



# Complaints Policy

## 1. Our Commitment

Swanland u3a is committed to providing a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all its members. We recognise that, occasionally, issues or disagreements may arise. This procedure is designed to ensure that any complaints are handled quickly, fairly, objectively, and confidentially.

## 2. Guiding Principles

In dealing with all complaints, the Swanland u3a Committee will ensure that:

- All actions and decisions will be documented.
- Complaints will be dealt with promptly and fairly.
- We will try to de-escalate the situation and settle issues informally, wherever possible.
- Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Information will only be shared with those who have a genuine need to know in order to resolve the issue.
- Decisions will be based on the facts and evidence gathered, not on personal bias or assumption.
- All parties involved will be treated with dignity and respect.

## 3. Scope

This procedure applies to complaints made by a member about another member, a group leader, a committee member, or an external individual or organisation related to the activities of Swanland u3a.

## 4. The Complaint Process

### Step 1: Informal Resolution (Recommended)

In most cases, we encourage members to try and resolve the matter informally by talking directly to the person involved. If the issue concerns a specific interest group, the member should first approach the Group Leader. If this is not appropriate or if the issue remains unresolved, the member should contact a member of the Committee.

### Step 2: Formal Complaint

If an informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, the member should make a formal complaint.

- **Submitting the Complaint:** The member should put the complaint in writing (via email or letter) to the u3a Secretary or Chair. The written complaint should include as much detail as possible, including:
  - The member's full name and contact details.
  - A clear and factual description of the issue.
  - The names of any other members or individuals involved.
  - Relevant dates, times, and locations.
  - A description of any actions already taken to resolve the issue informally.
  - The desired outcome of the complaint.

### **Step 3: Acknowledgment and Investigation**

- The u3a Secretary or Chair will send a written acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint within [e.g., 5-7 working days].
- The Chair will appoint an investigator, who will be a Committee member not directly involved in the complaint.
- The investigator's role is to gather information and investigate the facts. This may involve speaking to the complainant, the person the complaint is about, and any relevant witnesses. Confidentiality will be respected at all times during this process.

### **Step 4: The Hearing (if required)**

- If the issue cannot be resolved through the initial investigation, the Chair will convene a sub-committee of at least three Committee members who have no prior involvement in the case.
- The sub-committee will hear the complaint and review all the documentation and evidence gathered during the investigation.
- Both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint has been made will be invited to attend the hearing. They may be accompanied by a friend for support.
- The hearing will provide an opportunity for all parties to present their case.

### **Step 5: Decision and Outcome**

- The sub-committee will consider all the facts and any mitigating circumstances before making a decision.
- A written decision will be communicated to the complainant and the person against whom the complaint was made within [e.g., 7-14 working days] of the hearing.
- Possible outcomes could include, but are not limited to:
  - No further action required.
  - A verbal or written warning.
  - A requirement for a change in behaviour or procedure.
  - Suspension or termination of U3A membership.

### **Step 6: Appeal Process**

- Either party may appeal the sub-committee's decision.
- An appeal must be submitted in writing to the Chair within [e.g., 7 days] of receiving the decision, outlining the grounds for the appeal (e.g., new evidence, a failure to follow the correct procedure).
- The Chair will convene a final Appeals Panel, consisting of a different group of three Committee members. The decision of this Appeals Panel will be final.

**Important Note:** For serious complaints, particularly those that may involve a breach of the law (e.g., discrimination, assault), Swanland u3a may need to involve the Third Age Trust and, if necessary, the relevant authorities. The u3a's affiliation with the Trust allows for the sharing of information in these circumstances.

