



NEAR MEDIA CO-OP GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. Introduction

Near Media Co-op aims to create an environment where volunteers feel valued while volunteering with the Co-Operative. Near also recognises that there may be occasions when volunteers have concerns or grievances and this grievance procedure enables individual volunteers to raise grievances more formally. The procedure provides an open and fair way for volunteers to make known their problems and aims to enable grievances to be resolved quickly before they fester and become major problems.

2. Informal Discussions

In the first instance, if any volunteer has a grievance about their volunteering or a colleague they should discuss it informally, as soon as possible, with their relevant platform co-ordinator (i.e Near FM, Near TV, , outreach, training and production) or another co-ordinator if the grievance involves the platform co-ordinator. The co-ordinator will take the grievance seriously and ensure that everything is done to try and resolve the issue informally. It is hoped that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

Formal Procedure

3. Stage 1

If a volunteer feels that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, they should put the complaint in writing to their relevant platform co-ordinator. If the complaint involves the volunteer's platform co-ordinator the complaint should be put in writing to another co-ordinator in the organisation or the Project Co-Ordinator, Ciaran Murray.

A meeting will be held between the volunteer and their platform co-ordinator (or other appropriate person) to respond to the complaints raised. The meeting will be an opportunity for the volunteer to explain their complaints and share how they would like them to be addressed.

Following the meeting, the platform co-ordinator (or other appropriate person) will give a written response within 10 working days of the meeting outlining how the complaint(s) will be responded to. If the complaint is against another member of staff or volunteer or requires further investigation, the platform co-ordinator (or other appropriate person) will need to carry out further meetings or investigations. In this case, the 10 working days limit above, may need to be extended. The response will issue following this meeting and include a reference to the right of appeal.

4. Stage 2

If the volunteer feels the issue has still not been resolved satisfactorily, the volunteer must raise the matter, in writing, with the Co-Op Secretary. The Secretary will advise the Chair of the Committee of Management. The Secretary will invite the volunteer to a meeting where they can discuss the matter and establish how best to resolve the situation.

Following the meeting, the Secretary will give a written response within 10 working days of the meeting outlining how the complaint will be responded to. If the complaint is against another member of staff or volunteer, or requires further investigation, the Secretary will need to carry out further meetings or investigations. In this case, the 10 working days limit above, may need to be extended. The response will follow this meeting and include a reference to the right of appeal.

5. Right of Appeal

If the volunteer wishes to appeal against any grievance decision, they must appeal, in writing within 10 working days of the decision being communicated to them to the Chair of the Committee of Management. The Chair will convene an Appeals Sub committee to hear the appeal and the volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Appeals Sub committee.

The Chair will not form part of the Appeals subcommittee. The Appeals sub committee's decision will be final.

A grievance made against other near media co op processes which have an appeal mechanism, are handled through that appeals process. Only one grievance will be processed at any one time.

Please note – Near Media Co-op has a separate Harassment and Bullying Policy which should be used if the complaint relates to Harassment or Bullying.

BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Near Media Co-Op is committed to providing all of its volunteers, participants and guests with an environment free from bullying/harassment and sexual harassment. The aim of this policy is to outline what constitutes bullying and harassment and what action Near Media Co-Op will take in dealing with an offence of this nature.

Scope:

This policy is applicable to all volunteers, participants and guests both in the Near Media Co-Op offices and studios and at associated events such as meetings, conferences, and Near Media Co-Op functions whether on or off site. It also applies to contractors, customers and other business contacts with which volunteers might reasonably expect to come into contact within the course of their volunteering.

Policy:

Near Media Co-Op acknowledges the right of all volunteers, participants and guests to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect and to a working environment free from bullying and harassment. Every volunteer has an obligation to be aware of the effects their behaviour has on others.

Any instances of bullying/harassment will be dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. Cases where the behaviour is proved to be repeated and consistent causing unnecessary stress and anxiety will be considered as gross misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal as a volunteer, participant or guest. It is imperative that all volunteers, participants and guests respect the dignity of every colleague and be conscious of behaviour which may cause offence.

Definition:

Bullying/Harassment are defined as any form of repeated, unwelcome and unacceptable conduct that can be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidation. An individual can be harassed on grounds of race, religious belief, national ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability or membership of the traveller community. The Harassment can include conduct offensive to a reasonable person e.g. oral or written slurs, physical contact, gestures, jokes, displaying pictures, flags/emblems, graffiti or other material which state or imply prejudicial attitudes which are offensive to fellow volunteers.

Other examples of bullying behaviour include:

- Personal insults and name calling.
- Persistent unjustified criticism and sarcasm.
- Public or private humiliation
- Shouting at volunteers in public and/or private sneering.
- Instantaneous rage, often over trivial issues.
- Unfair delegation of duties and responsibilities.

- Setting impossible deadlines.
- Unnecessary work interference.
- Making it difficult for volunteers to have access to necessary information.
- Aggression
- Not giving credit for work contribution
- Continuously refusing reasonable requests without good reason.
- Intimidation and threats in general.

Sexual Harassment can be defined as conduct towards another person that is sexual in nature or has a sexual dimension and is unwelcome to the recipient.

Examples of this type of Harassment include:

- Sexual Gestures
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, calendars or sending suggestive pornographic correspondence (including e-mail)
- Unwelcome sexual comments or jokes
- Unwelcome physical contact such as pinching, unnecessary touching, etc.

The above examples are not exhaustive and only serve as a guideline to volunteers.

Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy adopts a two-tiered approach (the informal and formal procedures) to dealing with issues of Bullying and Harassment in Near Media Co-op.

Informal Procedure:

It is often preferable for all concerned that complaints of bullying/harassment are dealt with informally whenever possible. This approach is likely to produce solutions, which are speedy, effective and minimise embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality. Thus, in the first instance a person who believes he/she is the subject of harassment/ bullying should ask the person responsible to stop the offensive behaviour. The person responsible should also be informed of Near Media Co-Op's bullying/ harassment policy and advised that a further occurrence of this nature will result in a formal complaint. In instance where a person is unsure whether the behaviour constitutes a form of bullying/harassment, he/she should discuss this with a supervisor or manager.

It is recognised that it may not always be practical to use the informal procedure particularly where the bullying/harassment is of a serious nature or where the person(s) concerned are at different levels in Near Media Co-Op. In such instances, the volunteer, participant or guest should use the formal procedure.

Formal Procedure:

Where a formal complaint is being made, the volunteer, participant or guest should contact his/her supervisor/ manager as soon as possible. A participant or guest should contact the Project Co-ordinator. Any person making a complaint will be required to put his/her allegation in writing. In the interests of natural justice, the alleged harasser will be made

aware of the nature of the complaint, his or her right to representation and will be given every opportunity to rebut the allegations made.

While it is desirable to maintain utmost confidentiality, once an investigation begins it may be necessary to interview other volunteers, participants, guests or staff. If so, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them and any statements taken will be circulated to both the complainant and the alleged harasser for their comments before any conclusion is reached in the investigation. When the investigation has been completed both parties will be informed as to whether or not the complaint has been upheld. All complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially and dealt with as soon as is practicable. Strict confidentiality and proper discretion will be maintained as far as is possible to safeguard both parties from innuendo and harmful gossip. A record of all relevant discussions which take place during the course of the investigation will be retained on file.

ACTION POST-INVESTIGATION

Where a complaint is upheld, a disciplinary hearing will take place in line with Near Media Co-Op's Grievance Policy. Should a case of bullying/harassment be proven then the Near Media Co-Op will take appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Records of any warnings for bullying/harassment will remain on file with the Co-op and will be used if any further allegations of a similar nature occur in the future.

Regular checks will be made by the person responsible for investigating the complaint to ensure that the bullying/harassment have stopped and that there is no victimisation.

Retaliation of any kind against a volunteer for complaining ago taking part in an investigation concerning bullying/harassment is a serious disciplinary offence. In cases where it is established that a person made a false allegation against a volunteer, then he/she will face serious misconduct charges resulting in an immediate disciplinary hearing.

NEAR MEDIA CO-OP VOLUNTEER GOVERNANCE ACCORD

To deal with disputes and unacceptable behaviour by any Volunteer involved in this Community Media Project.

Objectives

The objectives of this Accord are:

- to ensure that volunteers against whom allegations are made are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner, and
- to provide an adequate means by which impropriety can be dealt with effectively and the highest standards of conduct be maintained.

Causes for activating the Accord

There are several areas covered by this Accord, including but not limited to:

- Unsatisfactory performances of one's voluntary duties.
- Absence without proper notification
- Any form of abuse or aggression
- Being unfit to carry out one's duties
- Ignoring a request or requirement of the Co-op Management.
- Breaching the Rules and Policies of Near Media Co-op.

Procedures

The Committee of Management, acting through its agents, the Coordination Committee and the Project Coordinator, as the persons dealing with Operations, will write to the volunteer(s) in question, requesting them to attend a Formal Review Meeting, explaining the reasons for the meeting:

- Outlining the volunteers alleged misconduct.
- Reiterating possible outcomes, including; lifting of any sanctions, continuation of suspension or confirmation of dismissal, which will depend on severity of alleged activity.

The normal course of events will be:

- First written warning
- Final written warning
- Dismissal.

The Formal Review Process

In cases where a volunteer has been deemed to be in breach of procedures or where conduct is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the Coordination Committee can decide to request the attendance of the volunteer(s) at a formal review of the situation, The nature and/or degree of a volunteers misconduct will generally determine the appropriate action to be taken.

- Reconciliation: If the matter under consideration is of a lesser nature, the Coordination Committee may seek to resolve the matter amicably with the volunteer and to find a way for the volunteer to continue in that role.
- Suspension: Depending on the scale of the alleged misconduct, the Project Coordinator with the consent of the Coordination Committee may decide in the interim, to suspend the volunteer(s) and the relevant programme, if in question, before the review meeting, or upon the issue of a written warning.

- Dismissal: In the case of gross misconduct, the Committee of Management, through the Coordination Committee, reserve the right under this accord to immediately dismiss a volunteer or volunteers. Such a letter of dismissal will be sent to the dismissed volunteer(s) by the Co-op Secretary.
- The Review: Written communication between the Coordination Committee and the volunteer under review shall be confined to: 1) any written warning(s), 2) the summoning to the formal review meeting, outlining the volunteers alleged misconduct and reiterating possible outcomes and finally, 3) a written notification to the volunteer of the outcome. A file on this correspondence shall be kept for a reasonable time. It may be necessary to include relevant correspondence from the volunteer prior to the review, but these should not be responded to, but should be dealt with during the review meeting.
- The Committee of Management shall deal similarly with an appeal, issuing only a letter of outcomes.
- All volunteers will be expected to co-operate fully in the review of allegations of impropriety by providing such explanations as are sought in the course of the review.

Discretion

The matter under review shall be dealt with by the Coordination Committee, in a manner that protects the dignity of the volunteer and shall not be conducted in the presence of other volunteers, staff or the general public. For operational reasons the Coordination Committee may need to inform necessary parties of a suspension, but otherwise, it will not be alluded to by them in any public fora. A volunteer in this review process, with no such operational imperatives, will be expected to conduct themselves in a similarly discreet manner and to confine their comments on the matter to the formal review exercise.

Participation

The Coordination Committee will act to hold the formal review of the alleged action(s) as soon as possible and will establish an agreed date and time with the volunteer. Should the volunteer fail to attend, the absence and conclusions will be noted in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes of the review meeting are the property of Near Media Co-op and may be shared with the volunteer if deemed appropriate. A volunteer under review, if they wish, may keep their own contemporaneous written notes and/or bring another volunteer to such review meeting.

Outcome

Following the review meeting, the Coordination Committee will discuss the matter and make a decision. As the Coordination Committee is primarily composed of volunteers, the decision will be taken and communicated in writing to the volunteer under review as soon as possible, but not later than 28 days.

Appeal

A volunteer sanctioned under this governance accord may appeal the result to the Committee of Management, who will attempt to have the matter dealt with at the next available meeting

of that committee. The appellant will receive written notification of the outcome soon thereafter. Or, the sanctioned volunteer may lodge a complaint through the grievance route, but not before the review process is completed.

The Committee of Management

The elected Management Committee of Near Media Co-op will have several functions in such a situation. If there is an appeal, to deal with it, minute it, and communicate the decision to the appellant. If there is no appeal, to hear and minute a report on the matter from the Project Coordinator.

Notification:

While the Committee of Management, nor its agents, will make no public comment during the formal review period, at the conclusion, they may decide that the general membership and any interested parties would benefit from clarification of such governance outcomes.

Status:

This Governance Accord was approved by a General Meeting of Near Media Co-operative on 5th March 2014.