



When Things Go Wrong

Dealing with Complaints

We hope that everyone involved in your Company will enjoy being part of the organisation but we also realise that things can go wrong. Therefore, we have some guidelines for dealing with general complaints.

General Complaints:

If a young person or parent/carer has a general complaint arising from a situation within the company then they should follow the steps below;

1. Speak verbally to the Company Captain.
2. If unresolved then speak to the Company Chaplain. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner. They should be informed as soon as possible of the decision and the action, if any, that will be taken.
3. If unresolved then put complaint in writing to the church leadership body (eg Session). Anyone wishing to appeal a decision made regarding a complaint or grievance at level 1 and 2 should also address their complaints in writing to the local Church leadership.

Complaints involving Volunteers:

Girls' Brigade values all of our voluntary leaders and we hope and pray that their experience of GB will be a rewarding one. However, things can go wrong sometimes so GBNI have some guidelines to help deal with issues fairly and consistently. Where Church procedures already exist those may be followed instead.

GBNI cannot offer solutions, however staff at GBHQ may be able to assist with advice or information that could help with problem-solving. If required, one of the Chaplains from Executive or Brigade Council will meet with you and/or the volunteer(s) in an attempt to mediate in a difficult situation. For the purposes of this

section we refer to any volunteer leader - Captain, Officer, Sub-Officer or Associate - as a 'volunteer'.

Complaints about a Volunteer

Stage 1 - Verbal complaint

The first step is to discuss the complaint with the volunteer. There could be external factors influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. Discuss a way forward and set a deadline for reviewing the situation. If there is insufficient improvement, then you may need to adopt a more formal approach, such as issuing a written warning.

Stage 2 - Written warning

The Captain can issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the Captain or Chaplain. At the meeting the volunteer may be accompanied by the person of their choice. Further goals could be set, and help offered to the volunteer. However, if you decide to dismiss the volunteer, then the volunteer has the right to appeal. The decision to dismiss a volunteer should be a last resort.

Stage 3 - Right to appeal

If a volunteer has been dismissed then they should appeal in writing to the leadership body of the Church (eg. Session). The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The leadership body of the Church must respond within 14 days, and their decision is final.

Exceptions

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct, eg. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the

influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer must be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.

Complaints by a Volunteer

Stage 1: Verbal complaint

The volunteer (complainant) should discuss their complaint with the Company Captain. If the complaint is about the Captain, then the matter should be discussed with the Chaplain. If this does not resolve the issue, the complaint must be made in writing.

Stage 2: In writing

The volunteer should make their complaint in writing to the Chaplain within 14 days and should receive an initial reply within 14 days.

Stage 3 - Right to appeal

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, then they can appeal in writing to the leadership body of the Church (eg. Session). The leadership body must respond within 14 days*, and their decision is final.

* if an investigation is required the response may take longer than 14 days and this must be explained to the complainant.

Further info...

Please ask ... one of our Chaplains may be able to offer support or mediation in a difficult situation.

For further information please refer to the Girls' Brigade volunteer problem-solving procedure available from the leaders' section of www.gbni.co.uk in the GBNI Policies and admin folder. or contact the GBHQ for a copy.