Centres.*

How to...say goodbye to volunteers

01202 466130

## The right way to say goodbye

This leaflet comes with a warning. You need to make a clear distinction between disciplining staff and disciplining volunteers. Have a separate procedure for each and check out the useful links given.

### Why have a problem-solving procedure?

Because it shows that:

- Your organisation follows best practice.
- Volunteers are treated fairly (volunteers are not covered by employment or equal opportunities legislation. In fact they only have the same legal rights as the general public when it comes to health, safety & data protection).
- they are not discriminated against.
- You have a procedure for dealing with problems.

If you have to deal with a problem volunteer and the problem hasn't been resolved through 1-1 sessions. The first step is the: **Oral discussion**, taking the following into consideration:

- Take notes
- Explain what you discuss will be confidential. (Only discuss it with another member of staff if they are the person to whom the volunteer reports).
- Discuss issues which may be affecting the reason why their behaviour is a problem. Some volunteers may be unaware of what they are doing. It can be a shock if it's brought to their attention, but by doing so it enable them to bring about a change.
- Refer them back to your organisation's policies and procedures and volunteer role description.
- Are there any training needs?
- Do they need extra support or supervision?
- Set a date for a review.

Once you've had your review and there's still been no change, you can then issue a: **Written Warning In the letter:**

- Outline the reason for the complaint.
- Tell them they are entitled to state their case. This can be the volunteer manager or other senior member of staff.

- They are entitled to bring along a friend to this meeting.
- Further objectives could be set and help offered.

If you then decide to ask the volunteer to leave they should be given a right to appeal in writing to a member of the management committee. They should not be doing their voluntary work for you during this period.

Your organisation may have a sub-committee which will hear appeals. If the volunteer takes this step, they are entitled to have a friend with them at any meeting. Once the chair or sub-committee has made their decision it is final.

### Practical aspects of 'saying goodbye'

Prior to this, check to see that they are not owed any expenses. If so, take these to the final meeting.

- Ensure this takes place in private.
- Be quick and to the point.
- Give them any personal items back.
- Don't enter into any discussion or banter.
- Try to keep your emotions in check.
- Write the volunteer a letter confirming why you made the decision.
- Inform staff, other volunteers and clients that the volunteer has left. Do not give any details.

Finally, don't forget yourself. After all you have been through a stressful few weeks and may welcome the opportunity to talk through what has happened with your line manager and discuss the lessons which have been learnt from the experience.

### This is how the CAB deals with the problem:

- The Volunteer Manager raises the issue with the volunteer. Where appropriate a course of action should be agreed.
- If the problem reoccurs you may wish to have another meeting and agree a further course of action.
- Should the issue be a serious problem, such as a deliberate breach of confidentiality, or the initial problem cannot be resolved then the decision needs to be taken as to whether or not to ask the volunteer to leave. It is very important that everything is fully explained and

understood, and the volunteer given the opportunity to reply. Once you have got to this stage, it may be impossible for the relationship to survive. Try to do all you can to keep the goodwill of the person involved, and also of the other volunteers. If the volunteer is asked to leave, the decision should be made by the Bureau Manager and confirmed in writing with the reasons explained.

- If the volunteer is not happy with the decision, s/he may raise it with the trustee board within five working days of the decision having been made. The trustee board's decision is final (the trustee board may wish to appoint a sub-committee to deal with all volunteering issues).

At any stage, the volunteer may be accompanied by a friend if s/he wishes.

### Your volunteer has a complaint against you. Oral complaint:

- Discuss this with the volunteer making the complaint.
- If the complaint is against you, refer this to another manager.
- tell them they can have a friend with them.
- Draw up a plan of action.

However, if the volunteer still isn't happy they will need to put their **complaint in writing**:

- Refer to your problem-solving procedure to agree the time frame (usually a month).
- You then respond in the given time limit.
- If your volunteer is still unhappy they can speak to the management committee.

### Right of appeal

- This could be done by forming a sub-committee to deal with complaints.
- The Chair or the sub-committee must reply to the complaint within a given time. Once made their decision is final.

**Note:** *Volunteers have no legal rights unless they can prove they are employees.*

### Exit Interviews

Your volunteer may be leaving for a good reason,

**Asking someone to leave** is always a last resort, unless, of course they have done something serious e.g. a physical attack on staff/ volunteers/clients.

If, however, you find yourself in the unenviable position of considering asking a volunteer to leave, deal with it as soon as possible. Putting it off doesn't help anyone. If you act immediately the problems will still be fresh in everyone's minds.

Asking a volunteer to leave can be a very stressful time. You may even feel that it has become a personal issue between you and the volunteer. If this is the case, it can help to remember you are only:

- taking this action on behalf of your organisation and that you have a duty of care for the wellbeing of your staff/ volunteers/clients.
- following your organisation's policies and procedures.

Let's look at why you may be thinking of asking a volunteer to leave? I say 'thinking' because some of the following could be dealt with and improvements made if the volunteer is prepared to acknowledge the issues and change.

- They are upsetting other volunteers/staff/clients and complaints have been received.
- They won't do what you ask them to do.
- They use inappropriate language.
- They don't do any work, just chat and drink tea.
- Their behaviour towards staff/volunteers/clients of the opposite sex is inappropriate.
- You suspect them of abusing their privileges.
- They come to work under the influence of drink/drugs.
- They have broken confidentiality.

**Here's an example of a problem I came across.**

A volunteer refused to use a computer to do their work. Fortunately his manager managed to find him another role within the organisation which didn't need a computer and everyone was happy. Even so, the manager found the process stressful, as I'm sure the volunteer did.

So how can we avoid this situation? Communication is very important. Regular 1-1 sessions are a must, so you can nip any problems in the bud before they get bigger. However, from experience I know that a lot of volunteers don't want formal 1-1 sessions. All they want to do is their voluntary work. So a balance has to be found.

**Let's look at another example:**

Mildred has been working in a charity shop for five years and although she's always been a bit of a gossip, she works well. A new manager comes in and, in following head office guidelines, makes some changes which Mildred doesn't approve of. She moans and criticises them to her fellow volunteers. They are fed up with her and don't want to work the day she's in. What could the manager do?

To start with speak to her in private, taking notes....

- Explain why the changes are necessary e.g. Government guidelines, health and safety etc., (if this wasn't done before the changes were made).
- Check all the facts and information available about the issue in question and make every endeavour to explain to Mildred what is wrong and to resolve the situation.
- Check to see that her moaning isn't hiding the fact that she doesn't feel as confident about carrying out the role any more.
- Ask if she isn't happy or is bored with her current role. She might want to change and do some different work.
- If she has a support or social worker, discuss the issue with them. They may be able to find out the real reason if she appears unable to confide in you.
- Does she have problems at home? If so, these could be exacerbating her attitude in the shop.
- What does she like about her role?

If, having explored all avenues with Mildred, she refuses to change and refuses all your suggestions you may have no alternative but to retire her. You could suggest she tries something different with another organisation. Perhaps doing something that incorporates a hobby she has, or something which will use the positive skills she possesses. If your situation is more serious and can't be resolved by talking it through you should follow the problem solving procedure....