

## Tips and best practice from local managers:



### Managing adults (including dealing with complaints)

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**There are no right answers, but there are things that it would be wise to avoid and some helpful hints, based on experience, that may assist.**

The following are some general guidance notes that may assist District Commissioners in dealing with some of the issues that may need to be considered:

1. If dealing with a complaint, ensure that you know the procedure and follow it.
2. If unsure as to whether something is a complaint, it is probably safer to treat it as if it is.
3. You may find it useful to create a 'decision/action log' in any situation where it appears there may be a problem brewing.
4. If you do not want anyone to see it, don't write it in any format (paper, text, e-mail). Be open about all that you do around the issue. The perception that you may be hiding something can sometimes be a bigger issue than the original problem.
5. Communicate: Talk to the adult(s) concerned. Don't avoid them. Keep everyone informed of what is happening at all stages (if possible). Take account of the level of understanding of the individuals with whom you are dealing.
6. Do not try to sweep things under the carpet. You may think that you have got rid of the problem, but it may come back to bite you and be an even bigger issue.
7. Be timely: Do not delay dealing with problems/issues. They are only likely to fester. Speedy resolution/action is usually best.
8. Be sensitive and try to recognise where the 'aggrieved' individual is coming from. Do not be dismissive. It may not be a big deal to you, but it may be to them.
9. There is no such thing as an expert in managing people. There are lots of people with experience, so do not be afraid to seek advice.
10. If it may help the situation, ask someone who is seen as independent to assist.
11. While you should try to keep matters confidential, there are always occasions where this may not be possible or appropriate. Be clear with all involved what you can or cannot do in this respect. If, however, you agree to keep something confidential then make sure that you do.
12. Ensure that all involved in the issue are aware of their responsibilities. It will always be the 'complainant's' issue, so do not let them try to hand it over to you. They must also take responsibility. You are there to try and help.

13. Be clear about outcomes/decisions and again write these down wherever possible. Confirming outcomes by letter may seem formal, but it can avoid misunderstandings.
14. Do not be afraid to apologise, even if you do not feel that you were wrong. A bit of give and take can work wonders. If appropriate you could consider apologising for the fact that an individual feels that they have been 'wronged'.
15. When meeting 'complainants' consider:
  - a. The location for any meeting. Pubs are rarely suitable.
  - b. Do you need to be accompanied, and if so does the offer of someone to support the 'complainant' need to be made?
  - c. Allow sufficient time for the issues to be explored, but do not allow things to drag on.
  - d. Keep to the issue(s). People who think that they are 'victims' sometimes, without necessarily realising it, prefer to stay in 'victim mode' and may try to move the goalposts by adding in other issues.

HEALTH WARNING: This note is designed just to be a helpful aide-memoire for District Commissioners and does not in any way constitute Association policy or a definitive list of issues.