

Bishop's Cleeve u3a

Grievances, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures

Complaints: this may include complaints from members about an issue that has arisen or complaints from an external organisation or individual. Depending on the nature and source of the complaint, the committee will make a decision as to how best to approach reaching a resolution.

Grievances & Disciplinary matters: this document sets out how the u3a will approach problems related to a breach or suspected breach of its agreed Terms and Conditions by a member.

In any organisation, problems 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 any complaints, grievances or disciplinary issues, to ensure that they are dealt with in this way.

The u3a will ensure the following :-

- All action taken will be documented.
- The issue (including the appeals procedure) will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Where possible, the u3a will try to de-escalate the situation and resolve issues 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 this process will be informed of the Trust's involvement.
- All communication & decisions will be based on the facts and evidence provided.

Confidentiality

All related actions and documents must be kept confidential at all times. Information will only be shared with those who have a genuine need to receive it and this will include Trust staff and volunteers, as required. The u3a will aim to handle all situations discreetly and by showing respect for the parties and views involved.

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

- Within an interest group:
 - A Group Leader may have to field a grievance or complaint. These may be caused by, e.g., 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 Groups Co-ordinator will keep a record of all issues referred

- to them. 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 to the Groups Co-ordinator direct.
 - Any committee member becoming aware of a grievance or complaint relating to an interest group will pass the issue to the Groups Co-ordinator.
 - Within the u3a as a whole: between the membership and the committee; between individual members; or between committee members:
 - The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that the complaint or grievance is dealt with, unless the complaint or grievance relates to the Chair, in which case the Vice Chair will deal with it.

Informal process

- The Group Leader or committee member who becomes aware of the allegation or issue must seek to secure clarity on its nature as early as possible, with examples of incidents, breaches of Terms & Conditions, times and dates, as appropriate.
- It is important to try and resolve disputes amicably and informally. This is more likely to lead to a better relationship between the parties in the longer term.
- Both parties need to have the opportunity to hear both points of view, whether orally or in writing. If there are several people involved, it may be deemed appropriate to speak to them so that as full a picture as possible may be obtained.
- The purpose of the informal meetings will be to seek to summarise the situation with both parties, attempting to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome and agreeing any changes required to ensure that the situation does not happen again, thus clearing the air.
- If it is felt that there is a case to answer but that nevertheless it is a minor issue, and all parties are willing to accept the agreed outcome, then it should be made clear that there should be no repeat of the actions/behaviour and that no further action is necessary.
- If a resolution is not possible and the person raising the issue still wishes to follow a formal process, then that person should write to the Chair, giving a clear and precise summary of the issue and describing any attempts that have been made to resolve it.

Formal process

- 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 issue, which should meet as soon as possible, and preferably within 14 days from the date that the Chair is first advised.
- Letters will be sent to the member against whom an allegation has been made and the person who raised the issue. This will set out the allegation and ask for a response in writing, giving the date of the meeting at which the issue will be considered, and inviting their attendance. Where appropriate, witnesses to any incident will be invited to the meeting.

The sub-committee meeting

- Minutes will be taken and remain confidential.
- The meeting will consider both sides and agree upon a course of action.
- Their decision will 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

- Dismissal of the case – no further action necessary
- A verbal warning about future conduct, making clear the nature of the unacceptable behaviour and the consequences of non-compliance. The Chair should give the warning on behalf of the sub-committee. Details of the warning will be recorded, dated and kept on file.
- An initial written warning - with the same components as the verbal warning.
- A final written warning as above, which states that if the behaviour is repeated the member will be asked to leave the u3a (or committee), with immediate effect.
- Where appropriate, exclusion from the interest group.
- Termination of u3a membership.

The sub-committee's decision to dismiss or uphold the complaint or grievance, and any ensuing disciplinary action to be taken as a consequence, will be communicated in writing to the member against whom the allegation has been made, giving them the right to appeal in writing within 7 days to the Chair.

The person(s) making the allegation/complaint will also be informed of the outcome

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 & must be communicated in writing to all parties.

Record retention

The Chair will keep an on-going record of the process. At the end of that process, the Secretary will keep a hard copy and an electronic copy of all minutes and other documentation, which will be available for scrutiny by the Chair upon written request. All records may be destroyed/removed six years after the conclusion.

Gross misconduct

In the case of an extremely serious alleged misdemeanour, for example:

- Sexual/racial abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying
- Dangerous or violent behaviour
- Falsification of expense claims
- Theft
- Malicious damage

The Chair shall consult the Third Age Trust and/or the Regional Trustee for advice on whether any further action should be taken, e.g., to inform the local authority. This will be in addition to, & take priority over, any other courses of action as described above.