

SECTION 2:

RUNNING YOUR

LOCAL GROUP



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

What do Coeliac UK local groups do?

A lot! We have around 90 active local groups across the UK. As I'm sure you can imagine each local group is different in how it goes about day to day tasks and runs its committee, but all are united in their aims and responsibilities.

Aims

1. To support and assist people (and their families) either diagnosed, or actively seeking diagnosis of coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) in the local area.
2. To further the aims of Coeliac UK in the local community.

Responsibilities

1. Welcoming and providing direct support to those with coeliac disease/DH and/or those new to Coeliac UK.
2. Organising social events and activities where members of Coeliac UK can meet, share experiences and build confidence.
3. Bringing members together online through the Coeliac UK website and individual social media accounts.
4. Keeping members and the charity up to date on events, activities, news and developments.
5. Being self-funding .
6. Maintaining a committee.

How Coeliac UK will support local groups?

Local groups adhering to the Constitution can expect the following support from Coeliac UK:

1. to use the Coeliac UK local group name and logo and to benefit from the charity's long-standing reputation
2. access to a dedicated team at the High Wycombe office providing support and resources to assist with the running of the local group
3. access to relevant and up to date information and resources on coeliac disease and DH
4. Public Liability Insurance for the local group activities in line with with insurance policy documents
5. details of new and current registered full members in the local group's area who have not opted out of such communications
6. an online facility to publicise the local groups activities and news
7. and access to resources and materials.

What Coeliac UK Local Groups don't do

Don't give medical advice

Committee members cannot give medical advice and should not be treated or regarded as offering a substitute for the medical advice of GPs, nurses or any other healthcare professionals. Anybody concerned about health related matters should be directed to their own nurse/GP for professional medical advice or referred to the Coeliac UK Helpline.

Don't become a counselling service

Local groups may find they are approached by people needing counselling, especially as receiving a diagnosis of coeliac disease can be very distressing. We do not expect local groups to do this and suggest the member is sensitively advised to contact the Coeliac UK Helpline who can provide further support or point them in the direction of a counselling organisation for specific advice.

Don't act as a representative of commercial companies

Local groups must not act as marketing outlets for particular gluten free manufacturers or retailers. Local groups must remain neutral in their dealings with and promotion of national and local commercial companies. For further information on working with commercial companies refer to the Volunteering team by emailing volunteering@coeliac.org.uk.

Don't speak for Coeliac UK

Your own personal knowledge and experience of having coeliac disease combined with the work you do speaking to and working with members is vital to the work of the charity. As representatives of your local group you can play a crucial role in raising awareness of the condition and improving the services and care for people with coeliac disease in your local area. However, local groups cannot act as a representative of or speak on behalf of Coeliac UK. For further information refer to the Raising Awareness and the Representation Policy.



LOCAL GROUP COMMITTEES

Setting up your committee

Every local group is led by a committee. The committee manages and is responsible for the running of the local group on behalf of its members. It is accountable to both them and the charity.

Members of the committee are a team, working together with good understanding between all. Each person should be actively involved in the working of the local group. They should be aware of their own skills, strengths, role and responsibilities within the committee. Honouring and respecting everybody's place and role allows for a strong, effective committee and from it a well run local group.

That said, creating an effective committee doesn't just happen overnight – it does need to be worked at. With this in mind it is important to get together as soon as possible, whether you are a completely new committee or an established committee welcoming a new volunteer to the team.

Best practice: the work of the committee

The committee is responsible for:

1. making sure the local group is run in line with Coeliac UK's vision, the Coeliac UK Local Group Constitution, Coeliac UK policies and the law
2. making sure all committee members agree and understand the goal/s of the local group and that they are reviewed each year
3. ensuring a safe, welcoming environment for the committee to meet where all committee members feel able to play an active role, feed in their thoughts and make a true contribution to the local group's activities
4. allocating clear roles and responsibilities for each committee member so that workload is shared amongst all
5. ensuring all committee members feel able to have their say at meetings and have input into the local group's activities
6. communicating and coordinating the local group activities and news
7. meeting regularly and ensuring minutes of meetings are circulated and everyone is informed in good time of the future dates and venues of all meetings and events
8. managing the local group finances, ensuring the local group operates within its means and in line with the financial responsibilities laid out in the local group constitution and Finance, Fraud and Fundraising Policy
9. debriefing new committee members on the workings and aims of the local group
10. rotating roles and encouraging new people to take on committee roles and develop within the committee.

Although all committee members share responsibility for the running of the local group and should have clear roles, that does not mean that everybody should be doing everything. It is important that tasks are split up between all, with everyone reporting back. Strong communication, working together and joint responsibility are key.

Who makes up the committee

Coeliac UK local group committees must include the three obligatory Group Officer posts:

- Group Organiser
- Group Secretary
- and Group Treasurer.

In addition, we recommend up to nine further committee members.

Committee members are formally elected into post at the Annual General Meeting. Outside of that meeting however, they can invite other people to join, these are known as co-opted members. We recommend no more than two co-opted committee members each year.

Who can serve on a local group committee?

- Coeliac UK members
- Coeliac UK Healthcare professional members
- non-members with a link to the local group eg sibling or spouse, parent or child of a member.

We know that a number of our members have strong links to the food and health sector. This can include working for a manufacturer, setting up their own gluten free company or acting as an ambassador for one of the major retailers, hosting cookery demonstrations or distributing products. Alternatively, some members work as nutritional therapists or diet experts.

Committee members with links to the food and health sector must declare their interests and should refer to the Volunteering team if they wish to hold the role of Group Organiser, Group Secretary or Group Treasurer. This is to protect the integrity and impartiality of the local group.

Committee member or volunteer?

You should be clear about who is a committee member and who is a local group volunteer. Committee members are actively involved in the running of the local group, taking responsibility for events, activities and the relationship between the local group, members and the charity.

Volunteers support the local group but are not actively involved in deciding how it is run. Volunteers are engaged in more specific tasks such as laying out chairs before a meeting, assisting with refreshments, helping to tidy up after an event, stuffing envelopes when a mailing takes place. Volunteers do not attend committee meetings.

Many local groups find they have an active group of committee members and volunteers. It is important you are able to differentiate between the two and that each knows what role and expectations are placed on them by the local group.

Role descriptions of the three Group Officers

The suggested role descriptions outlining the purpose, main tasks and skills that would be helpful for the positions of Group Organiser, Group Secretary and Group Treasurer follow on the next three page.

Group Organiser

Purpose of the role

To ensure the smooth running of the local group and lead the activities of the local group. This may include chairing meetings and acting as a local representative of Coeliac UK.

Main tasks:

- chairing meetings and AGMs
- working with the committee to plan and coordinate the local groups' events
- ensuring the local group complies with the Constitution and Coeliac UK rules
- ensuring committee members are up to date with news and developments
- respond to queries from members and the public
- acting as a spokesperson for the local group
- acting as a signatory on the bank account
- approving minutes and agendas of meetings
- ensuring tasks and roles are delegated
- keeping an overview of local group activities
- working to keep the committee motivated
- acting as the principle contact with Coeliac UK.

Helpful knowledge/skills/experiences to have for this post:

- good organisational skills
- leadership skills and experience of running meetings
- ability to motivate others and involve them in the work
- communication skills
- ability to delegate.

Group Secretary

Purpose of role

To provide administrative and secretarial support to the local group.

Main tasks

- arranging meetings
- ensuring effective communications between Coeliac UK High Wycombe office, the committee and members
- keeping the web page up to date with news and events
- maintaining a database of local members
- contacting new members within a month of receiving their details from Coeliac UK
- identifying and booking venues for meetings, speakers and produce an annual programme of events
- writing minutes of each meeting and circulating amongst the committee
- acting as a signatory on the bank account
- working with committee members to coordinate the production and distribution of the newsletter.

Helpful knowledge/skills/experiences to have for this post:

- good organisation and administrative skills
- good IT skills
- good communication skills
- ability to delegate
- experience of writing minutes.

This role could be divided into separate roles if you have sufficient committee members i.e. Membership secretary, meeting coordinator, newsletter coordinator and minutes secretary.

Group Treasurer

Purpose of the role

To keep track of the financial well being of your local group. The Treasurer takes responsibility for ensuring that all income and expenditure is recorded regularly and that any monies raised by the local group are deposited in the local group's bank account as quickly as possible. Although the Treasurer keeps records, the whole committee has responsibility for local group monies. The role involves record keeping and realistic planning of what funds will be needed.

Main tasks:

- maintaining proper up to date records and following the procedures required by Coeliac UK
- ensuring local group expenditure is in line with Coeliac UK rules
- preparing and submitting the twice yearly financial returns
- planning and budgeting for the use of the local group accounts
- acting as a signatory for the bank account
- checking and reconciling bank statements promptly.

Knowledge/skills/experience helpful to fulfil this role:

- good numerical skills
- ability to present and explain financial information
- good organisational skills
- ability to understand and analyse simple financial information
- commitment to comply with Coeliac UK's Constitution
- good IT skills.

Other Committee roles

Many local groups give specific titles to each of their committee members. This helps them clarify their roles and responsibilities. The following is a list of possible other roles you might want to take up in your committee:

- **Membership Secretary:** manages the database of members and coordinates mailings to members. This person needs to be computer literate and have access to a computer
- **Newsletter Coordinator:** drafts, edits and manages the publication and circulation of the local group's newsletters
- **Social Events Organiser:** organises and arranges events, such as coach trips, fish and chip suppers etc. This includes liaising with the venue, setting the date, organising speakers or exhibitors and keeping the committee up to date with the progress of events
- **Newly Diagnosed Contact:** makes initial contact with new members within a month of getting their details from the charity and invites them to attend local group meetings and events
- **Manufacturer Contact:** keeps in contact with manufacturers and arranges goody bags, cookery demonstrations and exhibitors at events. This person may also be responsible for organising sponsorship of newsletters or other publications
- **Raffle Organiser:** some local groups arrange a raffle at each meeting to raise money. This person is responsible for finding prizes, selling tickets and calling the winners on the day
- **Web Editor:** responsible for ensuring the local group's webpage on the Coeliac UK update is accurate, relevant and up to date. If the local group is involved in social networking too this person is responsible for keeping the pages active
- **Children's Coordinator:** organises specific events for children such as a Christmas party, Easter Egg hunt or Pizza night
- **Catering Organiser:** organises drinks and gluten free food at meetings and events. (We suggest this person receives some training in food hygiene.)

Of note: linking up with other volunteering opportunities

Those with a particular interest in raising awareness or supporting members might want to double up their committee role with another Coeliac UK volunteering opportunity. Such roles as the Campaign Network and Member 2 Member programme are open to committee members either as part of what you do with the local group or independently from your committee responsibilities.

Committee meetings

Committees must hold at least two regular meetings a year to discuss what they are doing. Those local groups planning a lot of events over the year should meet more regularly, ideally one meeting prior to the event to delegate roles for the day and to check on progress and another after to gather feedback. Dates for meetings should be agreed at least 28 days ahead of time giving everyone ample notice for those who need to organise childcare, transport etc to attend.

We recommend keeping meetings formal and structured as doing so can help:

- to make sure everyone has a chance to discuss an issue
- help resolve conflict and avoid confusion
- prevent 1 or 2 people from dominating the committee
- demonstrate good, democratic management.

Keeping minutes

Memories are unreliable. Minutes keep a written record of the meeting – who said what, who is doing what and when it needs to get done by. They also ensure that those unable to attend the meeting know what went on.

Minutes should include:

- date and venue
- who was present (and who sends their apologies)
- a record of the key discussions.

They do not need to be a long and complicated record of every conversation that took place. They should just focus on what decisions were made and who is going to carry them out. Minutes should not include

personal remarks.

After every meeting the Minutes should be circulated amongst the committee for comments or changes and their approval.

Quorum

Meetings must be quorate to do business, this means they must have the necessary number of people present for decisions to be allowed to be made.

Voting rights: there is one vote per committee member.

Committee meetings: a minimum of 50% of elected committee members which includes two Group Officers must be present for committee meetings to be quorate.

Decisions can only be passed if agreed by a simple majority (51%) of those present.

There is one vote per committee member. In the event of a tie the committee member chairing the meeting has a second or casting vote.

Decisions cannot be made unless the meeting is quorate and the majority of meeting attendees support the proposal.

Next steps

Once the committee has been set up and roles agreed you need to start thinking about:

- contacting members
- organising events
- establishing communication channels
- fundraising
- raising awareness.

Please remember, the responsibilities of the committee can be found in the **Roles and Responsibilities** section. Make sure you and the rest of your committee familiarise yourself with this chapter and refer to it throughout the year.

HOLDING AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Purpose of the AGM

The AGM is a chance for members to hear from the people they have elected and to elect committee members into office for another year.

Planning your AGM

The first step to planning your AGM should involve sitting down as a committee to discuss and agree on the following:

Date

All local groups must hold their AGM by 31 May each year. When choosing a date, think about which days will work for the majority of your members and what dates committee members have free.

Choosing a venue

When booking the venue for your AGM you should look to book exclusive use of a private room which has plenty of space. During the AGM you will need to present reports about the local group's activities and hold elections: you need to ensure you will be heard and not interrupted.

Finally, you need to make sure the venue is neutral, meaning it is not linked to specific committee members eg a restaurant a committee member works at, or somebody's home. Not only are such venues not suitable from a space point of view but they may stop members from feeling comfortable posing questions about the running of the local group. Preventing members from feeling comfortable and able to talk freely will undermine the integrity of the local group, the AGM and your ability to do your role.

Notifying Members

You must give members at least 28 days' notice of the AGM, including:

- the date
- the time
- the location
- the names of people standing down from the committee
- the names of people standing for election
- an open invitation to members and their family to also join the committee.

Agenda

Each AGM should have the following items on the agenda:

- approve minutes from previous AGM
- Group Organiser's report summarising the events and activities of the preceding 12 months
- Group Treasurer's report summarising the incomings and outgoings of the bank account and the end of year balance
- election and re-election of committee members.

We recommend you have several copies of the previous AGM minutes, the current financial report and a summary sheet of local group events for members to view on the day.

Keep your reports short and succinct and be sure to offer the chance to members to raise any questions they might have at the end of each presentation.

The AGM can be as formal or informal as you wish. Some local groups prefer to link their AGM with another event eg a cookery demonstration, guest speaker or take away lunch. Making it more than reports and elections can often help ensure a good turnout – though the decision on how to do it rests with you.

Voting

Committee members are elected for a 12 month period. By taking on the role they agree to fulfil the roles and responsibilities laid out in the Local Group Constitution (see also **Role and Responsibilities**).

We recommend Group Officers stay in their position for no more than five years in a row.

Voting rights

In accordance with the local group Constitution voting rights are given to all full members of Coeliac UK (those over the age of 16 who have paid their membership).

It is down to the local group to decide if they wish to extend voting rights to committee members who are not members of Coeliac UK.

Ensuring your AGM is quorate

Similar to committee meetings, AGMs must be quorate for the elections to be valid.

The quorum for an AGM is 10% of the local group's registered members or ten registered members (whichever is lower). Resolutions may be passed by a simple majority (51%) of those with the right to vote.

There is one vote per member / committee member. It is down to the committee to decide how voting takes place eg a show of hands, writing on voting slips or a ballot. It is good practice to ask for a seconder – a member not linked to the committee who will give their support to each nomination. In the case of a tie, the Group Organiser has the deciding vote.

Voting in a full Committee

A local group must have both the posts of Group Organiser, Group Treasurer and Group Secretary filled and three signatories to function. If you cannot find a minimum of three people to run the local group then you must contact the Volunteering team at Coeliac UK to discuss your options. Please note that failure to recruit a full committee may result in the closure of the local group.

After the AGM

Minutes of the meeting should be circulated to all committee members and to the Volunteering team within 28 days of the meeting. Once signed off from the committee it is good practice to post a copy of the minutes on your local group webpage and/or circulate with your next newsletter.





ORGANISING LOCAL GROUP MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Local groups are responsible for organising social events and activities, including their Annual General Meeting (AGM). This chapter provides guidance on how to do this, from preparations to the event itself and the feedback and review process at the end.

Step 1: Decide the type of event

Variety is the spice of life and nothing rings truer for local group events. Local groups who offer a range of different events and different venues across the area are often found to be the most successful local groups.

There are hundreds of different ideas for local group events. There are just a few which we know have been very successful for local groups in the past:

- **talk by a healthcare professional, manufacturer or Coeliac UK staff:** invite a speaker or two to give a talk on a topic relevant to your members. This could be anything from a dietitian talking on osteoporosis, a gastroenterologist running a question and answer session, a pharmacist presenting on products available on prescription, a large manufacturer getting feedback on their products, a local manufacturer talking about what they offer and their manufacturing process or somebody from Coeliac UK updating on the charity's current projects, campaigns or research developments.
- **cooking demonstration:** learning new recipes or better understanding how best to work and use specific gluten free flours can be of great interest to members, especially those only recently diagnosed. You can either approach a manufacturer to give a cooking demonstration or, if you have a talented baker in your local group, see if they would mind talking people through how to make some of their most loved recipes.
- **taste test:** have a bit of fun with members testing their palates, preferences and knowledge of the different gluten free brands on offer. Have them taste a selection of breads, crackers, biscuits, cakes, sausages – whatever you like, and see which products are most loved (and unloved) by your members.
- **meal in a restaurant or at a catering college:** nothing quite beats being able to eat out without feeling as though you are the odd one out, picking apart the menu and asking the waitress a list of questions before placing your order. Whether it is lunch at a catering college, afternoon tea in a café, dinner at a smart restaurant or Sunday lunch at the local pub, local group organised meals are popular, well supported and

loved of local group events. Members and family can enjoy each other's company, have a delicious meal and not even committee members are left having to do the dishes!

- **coffee morning:** a number of local groups have had great success hosting regular, mid-week coffee mornings. These informal, drop in events allow members a relaxed environment to talk about new recipes or products they've tried, pose any questions to the committee and catch up with friends over a cuppa! Whilst they don't usually involve a large number of members, they are easy to organise and really appreciated by those who attend.
- **quiz night with take away food (e.g. fish and chips, pizza or Chinese):** you don't have to book a table in a restaurant to feed your members. As the number of outlets offering gluten free take away continues to rise, so do take away events. Find a large space, add Members, somebody to pick up the take away and you've got the ingredients for a successful meeting. For those wanting to add a bit more, nominate a quiz master, print out quiz sheets and test the knowledge of your Members. Charge £1 per entry and offer a prize for the winning team!
- **new members meeting:** whilst things have improved greatly for people with coeliac disease over the past few decades, we know that the diagnosis and move to a gluten free diet can be daunting. Host a meeting specifically aimed at members who have joined the charity over the past 12 months. There are lots of things you can do from hosting a question and answer session, to providing different products for members to sample, to offering your own tips for baking and eating out locally. This can be a great way to support your newest recruits and engage a new audience in the local group
- **mini food fair:** mini food fairs are a great way to give local manufacturers a chance to showcase their products, and for members to see what's available. Book a village hall or community centre, invite four or five different companies to show and sell their products, organise a tea and coffee stand, add members, throw in a raffle and you've got a successful event!
- **coach trip to a food fair, gluten free event or restaurant:** there are food fairs taking place almost every month. Many of these are organised by other local groups, but there are also events such as the Allergy and Free From show or events organised by manufacturers, all of which are very popular with members. For venues a bit further away a coach trip to such events can be a great day out!

Don't forget to check out the Coming Up pages in Crossed Grain or 'Out and about with local groups' in the Volunteers' Update to see what other local groups are up to and to get ideas and inspiration from them!

Step 2: Choose a date and time

The date and time you choose does have an impact on who can attend. Firstly, you need a date which is suitable to the majority of your committee members. Secondly, if you are having a guest speaker, you need to make sure the date works for them. And finally you need to choose a date which will ensure members are given at least 28 days notice of the event.

Those who work will be unlikely to attend events that take place during the working week. Families often struggle to attend events which take place in the evening or on Saturday or Sunday mornings (when children are often involved in sports clubs). Elderly members can be reluctant to drive in the dark. Do spend some time as a Committee thinking about who your event is aimed at and use that to help you choose the best date and time.

Step 3: Book a venue

Community centres, church halls, village halls and leisure centres are often popular locations offering large open spaces without breaking the bank. Many have kitchens where you can serve tea and coffee from and are happy to accommodate cookery demonstrations and have food sold at the venue – but always double check before booking.

Hospitals, colleges and universities often have lecture halls which can be great if you are hosting a talk (but beware they can come with hefty price tags).

Supermarket cafes are popular choices for coffee mornings as most boast large, open cafes with good transport links and guaranteed parking spaces.

If organising a meal out at a restaurant, pub or catering college make sure you've discussed with the venue

manager where people will seat, timings for food to be served and, if meals are booked in advance, what the timings would be. You don't want to get caught out last minute.

The type of event you are holding will dictate the type of venue you need. We recommend running through this list of questions before booking a venue to make sure you are getting the right place for your meeting:

- is it big enough?
- how much does it cost?
- is it available for the date and time you want?
- is it easy to find?
- is it easy to get to e.g. does it have good public transport links?
- is there affordable parking available or nearby?
- does it have suitable access and facilities for disabled people?
- are there tea and coffee making facilities? What are the terms, conditions and costs of using these (if any)?
- do they have chairs and tables available? What are the terms, conditions and costs of using these (if any)?
- can you host a raffle?
- can you prepare and cook food at the venue? What are the terms, conditions and costs of doing so (if any)?
- can you sell food?
- do they have a screen (or a blank wall) for a projector?
- are there any other events taking place on the same day? (This might have an impact on parking and noise during your event)
- who will be your main contact for the venue on the day of your event?

Step 4: Notify members and publicise your event

Members must be given at least 28 days' notice for all local group events. The more notice you can give, the better the turn out.

When notifying members you should:

- contact them directly: you are responsible for ensuring that members on your mailing list are informed of all local group events. Email or write to members with the date, time, location and any booking details
- post the event on your local group webpage
- submit the event to the Volunteering team to be included in our monthly email newsletter and Crossed Grain magazine.

In addition to your responsibility to members, do try and publicise your event more widely if you have the time and resources to do so.

For example:

- let your local newspapers and radio stations know



- put a poster up on the notice board at local supermarkets
- put up a poster in your GP waiting room
- ask local pharmacists and dietitians to promote the event to their patients
- advertise to other related charities in your area eg local branches of the National Osteoporosis Society or the IBS network who might promote to their members too.

Step 5: Work out the details

You've agreed the type of event, date, time and location and you've let members know. You now need to work out your agenda and delegate roles for the day. Your event will run much smoother if committee members and volunteers know what is expected of them the minute they walk through the door.

Obviously, the specifics will be dependent on the type of event you are hosting, but whatever the event make sure you sit down as a committee, think about how you want the event to run, what needs to happen for that to take place and make sure all the committee are involved in the success of your event.

Step 6: On the day

At the start of the event somebody should do 'Housekeeping'. This involves pointing out fire exits, toilets and making any other announcements relating to the venue.

If you are looking to take photos at your event make sure you obtain permission from those present before you get clicking. If children are present you need to obtain written permission from the child's parent before any photos are taken. A photo permission form can be found in 'Supporting documents'.

Refer to the related Policies section for more information on Insurance, Health and Safety and Food Handling to guarantee your event is fully covered.

Step 7: Feedback

If possible, ask attendees to give feedback on the event and the local group. Print out feedback back forms (a template form can be found under **Supporting Documents** or have a suggestions box set up.

Direct feedback gives you a great opportunity to grow as a committee and ensures your events reflect the interests of your members. What's more positive feedback can prove as great motivation to your committee.

Before any event takes place make sure you can answer these questions:

- what time should the committee arrive at the venue?
- who is responsible for setting up the room eg laying out tables and chairs?
- who is responsible for organising tea and coffee?
- who is organising the raffle?
- who will be meeting members and guests?
- will the event be formally opened/ guests formally welcomed? If so, who is doing this job?
- who is the main contact for any speaker/exhibitors you have coming to your event?
- does money need to be paid on the day itself? If so, who is taking responsibility for this?
- who is available to help clear up at the end of the event?
- what time do you have to vacate the venue?
- who will be greeting people as they arrive?
- who will be conducting the health and safety check?
- who will open the venue up?
- who will close the venue up?

Try to be as specific as you can as this will help ensure an organised event.



LOCAL GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURE

Problems, grievances and conflict may arise in a number of ways. A volunteer may make a complaint about another volunteer, a member, a member of staff or Coeliac UK itself.

In most cases, internal local group problems should be sorted out within the local group through sensible and open discussion. Sometimes a democratic vote may be required to reach a decision in a dispute. If, however, you find yourself unable to do this then please ask for mediation by the Volunteering team.

In cases of conflict Coeliac UK:

- endeavours to get it right from the beginning, by following guidance on good practice, having up to date policies and listening to the concerns of volunteers
- offers means to achieve reconciliation when things go wrong by ensuring everyone knows what to do when something goes wrong, appointing somebody to monitor volunteer complaints and to explore independent means of conflict resolution when necessary
- accepts responsibility for ensuring volunteers complaints have a fair hearing.

What to do if you need to make a complaint

Stage 1: Oral complaint

Initial complaints, whether concerning a member of staff, member, the charity or another volunteer should first be discussed informally. Many issues can be solved this way. Complaints should initially be raised with the Head of Volunteer Development, or if the complaint refers to the Head of Volunteer Development it should be made to the Director of Marketing, Communications and Volunteering.

Stage 2: Written complaint

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, you should make a formal complaint in writing to Head of Volunteer Development, or if the complaint refers to the Head of Volunteer Development it should be made to the Director of Marketing, Communications and Volunteering.

Coeliac UK will reply to the formal complaint within 10 working days and we ask the Local Group or volunteer to respond within the following 15 working days.

Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 then you can appeal to the Chief Executive or Board of Governors.

What should happen if someone complains about you

Stage 1: Oral discussion

The first step will be an informal discussion about the complaint. This is an opportunity for you to hear about the complaint and offer your side of the story. It will also seek to identify some solutions, if required and appropriate.

Stage 2: Written warning

If the issue hasn't been resolved by the oral discussion, you may be issued with a writing warning outlining the reason for the complaint. You should be given the opportunity to state your case formally to a responsible person.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set or help offered. However, if the charity decided to ask you to leave you will be given the opportunity to appeal.

Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal

If you have been asked to leave you will be able to appeal in writing to the Chief Executive or the Board of Governors. If appropriate a sub-committee will be formed to specifically hear the appeal.

You will be informed of a time frame within which your appeal will be responded to. The decision made will be final.

To note:

- complaints should not be made anonymously. Everyone should have the right to know what they have been accused of and by whom so that they are able to offer their side of the story
- if attending any meetings you will also be given the option to be accompanied to the meeting by a nominated person of your choice
- all complaints must be treated confidentially and should only be discussed amongst those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue
- the charity will keep records of what happens and who is involved
- meetings will take place in a confidential place
- you will be kept informed at every step of the procedure
- whilst going through the problem solving procedure you can continue to be a member of the charity and enjoy the services of the charity unless there is a good reason why this needs to be stopped
- if you are unsure as to what the problem solving procedure is you should consult the Head of Volunteer Development or Director of Marketing, Communications and Volunteering.