

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland – Managing Volunteers

Introduction

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland (GBS) has an Equal Opportunities Policy (2011) in place which relates to its members, volunteers and paid staff. The policy states the organisation's position about discrimination, equal opportunities, diversity, conduct, etc. but it does not elaborate on what action may be taken against volunteers who do not follow such policy and may bring GBS into disrepute. Employed staff are bound by a code of conduct as outlined in the staff handbook, which covers these areas and a clear disciplinary process is in place.

Policy

GBS is an organisation founded on Christian principles, focusing today on Mission, Vision, Values and Ethics. It is therefore vital that volunteers are affirming, aspirational and inspirational in their leadership roles. They are viewed by members, parents, peers, church and community as role models who, by personal example, set standards and guidance for the young people in their care. As volunteer leaders they have, along with employed staff, a crucial role to play in providing a safe, caring environment for the organisation to deliver high quality services to all members. GBS is committed to ensuring that all those who serve as volunteers are supported as they undertake their role and that they maintain the integrity of the organisation at all times.

A common-sense approach

As a volunteer in GBS you hold a privileged position as you work with girls and young women who look to you as their leader, role model and confidante. It is a position that carries great responsibility and authority as you are viewed by members and other adults as a person who is knowledgeable, responsible and trustworthy. In this role you also work with fellow volunteers at company, division, national, with the staff team at GB HQ, the church and with parents and carers. It is important that respect and consideration is demonstrated at all times no matter who you are dealing with and the old adage of 'treating people the way you want to be treated' goes a long way in all that we do in our dealings with others.

Guidance for Volunteers

- Remember you are in a position of trust as a volunteer.
- Remember the code of conduct contained in the Protecting Young People in Our Care card that is supplied to and applies to all volunteers when joining GBS. This is a good framework from which to operate and sets out clear guidance about areas of child protection.
- GBS sets out and aims to regularly update policies and procedures for use by its leaders at all levels. These are there to protect members and leaders alike and it is vital that they are adhered to at all times.
- Remember that 'abuse' is not just of a sexual or physical nature but that we can abuse others verbally and emotionally through demeaning language, sarcasm or insensitive comments.

- Communication is an essential part of what we do. It is important that we aim to be clear, polite and respectful in all areas of communication, verbal, written or electronic. [It is important to think about tone, how clear the message is and try to avoid humour or sarcastic comments as, unless you know the person well, you may cause serious offence].
- Before using social media sites in a GB capacity, take time to read the **GBS and Social Media** policy and guidance material, available from www.girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk Remember, even in a personal capacity you will be seen as a GB leader and certain standards of conduct will be expected from you at all times.
- Integrity and honesty in all you do is key to your role as a volunteer in GBS. Dishonesty, cheating, malicious behaviour or theft is not appropriate as a general rule of society but in GBS they are contrary to the aims and ethos of the organisation. While such action may not always result in criminal proceedings they may still bring GBS into disrepute.
- Conflict with other leaders, parents, the church or the staff team should be avoided wherever possible. Often, a simple discussion will resolve the issues but if an area of conflict still arises you should aim to set out your grievances in writing to the appropriate person, e.g. Captain, Chaplain, Commissioner or National Director, who will assist in helping you resolve the issue. At all times you should aim to avoid making accusations you cannot substantiate, you should aim to be as calm as possible in your dealings with all parties and should, under no circumstances, become defamatory or aggressive in either personal or written approaches.
- Remember that the GB HQ staff team is employed by GBS to deliver the policies and procedures of the organisation and to support the membership through the provision of a variety of services. Volunteers and staff have to work together as a team to make GBS work effectively at all levels and, as such, there is a need for everyone to treat and be treated with respect at all times.
- If you witness or have concerns about a fellow volunteers in respect of dishonesty, theft, bullying, discrimination, etc. within GBS it is your responsibility to disclose this to an appropriate person, e.g. Captain, Chaplain, Commissioner or National Director. Ignoring such issues isn't helpful and it is better to tackle such issues promptly to avoid further complications for all concerned.
- Remember that your behaviour at work, when socialising with friends, etc. will be viewed by many in the context of your volunteering in GBS. No-one is suggesting that you can't have fun and enjoy yourself, which is a good example of living a full and rich Christian life, but you should think carefully about what you are comfortable with and how it reflects on your personal values and those of GBS.
- All actions have consequences. See below.

What action GBS will take

GBS values all volunteers and staff but they have a duty of care to maintain the integrity, reputation and ethos of the organisation at all times. GBS believes that it is the responsibility of each individual who works in GBS to maintain appropriate behaviour and conduct befitting their role in a way that will not damage their personal reputation or that of GBS. The majority of individuals do this without issue but, sadly, there will always be occasions when this is not the case and GBS has to take appropriate action. Listed below are some examples of situations where action may be taken but this is not exhaustive and GBS reserves the right to deal with each situation on its own merit.

Child Protection issues

Any person under investigation in respect of a child protection/safeguarding issue will **automatically have their commission/appointment suspended temporarily**. This means that they should not be involved in any form of GB activities during the period of the investigation. The company chaplain, captain and divisional Commissioner will be advised of the temporary suspension but not the detail of why this is in place.

When the investigation has been completed the suspension will be lifted if there is no case to answer but there may be a recommendation for further training in particular areas to help build the skills and knowledge of the individual. If the investigation confirms that the complaint is upheld the **commission/appointment will be withdrawn with immediate effect**. Thereafter, the normal safeguarding and legal processes would occur.

Note: The same procedures would apply in respect of vulnerable adults as per the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act (2007) Scotland.

Committing an offence against another person, e.g. physical violence

Such an act may result in criminal proceedings and, if found guilty, would lead to **an automatic withdrawal of the commission/appointment** of any individual. In situations where criminal proceedings did not result of such an act, GBS would still deem this as an inappropriate action and the same action would be taken.

Theft, Fraud, etc.

In cases where criminal proceedings are initiated and the individual is found guilty of the charges this would lead to **an automatic withdrawal of the commission/appointment**. In situations where a church or other organisation agrees not to press legal charges but where theft or fraudulent action has been established to have happened there would be **an automatic withdrawal of the commission/appointment**.

Where theft or fraudulent action is suspected the church or other organisation should discuss the issue with the National Director at GB HQ. This may result in a **temporary suspension of the commission/appointment** until the issue is resolved.

Being out of control in a public place through the influence of substances

The consequences of such actions may damage you and others both physically and/or in terms of reputation. It may have consequences for you in terms of employment and in respect of your volunteering with GBS, which may result in **removal of your commission/appointment**.

Being under the influence of alcohol or other substances while responsible for young people in your care

This is not acceptable under any circumstances whether at company, camp or any other activity as it may compromise the safety of members and other adults. Such behaviour will result in **removal of your commission/appointment**.

Bringing GBS into disrepute through the media/inappropriate media activity

Giving inappropriate interviews about a GB matter or making allegations against a fellow leader, member of staff, parent or the church that result in media coverage is not acceptable. This could lead to legal charges being raised against you personally and/or against the organisation. Such action may result in **removal of your commission/appointment**.

Failure to carry out the policies and procedures set by GBS

These have been created to assist individuals in meeting their duty of care to members at all times. They are there not only to protect our members but also our adult volunteers. Some carry a statutory requirement while others are good practice but failure to apply these may have serious consequences for young people and adults alike as well as damaging the reputation of GBS. It is the responsibility and duty of every volunteer to familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures of GBS and to apply these to the best of their ability at all times.

Failure to do so may lead to an individual being **asked to undertake refresher training in a particular area** or **they may be asked to undergo a period of supervised working** to help build confidence or skills in a particular area of work. If this continued to be a problem or there was a blatant disregard of policies and procedures which resulted in endangering young people this may result in **removal of your commission/appointment**.

General Information

This document should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Policy 2011, amended in July 2013 and also with the Volunteer Grievance Procedure 2013.