

Leigh and District U3A Complaints Procedure

Leigh and District U3A views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve its conduct for the future, whilst at the same time putting things right for the individual or organisation that has made such complaint.

Therefore, Leigh and District U3A's policy is

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for any person or organisation to make a complaint.
- To make, when the need arises, persons aware of the existence of a complaints procedure, and how contact can be made in the event of such complaint.
- To make sure that all members of Leigh and District U3A know what to do in the event of a complaint
- To make sure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely fashion.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information that helps our organisation to improve what we do and how we act.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, regarding any aspect of Leigh and District U3A's actions, policies and operations.

N.B. In this respect it tends to cover complaints received generally from outside our organisation and its members, as Leigh and District U3A also have in place a grievance procedure to cover internal disputes.

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who believes they have a legitimate interest in Leigh and District U3A's operations and actions.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, advising only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

The overall responsibility for this policy, its implementation and any actions taken lies with the Trustees of Leigh and District U3A.

This policy will be reviewed annually at the first Committee meeting following Leigh and District's Annual General Meeting and will then be updated and amended as appropriate.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through any channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be accurately recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should

- Write down the facts of the complaint

- Take the complainant's name, address and contact number
- Note the relationship of the complainant to Leigh and District U3A
- Inform the complainant that we have in place a complaints procedure
- Advise the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words

Note that attached are some guidance notes on the correct handling of verbal complaints in appendix 1

Resolving Complaints process

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be recorded and passed to Leigh and District U3A's Committee, within one week of the complaint being made.

On receiving a complaint, the U3A member receiving that complaint should record the complaint details, and if the issue has not been immediately resolved, should delegate the actions to an appropriate person, in most cases a member of the Committee, to further investigate and take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific member of Leigh and District U3A, that member should be appropriately informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint as soon as practically possible, but in any case within a week. The acknowledgement should state who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant may expect a response. A copy of this complaints procedure should be issued to the complainant.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive replay within four weeks. If this is not possible because investigations have not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent to the complainant explaining the reason(s) for delay and an expectation of when a full reply may be given.

Whether the complaint is deemed justified or not, any reply to the complainant should describe the action(s) taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint and the investigations. All items should be duly recorded.

Should the complainant not feel that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Trustee level, by a specially convened and quorate meeting of Leigh and District U3A's Committee, who should meet within one week of the appeal.

By this stage, the complaint not being immediately resolved, it is very likely that certain Committee members will have already been involved.

The person who dealt with the initial complaint should at all stages be fully informed, and given all opportunities to be involved in the process as appropriate.

The complainant should be advised of the Committee Meeting's response within 24 hours of the Committee Meeting, and whether further investigations need to take place. In this latter case, they should be advised of when a full response may be made.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the actions taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from that investigation, and any action(s) taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision at this stage is final, unless the Leigh and District U3A Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with the resolution.

At this stage the input from the Third Age Trust or other relevant bodies may be deemed appropriate.

The complainant may at any stage make an appropriate complaint of the relevant issues to the Third Age Trust and / or The Charity Commission.

Information regarding the kind of complaints The Charity Commission may involve itself in can be found on their website at www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Leigh and District U3A may vary this procedure for good reason, for example by avoiding conflicts of interest, where the complaint concerns a member of the Trustees.

Complaints should be reviewed annually to identify any trends, which may indicate a need to take further appropriate action.

This Procedure was adopted by the Trustees of Leigh and District U3A at their Committee Meeting on

And will be reviewed at the first Committee meeting following the next Annual General Meeting.

(attached Appendix 1 mentioned above)

(attached Appendix 2 Recording Action Form)

Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints (Appendix 1)

Leigh and District U3A

Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation

- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation
e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal

Complaints Procedure – Recording and Action Form (Appendix 2)

Person receiving the Complaint	DATE	NAME / Membership No
Name address and contact no for the complainant		
Details and Nature of the complaint		
Initial Action taken to resolve the complaint		
Details if complaint immediately resolved/ and actions taken		
If complaint is not immediately resolved. Detail further action taken, or person referred to. (Time/ Date)		
Are there written details of the complaint from the complainant. Please specify.		
Has the complainant been fully advised of further actions being taken? Specify exact nature of response		

Name of U3A member taking on responsibility for further actions and investigations	
Details of further actions and investigations taking place	DATE
Outcome of further actions and investigations	DATE
Has the dispute been settled satisfactorily.	DATE
Specify what further actions have or will be taken. When and by whom	DATE
Reported to a Committee Meeting	DATE By WHOM
Further Action required by the Trustees.	
Details of the above and when further action taken	
Details of referral to external body if deemed necessary	DATE
Final Resolution details	
All Actions signed off by Trustees.	DATE SIGNATURE