

Charnwood u3a Complaints Policy and Procedure

In any organisation, problems will occur from time to time.

It is Charnwood u3a (Cu3a) policy that:

- Problems and grievances are dealt with quickly, fairly and objectively
- Every effort is made to settle the issue without having to resort to the formal complaints procedure
- Confidentiality is maintained by all concerned
- If a complaint is upheld Disciplinary Procedures will be followed

Our advice is that you should always try to sort out any problem by talking and resolving it informally and amicably with the member(s) concerned. If this fails, please refer to the procedures set out below.

Please note that these procedures follow the guidelines and advice laid out by the National Office of the u3a and should be read alongside the Cu3a Code of Conduct and Cu3a Disciplinary Procedure. Where appropriate, advice may be sought from the Regional Trustee, and/or the Third Age Trust.

Problems within an Interest Group

If problems arise within a group, the Group Leader should normally discuss the issue with the member(s) involved and attempt to resolve it informally and amicably. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Groups Coordinator. If all parties are satisfied and agree to abide by the outcome of the discussions, no further action is necessary. However, if a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the complainant must decide whether to lodge a formal complaint.

The Group Leader should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on other members of the group. If the problem persists and the original complainant does not wish to take it further, the Group Leader should discuss it with the Groups Coordinator.

Group Leaders are not allowed to exclude a member from a group permanently. That decision should be made by the Committee.

Problems with the Group Leader

Where problems arise between one or more group members and the Group Leader, the member(s) should attempt to resolve the issue by discussing it with the Group Leader. If they feel unable to do so, or their attempt proves unsuccessful, they should refer the matter to the Groups Coordinator.

Problems within the u3a as a whole

If problems unrelated to a group arise between members, the matter should be referred to the Cu3a Chair. If the problem directly involves the Chair, the matter should be addressed to the Business Secretary or other Officer.

In all the above cases, if the problem remains unsolved but the original complainant does not wish to proceed to a formal complaint, the Committee will decide whether the complaint should be put on record anonymously or, in cases of serious misconduct (see below), should be referred to the formal complaints procedure.

Serious Misconduct

Although the aim should normally be to resolve matters amicably by discussion, some misconduct is sufficiently serious that a formal response is required. Examples might include:

- Sexual or racial abuse
- Persistent harassment or bullying
- Dangerous or violent behaviour
- Theft or malicious damage
- Conduct which brings Cu3a into disrepute or is prejudicial to Cu3a

In such cases, a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Cu3a Chair, providing as much detail as possible, including place and date. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Committee will make a decision as to how best to approach it. All actions from this point will be documented.

Formal Complaint Procedure

- When someone wishes to raise a formal complaint, they will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Chair, who will confirm that they have received it. If the complaint directly involves the Chair, it should be addressed to the Business Secretary or other Officer.
- The Chair will appoint two Committee members to investigate the complaint.
- The complainant and the person(s) against whom the complaint has been made will be informed in writing by the Chair about the basis of the complaint and that it will be investigated according to the Cu3a Complaints Procedure. Advice may be sought from the Third Age Trust.
- The Committee members appointed to investigate the complaint will gather all the relevant information, including the letter of complaint, any supporting documentation or other member statements and will interview those concerned.
- The Chair will appoint a subcommittee of two or three additional Committee members and set a date, within four weeks of the receipt of the complaint, to review the matter, which must be kept confidential at this stage, including from other Committee members.
- The subcommittee will consider the matter in consultation with those investigating the complaint. They will take into account any mitigating circumstances, and agree what action to take.
- The decision of the subcommittee will be communicated in writing to both parties.
- Both parties will be informed of any action to be taken and their right of appeal.

Right of Appeal

- An appeal can be lodged in writing either by the complainant or by the person against whom the complaint has been made. The appeal must be lodged within 14 days of the communication of the decision.
- For the appeal, the Chair will convene a meeting of three Trustees (including themselves). This should not include those who were involved in the initial investigation and decision.
- The person raising the appeal will be offered a verbal right of reply. The issue will be summarised and the person making the appeal allowed to speak.

- The appeal panel will review the decision, based on the facts included in the original hearing and taking into account any mitigating circumstances. Their decision must be communicated in writing to both parties within 7 days of the appeal meeting. This decision is final and absolute confidentiality must be maintained.

Further Action

If the complaint is upheld, disciplinary action will be in accordance with Cu3a Disciplinary Procedures.

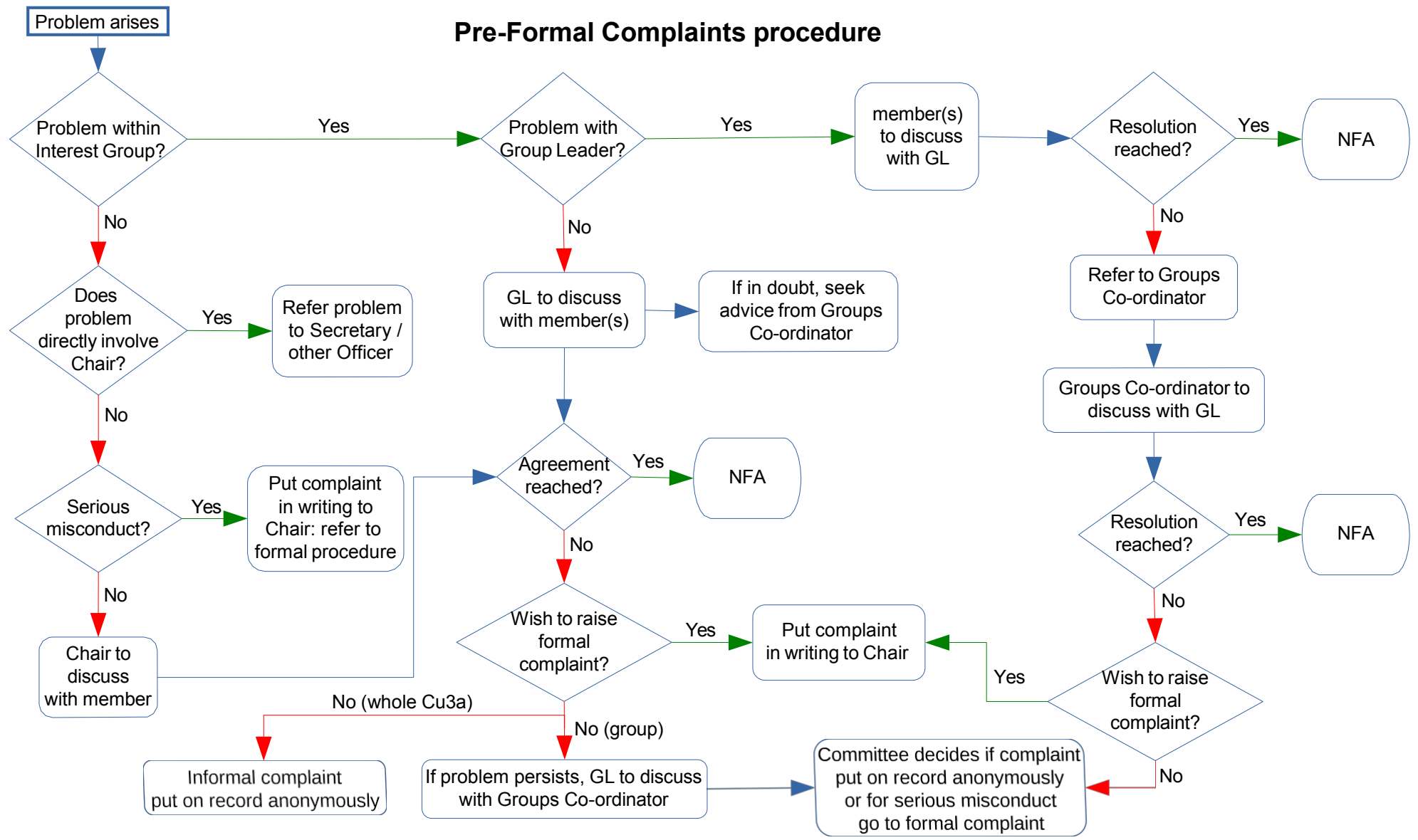
Confidentiality

All procedures and documents must be kept confidential at all times. All situations should be dealt with discreetly, showing respect for the parties and views involved.

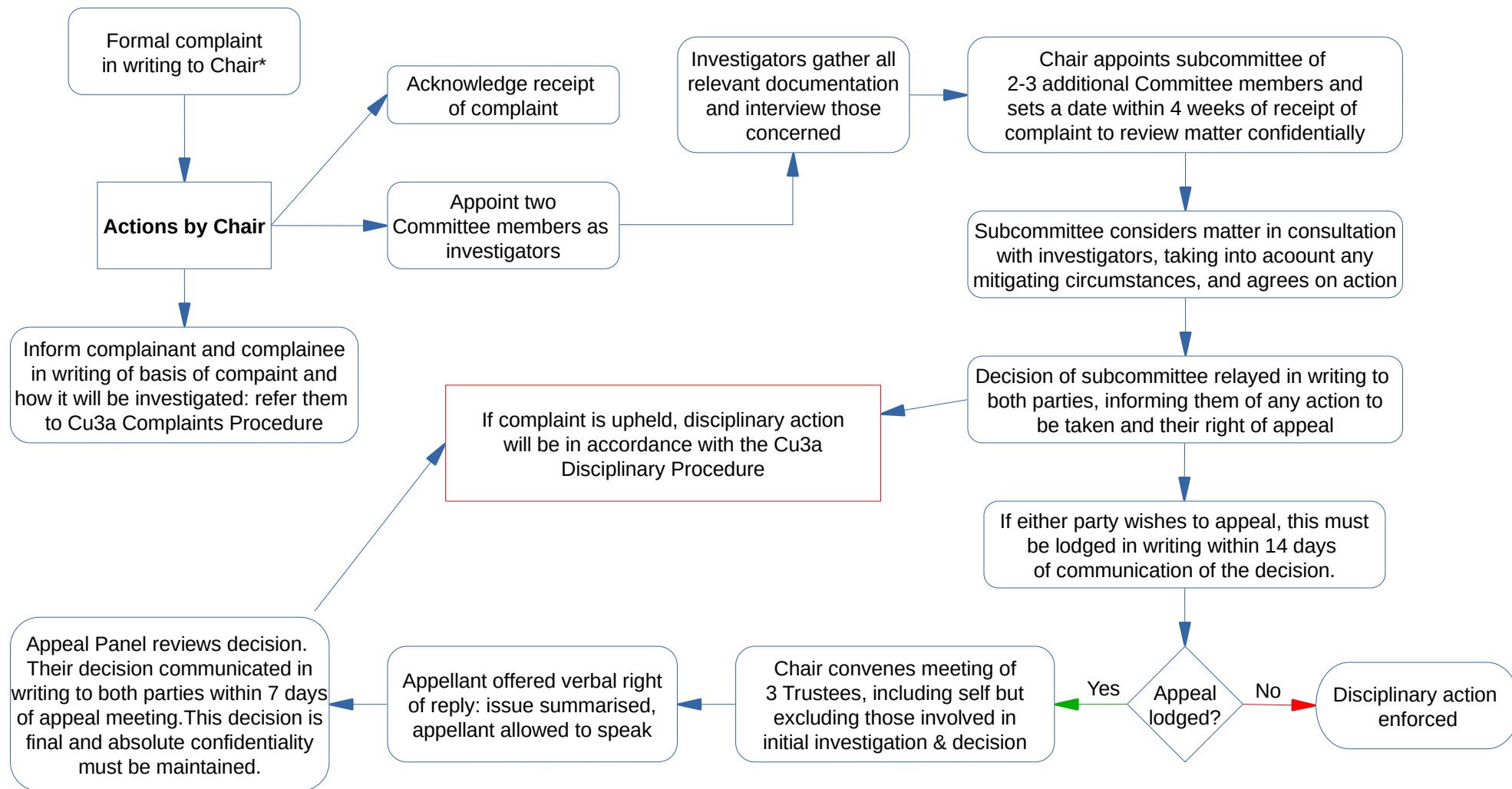
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Pre-Formal Complaints procedure



Formal Complaints Procedure



* If the complaint directly involves the Chair, it should be addressed to the Business Secretary or other Officer.