

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

The disciplinary process sets out standards of conduct to help ensure that volunteers know what is expected of them. It is hoped that any problems will be solved by informal discussions, but a more formal approach is needed if problems cannot be resolved. The vast majority of the organisation's volunteers are exemplary individuals. As such, these are viewed as precautionary measures which will be enforced when deemed necessary. The L.I.F.E. Directors reserve the right to contact a volunteer's next of kin whenever they see fit as an appropriate and responsible course of action.

The following 'offences' are ranked in terms of severity as follows, and therefore require different consequences as indicated.

Band 1:

1. Verbally disrespecting volunteers/staff
2. Swearing in an inappropriate situation
3. Blasphemy in a highly inappropriate situation (e.g. Place of worship or in certain contexts with staff who hold religious beliefs)
4. Mild anti-social behaviour

Band 1 offences will have the following consequences:

1st offence- Informal verbal warning

2nd offence- Formal verbal warning

3rd offence – Written warning and possible termination of working with the project beneficiaries (possibly for a short time).

4th offence – If under 21: parents will be called to arrange the volunteer being sent home depending upon their conduct in other areas. School/university may be notified if a partnership is in place. If over 21: volunteer will be sent to the most suitable airport on the train or arrangements can be made for private transport at the cost of the volunteer in question. The University may be notified if a partnership is in place depending upon the severity of the offence.

Band 2:

1. Smoking in unsuitable places (other than those outlined by your team leader)
2. Heavy drinking of volunteers over the age of 18 which is deemed as unsafe, irresponsible, and highly inappropriate.
3. Aggressive physical violence (i.e. a push that isn't playful).
4. Unjustified refusal to carry out designated tasks of the volunteer role.
5. Behaviour which is likely to bring our work into disrepute.
6. Unauthorised use of resources e.g. telephone, computer, photocopier.

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7. Discrimination against other volunteers, beneficiaries of the project, members of the management group or workers.
8. Deliberate damage of any property during undertaking the volunteering role.
9. Serious antagonistic or anti-social behaviour.

Band 2 offences will have the following consequences:

1st offence- Formal verbal warning

2nd offence – Written warning and possible termination of working with the project beneficiaries (possibly for a short time).

3rd offence – If under 21: parents will be called to arrange the volunteer being sent home depending upon their conduct in other areas. School/university may be notified if a partnership is in place. If over 21: volunteer will be sent to the most suitable airport on the train or arrangements can be made for private transport at the cost of the volunteer in question. The University may be notified if a partnership is in place depending upon the severity of the offence.

Band 3:

1. The taking of illegal substances by any means.
2. Drinking if under 18 years old. This is a criminal offence and if you are caught L.I.F.E. and our partners can do very little other than notify your family and the nearest British Embassy.
3. Physical violence deemed as aggressive.
4. Sexually inappropriate behaviour amongst volunteers.
5. Theft, fraud or dishonesty during the course of volunteering.
6. Falsification of any documents which relate the volunteer's role (a full explanation will be sought before any action is taken).
7. Being unfit to carry out the role of a volunteer, due to being under the influence/residual effects of alcohol or drugs.
8. Acceptance of money or gifts whilst volunteering (this does not include gifts made by project beneficiaries such as cards or drawings and volunteers should show appreciation for these gestures. If you have any concerns, please contact your team leaders who will be happy to help you).
9. Volunteering whilst contravening a duty or restriction imposed by law.
10. Failure to disclose a criminal offence in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. If you have a criminal offence, please discuss this with a member of the Board of Directors or Committee at your interview. Depending on the offence or date of the offence, this may not work against your application.
11. Disclosure of personal information relating to a project beneficiary, volunteer, or staff member to unauthorised personnel which could cause emotional distress to the individual.

12. Any form of discrimination, abuse, or negative behaviour towards a project beneficiary.

Band 3 offences will have the following consequences:

1st offence - If under 21: parents will be called to arrange the volunteer being sent home depending upon their conduct in other areas. School/university may be notified if a partnership is in place. If over 21: volunteer will be sent to the most suitable airport on the train or arrangements can be made for private transport at the cost of the volunteer in question. The University may be notified if a partnership is in place depending upon the severity of the offence. We reserve the right to inform the police or other relevant authorities of an incident if we believe a volunteer poses a serious threat to themselves, other volunteers/staff, or a project beneficiary.

Procedure

The disciplinary procedure is operated if the Team Leader(s), Project Co-ordinator(s), or Project Manager(s) have concerns about the volunteer and it has not been resolved through informal discussions. The appropriate personnel will investigate the concern as quickly as possible. Where the complaint is found to be justified the procedure will be as previously outlined. Details of the procedures are:

Verbal warning: The following conditions apply:

A meeting will be held with the volunteer and appropriate personnel. The volunteer has a right to a short summary of the main headings of complaint in advance of the meeting unless the matter is so urgent that such a statement cannot reasonably be provided; in which case the volunteer will be informed at the beginning of any meeting of the main headings of the complaint. The volunteer has the right to present their case and to be represented or bring someone along with them (e.g. a fellow team member).

The volunteer will be informed of:

- The reason for the warning
- The action required of them
- The time within which the improvement is expected
- The fact that the warning will be kept on their records
- Their right of appeal

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- The verbal warning will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days and will be kept on their record for 2 years.

Written warning

- A formal interview is held with the same conditions as in stage 1.
- If a formal written warning is issued it will lapse after six months.
- If the volunteer is under 21 years old, parents may be notified of the offence at this stage depending on the circumstances.
- Volunteers can be stopped from working with the project beneficiaries at this stage.

Termination of work

- A formal interview is held with the same conditions as in stage 1. If it is decided to terminate the volunteering then the Project Co-ordinator and Team Leader(s) will write to the volunteer confirming the action, and explain the reasons why. A record of the decision will be kept on the volunteer's file.
- Volunteering may be suspended immediately whilst the complaint is investigated.
- If under 21: parents will be called to arrange the volunteer being sent home depending upon their conduct in other areas. School/university may be notified if a partnership is in place. If over 21: volunteer will be sent to the most suitable airport on the train or arrangements can be made for private transport at the cost of the volunteer in question. The University may be notified if a partnership is in place depending upon the severity of the offence. The power to terminate volunteering resides with the Team Leaders, Project Co-ordinator, and Project Managers.

Appeals

After each stage of the disciplinary procedure the volunteer is entitled to appeal and apply for a review of the decision. The application should be made in writing to the Chair of the Committee within five working days of the written decision being received. Two members of L.I.F.E. (usually the Committee Chair and a L.I.F.E. Director unless they are involved in the original disciplinary action) will hear the appeal. Their decision is final.

If a volunteer breaks the rules we have outlined, the volunteer forfeits any rights to refunds because L.I.F.E. and partners will not be responsible for covering the costs of the mistakes of others.