



Friends of Refugees London Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures

Friends of Refugees London (FoRL) is committed to delivering a positive experience for its clients, volunteers, and staff. However, it is possible that challenges will arise and we want to ensure that everyone has access to fair procedures to resolve any issues, so we can deliver the highest standards of conduct and service delivery.

These procedures apply to staff, trustees, and volunteers; a separate Complaints procedure is available to clients [here](#), and the disciplinary and removal procedure for trustees is available in the Friends of Refugees London Constitution [here](#).

1. Definitions

- A grievance procedure is used to deal with a problem or complaint raised by a volunteer or an employee.
- A disciplinary procedure is used by an organisation to address a volunteer's or an employee's conduct or performance.

The grievance procedure outlines how a staff member or volunteer can make a complaint; the disciplinary procedure outlines how the organisation will deal with upheld complaints regarding conduct or performance.

2. Purpose

These procedures are designed to help and encourage all volunteers and staff to achieve and maintain the highest standards of conduct and service delivery. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all in the organisation.

3. Principles

- Informal action will be considered, where appropriate, to resolve problems.
- No disciplinary action will be taken against a volunteer or employee until the case has been fully investigated.
- For formal action the volunteer or employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint against them and will be given the opportunity to state their case before any decision is made at a disciplinary meeting.
- Volunteers and employees will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a disciplinary meeting.
- At all stages the volunteer or employee will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, a trade union representative, or a work colleague as appropriate.

- No volunteer or employee will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will be dismissal without notice, or payment in lieu of notice (employees only).
- A volunteer or employee will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action.
- The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the volunteer's or employee's alleged misconduct warrants this.

3. Raising grievances

3.1 Dealing with grievances with your work or colleagues informally

If you have a grievance or complaint about the nature of your volunteering or work, or about someone you volunteer or work with, you should start by speaking with your manager wherever possible. You may be able to agree a solution informally between you.

3.2 Formal grievance with your work or colleagues

If the matter is serious or you wish to raise it formally you should put the grievance in writing to your manager. You should keep to the facts and avoid language that is insulting or abusive. If your grievance is against your manager and you feel unable to approach them, you should raise it with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

3.3 Grievance hearing

For the complainant: Your manager will call you to a meeting with them and one trustee, usually within 10 working days, to discuss your grievance. If your grievance is with your manager you will be called to a meeting by a trustee, to be held with them and one other trustee. You have the right to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, colleague, or trade union representative. After the meeting your manager or a trustee will give you a decision in writing. Due to the voluntary nature of the leadership of FoRL, this will usually be within 10 working days. If more information is needed before making a decision, you will be informed of this and the timescale.

For the subject of the grievance hearing: Your manager will notify you of the grievance in a meeting, followed up with a written notice. You will have 5 working days to prepare any documentation as necessary to respond to the grievance or complaint, and a meeting will be held with your line manager and one trustee, usually within 10 working days of the initial notification, to discuss the grievance raised against you. You have the right to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, colleague, or trade union representative. After the meeting your manager or a trustee will give you a decision in writing. Due to the voluntary nature of the leadership of FoRL, this will usually be within 10 working days. If more information is needed before making a decision, you will be informed of this and the timescale.

3.4 Dealing with grievances regarding clients

If you have a grievance with your client, or a concern regarding your client's conduct, you should start by speaking with the volunteer manager as soon as possible. This is to ensure that appropriate discussions or actions are taken either directly with the client or the partner organisation which referred the client where necessary.

Where the grievance or complaint is of a serious nature, you will be asked to provide a written statement, keeping to the facts and avoiding language that is insulting or abusive. Serious grievances will be discussed at the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, and you will be notified of the outcome within 48 hours of the meeting. Potential outcomes where complaints or grievances are upheld include dismissal and future barring of the client from the services of FoRL and a formal notice to the referring organisation.

3.5 Appeal (for staff and volunteers)

For both the complainant and the subject of the grievance or complaint: If you are unhappy with the decision you can appeal. You should notify the person who contacted you with the grievance outcome. You will be invited to an appeal meeting, normally within 10 working days, with two different trustees where possible. You have the right to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer, colleague, or trade union representative. After the meeting the Board of Trustees will give you a decision, usually within 48 hours of the next meeting of the Board of Trustees.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of this decision, you can check if you have grounds to take your complaint to a national regulatory body. The UK Government guidance on making a complaint to the appropriate regulator for non-profit organisations is [here](#).

4. The disciplinary procedure

If a volunteer or staff member has raised a complaint or grievance against a fellow volunteer or colleague, and it is upheld, the Friends of Refugees London formal disciplinary procedure will be invoked.

4.1 First stage of formal procedure

This will normally be either:

- an improvement discussion and note for unsatisfactory performance if performance does not meet acceptable standards. This will set out the performance problem, the improvement that is required, the timescale, any help that may be given and the right of appeal. The individual will be advised that it constitutes the first stage of the formal procedure. A record of the improvement note will be kept for 2 months, but will then be considered spent – subject to achieving and sustaining satisfactory performance or
- a first warning for misconduct if conduct does not meet acceptable standards. This will be in writing and set out the nature of the misconduct and the change in behaviour required and the right of appeal. The warning will also inform the volunteer or employee that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change. A record of the warning will be kept, but it will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 6 months.

4.2 Final written warning

If the offence is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct or a failure to improve performance during the currency of a prior warning (2 months), a final written warning may be given to the volunteer or employee. This will give details of the complaint, the improvement required and the timescale. It will also warn that failure to improve may lead to dismissal (or some other action short of dismissal) and will refer to the right of appeal. A

copy of this written warning will be kept by FoRL but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 6 months subject to achieving and sustaining satisfactory conduct or performance.

4.3 Dismissal or other sanction

If there is still further misconduct or failure to improve performance the final step in the procedure may be dismissal or, for employees, some other action short of dismissal such as demotion or disciplinary suspension or transfer (as allowed in the contract of employment). Dismissal decisions can only be taken by the appropriate leadership team member(s), and the volunteer employee will be provided in writing with reasons for dismissal, the date on which the volunteering or employment will terminate, and the right of appeal.

For employees, if some sanction short of dismissal is imposed, the employee will receive details of the complaint, will be warned that dismissal could result if there is no satisfactory improvement, and will be advised of the right of appeal. A copy of the written warning will be kept by the supervisor but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 6 months subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct or performance.

4.4 Gross misconduct

The following list provides some examples of offences which are normally regarded as gross misconduct:

- theft or fraud
- physical violence or bullying
- deliberate and serious damage to property
- serious misuse of FoRL's property or name
- deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material
- serious insubordination
- unlawful discrimination or harassment
- bringing the organisation into serious disrepute
- serious incapability at work brought on by alcohol or illegal drugs
- causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence
- a serious breach of safeguarding or the code of conduct
- a serious breach of health and safety rules
- a serious breach of confidence.

If you are accused of an act of gross misconduct, you may be suspended from your volunteering role for up to 10 days and your client will be notified of this; if you are an employee you may be suspended from work on full pay, normally for no more than ten working days, while the alleged offence is investigated. If, on completion of the investigation and the full disciplinary procedure, the organisation is satisfied that gross misconduct has occurred, the result will normally be summary dismissal without notice, or for employees with payment in lieu of notice.

4.5 Appeals

An employee or volunteer who wishes to appeal against a disciplinary decision must do so within ten working days. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will hear all appeals and their decision is final. At the appeal any disciplinary penalty imposed will be reviewed.