



Cheadle (Staffs) U3A

Complaints Policy and Procedure

In dealing with complaints the Executive Committee will ensure:

- All actions will be documented.
- Complaints will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- The Committee will try to de-escalate the situation and settle issues without having to resort to formal action.
- Confidentiality will be maintained. For more serious complaints the Committee may need to liaise with and share information with the Third Age Trust. This will not constitute a data breach due to the U3A's membership of and affiliation with the Trust.
- Decisions made will be based on the facts and evidence gathered.

In most cases, it is hoped that complaints can be dealt with informally as detailed below

Informal Process

- The Groups' Co-ordinator, as designated Committee Member, will first attempt an informal resolution, by holding an informal discussion with each party concerned. The purpose of this would be to understand the problem and hear each party's views. The parties may decide to put their concerns or complaints in writing, and for the sake of clarity this is often helpful.
- The Groups' Co-ordinator will seek to summarise the situation with both parties, be clear about any required changes to ensure it does not happen again and clear the air.
- If the Groups' Coordinator feels that there is a case to answer but that nevertheless it is a minor issue, then it should be made clear to the relevant parties that there must be no repeat of the sort of actions/behaviour which led to this problem. If that outcome is accepted by both parties, then no further action is necessary.
- If the Groups' Coordinator feels that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a specific course of action e.g. exclusion from an interest group, or if the person raising the complaint wishes to lodge a formal complaint, the Groups' Coordinator will refer the matter, in writing, to the Chair of the Executive Committee stating that this is a formal complaint. This will include a summary of the complaint, any steps already taken to deal with the issue and any action that the parties involved consider necessary to resolve it.

If an informal resolution does not resolve the matter, then the following process will be implemented

Formal Process

The Chair and Groups Co-ordinator will investigate further and try to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction. The Chair may also contact the Third Age Trust and request support from the Regional Trustee, a Trust volunteer and/or National Office staff. The Committee will inform the complainant that additional support has been requested and the reasons why.

The member will be asked to put the complaint in writing giving specific dates and times – where possible.

A letter or email will be sent to the complainant confirming receipt of the complaint and

- if the complaint is deemed to be a grievance the letter should confirm that the grievance policy, as set out by the National Office will be followed.
- if the complaint is deemed to be a disciplinary matter, then the disciplinary procedure, as set out by the National Office will be followed.
- if the complaint is deemed to not involve a grievance or disciplinary matter then the following process will be undertaken.

The Chair will gather as much information as possible, relating to the complaint. This will include the letter of complaint and any supporting documentation or other member statements. The result of these investigations should not be disclosed to any other committee members at this stage, in order to not bias any appeal.

The Chair will appoint a subcommittee of three committee members to hear the complaint.

The timetable for the date of the meeting to hear the complaint will be short, within 14 days

The subcommittee will then consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take.

This could include, for example, a change of procedures, a change of venue for groups, or whatever outcome is deemed the most appropriate as a solution.

Decision

The subcommittee decision will be communicated in writing to both the member who raised the complaint and the member against whom the complaint has been made. Both parties will be informed as to the outcome of the investigation in respect of whether the complaint has been upheld or not upheld.

If the complaint has been upheld, the letter will also specify what action will be taken as a result.

Right of Appeal

A right of appeal should be offered providing it is lodged within a 7 day period from the date of the subcommittee decision being provided to the complainant and the member against whom the complaint has been made. The appeal needs to be lodged in the form of a written representation for the Executive Committee to consider. An appeal can be lodged either by the person who made the complaint or by the person against whom the complaint has been made.

The appeal can include a request for a right of reply as well as written representations.

For the appeal, the Chair will convene a meeting of three Committee Members (including him/herself). This should not include those who were involved in the in the initial investigation.

The person raising the appeal will be offered a verbal right of reply, if s/he wishes to take this up then s/he will be asked to attend a meeting with the appeal panel. Where the verbal right of reply involves the member against whom the complaint has been made, s/he will be offered the option to attend with a companion who may also speak in a personal capacity.

The whole issue will be summarised and the person making the appeal will be given the opportunity to speak. The appeal panel will review the decision based only on the facts included in the original hearing, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing to both parties.

The above Policy and Procedure were adopted by Cheadle (Staffs) U3A

On: 20th February 2019

Chris Brown
Chairman

Contact details for the Committee Member responsible for Complaints:

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If the committee member responsible for complaints is not available please contact any committee member. Contact details are available on the website and in the Group Leader's Handbook.