

1 May 2020

To: Club Secretaries
Copy: SIGBI Board
Federation Consultative Council

Dear members,

Dispute Resolution Procedure

I am pleased to be able to send you the new SIGBI Dispute Resolution Procedure with accompanying template letters and a copy of our existing Code of Conduct. This procedure is the result of a long period of consultation and input from a Soroptimist working party made up of members with professional expertise in how Soroptimist clubs operate and how conflicts are best resolved.

It would be wonderful if there was never a need for such procedures but sadly human nature is such that we do occasionally find ourselves at odds with each other or with our organisation. The aim of this procedure is to provide a road map for those situations.

The key message I want all clubs and members to take from this process is the importance of starting your attempts to resolve matters at the lowest level. Please communicate with each other and always try to resolve matters by a quiet word. I realise sometimes this takes great courage, particularly if you have been hurt by the words or actions of another member. Don't suffer in silence, talk to someone about how you are feeling and seek help. If you are part of the leadership of a club and you are aware of a dispute, please deal with it as soon as you can to avoid it escalating. Mediation should always be explored as an alternative to the formal process.

There will be a number of sources of guidance and support for clubs and Regions/National Associations/Countries on how the procedure is intended to work, which will be provided at Region/National Association/Country Meetings by the Federation Councillors who received an introduction to it at the last Board Meeting that we were able to attend in person. I have given the Federation Councillors a copy of the PowerPoint presentation I provided on the day which they may choose to use. In addition, we have a working party made up of SIGBI members who are skilled in mediation who are available to offer advice and guidance as well as being willing to run any mediations which need to take place. The third source of advice and guidance will be a Region/National Association/Country Dispute Resolution Procedure Liaison Officer who will be selected once we are able to hold meetings again, and who will be a wise 'older statesperson', able to stand back from the details of the dispute and make suggestions to resolve matters.

We have provided some template letters which form the basis of the letters that will need to be used in the formal process. They are the bare bones of the written communications you will need to use. You will need to expand them to include the details which apply to the cases you are dealing with and I am expecting that you will add in some helpful supportive phrases where possible and where appropriate.

Sincerely in friendship,

Claire Bell

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