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Abbey Physic Community Garden

Staff grievance policy

Policy agreed	April 2021
Date of next review	Biannually –March2023
Signed	Agreed at Trustee Meeting 12/03/21 (TO BE AMENDED)

The purpose of the grievance policy

This policy explains what people who work at Abbey Physic Community Garden (APCG) (employees, contractors or sessional workers) should do if they are unhappy about an aspect of their working life which cannot be resolved informally. Our aim is to settle grievances fairly, simply, amicably and effectively.

We encourage people who have experienced a problem at work to first discuss the matter with the person concerned and/or their line manager informally. The formal grievance process should be used if:

- They feel that informal approaches have not worked
- It would be uncomfortable to discuss the matter informally
- It's a very serious issues such as sexual harassment, discrimination or significant breakdown in trust.

APCG will investigate all formal grievances and handle them sensitively, maintaining confidentiality as far as is possible. People who raise grievances will not be disadvantaged. Equally any actions that may need to be taken with the person who is the subject of the grievance will not be disclosed to the wider team.

The procedure

APCG has a formal procedure for investigating and resolving grievances. At all stages of the process, returning to informal discussion is encouraged as it is often easier to resolve issues in an informal setting than through the formal process.

Step 1. Raise the grievance in writing

To raise a grievance, workers should set out their grievance in writing, explaining what has happened, listing any dates, times and witnesses if applicable. Ideally this should be within one month of the incident(s) that cause you to raise the complaint.

If the grievance is against the manager then the grievance should be taken to one of the trustees.

Step 2: The grievance meeting

Once the grievance has been received the line manager (or trustee if appropriate) will arrange an early meeting with the worker to discuss the matter. This will be as soon as possible and no more than 14 days after receiving the written grievance: one of the trustees will attend the meeting. We will notify anybody who is the subject of a complaint informally and in writing. In some cases it may be necessary to suspend the person involved while the grievance is being investigated. Such action will not be the default position and will only be decided after the individual involved has had an opportunity to explain their side of the situation.

Workers have the right to be accompanied by a fellow worker, a friend or a trade union representative, both at the grievance and appeal meeting (see below) and their companions will be able to speak at the meeting on their behalf. However it would not be appropriate for companions to answer questions put directly to the APCG worker.

Ideally there should be a note taker at the meeting - someone who is uninvolved in the case but who can make a neutral record of the proceedings. The meeting will be introduced by the line manager/trustee who will start by summarizing the complaint, asking the worker if the details are correct. The line manager/trustee may ask for further clarification about the details of the grievance. The worker will then have the opportunity to describe their grievance, introducing any witnesses or further evidence if appropriate, and setting out what they would like to happen for the matter to be resolved. The line manager/trustee can ask questions to clarify details of the case. At the end of the meeting the worker or their companion will be able to summarise the discussion.

It is generally good practice for the line manager/trustee to adjourn the meeting at this point so they can consider what has been said and make any necessary further checks about the matters raised, including giving people who may be the subject of the grievance an opportunity to respond to the complaints against them.

Having considered the grievance the line manager/trustee will give her/his decision on the case to the employee in writing. We will aim to provide a decision on what action APCG will take to resolve the grievance within five working days of the grievance meeting. However, in exceptional circumstances or where the matter is very complicated, we may need to take a little longer to respond. If the grievance is not upheld then the letter will explain the reasons and it will also explain the right of appeal.

Step3 Appeal

If the worker is not satisfied that the grievance has been resolved then they can make an appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, ideally within five working days of receiving notification of the decision and including any further information to support of the appeal. If the Chair has already been involved in the case then the appeal will be sent to the Company Secretary or Treasurer.

The Chair/trustee will organise an appeal meeting as soon as possible, with a panel comprising at least two trustee members, ideally people who have had no prior involvement in the case. Again the worker can be accompanied by a friend, work colleague or trade union representative. The panel will aim to reach a conclusion within five working days of the appeal meeting. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.