

PN 9 Problems and Grievances Policy

Sorting out problems and grievances

In any organisation, problems and grievances will occur from time to time and it is important that members know where to turn for help, advice and support, so that whatever the issue, it can be dealt with easily, objectively and appropriately.

Problems for a Group Organiser within an interest group

Possible problems:

- Disruptive and/or unsocial behaviour
- Poor attendance/timekeeping
- Unsuitability
- Failure to pay fees
- Disagreement between members

In most cases the Organiser will be able to resolve the situation informally and amicably by just having a quiet word with the member/s in question. In certain situations, asking a member to leave the group for the remainder of the session may well be the best solution.

If it requires more, or this fails and the problem persists, the Organiser should discuss the matter with the Groups' Co-ordinator. The Organiser should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on the enjoyment of other members of the group.

Group Organisers have the authority to exclude a member from the group permanently.

Initial procedure for the Groups' Co-ordinator when a problem/grievance is referred:

- Establish the facts quickly, determining whether the problem is confined within the group or extends beyond it
- For issues confined within the group, support the Organiser to take the steps that they feel appropriate
- For issues extending beyond the group (*cf section: problems within the U3A as a whole*) or s/he feels that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a particular course of action eg exclusion from the local U3A group, the Groups' Co-ordinator will refer the matter to the Committee to agree a course of action.

Problems with the Group Organiser

PN 9 Problems and Grievances Policy

Initially, the member/s should try to resolve the problem by discussing it with the Organiser. However, if this is unsuccessful, or if the member/s involved feel unable to do so, they should discuss the matter with the Groups' Co-ordinator.

Problems within the U3A as a whole

- Member to member
- Member and the Committee
- Member and an individual trustee
- A member who brings the U3A into disrepute or acts in a way which is prejudicial to the U3A
- A member who causes damage to property and/or equipment through misuse/negligence, etc.

The above should all be referred to the Chair in the first instance unless the Chair is personally involved; in which case, the Committee will decide who should take over.

Committee Procedure

It is advisable to invite all the members involved to attend a minuted meeting with either some or all members of the Committee so that the matter can be fully discussed and an opportunity provided for everybody to state their case. The Committee will then consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take.

Possible forms of disciplinary action

- Level 1 - a verbal warning about future conduct by an elected officer with another officer present, which should be confirmed in writing
- Level 2 - a written warning which clearly states what will happen if the situation is repeated
- Level 3 - a final written warning
- Level 4 - termination of U3A membership

Most problems will start at Level 1. However, in the case of an extremely serious proven misdemeanour eg:

PN 9 Problems and Grievances Policy

- Sexual/racial abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying
- Dangerous or violent behaviour
- Falsification of expense claims
- Theft
- Malicious damage
- Conduct which brings the U3A into disrepute or is prejudicial to the U3A or the running of the U3A, the committee has the right to move immediately to Levels 3 or 4.

Right of Appeal

Before a member has his/her membership terminated, a right of appeal will be offered.

An appeal, providing it is lodged within a seven day period, can take the form of written representation for the Committee to consider or a request for a right of reply. If it is the latter, a meeting of the whole Committee should be called and the member in question should be asked to attend and can be accompanied by a friend who may also speak in a personal capacity. The whole issue should be summarised and then the member given the opportunity to speak, along with the supporter, if so desired.

The Committee will review its decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing.

The Committee will:

- Ensure every action is documented
- Deal with problems and grievances quickly and fairly
- Do all we can to settle the issue without having to resort to formal disciplinary action
- Maintain confidentiality

Signature

Date