



## **Complaint/Grievance Procedure for Stoke-on-Trent South U3A**

In any organisation, complaints/grievances will occur from time to time. It is therefore 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. In the first instance, complaints/grievances relating to Interest Groups should be directed to the Groups' Co-ordinator. Other complaints/grievances that may be received from an external organisation or individual should be directed to the Chairman.

In carrying out the following procedure, Stoke-on-Trent South U3A will ensure the following:

- Every action will be documented.
- The procedure (including the appeals procedure) will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Stoke-on-Trent South U3A will strive to de-escalate any situation and to settle the issue without having to resort to a formal process.
- Decisions will be based on facts and evidence.

### **1. Informal procedure.**

- The Groups' Co-ordinator (or Chairman) will first attempt informal resolution, by holding an informal discussion with each party concerned. The purpose of this will be to understand the problem and hear each party's views. The parties may decide to put their concerns or complaints in writing, and for the sake of clarity this is often helpful.
- The Groups' Co-ordinator (or Chairman) will seek to summarise the situation with both parties. If it is considered that there is a case to answer, but deemed a minor issue, the required changes that will ensure there is no recurrence will be made clear to the parties. If this outcome is accepted by both parties, then no further action is necessary.
- If the Groups' Coordinator considers that a group related matter warrants a more formal approach, or if the person raising the complaint wishes to lodge a formal complaint, the Groups' Coordinator will refer the matter, in writing, to the Chairman stating that it has become a formal complaint. This will include a summary of the complaint, any steps already taken to deal with the issue and any action that the parties involved consider necessary to resolve it.

## **2. Formal procedure.**

The Chairman may contact the Third Age Trust to request support from the Regional Trustee, a Trust volunteer and/or National Office staff. Sharing of information with the Trust will not constitute a breach of confidentiality due to the affiliation with the Trust. The parties will be informed that additional support has been requested, together with the reasons.

The Member will be asked to put the complaint in writing giving specific dates and times – where possible.

The Chairman will send a letter to the complainant confirming receipt of the complaint, and will confirm :

- That the complaint/grievance procedure will be followed, **or**;
- That the complaint is considered to be a disciplinary matter, and that the disciplinary procedure will be followed.

Where appropriate, the Chairman may appoint an investigating Trustee to gather information relating to the complaint, which will include all supporting documentation including other member statements. The result of these investigations will not be disclosed to any other Trustees at this stage, in order to not bias any appeal.

## **3. Hearing**

The Chairman will appoint a Sub-committee of three Trustees to hear the complaint/grievance, and he/she will also chair the meeting.

The timetable for the date of the meeting to hear the complaint will be short, i.e. within 14 days.

The Sub-committee will then consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take.

### **3.1. Decision**

The Sub-committee decision will be communicated in writing to both the complainant and the Member or Trustee against whom the complaint has been made, i.e whether the complaint/grievance has been upheld or not upheld.

If the complaint/grievance has been upheld, the letter will also specify what action will be taken as a result.

## **4. Right of appeal**

A right of appeal will be offered, providing it is sent to the Chairman in writing within 14 days from the date the Sub-committee decision was provided to the parties concerned. An appeal can be lodged either by the person who made the complaint, or by the person against whom the complaint has been made. The appeal can include a request for a right of reply as well as written representations.

#### **4.1. Appeal Hearing**

For the appeal, the Vice-Chairman will convene a Sub-committee of three Trustees, and he/she will chair this meeting. These Trustees will not have been involved in the initial investigation/hearing.

At the hearing, the whole issue will be summarised and the person making the appeal will be given the opportunity to speak. Where the verbal right of reply involves the Member or Trustee against whom the complaint has been made, he/she will be offered the option to attend with a companion, who may also speak in a personal capacity.

The Sub-committee will review the decision based on the facts included in the original hearing, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision. This decision will be communicated in writing to both parties within 7 days of the Appeal Hearing.

#### **Review of Procedure.**

This Procedure was adopted at a Committee Meeting of Stoke-on-Trent South U3A on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019, and will be reviewed at least every 3 years.