

# Lothians Conservation Volunteers

www.lcv.org.uk



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## Dealing with Problematic Behaviour by Volunteers

### What constitutes problematic behaviour

LCV aims to be an inclusive group, consequently volunteers on a given day can span a wide range of age, social group, background, ethnicity, sexual orientation, neurodivergence and personality. LCV needs to achieve a safe and enjoyable experience for its volunteers without any real or perceived threats to their safety or wellbeing. Moreover LCV cannot accept behaviour that constitutes a risk to the successful operation of LCV, its aims and ethos. This would include behaviour that discourages volunteer participation or causes reputational or potential financial damage to LCV.

LCV cannot tolerate dangerous behaviour or a failure to heed essential safety instructions. Nor can LCV tolerate discrimination against, harassment or verbal abuse of any volunteer (or third party: client or member of the public). However LCV cannot police the expression of the personal opinions and sense of humour of volunteers, though constructive advice against overly robust discussion and 'banter' may occasionally be judicious. Nor should LCV expect a particular standard of work, enthusiasm and engagement from a volunteer, although repeat attendance by a disinterested individual may need to be addressed.

### Informal action to be taken

If during an LCV task the task leader, an LCV committee member or another LCV member feels the need to discuss perceived problematic behaviour with an individual – they should take care to do so in the presence of one or more volunteers - and document the process before the end of the day. Minor problems worthy of note can be recorded on the daily task sheet – but more serious problems should be documented electronically and sent to the committee (e.g. by emailing [committee@lcv.org.uk](mailto:committee@lcv.org.uk)). This should record:

- the nature of the problematic behaviour
- who witnessed or reported it
- what was said to the individual and by whom
- the individual's response (verbally and in terms of their subsequent behaviour)
- whether further action is required.

A task leader may not have the opportunity, desire or skills to address minor issues on the day but choose to discuss with members of the committee whether someone should be tasked with initiating an informal discussion with the volunteer at a future date (preferably at the next task attended by the individual).

The committee itself may feel it appropriate to instigate an informal discussion on the basis of recorded incidents on task sheets or through word of mouth reports from leaders or other members.

All of the above eventualities and outcomes should be noted in the standard committee meeting minutes.

### **Formal action to be taken**

Where the behaviour is more serious, persistent or continues after (documented) informal discussions, the committee can discuss and approve initiating a formal discussion with the individual. A committee member should be appointed to take charge of this process and its documentation. Typically the Membership Secretary would fulfil this role. The problem individual should be informed of the nature of the behaviour that LCV considers unacceptable and informed clearly that they will face exclusion from LCV if the issue cannot be resolved at an invited review meeting. Until the meeting is held – they are suspended from LCV and may not attend any LCV tasks. The review meeting should be held at a mutually convenient public venue and time within 4 weeks of the notification. The meeting should comprise at least 2 committee members and a friend, family member or support worker of the individual if desired. Notes should be taken in this meeting, and the outcome reported at a committee meeting.

The committee will then agree an outcome having considered the result of the meeting, thus:

1. the individual declines to participate in the process within a reasonable time frame and thus excludes themselves.
2. the individual attends the review process and agrees to modify their behaviour in line with LCV volunteer requirements
3. the individual and the committee members attending agree that any modification is too difficult to achieve and therefore by mutual agreement the individual ceases to be a volunteer with LCV.

Any and all agreed outcomes are noted in the committee minutes.

### **Extreme Unacceptable Behaviour**

The leader has the right and responsibility to remove an individual from a task if they are deemed to be seriously endangering personal safety and not paying heed to direct requests to change behaviour. *In extremis* the whole task could be cut short, and volunteers returned to Edinburgh.

Further examples of very serious behaviour are set out below (the list is neither comprehensive nor exclusive)

- theft or fraud
- violent behaviour, fighting, assault on another person
- deliberate damage to LCV, client or public property
- consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs during the work day
- being unfit for work through alcohol or illegal drugs
- being found in possession of illegal drugs

In the event of such seriously unacceptable behaviour the leader or any committee member present on task can escalate the issue immediately to the committee and request a formal review be instigated. In such an eventuality the individual will be immediately suspended from future tasks and informed as such as soon as possible.

### **Informing Volunteers of this policy**

When this policy is authorised or modified LCV shall inform members of this policy via the “welcome” email received by all new volunteers, include it on the website, and reference it on the new Volunteer Form.