

Norfolk Autism Partnership Board Volunteer Problem Solving

Volunteers make a unique and valuable contribution to the NAPB. It is recognised that volunteers are not only an essential resource in helping us to achieve our goals, but that by providing opportunities for, and supporting volunteering, it helps to promote active citizenship and social inclusion.

Whilst the involvement of volunteers is generally a positive experience for everyone involved, there are times when things can go wrong. A volunteer may wish to make a complaint about something or someone, and similarly the volunteer's contribution may decline, or someone may wish to make a complaint against a volunteer.

These are rare occurrences, but in an effort to ensure a fair, equitable, and consistent approach to dealing with them, it is essential to have a formal procedure. This document sets out that procedure.

When reading this procedure, it is important to note that volunteers have no legal employment rights and therefore are not subject to, or protected by, the usual employee policies and procedures.

If a complaint is to be made by an employee about another employee, the appropriate organisations complaints procedure will apply.

Some points to remember

- All complaints must be treated confidentially and will only be discussed where appropriate with the NAPB Co-Chairs, Working Group Leads and those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue.
- An effort should be made to resolve the problem informally at a local level.
- A written record of all incidents and complaints will be maintained by the Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator.

- Enough time will be allowed for all problem-solving meetings, and they will be conducted in a private place.
- Volunteers have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or friend in any meetings that form part of the problem-solving process.

If a Volunteer makes a complaint

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to complain if they have been unfairly treated.

Stage 1 - Verbal complaint

Initial complaints, against another NAPB member, should be discussed with the individual with every effort made to resolve the problem informally at a local level. Seeking clarification and understanding.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing (stage 2) to the Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator at contact@norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk.

Stage 2 - In writing

A complaint in writing must be done within 20 working days, excluding bank holidays or weekends, of the verbal complaint.

The Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator:

- will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of receipt.
- inform Co-Chair/Working Group Lead
- log the complaint

An investigation into the complaint will be directed by the NAPB Co-Chairs to an appropriate working group and validated by the NAPB Co-Chairs. The results and

subsequent actions will be discussed with the volunteer within 20 working days of the original letter. This is called the decision meeting.

During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a colleague or friend, not acting in a legal capacity, if they wish.

The actions or decision taken should be confirmed in writing to the volunteer.

Stage 3 - Right to appeal

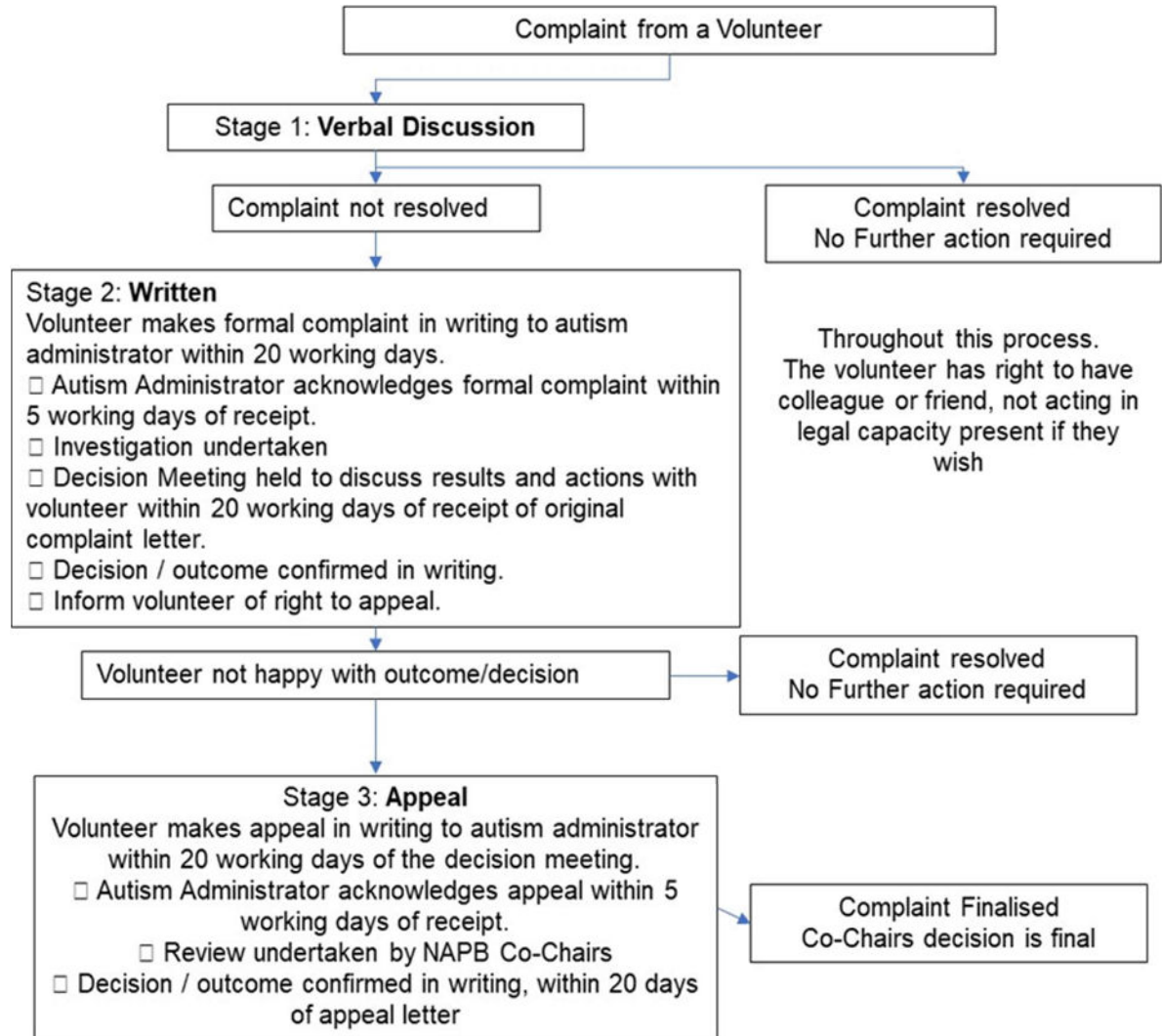
If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal in writing to the Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator (contact@norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk) within 20 working days of the decision meeting.

The Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator:

- Will acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days of receipt
- Inform the Co-Chair/Working Group Lead
- Log the appeal

The Co-Chairs will review the investigation and respond within 20 working days of the right to appeal letter. The Co-Chairs findings are final.

Volunteer Complaints Procedure Diagram



Complaints about a volunteer

This part of the problem-solving procedure gives the volunteer the right to appeal and state their case.

Sometimes minor issues can arise during the course of volunteering, such as a volunteer not meeting the required standards when undertaking their role or being unreliable. However, if a more serious issue occurs then immediate action may be necessary.

Minor issues may be quite easy to resolve by the Co-Chairs/Working Group Leads, without resorting to formal procedures. This checklist suggests how some issues can be dealt with in this way:

- A comprehensive induction to the NAPB on commencing a volunteer placement.
- Assessment of the volunteer's training and support needs and addressing them.
- Providing the volunteer with a period of support and supervision.
- Undertaking regular 6 monthly reviews with the volunteer.

However, if these do not address the issues then the following procedure should be instigated.

Stage 1 – Verbal discussion

Initial complaints, against NAPB volunteers, should be discussed with the individual, with every effort made to resolve the problem informally at a local level. This is about individuals seeking clarification and understanding of the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, then the individual may make a formal complaint about the volunteer in writing (Stage 2) to the Norfolk Autism Partnership Coordinator (contact@norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk).

Stage 2 – Performance discussion

The Co-Chair/Lead will discuss the issue with the volunteer.

- Identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil their role, and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary.
- Set a deadline for reviewing the situation.
- Document the discussion and the agreed actions.
- Notes of the meeting should be sent to the volunteer within 10 working days of the meeting.

During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a colleague or friend, not acting in a legal capacity, if they wish.

The actions or decision taken will be confirmed in writing to the volunteer.

- If there is insufficient improvement, the Co-Chair/Working Group Lead may need to adopt a more formal approach and move to stage 3 of the procedure and issue a written warning.

Stage 3 – Written warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the performance discussion, then the Co-Chair/Working Group lead will issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint.

The volunteer has the right to state their case, and to be accompanied by a colleague or friend, not acting in a legal capacity, if they wish.

Depending on the nature of the complaint:

- Further investigation of the issue may be needed.
- Further objectives could be set, and help offered to the volunteer.
- The volunteer's NAPB membership may be suspended pending the investigation.

Stage 4 – Final warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the written warning or in the case of misconduct (see code of conduct), then the Co-Chair/Working Group Lead will issue the volunteer with a final warning outlining the reason for the complaint.

The volunteer has the right to state their case, and to be accompanied by a colleague or friend, not acting in a legal capacity, if they wish.

Depending on the nature of the complaint:

- Further investigation of the issue may be needed.
- Further objectives could be set, and help offered to the volunteer.
- The volunteers NAPB may be suspended pending next steps.

Stage 5 – NAPB Membership Withdrawn

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the final warning or in the case of gross misconduct (see code of conduct), the next steps have taken place and further objectives set have not been achieved the NAPB Co-Chairs will withdraw NAPB membership.

- The volunteers NAPB membership will be withdrawn.
- The NAPB Co-Chairs decision is final.

Complaints about a Volunteer Procedure Diagram

