

Tetbury & District u3a

Complaints Procedure

1. Responsibilities of the committee

- 1.1. In any organisation, complaints will occur from time to time and it is 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 should be directed towards the committee of Trustees of the Tetbury & District u3a. (Email chair@tetburyu3a.org or use the contact form on our website). This may include complaints from members about an issue that has arisen or complaints from an external organisation or individual. Depending on the nature and source of the complaint, the committee will make a decision as to how best to approach reaching a resolution. In the event that it is the Chair's behaviour which is the subject of the complaint, then it can be reported to any other Committee member.

- 1.2 In dealing with complaints, the committee will ensure:

- The u3a committee will try to de-escalate the situation and settle issues without having to resort to formal action, where possible.
- If the complaint is deemed to involve a disciplinary matter, the Disciplinary Procedure will be followed.
- All actions will be documented.
- Complaints will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Decisions made will be based on the facts and evidence gathered.
- Confidentiality will be maintained. For serious complaints, the committee may need to liaise with and share information with the Third Age Trust. This will not constitute a data breach due to the u3a's affiliation to the Trust.

2. Informal process

In most cases, it is hoped that complaints can be dealt with informally as detailed below:

- 2.1. The committee will first check with the party raising the concern as to whether they are willing to accept an informal outcome as opposed to going through a formal process.
- 2.2. Depending on what the issue is, the committee will make a decision as to who the best person is to lead on attempting to resolve the situation informally:
- 2.2.1. If an issue has arisen between two members in a group then the Group Leader may be the best person supported by the Groups' Coordinator, if felt appropriate.

2.2.2. For issues involving committee members it will be best for another committee member to attempt to mediate and try to find a solution.

- 2.3. The person(s) identified to lead on the informal stage will hold an informal discussion with all relevant parties. 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.
- 2.4. If there are several people involved with the complaint, the person leading on the informal stage may deem it appropriate to speak with others mentioned, so that as full a picture as possible is obtained.
- 2.5. The purpose of the informal meetings will be to seek to establish the facts and the nature of the complaint with both parties, attempt to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome and agree any changes required to ensure that the situation does not happen again and clear the air.
- 2.6. If it is felt that by the person leading on the informal stage that the complaint is well founded but that nevertheless it involves a minor issue, and all parties are willing to accept the agreed outcome, it will be made clear that there should be no repeat of the actions/behaviour that gave rise to the complaint and that no further action is necessary.
- 2.7. If, however, it is felt by the person(s) leading on the informal stage, that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a specific course of action e.g. exclusion from an interest group; or if the person raising the complaint wishes to lodge a formal complaint, the person leading on the informal stage will submit the matter, in writing, to the Chair of the committee, stating that this is a formal complaint. The submission to the Chair will include a summary of the complaint, a description of any steps already taken to deal with the issue and of any action that the parties involved consider necessary to resolve it.

3. Formal process

Where a complaint is dealt with as a formal complaint, the following procedure will apply:

- 3.1. The person who has complained will be asked to put the complaint in writing, providing as much information as is relevant and giving specific dates and times where possible. The complainant must also state what outcome they are hoping to achieve by making the complaint, for example, whether they would be prepared to accept an apology. The complainant will be made aware by the Chair of the committee that, whilst their desired outcome forms part of their complaint, they need to be aware that there are no guarantees as to what the likely outcome will be.
- 3.2. The committee will appoint a Trustee who will act as the designated Trustee for managing the complaint. The committee may also contact the Third Age Trust and request support from the Regional Trustee, a Trust volunteer and/or u3a Office staff. The Chair will inform the complainant if additional support has been requested and the reasons why.
- 3.3. The Chair will send a letter or email to the complainant confirming receipt of the

complaint and the procedure that will apply to the complaint which is as follows:

4. Procedure for Non-Disciplinary Matters

- 4.1. The Chair will appoint either one or two Trustees including the designated Trustee to lead an investigation into the complaint. This will include gathering information and conducting interviews related to the complaint.
- 4.2. The lead investigator will inform the person(s) against whom the complaint has been made will be informed about the basis of the complaint. This will include the letter of complaint and any supporting documentation or other member statements.
- 4.3. The result of the investigations will not be disclosed to any other Trustees at this stage, in order to not prejudice any appeal.
- 4.4. The Chair will appoint a subcommittee of three committee members to hear the complaint. Unless the subcommittee and the complainant agree otherwise, the meeting to hear the complaint will take place within 14 days of the Chair's communication acknowledging receipt of the complaint.
- 4.5. At the hearing, the subcommittee will consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take. This could include, for example, a change of procedures, a change of venue for monthly meetings or whatever outcome is deemed the most appropriate as a solution.
- 4.6. The subcommittee will communicate its decision in writing to both the member or Trustee who raised the complaint and the member or Trustee against whom the complaint has been made. If the complaint has been upheld, the letter will also specify what action will be taken as a result.
- 4.7. Within a 7 day period from the date of the subcommittee decision being provided to the complainant and the member or Trustee against whom the complaint has been made, either of those parties may appeal against the decision.
- 4.8. The appeal must be lodged in the form of a written submission addressed to the Chair, for the committee to consider.
- 4.9. The appeal submission can include a request for a verbal right of reply as well as written representations.
- 4.10. For the appeal, the Chair will convene a panel of three Trustees (including the Chair). The panel must not include any person who was involved in the initial investigation or who was a member of the subcommittee which made the decision that is being appealed against.
- 4.11. The person raising the appeal will be offered a verbal right of reply. If they wish to take this up, the Chair will invite them to attend a meeting with the appeal panel and they will be offered the option to attend with a companion who may also speak in a personal capacity.
- 4.12. At the hearing, the original complaint will be restated along with a summary of the actions taken to resolve the complaint and the final decision. The person making the

appeal will be given the opportunity to speak but may not raise new complaints.

- 4.13. Following the hearing, the appeal panel will deliberate and make its decision based only on the facts before it at the hearing, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing to both parties.
- 4.14. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.

Approved by Trustees: 15 April 2026

Amendment history

April 2026 – new document.