

13th May 2004

Ref: APPEAL AGAINST VERBAL WARNING

To whom it may concern,

I am taking this opportunity to appeal against the “formal oral warning” concocted by Ms A Barney against me. As you are well aware, I have a clean employment record over the course of more than 3 years and wish to maintain this spotless record. As you know full well, various disciplinary threats against me in the past have always been resolved amicably after sufficient positive communication has been exchanged.

I consider that this matter was not dealt with in a fair and proper way:- The two “attempts” to talk about this referred to confirm the lack of opportunity to resolve this matter informally without resorting to this legalistic, unnecessary and desperate course of events. I was not asked to respond to the issues contained within this letter, but curtly informed that an “oral warning” was being issued immediately.

Daz did inform me of his exacerbation with the team meetings process, due to their length and the confrontational and disputatious nature of the points discussed, which made the experience an unpleasant one for all involved. I am in full agreement with him and found it frustrating myself to be unable to raise many of the substantive issues I needed to discuss in the appropriate forum.

I myself have made several suggestions for improving the meetings process, some of which have been adopted, like the need for regular monthly dates, and some of which have not yet been implemented, like the need for service-user involvement and attendance (an actual requirement under Opps for Vols) or the suggestion that meetings should be taped to provide a true and accurate record, which would have been very helpful in the current situation.

I have a record of the meeting in question and can recall in detail exactly how and why it was unproductive and confrontational. It is a simple matter to analyse the content of this meeting and prove conclusively where any unpleasantness originated.

I am anticipating that each and every of the allegations contained therein will have to be substantiated. I therefore have to request that you provide detailed evidence to explain the conclusions contained therein.

Please provide full witness statements and supporting explanations of the following:

- In what way was my behaviour “unprofessional”?
- What evidence is there that I was being “destructive” (and why would I want to be?)
- In what specific ways was I being “disrespectful” and to whom?

- How and why did I “sabotage” good team-spirit and team-work?
- How and why does management feel “undermined”? Surely, management exists to support workers and the actual delivery of the core project.
- How can any aspect of my “behaviour” or “attitude” in this meeting have possibly impacted on colleagues’ working ability in any way?
- As for the implication that I may have been “critical and aggressive” in the past 2 years, I would welcome details of any unresolved issues, since I thought that any misunderstandings on this count had been resolved at the time and did not realise that anybody harboured lingering resentment towards me...
- As for the suggestion that I am walking out from unarranged meetings or that this might have some impact on the morale of the whole team, I am sorry that management considers these issues more important than existing commitments to volunteers or pre-arranged meetings with representatives of other organisations.

I can of course provide a detailed refutation of each and every point if necessary in due course.

As you may be aware, the gardens are currently maintained by teams of anything up to 50 volunteers, clients and students each week, all of whom contribute their time and goodwill gratis. I would suggest that this demonstrates conclusively that I am more than capable of working cooperatively and constructively, and that this example of harnessing and managing goodwill should be a model of good practice for other aspects of the project.

I would also like to know what my motivation is supposed to be, precisely because I consider that my actual work has been so productive, successful and rewarding, especially in the past 5 months. Why would I wish to jeopardise ten years hard work and all the many wonderful achievements I have contributed to at Unstone Grange?

As you will be well aware, this is the busiest time of year for a gardener and I have no inclination whatsoever to embark on a lengthy and disputatious process of legalistic wrangling. I myself have much better ways of spending my time.

I look forward to being exonerated from these petty and unnecessary libels on my character.

You will also be aware that any objective observer of this process would be appalled if it were known that public funds were being used to pursue personal vendettas in this way.

Yours Sincerely, Richard Clare