

## **Complaints Procedure**

In any organisation, problems and grievances will occur from time to time.

It is in everyone's interest that:-

- Problems and grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly
- Every effort is made to settle the issue without having to resort to formal disciplinary action
- Confidentiality is maintained by all concerned.

Stubbington U3A requires that members should always try to resolve any problem by talking and resolving it informally and amicably with the person or people concerned. Only if this fails should members refer to the procedures set out below.

### **PROBLEMS FOR A GROUP LEADER**

Problems that can arise within a group e.g.

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

In most cases, the Group Leader should be able to resolve the matter by talking informally and amicably to the member/members concerned. If this fails and the problem persists the Group Leader should refer the matter to the committee. The Group Leader should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on other members of the group.

### **PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP LEADER**

Initially the member/members should try to resolve the problem by discussing it with the Group Leader. However, if this is unsuccessful or if the member/members involved feel unable to do so, the matter should be referred to the committee by the members.

### **PROBLEMS WITHIN THE U3A AS A WHOLE**

- Member to member
- Member and the committee
- Member and an individual committee member
- 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 Chairperson by Group Leaders or members in the first instance unless that person is personally involved, in which case, the matter should be referred to the secretary.

## **PROCEDURE WHEN A PROBLEM/GRIEVANCE IS REFERRED**

If a matter is referred to the committee the committee shall appoint three committee members who will :-

- Establish the facts quickly, consulting as many people as possible.
- Have an informal discussion with all concerned to summarise the problem, hear everybody's views and clear the air.
- 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 problem
- If they feel that the situation warrants a more formal approach the group will instigate the procedure for formal complaints.

## **PROCEDURES FOR FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

The committee will appoint three members of the committee who will form a sub-committee and hold a formal meeting.

- The relevant people will be invited to a meeting of the sub-committee, this may include the complainant and independent witnesses. Complainants may be accompanied by a friend if required.
- The matter will be fully discussed with the individual/individuals concerned who shall be given the opportunity to state their case
- Written records will be kept
- The sub-committee will take into account any mitigating circumstances and produce a written report which will contain recommendations.
- The report will be considered by the full committee and a final decision taken on the recommendations.

## **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

Before a member is excluded from an interest group or has his/her membership terminated, a right of appeal will be offered. An appeal, providing it is lodged within a 7 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 will be called and the member(s) in question will be asked to attend accompanied by a friend/friends who may also speak. The whole issue will be summarised and then the member(s) given the opportunity to speak, along with the supporter(s) if so desired. In both cases, the committee will review its decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing to all concerned.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All procedures and documents relating to a complaint must be kept confidential at all times. Information should only be shared with those who have a genuine need to receive it. This may include Third Age Trust staff, Trust volunteer/s and the Regional Trustee. All situations should be dealt with discreetly and by showing respect to the parties and views involved.

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