

Grievance

Settle District U3A Grievance Policy

Context

In any organisation, problems and grievances will occur from time to time. 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. This policy sets out how Settle District u3a (sdu3a) will approach problems and grievances, to ensure they are dealt with in this way.

Procedure

All parties are encouraged to take a problem solving approach to achieve resolution. In dealing with grievances Settle District u3a (sdu3a) will ensure the following:

- All action taken will be documented.
- Grievances will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Settle District u3a (sdu3a) will try to de-escalate the situation and try to settle the issue without having to resort to formal action
- Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. For serious issues Settle District u3a (sdu3a) may contact the Third Age Trust for advice. This may include liaising with the Regional Trustee and/or Trust volunteers to deal with the issue. Sharing information with the Trust will not constitute a breach of confidentiality due to Settle District u3a's affiliation to the Trust. Members involved in grievance procedures will be informed of the involvement of the Trust. All situations will be dealt with discreetly and by showing respect for the parties and views involved.
- All communication will be based on fact and evidence

provided.

Responsibility for dealing with grievances ultimately rests with the Chair and the Committee. Grievances within a group, whether about members of that group or about the group leader, should initially be dealt with by the Group Co-ordinator. Wider grievances relating to the U3A as a whole will be referred to the Chair or to members of the Committee delegated by them. Grievances relating directly to the Chair will be referred to the Vice Chair and the Committee

Informal procedure

When a problem or grievance is referred to the Groups' Coordinator or designated Committee member they will first attempt informal resolution, by holding a meeting with the party or parties concerned. The purpose of this would be to understand the problem and hear the views of those involved. 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 Committee member will seek to summarise the situation with both parties, be clear about any required changes to ensure it does not happen again and clear the air. If it is judged that there is a justifiable grievance but that nevertheless it is a minor issue, this should be communicated clearly to those involved in writing. Provided this outcome is accepted by those involved no further action should be taken.

If the outcome is not accepted by those involved or if on Groups' Coordinator or designated Committee member feels that the situation warrants a more formal approach or a specific course of action e.g. exclusion from an interest group, the matter should be referred in writing to the Chair of the Settle District U3A(sdu3a) Committee. The referral should 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.

On receipt of this referral the Chair will appoint a subcommittee of 2/3 committee members to hear the grievance. The members selected should not previously have been involved in dealing with the grievance nor should they be the focus of that grievance

The designated Trustee will ask the aggrieved party to provide specific details of the grievance in writing with dates and times if relevant. The designated Trustee should advise the aggrieved party that a meeting to hear the grievance by a subcommittee will be convened. The timetable for the date of the meeting will be short, preferably within 7 to 14 days.

A letter will be sent to the person against whom the grievance has been made • advising them of the grievance

- asking for their response to the grievance in writing
- advising them of the date of the grievance hearing
- advising that they can also attend the subcommittee meeting to state their response in addition to their written response
- advising them they may choose to bring a companion who will also be bound by confidentiality, if they wish.

A letter will be sent to the person lodging the grievance

- advising them of clear and specific details of the grievance including dates and times if relevant
- advising them of the date of the grievance hearing
- advising that they can also attend the subcommittee meeting to state their grievance in addition to their written response
- advising them they may choose to bring a companion who will also be bound by confidentiality, if they wish

If either person advises that there are witnesses to the grievance incident(s) who are willing to give representations, they should ask those witnesses to contact the subcommittee to agree to giving a statement relating to the specific grievance incident(s) that they have witnessed.

The subcommittee meeting

The meeting will be minuted. The minutes will be confidential and these minutes will not be published on the website or distributed to anyone outside of the subcommittee. This subcommittee will then consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and agree what action to take. The sub-committee will record its decision and give reasons for the decision based on the factual information provided in the statements and the written and oral reports provided.

Possible forms of action

Level 1- no case to answer. No further action necessary

Level 2- a verbal warning about future conduct by an elected officer with another officer present, details of which should be confirmed in writing

Level 3 – a written warning which clearly states what will happen if the situation is repeated

Level 4 – a final written warning, which if breached will result in automatic escalation to level 4 or 5

5a – exclusion from an interest group

Level 5b – termination of u3a membership

Gross misconduct

If there is a case to answer, most problems will start at Level 1. However the committee has the right to move immediately to Levels 3,4 or 5, including asking the member to leave the interest group or to leave the u3a in the case of an extremely serious proven misdemeanour, for example

- Sexual/racial abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying •
- Dangerous or violent behaviour
- Falsification of expense claims
- Theft
- Malicious damage
- Conduct which brings the u3a into disrepute or is prejudicial to the u3a or the running of the u3a
- Grievance against the Chair

If the grievance is against the Chair of the Committee, then the Vice Chair will replace the Chair in the procedure. In this case and in the event of an appeal, the Vice Chair may choose to ask committee members from a neighbouring u3a or seek advice/request attendance from Third Age Trust staff or trustees.

Decision

The decision will be communicated in writing to all parties involved advising them if the grievance has been upheld or not upheld. If the grievance has been upheld, they will be informed

- of the action that will be taken as a result
- that they have the right of appeal
- that the right of appeal can only relate to the original grievance
- that the appeal request must be lodged within 7 days with the designated Trustee
- Right of appeal

An appeal, providing it is lodged within the 7 day period, can take the form of written representation for the committee to consider or a request for a right of reply. In either case the Chair should be informed of the intention to appeal. The Chair will then convene a further sub-panel of committee members who did not hear the original grievance, to hear the appeal. This sub-panel should consider any written response and make their decision on whether to uphold the appeal. This should be

independent of the initial hearing and committee members should not discuss this outside of the appeal sub-panel. If the person concerned requests a right of reply the sub-panel should arrange an appeal meeting with the aggrieved party, who, again, may be accompanied by a companion who may also speak in a personal capacity. The whole issue should be summarised and

then the aggrieved party given the opportunity to speak, along with their companion, if they wish to. The sub-panel will review its decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which will be communicated in writing within 7 days of the appeal meeting. The decision will be minuted and the minutes will be kept confidential. The Committee's decision following any appeal is final and confidentiality will be maintained except in the case of gross misconduct issues where the appropriate authorities have been informed and legal advice has been sought from the Third Age Trust

Availability and changes to this policy

This policy and any appendices will be reviewed annually by the Committee. It is available on the Settle District U3A (sdu3a) website or by contacting a Committee member. This policy may change from time to time. Members will be informed via the newsletter and/or the monthly meetings when any material changes are made to Settle District U3A's (sdu3a) policies and procedures. Members should contact any member of the Committee if they have any queries about this policy, need it in an alternative format, or have any complaints about our grievance process

Date of next review

November 2024