

Role and remit for the Staff Support Group (SSG)

What is the role of the SSG?

- Staff Support Group are a key part of CAAT's efforts to support staff and raise issues when they need to. Staff are encouraged to raise work-related issues with SSG at any time throughout the year. Likewise, the SSG can approach any member of staff to discuss a work related issue at any point during the year.
- SSG are part of the consensus-based decision making structure at CAAT. Therefore they should be empowered, like everyone else, to raise issues and suggest changes to staff and/or to Steering Committee, as outlined below.
- SSG have the unique position of hearing in detail from all members of staff, and so is likely to have a clearer understanding of what is happening for people across the organisation.
- SSG should be supported wherever possible by our already existing policies and practices, through relevant training and also should be empowered to suggest changes and new ways forward.

In their expectations of the SSG staff should remember that they are all volunteers and although they will try to support staff as best they can there are limits to their capacity and how quickly they can respond to issues.

1) Provide a 'listening ear' to staff

Staff want to be able to approach SSG as individuals for peer support

- As well as staff's Static Reviewers, SSG can be an additional peer support option for staff.
- SSG play a role in the [informal part of CAAT's disciplinary and grievance procedures](#), attempting to resolve issues before they escalate.
- Personal information shared to SSG is confidential. If it seems appropriate, SSG can ask if information can be shared with other individuals and/or a group (e.g. staff, SC). If the person gives their consent, the information can be shared.
- Identifying anonymised trends across the organisation is not personal, confidential information, so can be raised with others without the need of consent

Staff want to be able to go to SSG as individuals if they feel internal processes aren't working

- SSG should be introduced to CAAT's policies and internal systems of work as part of their induction. This includes ensuring they are understood and know how to access them, so they can refer staff members to them wherever relevant.
- Informal processes to address conflict are built into CAAT's disciplinary and grievance procedures: SSG can facilitate this taking place where necessary. SSG should feel confident that by offering a listening ear to one person they are not 'taking sides' in a disagreement.
- If SSG suspect there is an issues with a staff member(s) they should first look to CAAT's policies and internal systems, and check whether any issues that are being raised to them go against CAAT's policies.
- SSG should be empowered to make suggestions for ways forward, according to CAAT's policies where applicable, and in creative ways if CAAT's policies do not cover the issue or if they believe they need changing.
- Staff should be open to suggestions from SSG regarding changes to CAAT's internal systems if considered this will help resolve an issue.

2) Help to resolve disputes between staff

- This would often be in an informal role, as part of the informal section of our disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- To facilitate this, CAAT will try to organise conflict management training for all staff and SSG whenever there is a turnover of individuals in post.
- SSG should feel able to seek external mediation if they consider a situation needs it. Guidance on doing this will be part of the SSG induction (see external mediation doc).

3) Take a 'birds-eye-view' of what's going on at CAAT so the SSG can raise concerns or issues to staff and/or Steering Committee

- Information is shared with SSG through Peer Reviews, annual one to ones and through individuals contacting them at any time during the year, which means they should get a good idea of any issues across the organisation.
- SSG should be empowered to make suggestions for ways forward, according to our policies where applicable, and in creative ways if our policies do not cover the issue or if they believe our policies need changing.
- SSG should be able to bring issues to individuals, staff and/or to Steering Committee: if these are personal rather than process issues (e.g. an interpersonal conflict), SSG should have the consent of the person/people involved.

4) Support staff to receive the training and coaching they require

This role includes:

- Reading all staff peer review forms twice a year (Spring and Autumn) and responding as necessary to issues.
- Ensuring all staff meet with at least one, preferably two, members of the SSG at the beginning of the year to discuss how things are going and any relevant issues. This can be done face to face or online.
- Being prepared to be contacted by any member of staff at any time throughout the year if they would like any advice or support.

What skills and attributes do the SSG need?

The following is a list of skills and attributes that staff believe would enable SSG to best fulfil the role, and is therefore intended to inform training and support offered to SSG.

Please note: the following list is not a list of skills and attributes required in every SSG member. Some are contradictory: we would hope they would be represented by different members of SSG. If any member of the SSG feel they lack any essential skills to carry out the role they should approach CAAT's Office Manager to seek out appropriate training.

- Dispute resolution/mediation
- Active listening skills
- Emotional support skills
- Knowledge about HR regulations and Equality Law
- Best practice as well as baseline Equality Act obligations
- Familiarity with CAAT's processes and HR policies
- Being able to 'read between the lines'
- Facilitation skills (this applies to all SC)
- Understanding of non-hierarchy
- Knowledge of project planning
- A range of experiences and identities
- Institutional knowledge (of CAAT and its history), how we do things, understanding non-hierarchy
 - Understanding history of internal issues and how they've been dealt with
- New perspectives not bound by 'how we've always done things'

SSG induction

This should include:

- Introduction to the role and remit of the SSG
- Introduction to CAAT's processes, internal systems and HR policies
- Update of any current internal issues with staff
- Discussion regarding any training needs for the role