

# Furness u3a: Complaints Procedures

## Introduction

As in any organisation, issues may arise in our u3a that lead to members becoming dissatisfied or distressed. This guide explains how to get help, advice and support so that your problem can be dealt with quickly, objectively and appropriately. Please remember that our u3a is run by volunteers, in their own time.

In the first instance, try to resolve the matter informally, as suggested in **Section A** below. Only follow the procedures in **Section B** if the informal procedures have been unsuccessful.

## A Informal Procedures

- First, try talking directly to the person with whom you disagree, or who has caused you distress. If you feel anxious about doing this, ask another u3a member to accompany you.
- If talking to the person concerned does not resolve your problem, approach another u3a member for further advice and help. For example:
  - if your problem relates to the behaviour of another member of your Group, approach the *Group Leader*;
  - if your problem relates to the Group Leader, approach the *Groups Liaison* officer on the Committee;
  - if you are a Group Leader, and the problem concerns your group, contact the *Groups Liaison* officer;
  - if your problem relates to a Committee member, approach *another Committee member* [not the Chair];
  - if your problem relates to the Chair, approach the *Vice Chair*;
  - if a matter is making you distressed, approach the *Welfare and Inclusion Officer*.
- The other u3a member will try to:
  - de-escalate the situation and settle issues without having to resort to formal action;
  - help you, and other people involved, reach a mutually satisfactory outcome.This may involve facilitating informal meetings between the various parties.
- If the other u3a member is able to resolve the problem, no formal record will be kept, and the matter will not be reported to the Committee. However, if a mutually satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved informally, and you wish to pursue the matter, you must submit a formal complaint.

## B Formal Procedures

- Put the complaint in writing and email it to the Chair of our u3a, at [chair@furnessu3a.org](mailto:chair@furnessu3a.org). Provide as much information as you can, including the outcome you are hoping to achieve. Also give the name of the u3a member you had approached for informal advice.
- The Chair will appoint two members of the Committee to investigate the matter, and prepare a report, with recommendations, for the full Committee. Neither investigator will have been involved in the matter leading to the complaint or in informal attempts to resolve the problem.
- Records will be kept of the formal investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained, but for serious complaints the investigators may need to liaise and share information with the Third Age Trust.
- The person(s) against whom you have complained will be informed about the basis of the complaint. This will include the letter of complaint and any supporting documentation.
- The investigators will gather information, conduct interviews, and prepare a report for the Committee, summarising the case, and proposing one or more solutions. Both you and the person who you complained about will be sent the report, and will be given a deadline for submitting to the Committee written comments on it. The investigators' report, and comments submitted by the deadline, will be considered by the Committee as soon as practicable. The meeting will be private, and normally attended by all Committee members, but a Committee member must not attend if they are either the complainant or a person complained about.
- The Committee's decision is final, and will be communicated in writing both to you and the person you complained about. If the complaint has been upheld, the letter will also specify what action will be taken. The only grounds for appeal would be that the procedures in this document had not been followed.