

u3a

Wilmslow

Complaints Policy

Introduction

This document has been adapted from the u3a National Office template to outline a pragmatic, common-sense complaints procedure for Wilmslow u3a. This policy aligns closely with the foundational principles of the wider u3a movement and practices adopted across the United Kingdom.

Wilmslow u3a values its members and aims to provide an environment that is cooperative, constructive, and free from conflict. However, we recognise that problems, operational issues, or misunderstandings can occasionally occur. This policy is designed to ensure that any complaints are handled fairly, transparently, and as swiftly as possible.

Scope and Principles

This policy applies to all formal complaints raised by members regarding the administration, operational decisions, committee actions, or conduct within Wilmslow u3a activities. It does not replace our Safeguarding Policy, which must always take precedence if an issue involves the abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult.

Our approach is guided by the following core principles:

- **Fairness and Respect:** All issues will be treated with confidentiality, objectivity, and mutual respect.
- **Informal Resolution First:** Informal dialogue and common-sense solutions will always be explored as a first step.
- **Timeliness:** Formal complaints will be documented, investigated impartially, and resolved without undue delay.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Most operational difficulties, group disagreements, or minor misunderstandings can be successfully resolved through informal conversation. Members are strongly encouraged to speak directly and calmly with the Group Leader, Activity Organiser, or individual involved to find an amicable solution.

If an informal discussion is not appropriate, or if it fails to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the complainant may contact a member of the Wilmslow u3a Committee or the Secretary for guidance on an informal basis.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Where an informal approach is unsuccessful or inappropriate due to the seriousness of the issue, a formal complaint may be submitted. The process is structured as follows:

- **1. Submission:** The complaint must be submitted in writing (via email or letter) to the Wilmslow u3a Secretary. It should clearly outline the nature of the issue, relevant dates, any supporting evidence, and the desired outcome.
- **2. Acknowledgment:** The Secretary or Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 7 working days.
- **3. Investigation:** The Committee will appoint a designated officer or a small sub-committee (typically 2 to 3 trustees) who have no direct personal involvement in the matter to investigate the circumstances impartially.
- **4. Review:** The investigator(s) will review the facts, speak to relevant parties if necessary, and formulate a recommended course of action.
- **5. Decision:** The complainant will receive a formal written response outlining the committee's decision and any actions taken, normally within 28 days of the initial acknowledgment.

Stage 3: Right of Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 decision, they have the right to lodge an appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Chair within 14 days of receiving the decision letter, stating the precise grounds for the appeal.

An appeal panel, consisting of at least three committee trustees who were not involved in the initial Stage 2 investigation, will be convened. The panel's decision will be final within Wilmslow u3a, and a written conclusion will be shared with the member within 21 days.

Related documentation

The following supporting guidance and templates are available on the national u3a website at www.u3a.org.uk/advice:

- National Office Core Principles and Member Code of Conduct
- u3a Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure Templates
- Trustee Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidance

Changes to the policy

This Policy is published and available on the Wilmslow u3a website. The policy may be updated periodically. Members will be notified via the regular Newsletter and during monthly meetings when any material updates or changes are introduced to Wilmslow u3a's operational policies and procedures.

Queries regarding this policy

If you have any questions, clarifications, or require support regarding this Complaints Policy, please direct your correspondence to secretary@wilmslowu3a.org.uk

Adoption and Review

This policy was formally adopted by the Wilmslow u3a Committee on 14th September 2026 and will be scheduled for routine review or when national third-age trust guidance undergoes structural changes.