

Volunteer Resolving Concerns Guidance



Please note this document replaces the Volunteer Problem Solving Guidance document.

Purpose

Volunteers are vital to the Alzheimer's Society. They enable us to reach further, shout louder and get closer to a world without dementia. Volunteering is usually a positive and rewarding experience for both volunteers and the Society, however, if concerns or issues do arise, it is important to have a process in place to ensure they are dealt with in a fair, consistent and respectful way.

Our Society's behavioural framework communicates the expectations of all volunteers and employees. These expectations enable us to recognise how our actions impact on each other and ultimately on the experience of people with whom we come into contact.

This document covers two processes:

- When a volunteer wishes to raise a concern with Alzheimer's Society (both informally and formally)
- When Alzheimer's Society wishes to raise a concern with a volunteer (both informally and formally)

Where a volunteer is making a complaint or allegation about an employee, different processes will be followed. If a situation becomes formal, the employee may be required to take part in the resolving concerns at work process. More information about this can be found on Arena.

If a volunteer wishes to complain, compliment or provide feedback about the Society or a service it provides which is not directly related to their volunteering experience with the Society, they can use the Alzheimer's Society feedback form which is available on our website.

When a volunteer wishes to raise a concern with Alzheimer's Society

1. Informal process

Volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns or issues about their volunteering with their role manager informally in the first instance. The role manager should meet with the volunteer, listen to and discuss their concerns and work with the volunteer to find a satisfactory solution and agree a timeframe for this to be implemented. The role manager should document this discussion, give the volunteer a copy and ensure a copy is put in the volunteer's file.

If the volunteer's concern regards their relationship with their role manager, the role manager's line manager should meet with the volunteer to discuss their concern. If the volunteer does not know who their role manager's line manager is, they can seek help from the Volunteering Support team to find out.

If the issue cannot be resolved through the meeting, the person who has conducted the meeting should inform the volunteer that they can choose to raise the concern formally and explain the process for doing so.

2. Formal process

If the informal process has been followed and failed to resolve the situation or the concern regards a more serious concern, the volunteer should raise the concern with their role manager's line manager formally. Where possible the volunteer should put their concern in writing to the line manager, giving as much detail as possible and outlining the desired solution. The line manager should acknowledge receipt within 7 working days of receiving it. If the volunteer would prefer to outline their concern verbally, they can request a meeting or phone call with the line manager.

The role manager's line manager should inform their own line manager that a formal concern has been raised. The Volunteering Support team must also be informed and in some cases, they will refer the case to the relevant National Volunteering Development Advisor – Delivery. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for the role manager's line manager to lead the formal process, in which case another appropriate member of staff should lead the investigation, as outlined below.

The concern and all the points raised by the volunteer should be investigated and relevant information gathered. This may include obtaining statements from people that have participated in or observed any alleged behaviour or incidents. Questions and points to discuss with the volunteer should be prepared.

The line manager should arrange a meeting with the volunteer informing them who will be in attendance and the purpose of the meeting. At least one week's advance notice of the meeting should be given. Ideally this should be done verbally and followed up with a letter (see template on Arena), enclosing this guidance and any other relevant policies which may be referred to. A second member of staff, who is not directly involved, should also attend the meeting to record what was discussed and agreed. The volunteer may choose to be accompanied to the meeting by someone not involved in the situation, to support them, though not to represent them. This should not be an Alzheimer's Society employee as this may present a conflict of interest.

The meeting should focus on the points raised by the volunteer in their original letter (or verbally). The line manager should address each point, referring to any evidence as appropriate, and give the volunteer the opportunity to respond. The volunteer should be asked what they would like to happen to resolve or address any issues and where possible a way forward should be agreed. At the end of

the meeting the line manager should let the volunteer know when and how they will be informed of the outcome of any decision which may need to be made.

The volunteer should be informed of any outcomes and intended further action, where appropriate, in a timely manner. Where applicable, particularly where there has been a relationship breakdown involving the volunteer, support should be given to the volunteer to ensure they feel able to fully participate and engage in their role and with the wider Society. The volunteer should also be informed of how they can appeal the decision if they are not satisfied with the outcome or that the issue has been handled fairly, as well as the appropriate person to appeal to.

3. Appeals

Where the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome or does not feel the issue has been handled fairly, they may appeal the decision by writing to their Head of Service or Head of Department, as appropriate, within 10 working days of the original decision. The Head of Department/Operations Director will review the situation, with support from their Volunteering Business Partner and will make a decision within a further 20 working days. This decision will be final.

When Alzheimer's Society wishes to raise a concern with a volunteer

1. Informal process

It is always best to seek to resolve a concern informally first and most concerns can be resolved through discussion. Concerns should be raised by the relevant role manager directly with the volunteer.

Guidance and support can be sought by the role manager from their line manager and/or the National Volunteering Development Team. They may also consider obtaining peer support from the "Role Managers of Volunteers" Yammer. The role manager should, however, respect that confidentiality must be maintained.

The role manager should meet with the volunteer to have an open conversation about the concerns they have. This should include outlining any concerns and what the expectations are of the volunteer as well as agreeing what should happen next to ensure improvements are made. This includes any support which may need to be put in place to enable any required improvements. Further support about providing feedback can be found in the How to give and receive feedback guidance on Arena.

Role managers should address informal concerns regarding their volunteer by:

- Tackling issues as close as possible to the event – delays can cause additional problems
- Ensuring that private space and protected time is available so that concerns can be discussed in sufficient detail and confidentially
- Empowering the volunteer to give their point of view about the issue raised

- Ensuring that any additional support or training needs are identified and addressed appropriately
- Referring to documents such as the volunteer handbook, the behavioural framework and the volunteers role description, as appropriate
- Ensuring decisions/outcomes are clear and measurable so that the volunteer understands any expected improvements and how these will be measured
- Communicating a specific time period for improvements to be demonstrated
- Making adequate notes and keeping them securely in the volunteer's file

2. Formal process

Where the informal process has not been successful or is inappropriate due to the serious nature of the concern, then a formal process will need to be followed.

Concerns which should immediately be raised as a formal matter could include:

- Safeguarding concerns (actual or potential) to service users
- Harm or risk of harm to volunteers, employees or other people connected to the Society for whom we have a duty of care
- Malicious damage, theft, fraud and similar acts
- Incapacity due to suspected misuse of alcohol or drugs
- Inappropriate or unauthorised contact with the media
- Behaviour that may cause offence to others and considered contrary to our behaviours and values as well as our expectations around equality, diversity and inclusion
- Misuse of Society assets (such as the accessing of inappropriate material on websites)
- Behaviours that may seriously affect the reputation of the Society or damage relationships (for example, breaching confidentiality, going beyond agreed boundaries of a role or activity).

The role manager should inform their line manager as soon as possible if the concern is formal. The Volunteering Support team must also be informed and/or involved throughout the process and in some cases, they will refer the case to the relevant National Volunteering Development Advisor – Delivery. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for the role manager to lead the formal process, in which case their line manager or another appropriate member of staff should take on the role outlined below.

The role manager should consider whether they need to temporarily suspend the volunteer's volunteering activity whilst the process is undertaken. This will be the case if there is felt to be a considerable level of risk to the Society or volunteer. This should first be discussed with the Volunteering Support team.

The role manager should arrange a meeting with the volunteer, communicating to them what the meeting is about, including a summary of the concerns and who will be in attendance, giving them at least one week's notice. Ideally this should be done verbally and followed up with a letter (see template on Arena), enclosing this guidance and any other relevant policies/guidance. A second member of staff, who is not directly involved, should also attend the meeting to record what was discussed and agreed. The volunteer may choose to be accompanied to the meeting by someone not involved in the situation, to support them, though not to represent them. This should not be an Alzheimer's Society employee as this may present a conflict of interest.

If a volunteer refuses to attend a meeting they should be informed that a decision will be made in their absence. If the volunteer is unable to attend the meeting one further attempt should be made to find a mutually convenient time to meet.

Ahead of the meeting the allegation should be investigated, and relevant information gathered. This may include obtaining statements from people who have observed any alleged behaviour or incidents. Questions and points to discuss at the meeting should be prepared in advance.

The purpose of the meeting is to establish the facts and ensure that all evidence and concerns are presented clearly to the volunteer. It is also the opportunity for the volunteer to respond to the concerns and communicate their views. It is important that the role manager keeps an open mind and listens to the volunteer. At the end of the meeting the role manager should let the volunteer know when and how they will be informed of the outcome of any decision.

After the meeting the role manager should review all the evidence with their line manager to decide the most appropriate outcome. Outcomes will be one of the following:

- a. The concern is unfounded. Support should then be offered to the volunteer in continuing their role. This will be the case where no further evidence has been found to back up the claim or the volunteer has explained their actions in context satisfactorily.
- b. An action plan is drawn up which outlines the changes needed and the support in place to enable these, with an appropriate timeframe to action and review. This will be the case where some parts of the concern are founded but it is felt they can be rectified or where the issue is a result of lack of training or support from the Society.
- c. The concern is founded, and the volunteer is advised that they will no longer be able to continue volunteering. This will be the case where the issue is so serious that if the volunteer continues volunteering it could be detrimental to the Society or the volunteer.

All relevant parties, including the Volunteering Support team, should then be informed of the outcome within seven working days. Ideally this should be communicated to the volunteer verbally with a follow up letter sent. The letter should state the deadline for them to appeal the decision and who they should direct the appeal to.

The role manager should also consider whether they need to connect with other teams, such as the Chief Executive's Office and/or External Affairs, depending on the scope of the concern and potential for further escalation. In some cases, it may also be necessary, depending on the nature of the concerns, to inform/involve third party agencies, such as the Police.

3. Appeals

Where the volunteer does not feel the issue has been handled fairly or that relevant details were not taken into account, they may appeal the decision by writing to their Head of Department or Operations Director, as appropriate, within 10 working days of the original decision. The Head of Department/Operations Director will review the situation, with support from their Volunteering Business Partner, and will make a decision within a further 20 working days. This decision will be final.

Further support and information

It is important that the process to resolve concerns is led and managed by one person. If at any stage during the process to resolve concerns the volunteer in question contacts another member of staff regarding the issue, including the Chief Executive or a Director, the member of staff should acknowledge receipt as soon as possible, and explain that they are passing the communication on to the relevant member of staff leading the process. If they do not know who the staff member leading the process is they should contact the Volunteering Support team to find out. The communication should then be passed on as soon as possible so as not to delay the process.

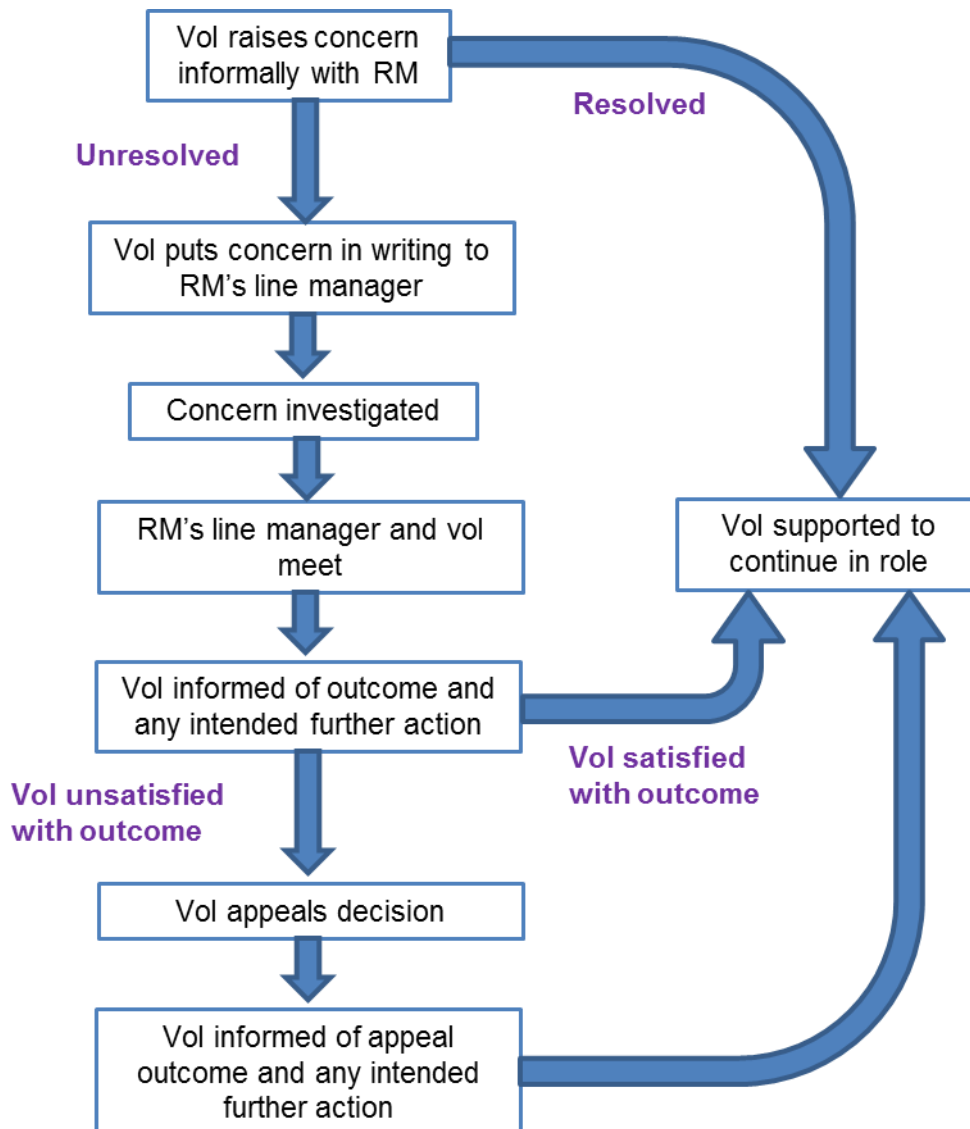
It is important that all our volunteers are enabled to fully engage with the processes outlined in this guidance. As such the need for reasonable adjustments should be considered throughout e.g. written material in alternative formats, the provision of a translator, or ensuring a meeting venue is accessible. Volunteers should make the person who is working with them to resolve the concern aware of any such needs, or if they do not feel comfortable doing so, they can speak to Volunteering Support team. Volunteers can also contact the Volunteering Support team if they need any support understanding the guidance and how it applies to their situation.

If after the process is concluded and the volunteer is aware their volunteering is not continuing, this must be processed accurately on People+. Therefore, when the Role Manager makes the volunteer a leaver in People+, the Role Manager must select 'resolving concerns case outcome' as the reason for leaving so that the usual leavers email does not get triggered.

For further information and guidance please contact the Volunteering Support team at volunteering.support@alzheimers.org.uk or 0300 222 5706.

Appendix 1: Flowcharts

When a volunteer wishes to raise a concern with Alzheimer's Society



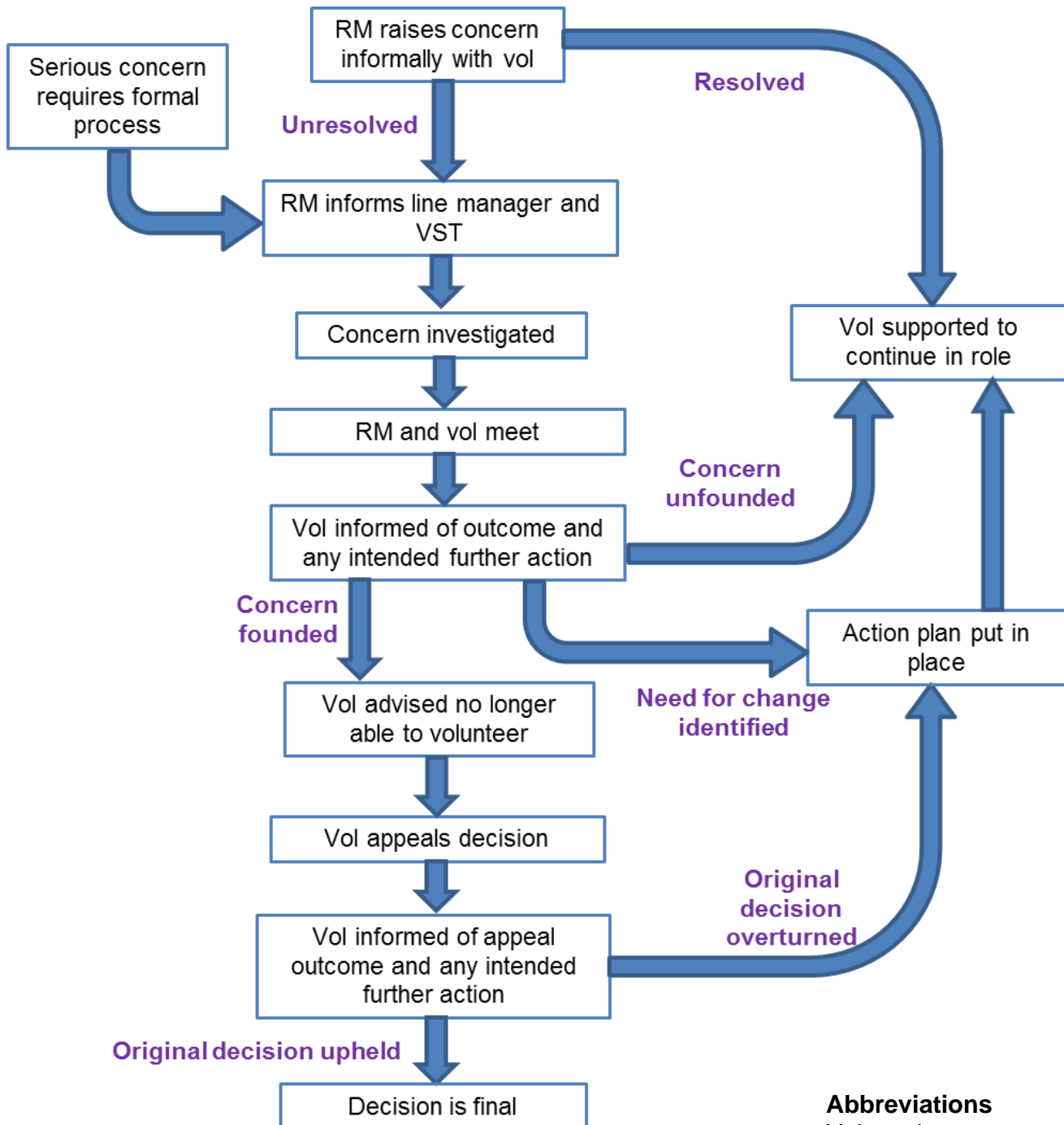
Abbreviations

Vol = volunteer

RM = role manager

VST = Volunteer Support team

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