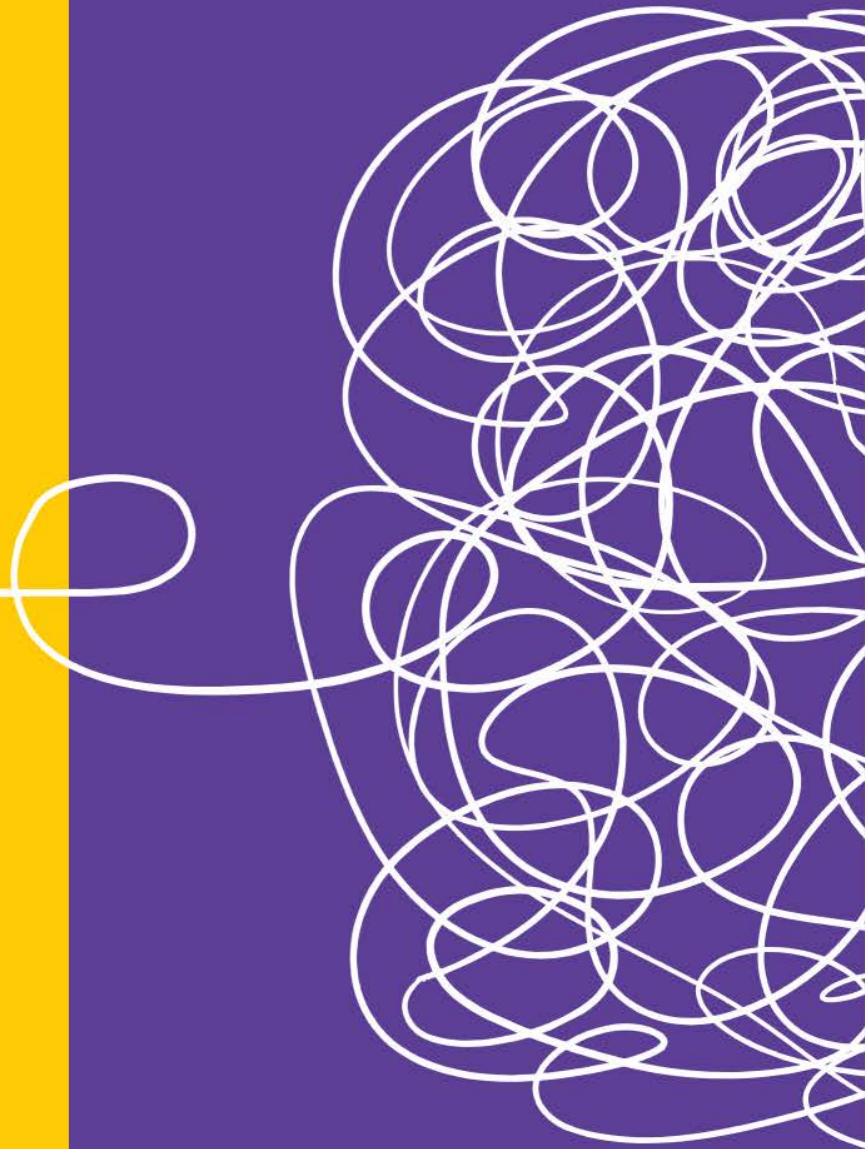


This document should be read
in conjunction with the Volunteer
Code of Conduct

Interim Volunteer Problem- Solving Policy



The
United
Synagogue

Introduction

Our communities depend on the commitment, dedication and goodwill of volunteers. Inevitably, when people care deeply about their community and its future, there will be moments of disagreement. These can be challenging, but when handled well, these moments can strengthen relationships and take our communities forward.

Judaism teaches us the ideal of *machloket l'shem shamayim* or an argument for the sake of Heaven as a model for respectful disagreement:

"In an argument for the sake of truth, both sides win... Each is willing to listen... There is no triumphalism in victory, no anger or anguish in defeat." Rabbi Sacks zt'l in Covenant and Conversation

The contrast between Korach's rebellion (described in the Torah) and the respectful debates of Hillel and Shammai (quoted in the Talmud) reminds us that how we disagree matters.

This policy is grounded in a simple but essential principle: we always treat one another with dignity and respect; even, and especially, when we disagree. Its aim is to support volunteers to raise concerns constructively, resolve issues fairly, and maintain positive working relationships. By providing a clear, consistent framework, we seek to ensure that disagreements are addressed in a way that reflects our shared values and strengthens our communities.

Policy Summary

This policy details the procedure that will be followed by United Synagogue if:

1. A volunteer raises a concern or complaint
2. Someone raises a concern or complaint about a volunteer

This policy should be read in conjunction with the United Synagogue Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Code of Conduct, which cover the relationship between the charity and all volunteers, as well as the US Employee Code of Conduct and Rabbinic Code of Conduct, where relevant.

It should be noted that these Volunteer documents and processes will take priority over the US Complaints policy. Safeguarding allegations are handled separately under safeguarding procedures, which take priority over this policy.

This policy is intended to resolve difficulties fairly and proportionately, not to discipline volunteers, except where absolutely necessary. Nothing in this policy is intended to create a contractual relationship.

We recognise that the majority of individuals who volunteer for the United Synagogue are also members. Accordingly, actions taken under this policy, whether submitting a complaint or being the subject of one, will not negatively affect a person's membership of the United Synagogue, except where there is a substantive justification for doing so, as provided for within the US byelaws.

Honorary Officers have delegated authority from the US Trustees, so any issues involving them will follow a separate process to other volunteers, as detailed later in this document.

Overall accountability for this policy in the interim sits with the United Synagogue Chief People Officer, Vickie Wiltshire, who can be contacted at VolunteerSupport@theus.org.uk.

Pending the appointment of the Head of Volunteering Involvement and the US Volunteering team, all references to the Volunteering team in this document will sit with the HR department.

1. If a volunteer has **a concern** or wants to **make a complaint**

1a. Informal process — raising a concern

It is our strong preference to resolve issues swiftly and informally. Very often, discussing the matter, perhaps with the help of a third party, is sufficient to clear things up to everyone's satisfaction.

For those who volunteer in your local community, this should initially be managed by your local Honorary Officers, with oversight from the US Volunteering team and support from HR.

For those who volunteer within one of the central functions of the United Synagogue, your concern should be addressed to the member of staff responsible for that activity.

If, for any reason, you are uncomfortable raising the issue directly with your local Honorary Officers or with the member of staff responsible, for example if your concern is about them, or there is a concern about a conflict of interest, you should speak to the US Volunteering team. A team member will work with you to ensure that any steps needed to seek a solution are taken.

If your concern is about a US member of staff, the US Volunteering team will support you to review the US Employee Code of Conduct and contact the HR department to take it further informally.

Whoever you speak to will ensure that your concern is investigated and that any steps needed to rectify the situation are taken.

They will also ensure you are provided with an outcome, either in person, by email or by letter. For the avoidance of doubt, they will not be able to share details of any action taken where it relates to somebody else.

If your concern is about whistleblowing or victimisation, please contact [Jo Grose, US Chief Executive Officer](#) or [Claudia Kitsberg, US Director of Safeguarding](#), who will deal with the matter according to the [US Whistleblowing policy](#). You will be kept informed throughout, and your concerns will be dealt with confidentially. Volunteers will not be treated unfavourably for raising concerns in good faith, and we will offer support and protection as a result of raising valid concerns about others.

1b. Formal process — making a complaint

If you are not satisfied after raising a matter informally, then you should make a formal complaint.

To do this, email or write to the US Volunteering team at Head Office, who will share it with your Synagogue Chair or the member of staff responsible for the central volunteering activity. You should explain the issue, provide full details and ask for it to be dealt with formally. If appropriate, you can ask another person to do this on your behalf.

Where appropriate, the investigation will be carried out in your local community.

If your complaint is about a US member of staff, it will be addressed under the formal US investigation and disciplinary procedure, and you will receive support from the US Volunteering team and HR department.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within five working days, with a timescale for providing you with a response. This is normally within fifteen working days from the date the complaint is received. If an extension to either timeframe is required, you will be notified in writing.

Following the investigation, you will receive a formal response to your complaint, which will include:

- Details of the investigation carried out.
- A decision about whether your complaint was upheld.
- The reason for the decision.
- Any appropriate response, e.g. an apology or help with accessing support from another source.
- Information about any other actions to be taken as a result of your concerns/complaint.

If, for any reason, more time is required to deal with the issue, we will tell you about the reasons for this and give you a date by which we will respond.

1c. Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint or concerns raised, you may ask for an appeal. You should send an email or letter setting out the reasons why you are dissatisfied and send it to the US Volunteering team. They will review whether further action is needed.

They will acknowledge your request for an appeal within five working days and will inform you of the timescale for providing you with a response.

The appeal will examine:

- The original complaint made.
- The way it has been investigated.
- The decision made and any agreed actions.

When the appeal has been completed, the Head of Volunteering Involvement will write to you to:

- Tell you the outcome of the appeal and the reasons for this.
- Inform you of any actions that we will be taking as a result.

The outcome of this appeal is final, and no further action will be taken under the problem-solving procedure.

2. If someone has a concern or raises a complaint **about a volunteer**

2a. Informal process — when a concern is raised about you

If you volunteer within one of the central functions of the United Synagogue, the member of staff responsible for that activity will discuss the concern with you.

For those who volunteer in their local community, this is a role for the Synagogue Chair with support/assistance from the US Volunteering team and HR.

If the concern involves the Synagogue Chair, a US member of staff or another Honorary Officer, it will be handled by the US Volunteering team. NB: If the concern involves a child or vulnerable adult, it will be handled by the US Safeguarding team according to their procedures.

They will:

- Try to resolve the matter by talking to you in person in a private setting.
- Find out more from you about the issue and what might be causing any problems.
- Get advice or support from the US Volunteering team, if required.
- Identify any goals and any changes needed to help you.
- Offer you extra support and training where appropriate and necessary.
- Agree a deadline to review the situation with you.

The relevant member of staff or Synagogue Chair will maintain confidentiality regarding your personal experience and any private or sensitive information. They will, however, informally keep the person who raised the concern updated, possibly including details of measures taken to rectify a situation.

2b. Formal process — when a complaint is made about you

If the concern has not been resolved through informal discussions and/or the relevant member of staff or Synagogue Chair thinks that the problem is too serious to deal with informally, then they will deal with the complaint by informing you in writing that they are passing it over to the US Volunteering team, who will co-ordinate the response.

If the complaint involves the Synagogue Chair or another Honorary Officer, or a US member of staff, this will be addressed by a Director or Senior Manager at Head Office. If the

complaint has been made by a member of staff via the US Grievance Policy, then a separate process will be followed as detailed in the Appendix to this document.

A member of the US Volunteering team or Synagogue Chair will issue you with a written outline summary of the complaint and contact you by telephone or online to explain it and offer you support through the process.

You will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint at a meeting. You can be accompanied for support at this meeting by someone that you choose if you wish. The relevant member of staff or Synagogue Chair (plus supporting Honorary Officer or Synagogue Council member) will also attend this meeting. You may be asked not to continue your usual volunteering activity until this meeting has taken place.

During the meeting, the member of staff or Synagogue Chair will:

- Approach the meeting with an open mind and with awareness of their own potential unconscious bias.
- Clearly communicate the nature of the concern to you.
- Provide you with enough time to talk and to give your perspective.
- Identify clear goals or changes needed to resolve the concern.
- Offer extra support and training where necessary, and the option to change to a new role, where possible.
- Agree a timeline with you to review the situation.
- Take written notes and share these with you afterwards. The meeting may be recorded as a method of note-taking and will be for internal use only.

You will receive a written note following the meeting, which outlines the outcome of the meeting.

Following this, you may be asked to step away from your volunteering role with the United Synagogue for a period of time or on a permanent basis. Volunteers asked to leave will be given a clear explanation for the decision. Except for instances of extreme unacceptable behaviour, we will only ask a volunteer to leave their role if other means for resolving the situation have been exhausted.

2c. Appeal

For non-Honorary Officers

If you are not satisfied with the outcome or the handling of a complaint concerning you, you may ask for an appeal by sending a letter or email to the Head of Volunteering Involvement. They will acknowledge your request for an appeal within five working days and will inform you of the timescale for providing you with a response.

The appeal will examine:

- The original complaint made.
- The way it has been investigated.
- The decision made and any agreed actions.

When the appeal has been completed, they will write to you to:

- Tell you the outcome of the appeal and the reasons for this.
- Inform you of any actions that we will be taking as a result, unless these relate to other individuals, in which case these will remain confidential.

The outcome of this appeal is final, and no further action will be taken.

For Honorary Officers

In cases concerning Honorary Officers, after the above process (both informal and formal) has been followed and attempts have been made to resolve the situation, the matter may be reviewed by the US Trustees. Following this, the Trustees may ask you to step away from your volunteering role with the United Synagogue for a period of time or on a permanent basis. Volunteers asked to leave will be given a clear explanation for the decision. Except for instances of extreme unacceptable behaviour, we will only ask a volunteer to leave their role if other means for resolving the situation have been exhausted.

3. Summary table

Note: if a formal complaint has been made by a member of staff via the US Grievance Policy about a volunteer, then a separate process will be followed as detailed in the Appendix to this document.

Type of volunteer	Informal <u>Concern</u> heard by and action decided by	Formal <u>Complaint</u> heard by and action decided by	<u>Appeal</u> heard by and decided by
Community or central function volunteer	Synagogue Chair or relevant member of central volunteering function, with oversight of US Volunteering team and support from HR where necessary	Synagogue Chair or relevant member of central volunteering function, with oversight of US Volunteering team and support from HR where necessary	Head of Volunteering Involvement with support from HR, US Volunteering or other teams
Honorary Officer	US Volunteering team	Director or Senior Manager at US Head Office - with support of HR and US Volunteering team	Trustees only

Note: if a formal complaint has been made by a member of staff via the US Grievance Policy about a Honorary Officer, then a separate process will be followed as detailed in the Appendix to this document.

4. Serious incidents

If a volunteer is concerned about the safety of anyone connected with the charity (a US employee, member or another volunteer), they should escalate the concern to a member of staff responsible for that activity or the Synagogue Chair.

If a volunteer witnesses something in their role that seriously concerns them, such as suspected unethical or discriminatory behaviour from another volunteer or a member of staff, this should be raised immediately with the member of staff responsible for that activity or a member of the US Senior Management Team via complaints@theus.org.uk.

All incidents where there is alleged to have been a serious or repeated breach of either the law or United Synagogue's [policies, procedures and byelaws](#), including the Volunteer Code of Conduct, will be investigated.

Where illegal activity is known or is believed to have occurred, the organisation will contact the Police. This includes all complaints relating to safeguarding matters involving children and/or adults at risk (see below). The [US Whistleblowing policy](#) may be relevant in some cases.

If the serious incident relates to a volunteer, then we will ask them to suspend their volunteering while an investigation is carried out. The decision to suspend them will be confirmed to them in writing. An investigation will take place, and they will be informed of the results and decisions made.

If the volunteer wishes, they may ask for an appeal of these decisions using the process outlined above.

5. Safeguarding

Where a volunteer has been removed or dismissed following a serious safeguarding incident, we are legally required to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This may result in the individual being barred from working or volunteering with children or adults in regulated settings and, in some cases, others in their household may also be disqualified by association. You will be informed if this applies.

Any concerns about harm to children or vulnerable adults must be reported immediately to **Claudia Kitsberg, US Director of Safeguarding:** (0208 343 5652/ ckitsberg@theus.org.uk / Out of hours: 0203 758 8440).

Please refer to the forthcoming Safeguarding Code of Conduct for additional requirements for volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults.

Appendix: Allegations against an Honorary Officer arising from a formal grievance raised by a US employee

We value the time and effort our Honorary Officers dedicate to the charity, and therefore it is our policy to ensure that matters are dealt with fairly and transparently. This process ensures that steps are taken to establish the facts and to give volunteers the opportunity to respond before taking any formal action, if required.

This document sets out the process to be followed where allegations are made against an Honorary Officer arising from a formal grievance raised by a United Synagogue employee, and where the grievance has been investigated under the Grievance Policy and the allegations have been upheld.

Once allegations have been raised, an investigation process will ensue as per the grievance procedure. Where the grievance is upheld in full or in part, the grievance chair will request that Trustees convene a panel to consider what action, if any, should be taken under the US byelaws.

The hearing should be scheduled as follows:

Within 10 working days of the investigation outcome being communicated to the Honorary Officer in writing, a written invitation to attend a hearing should be issued. Any delay to this process will be reasonable in the circumstances and communicated to the Honorary Officer.

The invite letter should provide a minimum of 5 working days' notice of the hearing.

The hearing will be conducted by a panel of 3 United Synagogue Trustees, selected by the President. Where possible, the president will not participate at this stage so that they remain available to hear an appeal, if any.

Also in attendance will be a representative of the HR team and/or the grievance chair, whose role is limited to explaining the investigation process and evidence and answering questions. They will not participate in the panel's decision-making.

The Honorary Officer may be accompanied at the hearing by either another US Honorary Officer (not limited to within their local community) or a volunteer. The companion may provide support but will not act in a legal or representative capacity. Their role is purely

supportive, and whilst they may address the panel, they are not permitted to answer on behalf of the Honorary Officer.

Prior to the hearing, the Honorary Officer will receive a letter setting out the allegations they are being invited to respond to, the relevant Bye-law provisions, the potential outcomes available to the panel and any evidence which may be referred to by the panel and investigating chair, during the hearing, subject to any anonymisation, redaction or confidentiality restrictions on what can be shared. Where there are limitations on what can be shared, the Honorary Officer will be provided with sufficient information to understand and respond to the substance of the evidence.

There may be instances where names and certain details are redacted to protect the identity of a witness or third party. Where an individual's identity is redacted or anonymised, the identity will be available to the panel and, if required, they may request further points of clarification from the anonymised individual, as with any other witness.

The Hearing

The purpose of the hearing is not to reinvestigate the allegations, but to determine whether the established findings justify action under the Byelaws and, if so, what outcome is proportionate.

At the hearing, the case will be set out by either the HR representative or the Investigating officer, referencing the relevant evidence provided to both parties in advance of the hearing.

The Trustee panel will have the opportunity to ask the Investigating officer any questions or points of clarification.

The Honorary Officer will have the opportunity to present any new evidence not previously considered as part of the investigation. Where new material is raised, the panel may adjourn or reconvene the hearing to ensure proper consideration.

The hearing will adjourn so that the Trustee Panel can take the necessary time to consider all the evidence, including any new evidence collected at the hearing.

The panel will determine matters on the basis of the evidence before it on the balance of probabilities. The panel is not bound by the investigation findings or recommendations and will reach its own decision in accordance with the Byelaws

If the Honorary Officer declines to attend the hearing, they will be given the option of making a written submission, which will be considered accordingly.

Outcome

Depending on the time required to consider the facts of the case, it may not be possible to provide an outcome at the hearing. In such circumstances, the outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the hearing.

All participants in the process, including panel members, attendees and the Honorary Officer, are expected to treat the process and associated materials as confidential, save where disclosure is required for the purposes of the process or by law.

Possible outcomes/sanctions may include:

- No action
- Letter of concern
- Partial removal or suspension of duties
- Full removal

The Honorary Officer will be given the right to appeal. Ordinarily, this will be to the President, within 5 working days upon receipt of the written outcome. The President has the right to nominate another appropriate individual to hear the appeal.

Appeal

The Honorary Officer may appeal in writing within five working days of receipt of the written outcome.

The appeal should be submitted to the requisite individual as set out in the outcome letter, setting out the grounds for appeal. These should normally focus on evidence not already considered, any breach in legislation or procedural error or a factual explanation of why the sanction was too harsh/inappropriate.

The appeal chair will be accompanied by a United Synagogue Director, typically someone who has had no prior involvement in the case. They will be provided with all evidence relied upon throughout the main hearing, as well as any new evidence or information provided at the appeal stage. They may decide a hearing is required, or they may be able to reach a decision relying solely on the evidence already available. If a hearing is required, the

Honorary Officer may be accompanied by a United Synagogue Honorary Officer or volunteer.

An appeal outcome will be provided in writing within 10 working days.