

Bishop's Cleeve u3a Grievance Procedure

In any organisation, problems and grievances will arise from time to time. It is important that members know where to turn to for help, support and advice, so that whatever the issue, it can be dealt with quickly, efficiently and appropriately. This procedure sets out how Bishop's Cleeve u3a ("the u3a") will approach problems and grievances, to ensure that they are dealt with in this way. All parties are encouraged to take a problem-solving approach to achieve resolution.

In dealing with grievances, the u3a will ensure the following:-

- All action taken will be documented.
- Grievances (including the appeals procedure) will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Where possible, the u3a will try to de-escalate and resolve the situation without having to resort to a formal procedure.
- Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. In the case of serious issues, the u3a may contact the Third Age Trust and/or the Regional Trustee. Sharing information with the Trust or Regional Trustee will not constitute a breach of confidentiality, as the u3a is affiliated to the Trust. Where appropriate, members who are party to grievance procedures will be informed of the Trust's involvement.
- All communication will be based on the facts and evidence provided.

Grievances may arise in one or some of the following circumstances:-

- Within an interest group - a Group Leader may have to field a grievance. These can be caused by an occurrence of disruptive behaviour within a group; poor attendance or timekeeping at group meetings; failure to pay shared expenses; disagreements or incompatibility between members.
Hopefully, the Group Leader can resolve the situation by having a quiet word with the member(s) in question. If that does not resolve the situation, the Group Leader should refer the matter to the Groups Co-ordinator, who may refer it on to the Committee. The Group Leader should not allow any of the above to impact on the enjoyment of other group members.
- Where the issue arises with the Group Leader, group members should feel able to go the Groups Co-ordinator direct.
- Within the u3a as a whole - between the membership and the Committee; between individual members or between Committee members - the Chair should be responsible for dealing with the grievance, unless the grievance is with the Chair, in which case the Committee should deal with it.

Informal grievance procedure – seek and secure clarity as early as possible as to the nature of the grievance, with examples of breaches, times and dates. Both parties need to have the opportunity to hear both points of view, whether orally or in writing. Then, there should be an agreement that there must be no repeat of the occurrence that led to the grievance, or an agreement that the person causing the grievance should voluntarily leave

the group or meeting. If a resolution is not possible and the person raising the grievance still wishes to lodge a formal grievance, then that person should write to the Chair, giving a clear and precise summary of the grievance and describing any attempts that have been made to resolve it.

Formal grievance procedure – this should only be activated after every attempt has been made to resolve the issue informally. The Chair will appoint a small sub-committee to consider the grievance, which should meet as soon as possible. Letters will be sent to the member against whom the grievance has been made and the person who raised the grievance. This will set out the alleged grievance and ask for a response to the grievance in writing, giving the date of the meeting at which the grievance will be considered and inviting their attendance. Where appropriate, witnesses to the grievance incident can be invited to the meeting.

The sub-committee meeting – minutes must be taken and remain confidential. The meeting will consider both sides and agree upon a course of action. Their decision must be recorded, giving reasons for their decision, which should be based on the written and verbal reports they have received.

Options on courses of action (depending on proof of a serious misdemeanour) – escalating from a dismissal of the case; a verbal warning about future conduct; a written warning of the same; exclusion from the interest group; or the ultimate sanction - termination of u3a membership. The Committee's decision to dismiss or uphold the grievance will be communicated in writing to the member against whom the grievance has been made, giving them the right to appeal in writing within 7 days to the Chair.

Rights of appeal – provided it is lodged within the 7-day period, an appeal will be convened, with a different composition of Committee membership, which will follow the same process as the original Committee. Its decision will be final.

If necessary and where required, the u3a can seek legal advice from the Third Age Trust. All minutes will be held electronically by the Business Secretary & available for scrutiny by the Chair upon written request.