

## Tetbury and District U3A Complaints Policy

In any organisation problems and grievances will occur from time to time. It is important that members know where to turn for help, support and advice, so that whatever the issue, it can be dealt with quickly, objectively and appropriately. This policy sets out how Tetbury and District U3A will address any problems or grievances which arise.

### **Problems for a Group Leader within a Group**

Problems can arise within a group, such as disruptive or anti-social behaviour, poor attendance or timekeeping, failure to pay fees or disagreements between group members.

In most cases the group leader will be able to resolve the situation informally. If this fails and the problem persists, the group leader should refer the matter to the Groups' Co-ordinator or the committee. The group leader should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on the enjoyment of other members of the group.

Group leaders do not have the authority to exclude a member from the group permanently. That decision would be made by the committee. Should a leader refuse to have a member in the group, it will not be possible for that group to continue with that leader. Similarly, if a leader refuses to have a group member in their house, it will not be possible for the group to continue to be hosted there.

### **Problems with a Group Leader**

Initially, members should try to resolve the issue by discussing it with the group leader. If this is unsuccessful, or if the members involved feel unable to broach the matter with the group leader, the matter should be referred to the Groups' Co-ordinator.

### **Problems within Tetbury and District U3A**

These include:

- Member to member
- Member and the committee
- Member and an individual committee member
- A member who brings the U3A into disrepute
- A member who causes damage to equipment or property through misuse or deliberate negligence

These issues should be referred to the **designated trustee** - who is this? unless they are personally involved, in which case the Chair will decide who should take over.

### **Procedure following referral of an issue**

- Establish the facts quickly, consulting as many of those involved as possible
- Have an informed discussion with all concerned to summarise the problem, hear everybody's views and clear the air

- If you feel that there is a case to answer, but the issue is minor, make it clear that there must be no repetition of the actions which led to this issue
- If you feel that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a particular course of action such as exclusion from a group, you should refer the matter to the whole committee to agree a course of action.

### **Committee Procedure**

The relevant people will be invited to attend a minuted meeting with a subgroup of the committee so that the matter can be fully discussed.

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

### **Possible Follow up Actions**

1. A verbal warning about future conduct given by a committee member, with another committee member present. Details of the warning confirmed in writing
2. A written warning, which clearly states what will happen if the situation is repeated.
3. Exclusion from a group.
4. Termination of Tetbury and District U3A membership.

For most problems, the response will be at Level 1. However, in the case of extremely serious inappropriate behaviour, such as:

- Sexual / racist abuse, discrimination, harassment or bullying
- Dangerous or violent behaviour
- Falsification of expense claims
- Theft
- Malicious damage
- Conduct which brings the U3A into disrepute

the committee has the right to move immediately to level 3 or 4.

### **Right of Appeal**

Before a member is excluded from an interest group or has their membership terminated, they will be offered a right of appeal. The appeal must be lodged within a 7-day period and can take the form of a written representation to the committee or a request for a meeting with the committee.

In the case of a request for a meeting, a meeting of the whole committee will be arranged and the member in question will be invited to attend, together with a friend to accompany them if they so wish. The friend may speak at the meeting in a personal capacity.

At the meeting, the whole issue will be summarised, and the member will be given the opportunity to speak, as will their supporter.

Whether the appeal is made in writing or through a meeting, the committee will review its decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which will be communicated in writing.

In the resolution of any issue, the committee will:

- Document all actions
- Deal with issues quickly and fairly
- Do everything possible to settle issues without recourse to formal action
- Maintain confidentiality