

HCH Conflict Resolution policy

Mutual respect and care for each other provides an essential underpinning for life in a co-housing community. Kindness, generosity and tolerance help to keep it a positive experience. There is no point in living together as a group if individual members do not aspire to the highest standards of behaviour in their interactions with each other. This said, we are all human, and, imperfect communication, personal stress and inevitable personality differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between the best motivated people.

The key feature of a co-housing group is that there is a genuine collective willingness to address and resolve conflict. HCH has a policy and an agreed procedure to resolve conflicts when they occur so that they don't damage the life of the group. Individual members have a collective responsibility for supporting the policy and implementing the procedures. Issues and problems not dealt with satisfactorily as soon as possible can become entrenched. However, it should be recognised that some types of conflict cannot be resolved but may need to be tolerated and lived with. With a basis of goodwill, this should be possible.

We anticipate that problems may arise at two levels – between individual HCH residents and within the wider group of HCH residents [and Friends]– and there may be a spillover between both. However, difficulties between individuals need not and should not without good reason become a matter for the group as a whole. The following policy and procedures have been agreed therefore by the group and individual members are expected to conform to them.

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS POLICY

- Where difficulties arise between HCH members, the individuals concerned are responsible for taking action as soon as possible to resolve these with each other in a spirit of openness and honesty.
- If a conflict cannot be resolved directly by the people concerned, they should follow the procedures recommended below.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

- Where an issue or problem arises that causes distress and difficulty between individual members of the group, they should acknowledge it and should seek the help of others to resolve it. They can each ask someone, whom they trust and who they believe can be objective, to support, clarify and help to disentangle muddled feelings.
- If after these procedures have been exhausted, conflict is unresolvable and is seriously damaging the communal life of the group, it may be that one or more members may be asked to withdraw from the Co-Housing Community. In such a case, the group should take responsibility for the welfare of the departing member and take reasonable steps to ease the difficult process of withdrawal.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITHIN THE GROUP AS A WHOLE

- HCH members have a collective responsibility for addressing and taking swift action to resolve conflicts which may emerge between different bodies of opinion within the group.

- In such cases, HCH rules regarding consensus decision-making should be operated in the first instance. If these are insufficient, recourse must be had to procedures such as those outlined below.

PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS WITHIN THE GROUP AS A WHOLE

- Key decisions in the HCH group are agreed through a process of consensus building based on every member having a say and full and open exploration of dissent. [There is provision, where time is running out, for a majority vote in the absence of full agreement. Serious divisions of opinion or conflicts between factions in the group are not ideally resolved through a voting mechanism.]
- Where the group is split and progress to a resolution appears to be blocked, there is a group responsibility for addressing the conflict immediately or as soon as possible. Inaction is not an option.
- If the group is still unable through negotiation and debate to resolve a conflict, an independent mediator will be requested to help. Failing this, the services of a trained external mediator must be sought to assist the group. The group will maintain a small fund to provide purposes of external mediators.