

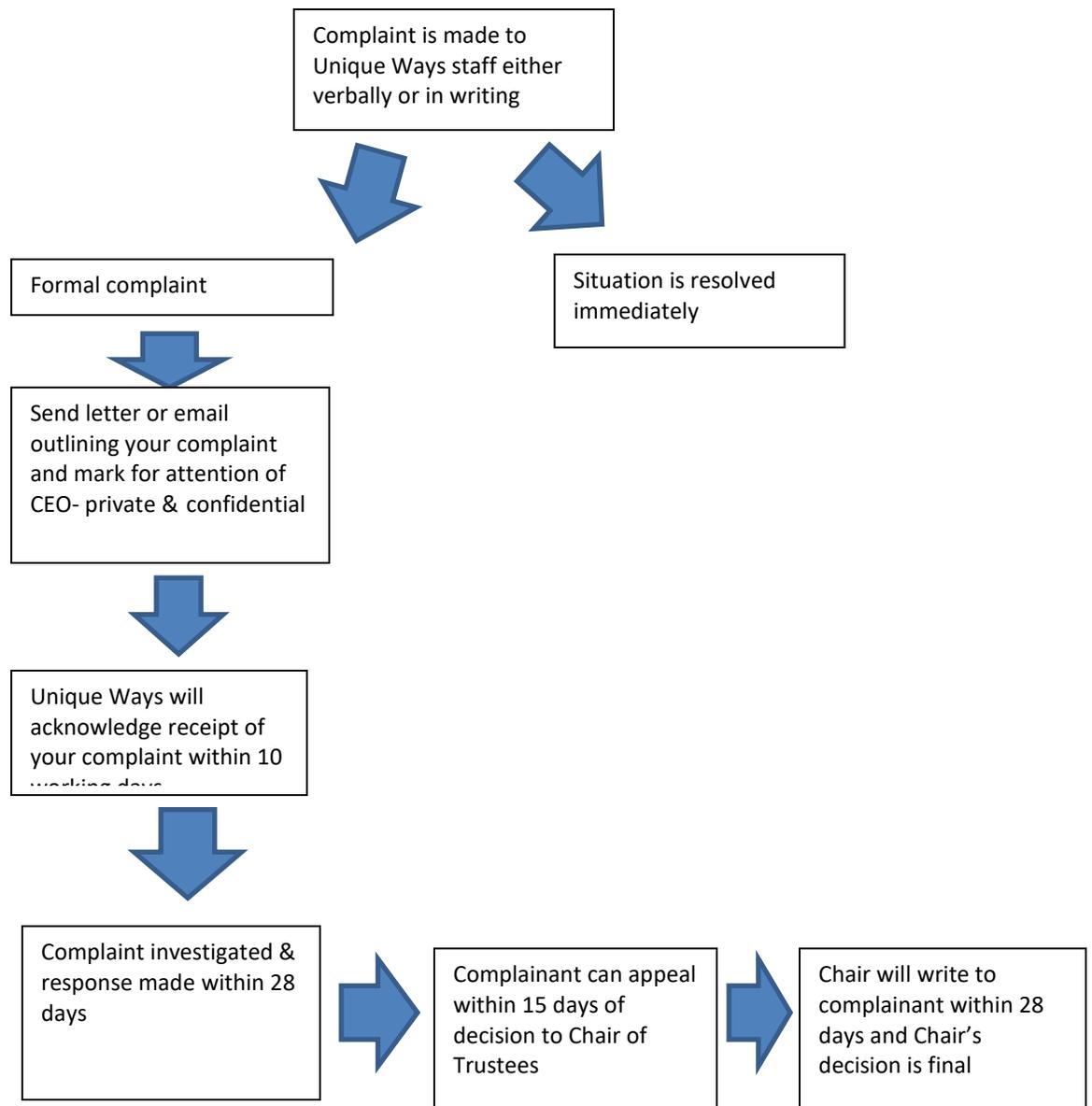


## Complaints Policy

Unique Ways is committed to providing the best possible service to the organisations and individuals with whom we work, and we endeavour to listen to our members. We acknowledge, however, that there will be occasions when people may not be happy with some aspect of our provision.

This policy exists to make it easier for you to tell us when you are unhappy, or indeed when you have any comment you wish to make about Unique Ways. All complaints will be taken seriously and we aim to treat you with respect and consideration throughout the complaints process.

### Complaints flowchart



### **How to complain informally**

In the first instance you can make your complaint to the member of staff/volunteer with whom you have been dealing. If you prefer, you can take the matter up with their line manager. Any worker will be pleased to tell you who the most appropriate person to approach is. This may be done in person, or by telephone. We will listen to what you have to say, to apologise whenever necessary and to try to agree a way forward with you.

We will try to deal with your complaint to your satisfaction immediately; however, there will be occasions when this may not be possible (for example during holiday periods). If there will be a delay in responding to your complaint, you will be told, and we will reply as quickly as possible either verbally or in writing as you wish. If you remain dissatisfied with us or our response you should use the formal procedure outlined below.

### **How to make a formal complaint**

You may use the formal complaints procedure at any time, you do not have to complain informally first if you believe that your complaint is too serious for that approach. You may write a letter or send us an email. In either case, you should feel free to obtain assistance with writing your complaint if you need it; such assistance could be given by a friend or family member, a Citizens Advice Bureau or Advocacy group or a similar organization. You should then post or hand-deliver your complaint to Unique Ways, marking the envelope clearly "Private and Confidential, for the attention of the Chief Executive". If your complaint involves the Chief Executive, you may address it to the Chair of Trustees.

### **What will happen next?**

Unique Ways will acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within ten working days; this will be done by letter, so it is important that you provide us with your correct postal address. This letter will also tell you what steps will be taken to investigate your complaint; we may ask you to meet with us to discuss the problem (in which case you are welcome to be accompanied by a person of your choice from outside of Unique Ways), and we may allocate responsibility for this meeting and the subsequent investigation to the appropriate line manager.

If your complaint is about a member of staff/volunteer, it will be passed immediately to their line manager. We aim to resolve all complaints quickly and to keep you informed throughout the process. You will receive a full written response usually within 28 days of our initial response; if there will be any further delay, you will be informed.

### **Will my complaint be confidential?**

Your complaint may be seen by committee members as part of the investigation process but we will make every effort to safeguard your privacy; your complaint will not become "public knowledge" unless you so wish. You should be aware, however, that if your complaint is specifically about a member of

staff/volunteer or a board member, it will be necessary for that person to be told that a complaint has been lodged against them to allow the investigation to proceed.

### **Appeals**

A complainant may wish to appeal against a decision. Appeals should be made in writing to the Chair within 15 working days of receiving the final verdict.

The Chair will inform the complainant in writing within 28 days of receiving the appeal as to the decision. The Chair's decision is final.

### **Monitoring and learning from complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

### **Notes**

At all stages the complainant is welcome to have a friend or colleague to accompany them.

Whilst investigating the complaint the workers/volunteer involved may wish to have further discussions with the complainant about the nature of their complaint and may wish to set up meetings with all parties concerned to discuss the complaint.

At all stages of the procedure written records will be kept and stored in the confidential complaints file.