



MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS/SITUATIONS

CLUB POLICY DOCUMENT

Managing challenging Volunteer situations and Managing Difficult Conversations

Club volunteers represent UOAPS with members and external clubs and partners, in the absence of a formal problem-solving process, it is simple for minor issues to spiral out of hand. In order to demonstrate how much your club values its volunteers it is important to have guidance on:

- What behaviours are acceptable through codes of conduct and communicate club values.
- How to respond to a challenging situation, which is important to protect everyone.
- Wellbeing and Protection policies to help keep everyone safe.
- How to deal with Complaints and Appeals
- Discipline policy for managing any incidents which require consequences for breaching the acceptable behaviours.

Having a clear process for managing difficult situations also shows that UOAPS will deal with situations with a consistent approach. It's essential that volunteers are treated fairly and ensure everyone is treated with respect. Any situations will be dealt with as effectively and quickly as possible.

As part of the volunteer inductions, there should be information on the problem-solving process along with other club policies. If volunteers are clear of the boundaries for their role, this often avoids misunderstandings from the start. Volunteers should be aware of the potential action that could be taken if there is a breach of these policies.

There are three areas where a managing challenging volunteer situation process can be applied:

- Capability: a volunteer's ability to undertake the role.
- Performance: how well a volunteer is performing the role.
- Conduct: behaviour when taking part in volunteering.



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Formal vs Informal Approaches

Managing challenges with volunteers does not automatically mean that a formal process should begin. There are other options which can be considered before a formal process commences. It is also important to note that even when a formal process has started, there could still be alternatives to asking someone to stop volunteering.

Informal Process

- Informal procedures aim to resolve behaviour or performance that gives cause for concern as soon as possible.
- Regular support meetings are important for consistent management and communication with volunteers. They provide a good opportunity to talk about performance or conduct, including any specific concerns or complaints raised by a volunteer, or about the volunteer.
- When issues arise a member of the UOAPS Executive Committee should meet with the volunteer as soon as possible to ask what their view on the situation is. This is to establish the facts surrounding the issue and agree with the volunteer the best solution to rectifying the issue. The timeframe for improvements and for any follow up meetings should also be decided and communicated.
- By meeting with the volunteer, what initially seems to be a serious problem may highlight a training need. Volunteers might not realise that something they're doing is a cause for concern, particularly if guidance or policy has changed since they joined the club.
- It can be difficult to give volunteers constructive feedback or raise issues, but a volunteer cannot be expected to improve or change the way they work if an issue has not been discussed with them. Often, they will not be aware they have done something wrong and will want to improve.
- If, after the agreed time, informal procedures do not bring a positive change, the UOAPS Executive Committee should initiate the formal process.

Formal Process

- If it is not possible to resolve issues using informal procedures, then a more formal process can be used to manage the situation.
- In some cases, if the issue is more serious, for example gross misconduct, then the formal process should begin sooner.
- Initial complaints should go to the person who supervises the volunteer. If the matter is not sorted out at this stage, the club should follow its complaints process.
- Volunteers should have the option of having a friend along to any meetings as part of this process. Any decisions, that are jointly agreed between you and the volunteer, on how to resolve the situation should be written down and communicated to the volunteer either in writing or via email.
- If a volunteer has to leave as a result of these proceedings, you should let them know as soon as possible, during a face-to-face meeting if practical, and followed up in writing. The relevant members of staff and volunteers should be made aware of the situation.
- The UOAPS Executive committee should refer to the other club policies and procedures around wellbeing, complaints and discipline to ensure any process being followed is the correct way to proceed.
- Asking a volunteer to leave can be extremely difficult. This may be needed if there is no satisfactory improvement in a volunteer's performance in the time frame discussed and agreed. The volunteer should be told as soon as possible of the reasons for this, the date on which their volunteering will end and their right of appeal.

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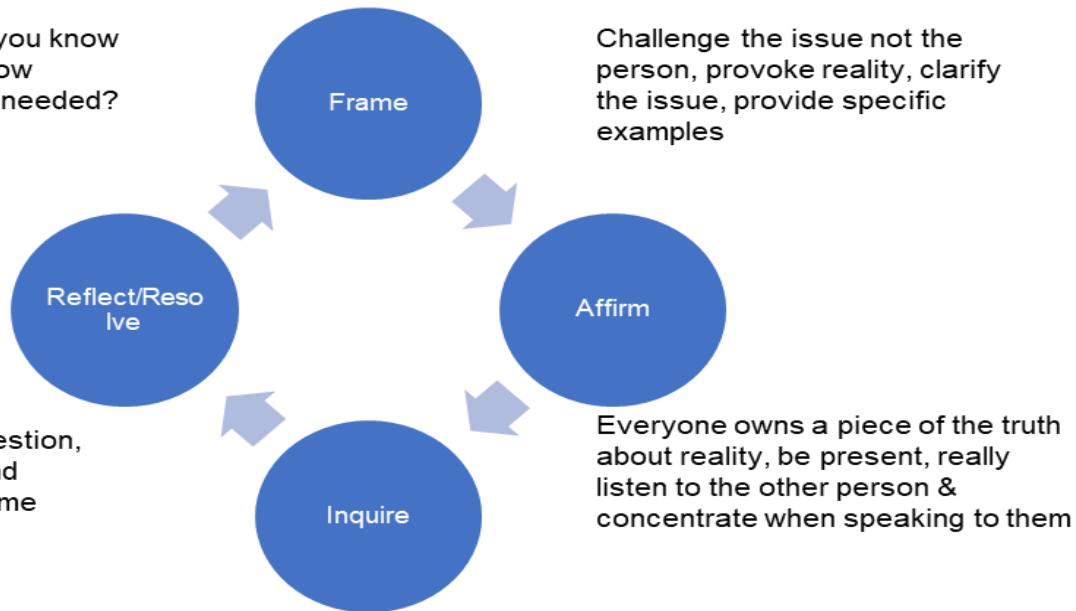
Managing Difficult Conversations

As volunteers it is sometimes difficult to have discussions with other volunteers around their work, commitment or behaviours. It is important that situations are addressed quickly. Below are some examples of how to have these conversations.

Fair Model

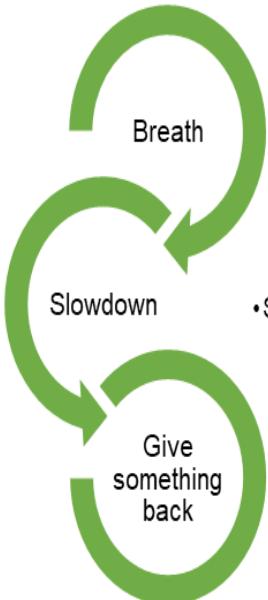
Step back – What do you know now that you didn't know before? What more is needed? Now what?

Ask genuine open question, listen seek to learn and understand, avoid blame



Simple dos and don'ts

DO's



Dont's

