

## Compliments and Complaints Procedure

All too often organisations have procedures to deal with things 'going wrong', and fail to acknowledge when things are 'going right'. Here at Palmers Green and Southgate u3a we want to give a positive welcome to Compliments as well as assuring all our \*stakeholders\* (see footnote) that Complaints are taken equally seriously.

We aim to address Complaints as quickly as possible, whilst giving the complainant every opportunity to share their experience with a view to ensuring that it is not repeated. The Complaints Procedure is invoked by completing a Complaint Form which is sent to the u3a Secretary.

### Compliments

We encourage all Members and prospective Members to provide feedback to our u3a. This is most likely to be verbal (e.g. to a speaker following a presentation) but an individual may choose to put their Compliment in writing by email or letter. Written compliments that are sent to the u3a Secretary will be reported at the next meeting of the u3a Executive Committee.

### Complaints

Unfortunately our Members, prospective Members or others may be less than satisfied with our service and wish to draw this to the attention of the Executive Committee for further action. We ask that anyone with a Complaint about any aspect of u3a activities follows our Complaint Procedure to maximise the chances that it will be addressed fully. The Executive Committee (or its delegates) will maintain a written record of the actions taken in investigating and (hopefully) resolving any Complaint.

### Confidentiality

u3a reserves the right to publicise any complimentary feedback it receives as this may assist recruitment and retention of Members. However the individual providing feedback may request that it is quoted anonymously and this will be observed.

Complainants have the right for issues to be addressed in confidence with information being shared on a 'need to know' basis. This is particularly important as the Formal process may be instituted and it is important that the Panel members (see **Formal process**) have no prior knowledge/opinion with regard to the complaint.

### Criminality

Any Complaints that **appear to be** very serious (e.g. related to theft, fraud, use of violence, illegal discrimination etc.) will be referred directly to the Chair who will decide if an external enforcement agency should be contacted.

### ***Informal process***

- We encourage individuals to resolve their Complaint on an informal basis wherever possible. This may involve asking the Group's Co-ordinator or a Trustee to act as an impartial mediator
- The Co-ordinator/Trustee will ensure that they understand the problem from all points of view. Having details of the Complaint in writing from all parties involved is recommended (e.g. ensures transparency, reduces misunderstanding etc.)
- The Co-ordinator/Trustee may consider that the nature of the complaint (e.g. potential illegality) is such that it should not be dealt with on an informal basis (refer to ***Formal process***)
- Subject to the foregoing, the Co-ordinator/Trustee may be able to identify a means of resolving the issue identified in the Complaint and offer this as a proposal to both parties
- It is vital that ALL parties accept the proposed solution if the matter is to be resolved
- If ALL parties accept, then the agreed action is taken to resolve the complaint
- Failure to resolve the complaint (i.e. to the satisfaction of ALL parties) informally will invoke the ***Formal process***

### ***Formal process***

- The Chair (or other office-holder in the event that the Chair is the subject of the complaint) will be informed of the Complaint
- The Chair (or other office-holder) will inform all members of the Executive Committee that the *Formal process* has been invoked and invite 3 other trustees to convene in a Panel to investigate the matter
- The Panel will be provided with full written details from both parties and may contact TAT, u3a Regional Office or an appropriate person outside u3a for support
- The Complainant will be kept fully informed as to the situation in regard to their Complaint and be invited to meet the Panel within 3 weeks. The Complainant will be given every assistance to present their Complaint (NB having in mind that they may not be familiar with such a formal situation)
- The Panel is responsible for meeting anyone else involved in the Complaint (e.g. witnesses) and ensuring that they obtain the fullest possible information
- The Panel will come to a conclusion about the Complaint and, where this is justified, endeavour to identify a resolution to the Complaint which is acceptable to the Complainant. This is reported to the Executive Committee.
- Where the Panel is unable to reach a conclusion/make a remedial proposal that is acceptable to the Complainant, the Appeal option will arise
- The Complaint is referred back to the Chair (other office-holder) who convenes a NEW Panel, with two OTHER trustees (i.e. not previously involved) to meet the Complainant, review all the evidence and come to a FINAL conclusion in regard to both the Complaint and remedial proposal both in regard to the Complaint and any remedial proposal. The outcome of the appeal is reported to the Executive Committee and the Complainant
- The outcome of the appeal concludes the formal process