

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE FOR BEREAVEMENT SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

### **Introduction**

There are occasionally times during the service of a volunteer that things go wrong – possibly in their dealings with their clients or in their relationships with other volunteers, staff, supervisor or co-ordinators. Every example has its own unique features, but the common factors are that they can cause a great deal of pain and concern and need to be dealt with sensitively and in a timely fashion.

It is important to bear in mind that shortcomings eg. of commitment, practice or breaks in boundaries or confidentiality need to be picked up at an early stage and shared with the volunteer or member of staff so that they are given an early opportunity to clarify, discuss and put things right.

Initially when problems crop up it is essential to check all the facts and information available about the issue in question and make every endeavour to explain to the volunteer or member of staff what is wrong and to resolve the situation. It is also important that the situation is discussed with the Chair of the Bereavement Service\* at an early stage. It is good practice and recommended that notes should be kept about what has happened.

It will be important, whenever possible, to talk to the individual, on an informal basis to get their version of what took place.

**Grounds for concern, and dismissal if unresolved**, include: breaches in confidentiality, not abiding by CARIS policies and procedures or professional standards (as embodied in the BACP code of ethics), and other offences such as theft, violence, malicious damage, providing false personal details, deliberate falsification of expenses claims when committed against ICBS and/or its volunteers and clients.

Following informal discussions the formal procedure outlined below should be followed.

\* Should the Chair of the Bereavement Service not be available at this or any other time during the process, the Secretary or another member of the Bereavement Service Committee should take the Chair's position.

## **Formal Disciplinary Procedure for Bereavement Service Volunteers**

### **Formal warning**

Following informal discussions, if appropriate, a formal warning will be issued to the volunteer by the Co-ordinator who will also inform the Chair of the Bereavement Service.

### **Action Plan**

A meeting will then be arranged with the volunteer where a plan of action can be prepared. This will include what is needed from the volunteer and the Co-ordinator to ensure that the issue can be resolved. The will include include a timescale and measurable targets together with an agreement that the volunteer will meet with the Co-ordinator to review progress. The Chair of the Bereavement Service will be informed about the action plan.

### **Progress Review**

If things improve following the forming of the action plan, the volunteer will be invited to demonstrate this, and if successful, the action plan can be regarded as complete. The Chair of the Bereavement Service will be informed that the issue has been resolved.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue it may be necessary to consider the dismissal of the volunteer.

## **Policy Guidelines for the Dismissal of a Volunteer**

If it is necessary to consider the dismissal of a volunteer, the Chair of the Bereavement Service should be informed of the situation and these guidelines should be followed. It is important that the volunteer has had the opportunity to present their case to the Co-ordinator before any decision for dismissal is taken.

The Chair of the Bereavement Service and members of the Management Committee should not be part of the decision for dismissal.

It should not be suggested that the volunteer leaves the service although this is an option they may wish to take. If they do, they should be made aware that they will not have an opportunity to present their case at a hearing.

If the Co-ordinator is considering dismissing a volunteer because their practice is causing ICBS or its clients to suffer or the volunteer is not wholly suited to continue as a volunteer with the service, the following steps should be taken.

**1. The Co-ordinator should suspend the volunteer with immediate effect.**

The ICBS Co-ordinator

has absolute discretion to suspend any volunteer if s/he considers that the interests of the service or the clients may suffer or that the volunteer is not wholly suited to remain a volunteer with ICBS.

may only suspend such a volunteer after informing the Chair of the Bereavement Service

should endeavour to share with the volunteer her/his reasons for suspension or termination but is not obliged to.

should endeavour to give the volunteer reasons for the suspension/termination.

They should only not give reasons if doing so would harm a client, the volunteer or any other volunteer in the service.

**2. The Co-ordinator should consult with the Chair of the Project Committee and Assistant Co-ordinator.**

**3. If it is agreed in step 2 there are grounds for dismissal, the Co-ordinator will call a meeting with the volunteer.**

The volunteer will be invited to bring a supporter (another volunteer or volunteer representative with ICBS) to the meeting, but the role of that person is of an observer only. Deaf volunteers will also require the presence of an interpreter and interpretation costs will be met by ICBS. It is advisable to also have the Assistant Coordinator present who will act as an observer.

At the meeting the Co-ordinator will:

Outline the complaint against the volunteer.

Tell them of their right to discuss this with the Chair of the Bereavement Service.

Suspend the volunteer temporarily to a specific finite date (unless already done in step 1).

Tell the volunteer there will be a further meeting following their discussion with the Chair of the Bereavement Service. (It is important that the volunteer realises that there will be another meeting whether or not they take up the option of approaching the Chair of the Bereavement Service.

**Make it clear that proceedings of all meetings about the complaint/dismissal will remain confidential between the parties involved, except where there is a need for discussion with other staff or Bereavement Service Committee members in order to rectify the situation.**

**4. The Co-ordinator should consult further with the Chair of the Bereavement Service.**

**5. The Co-ordinator will call a further meeting with the volunteer, the Chair of the Bereavement Service, and the Assistant Co-ordinator.**

At this meeting, having discussed the situation and heard all sides of the question follow one of the following courses of action:

dismiss the volunteer or give them the opportunity to resign

ask the volunteer to resume their work with the service

ask the volunteer to resume their work with the service after a suitable warning as to future behaviour, offering support and plans for retraining as appropriate.

All meetings and contact with the volunteer should be recorded and a copy given to the volunteer and to the Project and CARIS Management Committee Chairs.

**6. It is essential that following dismissal, the volunteer is told of his/her right to appeal to the Chair of the CARIS Management Committee and two other members of the Management committee.**

**Meeting with the Chair of the Project Committee:**

At the complainant's request, a meeting with the Chair of the Bereavement Service may be arranged. The person complaining may bring a supporter and the Chair of the Bereavement Service at his/her discretion may choose to invite the Secretary of the Bereavement Service Committee or another member of that Committee. The Co-ordinator or Assistant Co-ordinator will only be invited at the complainant's request and with the Bereavement Service Committee Chair's agreement. The purpose of the meeting will be to formally hear the complaint and to find a way to resolve the issue if possible.

**3. Bereavement Service Committee Final Decision:**

Following meeting with the person who is complaining, the Chair of the Bereavement Service Committee will discuss the situation with members of that Committee and with the Bereavement Service Co-ordinator. After this consultation the Chair of the Bereavement Service Committee will write a final letter outlining the Project Committee's response to the complaint. The letter will state that should the person wish to appeal against the Bereavement Service Committee's decision this appeal can be made to the Chair of the CARIS Committee.

## **Appeals:**

A sub-committee of the main CARIS Management Committee will hear appeals. The sub-committee will include the CARIS Chair and two other members of the committee. It is essential that these people have not been previously involved in the complaint.

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