

Bakewell Area u3a complaints procedure

When someone wishes to raise with Bakewell Area u3a (Bu3a) a formal complaint, they will be asked to put the complaint in writing providing as much information as is relevant, giving specific dates and times (where possible) and stating what outcome they are hoping to achieve by making the complaint, for example, whether they would be prepared to accept an apology. Complainants need to be aware that there are no guarantees as to what the likely outcome will be.

The complaint may be addressed to a group coordinator, any committee member or to the committee, as represented by the chairman or secretary. In every case, all committee members will be informed of the complaint and the committee will appoint a trustee who acts 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 TAT 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 by the designated trustee to the complainant confirming receipt of the complaint.

The Chairman 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 will not be disclosed to any other trustees at this stage, in order to not bias any appeal.

The Chair will appoint a subcommittee of three committee members to consider the complaint. Such consideration may be at a face-to-face meeting or by other means of communication.

The timetable for consideration of the complaint by the subcommittee will be short, generally within 14 days. The subcommittee will take 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.

Decision

The subcommittee decision will be communicated in writing to both the complainant and the member(s) 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 communication will also specify what action will be taken as a result.

Right of appeal

A right of appeal should be offered providing it is lodged within a 7 day period from the date of the subcommittee decision being provided to the complainant and the member(s) 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(s) 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 Trustees (including themselves). 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 they wish to take this up then they will be asked to attend a meeting with the appeal panel. Where the verbal right of reply involves the member(s) against whom the complaint has been made, they 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, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing to both parties.