



# COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Key topics include:

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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Wymondham u3a Disciplinary Policy

Wymondham u3a Harassment and Bullying Policy

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Committee role: Vice Chair

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Issue	Revision	Date	Comments
1		January 2026	Initial issue

## **1. Purpose**

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. In the first instance, complaints should be directed towards the Committee of the u3a, or the independent Welfare Officer should the Committee be implicated.

This way, whatever the issue, it can be dealt with quickly, objectively, and appropriately.

## **2. Scope**

2.1 This may include internal 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 decide how best to approach reaching a resolution.

### **3. Typical problems.**

#### **3.1. Within a Group**

Problems that could arise within a group may be, but are not limited to:

- Disruptive and/or unsocial behaviour
- Unsuitability
- Failure to pay Group fees.
- Disagreement between members

In most cases, the Group Leader should be able to sort it out by talking to the member/members in question and resolve it informally and amicably.

If this fails and the problem persists the Group Leader should refer the matter to the Group Co-ordinator on the Committee.

The Group Leader should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on other members of the Group.

#### **3.2. 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 Group Co-ordinator.

#### **3.3. Wymondham u3a as a whole:**

- Between members
- Between a member and the Committee
- Between a 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 Chair in the first instance unless that person is personally involved. In which case, the Secretary or other Officer should take over. They will then deal with the case themselves or appoint a designated Committee Member to follow the procedures set out below.

#### **3.4. External Complaints**

An external complaint must be received in writing and will be processed in accordance with para. 4.7. An external complaint may be against Wymondham u3a Committee as a whole, a particular individual on the Committee, or an individual member.

## **4. Process**

### **4.1. Requirements**

In dealing with complaints the u3a Committee will ensure that:

- All actions will be documented.
- Complaints will be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- The u3a Committee will try to de-escalate the situation and settle issues without having to resort to formal action, where possible.

- Confidentiality will be maintained. For more 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 membership of and affiliation with the Trust.
- Decisions made will be based on the facts and evidence gathered.

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

#### 4.2. Informal process

Depending on what the Issue is, a decision should be taken as to who the best person is to lead on attempting to resolve the situation informally.

If an issue has arisen between members in a Group, then the Group Leader may be the best person, supported by the Groups' Coordinator, if felt appropriate.

For issues involving Committee Members it will be best for another Committee Member to attempt to mediate and try to find a solution. The initial stage requires checking with the party raising the concern as to whether s/he is willing to accept an informal outcome as opposed to going through a formal process.

The person(s) identified to lead on the informal stage will hold an informal discussion with all relevant parties. The purpose of this would 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.

If there are several people involved with the complaint, it may be deemed appropriate to speak with others mentioned so that as full a picture as possible is obtained.

The purpose of the informal meetings will be to seek to summarise the situation with both parties, attempting to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome, agree any changes required to ensure that the situation does not happen again and clear the air.

If it is felt that there is a case to answer but that nevertheless it is a minor issue and all parties are willing to accept the agreed outcome then it should be made clear that there should be no repeat of the actions/behaviour and that no further action is necessary.

If, however, it is felt by the person(s) leading on the informal stage, that the situation warrants

- a) a more formal approach or a specific course of action,
  - b) or if the person raising the complaint wishes to lodge a formal complaint
- the matter should be referred, in writing, to the Chair of the u3a Committee stating that this is a formal complaint.

This will 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.

#### 4.3 Formal process

Where someone wishes to raise a formal complaint, they 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 should also be asked as to what outcome they are hoping to achieve by making the complaint, for example, whether they would be prepared to accept an apology. Explain to the complainant 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.

The Committee will appoint a designated Committee Member for managing complaints.

The Committee may also contact the Third Age Trust and request support a Trust volunteer and/or National Office staff. The Committee will inform the complainant that additional support has been requested and the reasons why.

A letter or email will be sent to the complainant confirming receipt of the complaint and if the complaint is deemed to be a disciplinary matter, then the disciplinary procedure will be followed.

4.4. If the complaint is deemed to **not involve** a disciplinary matter, then the following process will be undertaken.

The Chair will appoint either one or two people to lead on the investigation. This will include gathering information and conducting interviews related to the complaint. 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. The result of these investigations must not be disclosed to any other Committee Member at this stage, to not bias any appeal.

The Chair will appoint a Sub-Committee of three Committee Members to hear the complaint. The timetable for the date of the meeting to hear the complaint will be short, within 14 days. The subcommittee will then consider the matter considering 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.

#### 4.5. Decision

The Sub-Committee decision will be communicated in writing to both the member or Trustee who raised the complaint and the member or Trustee against whom the complaint has been made. Both parties will be informed as to the outcome of the investigation in respect of whether the complaint has been upheld or not upheld.

If the complaint has been upheld, the letter will also specify what action will be taken as a result.

#### 4.6. Right of Appeal

A right of appeal should be offered providing it is lodged within a 7-day period from the date of the Sub-Committee decision being provided to the complainant and the member or Committee Member against whom the complaint has been made. The appeal needs to be lodged in the form of a written representation for the Committee to consider. An appeal can be lodged either by the person who made the complaint or by the person against whom the complaint has been made.

The appeal can include a request for a right of reply as well as written representations.

For the appeal, the Chair will convene a meeting of three Committee Members (including him/herself). This should not include those who were involved in the initial investigation.

The person raising the appeal will be offered a verbal right of reply, if s/he wishes to take this up then s/he will be asked to attend a meeting with the Committee. Where the verbal right of reply involves the member or Committee Member against whom the complaint has been made, s/he will be offered the option to attend with a companion who may also speak in a personal capacity.

The whole issue will be summarised and the person making the appeal will be given the opportunity to speak.

The appeal panel will review the decision based only on the facts included in the original hearing, considering any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing to both parties.

#### 4.7. External Complaint Process

On receipt of an external complaint the Committee will select a small subcommittee of three Committee Members to investigate. This will include gathering information and conducting interviews related to the complaint. The person(s) against whom the complaint has been made will be informed.

The subcommittee will then consider the matter considering any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take. This could include, for example, an apology, payment for a claim, a change of procedures, a change of venue for monthly meetings, or whatever outcome is deemed the most appropriate as a solution about the basis of the complaint.

The sub committee recommendation will then be submitted for approval at Full Committee, if appropriate, and any approved action completed.

The decision will be communicated in writing to the complainant specifying what action will be taken.