

**u3a Harborne and Edgbaston ('u3a H&E')**  
(Registered Charity Number: 1101356)

**COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES/ISSUES POLICY**

**1. Preamble**

- 1.1 In any organisation, there will be issues, grievances and complaints 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 quickly, objectively and appropriately.
- 1.2 It is in everyone's interest that
  - a. Issues , grievances and complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly
  - b. Every effort is made to settle the issue without having to resort to formal action
  - c. Confidentiality is maintained by all concerned
- 1.3 Members should always try to sort out any problem by talking and resolving it informally and amicably with the person/people if possible but if this fails then please refer to the following procedures.

**2. Issues for a Group Co-ordinator within an Interest Group ('group')**

- 2.1 Issues that can arise within a group e.g.
  - a. Disruptive and/or unsocial behaviour
  - b. Poor attendance/timekeeping
  - c. Unsuitability
  - d. Failure to pay fees
  - e. Disagreement between members
- 2.2 In most cases, the Group Co-ordinator should be able to sort it out by talking to the member(s) in question and resolve it informally and amicably. If this fails and the issue persists the Group Co-ordinator should refer the matter to the Groups' Secretary on the u3a H&E Committee.

- 2.3 The Group Co-ordinator should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on other members of the group.
- 2.4 The Group Co-ordinator does not have authority to exclude a member from the group permanently. That decision must be made by the Committee. Should a Group Co-ordinator refuse to have a member in the group, it will not be possible for that group to continue with that Group Co-ordinator running it.

### **3. Issues with the Group Co-ordinator**

- 3.1 Initially the member(s) should try to resolve the problem by discussing it with the Group Co-ordinator. However, if this is unsuccessful or if the member(s) involved feel unable to do so, they should refer the matter to the Groups' Secretary.

### **4. Issues within the u3a H&E as a Whole**

- 4.1 The following will all be referred to the Chair in the first instance unless that person is personally involved, in which case it should be referred to the Vice-Chair:
  - a. Member to member
  - b. Member and the Committee
  - c. Member and an individual Committee member
  - d. A member who brings u3a H&E into disrepute or acts in a way, which is prejudicial to u3a H&E
  - e. A member who causes damage to property and/or equipment through misuse/negligence etc.
  - f. Complaint received concerning any member or the u3a as a whole.

### **5. Procedure when a Complaint is received or Issue/Grievance is referred**

- 5.1 The Groups' Secretary will endeavour to:
  - a. Establish the facts quickly, consulting as many people as possible
  - b. Have an informal discussion with all concerned to summarise the issue, hear everybody's views and clear the air

- c. If they feel there is a case to answer but that it is a relatively minor issue, they will make it clear to all present that there must be no repeat of the sort of actions/behaviour that led to this issue
- d. If they feel that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a particular course of action e.g. exclusion from a group, they should refer the matter formally to the Secretary

## **6. Formal Process**

- 6.1 The Secretary will appoint a sub-committee of at least three members of the Committee (including at least one officer but not the Chair) to consider the issue.
- 6.2 This sub-committee will hold a meeting (which will be minuted) with all relevant people including the Groups' Secretary (or whoever has dealt with the matter informally).
- 6.3 Everyone will be invited to state their case.
- 6.4 The sub-committee will then agree a course of action, having taken into account any mitigating circumstances.
- 6.5 The process will be concluded within twenty one days or exceptionally the persons concerned will be notified within that time to explain the delay and advise a revised timescale.

## **7. Possible Forms of Action**

- 7.1 Possible forms of action shall be:
  - a. Level 1 - a verbal warning about future conduct by an elected officer with another Committee Member present, which will be confirmed in writing
  - b. Level 2 - a written warning which clearly states what will happen if the situation is repeated
  - c. Level 3 - a final written warning
  - d. Level 4 - exclusion from an interest group
  - e. Level 5 - termination of u3a H&E membership
- 7.2 Ideally it would be expected that most issues would be resolved either through an informal conversation or through Levels 1 or 2.

7.3 However, in the case of an extremely serious proven misdemeanour, e.g.

- a. sexual/racial abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying
- b. dangerous or violent behaviour
- c. falsification of expense claims
- d. theft
- e. malicious damage
- f. conduct which brings u3a H&E into disrepute or is prejudicial to u3a H&E or the running of u3a H&E the Committee has the right to move immediately to Level 3, 4 or 5

## **8. Right of Appeal**

8.1 Before a member is excluded from a group or has his/her membership terminated, a right of appeal should be offered and in the case of expulsion from u3a H&E, must be offered.

8.2 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.

8.3 In both cases, the Committee will review the decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing.

8.4 The decision will be communicated within twenty one days of receipt of appeal. When this is not possible the persons concerned will be advised of reasons for delay and a revised timescale.

8.5 If it proves impossible to resolve the issue at local level then the matter will be referred to u3a National Office (The Third Age Trust – TAT) for advice.

Adopted: Unknown; based on Third Age Trust Guidelines C05-February 2016; to note that there is a Third Age Trust document, Complaints Procedure Sample, dated 13/12/2022 which supersedes the 2016 document

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