

Coventry Local Involvement Network (LINK) Problem Solving Procedure for LINK Volunteers

Scope

This document sets out how Coventry Local Involvement Network's (LINK) will address problems raised within the LINK by LINK volunteers.

Coventry LINK and the LINK Host organisation will try to resolve fairly any problems that people who volunteer within the LINK experience. The aim is to offer the opportunity to discuss any issues and facilitate a solution.

Problems or grievances raised by LINK Host Staff are covered by the Voluntary Action Coventry (VAC) Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure.

Process

Stage 1 informal resolution

- If possible volunteers should in the first instance raise issues directly with the party concerned. 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 LINK Project Manager (or if the matter involves the LINK Project Manager with VAC's Director of Policy and Partnerships).
- The LINK Project Manager 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 LINK volunteer might include setting up a meeting between both parties and the LINK Project Manager or the LINK Project Manager speaking to that person or written recommendations being copied to both parties.
- Volunteers 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 LINK Project Manager will refer the problem straight to stage 2.
- Volunteers should try to address issues regarding the LINK staff team 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 the LINK Steering Group and the LINK Project Manager (or if appropriate the Director of Policy and Partnerships) and at a mutually convenient time (if the issue raised relates to the Chair a nominee will be sought from the Steering Group).
- Written notes of the meeting will be taken of:
 - Issues raised
 - Areas of agreement/disagreement about the issues raised
 - Any actions taken to resolve issues to date.

The volunteer can also take their own notes if they wish.

If appropriate the Chair 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 will be informed about progress/the outcome within 2 weeks.

Stage 3: Appeal process

Volunteers who are not happy with the outcome from stages 1 and 2 can use the appeals process. For this a special meeting, comprising at least three members of the Steering Group nominated by the Chairperson, will be called to consider the problem. The volunteer will be asked to attend this meeting. This meeting will take place within 2 weeks of the volunteer notifying the Director of Policy and Partnerships and the Chair that they wish to use the appeals process.

The decision of this group is to be considered the LINK's final statement. This will be produced in writing within 2 weeks of the meeting.

Advocates

Volunteers who feel that they need someone to attend stage 2 and 3 meetings with them either to provide support or to advocate on their behalf can ask a friend or other volunteer to do this. This person must not be directly involved in the issues which have been raised.

Outcomes

At all stages an assessment will be made as to whether any party is in breach of the LINK code of conduct or if staff have breached any policies and procedures relating to their employment.

Therefore, matters can be referred to staff disciplinary processes or sanctions within the Coventry LINK Code of Conduct.