# WA 003 Resolving Differences and Difficulties Procedure



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#### 1. Introduction and Overview:

- 1.1. As per the Archery GB codes of conduct policies, Wymondham Archers fosters a positive environment for all its members and volunteers. The Club prioritises informal resolution to the occasional issues that may arise, recognizing the potential emotional impact for all involved. Although not bound by employment laws or the Equality Act, the Club has established these procedures to ensure fair treatment and support for all.
- 1.2. In the event of a matter of concern affecting a member of the Club in terms of any word, act or demeanour made by or towards a Club member or Volunteer from another Club member, Club Volunteer, or particular group, this procedure serves as a means to resolve the situation.
- 1.3. Early identification and informal discussions are encouraged. The involvement of the Safeguarding Officer or Club Chair is advised for matters involving vulnerable children or adults. If informal resolution fails, the formal procedure is to be followed.
- 1.4. Mediation, a key aspect of these procedures, Involves an unbiased approach by Club Committee members or Volunteers facilitating discussion and agreement between the parties. Mediation aims to uphold a harmonious environment where the emphasis lies on teamwork and collaborative outcomes or resolution, to foster mutual respect and resolution. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process, with the mediators facilitating discussions and seeking mutual agreements without imposing solutions.
- 1.5. Each of the processes below begin with a Submission of what is being experienced by those involved. This is achieved using our online form "<u>Let Us Know</u>" that, once completed, is sent directly to <u>Wymondham Archers</u>

Membership Secretary. Should the concerns involve the Membership Secretary or Chair, they should be emailed with a full description of the concern/s to the Vice Chair at <a href="wicechairwa@gmail.com">wicechairwa@gmail.com</a> or an alternative committee member that you can find on our website.

1.6. Investigating incidents, matters of concern or difficult circumstances can be very challenging. When completing the online form, or using the form below as much detail as possible should be provided about what happened or is happening.

# 2. Submitting Matters of Concern to the Club

#### 2.1. Submission of a matter of concern:

2.1.1. Those experiencing poor behaviour in terms of word, act or demeanour towards themselves or another member of Wymondham Archers should complete the...

### "Let Us Know" online form

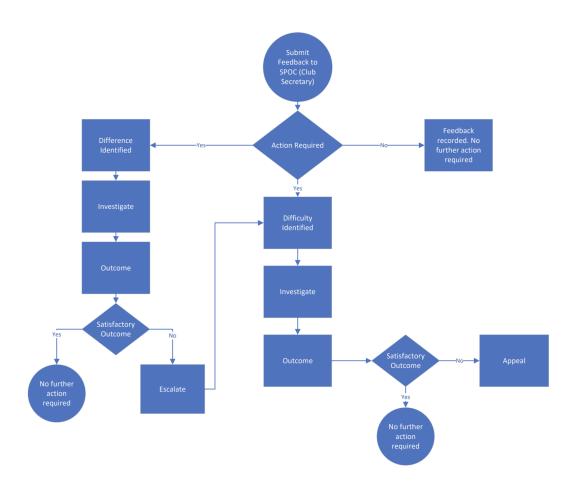
(<u>https://forms.gle/pmsXPYVWvw9Egz578</u>) or the form found at <u>Appendix 2 below</u>.

- 2.1.2. The "Let Us Know" form will be forwarded to the Club Membership Secretary in the first instance.
- 2.1.3. The Club Membership Secretary will nominate a committee member or volunteer to handle the concern/s.
- 2.1.4. If the matter of concern/s relates to any member of the Executive Committee of Wymondham Archers the Committee will assign an appropriate Club Member or Members' or Committee Members that are not implicated to the investigation to ensure impartiality.
- 2.1.5. In the event that the submission is a re-submission, the Membership Secretary Role, on receipt of the newly completed form, will inform the Chair who may delegate the escalation to another designated officer or panel if possible, allowing for paper-based or virtual hearings at the discretion of the designated officer.

# 3. Investigating Submitted Matters of Concern

- 3.1. On receipt of a matter of concern the Membership Secretary will assess whether the matter will be investigated under one of two methods: by utilising a Resolving Differences Approach, or the Investigating Difficulties Approach.
  - 3.1.1. Should the concerns involve the Chair or Membership Secretary Role, a full description should be emailed to the Vice Chair at <a href="mailto:vicechairwa@gmail.com">vicechairwa@gmail.com</a> or an alternative committee member that you can find on our website.
- 3.2. The flow chart below indicates the flow of information and control should a matter of concern be submitted to the Club. A Single Point of Contact (SPOC) (usually the Club Membership Secretary Role) will be the initiator of actions that follow on receipt of a matter of concern.

The following flow chart indicates how investigating matters of concern should be addressed.



- 3.3. If the matter of concern being raised, triggers any of the Safeguarding protocols adopted by ArcheryGB or Wymondham Archers the matter will be confidentially passed to the Club Safeguarding Officer, who will undertake the investigation.
- 3.4. All other matters of concern will be resolved under the Resolving Differences Approach unless there is
  - 3.4.1. An act of aggression towards another person by or towards a Wymondham Archers Member;
  - 3.4.2. A threat to or actual harm caused to another person by or towards a Wymondham Archers Member;
  - 3.4.3. A demonstrable loss of goods or damage to property (other than that described within the AGB Rules of Shooting) to a Wymondham Archers Members' property by a Club Member or damage has been caused by a Wymondham Archers Member to non members property;
  - 3.4.4. A matter that brings the Club or Archery into disrepute;
  - 3.4.5. Or, If there has been a matter of concern received from an external source to Wymondham Archers;

Under these circumstances the Investigating Difficulties Procedure will be used.

# 4. When Difference(s) are Identified

4.1. Following submission and consideration, as detailed in section 3, an investigator will be notified and provided with all information regarding the matter of concern.

# 4.2. Actions by Person(s) Appointed to Undertake an Investigation of Differences

- 4.2.1. The person(s) undertaking the investigation shall contact the initiator of the concern in the first instance to ascertain the facts and circumstances of the case.
- 4.2.2. Subsequently the investigator should contact the person or persons about which the matter of concern was raised.
- 4.2.3. The above actions should be undertaken within 21 days, where possible.

#### 4.3. Mediation and Discussions:

4.3.1. Once the facts have been ascertained sufficiently for an understanding of the situation to be made, both the complainant and the subject of the concern will be given the opportunity to present their perspectives in a meeting facilitated by appointed officers, with the option of involving

additional support persons where needed.

In cases where disputes persist, parties will continue to be encouraged to consider further mediation as a means of improving relationships and resolving conflicts amicably.

#### 4.4. Investigation where Mediation is not possible

4.4.1. Should mediation not be possible, the appointed officers should make every effort to assess the situation and undertake an investigation to obtain the facts prior to making a decision. Investigation guidance notes can be found at <a href="Appendix 1: Investigating Officer Guidance Notes">Appendix 1: Investigating Officer Guidance Notes</a>.

#### 4.5. Decision Making: Outcome(s)

If mediation was not possible, not utilised or where subsequently to mediation it transpires that mediation was not effective, the investigating officer will make a decision based on the findings of their preliminary investigation, either upholding or dismissing the concern, which is then communicated to the concerned parties through a personal call or face-to-face meeting.

4.5.1. Informal resolution of any investigation must include a written response to both parties, outlining the conclusion of the findings that may include one of three outcomes; of <u>no further action</u>; <u>a development plan</u> or a verbal warning. If the outcome appears to suit a more severe outcome the <u>Addressing Difficulties Approach</u>, should be adopted.

#### 4.5.2. No Further Action Required - Differences:

If no case or sufficient evidence is found, all investigation records are disposed of at the end of the process.

#### 4.5.3. Development Plan - Differences:

In case of a need for behaviour change, a development plan is created, listing required actions over 6-8 weeks. The plan is kept for a maximum of six months. A development plan may be utilised in addition to a verbal or written warning.

#### 4.5.4. Verbal Warning - Differences:

Issued for less serious situations, lasting for six months. After this period, the record is destroyed, and the incident cannot be used in the future.

4.5.5. Should either party not be satisfied with the outcome made, they may wish to use the <u>Escalation to Addressing Difficulties Approach</u>.

#### 4.6. Escalation to Addressing Difficulties Approach

- 4.6.1. Following a <u>Resolving Differences Approach</u>, the right to escalate is available to those who are in receipt of an <u>outcome</u>. This right allows the recipient to challenge the decision made during the investigation if they believe it to be unjust or incorrect.
- 4.6.2. An escalation will utilise the <u>Addressing Difficulties Approach</u>.
- 4.6.3. The escalation enables a review of the initial decision, providing an opportunity for the subject of the <u>outcome</u> to present their case and seek a reconsideration or reversal of the outcome. They may address their concerns through the <u>Address Difficulties Approach</u>.
- 4.6.4. The escalation process shall be undertaken by a newly appointed investigator.
- 4.6.5. The escalation must meet a timescale threshold and be lodged within 21 days of the Differences Outcome. The person(s) requesting the escalation should use the <u>Let Us Know Form</u>, detailed above. The form should contain the reasons why the person completing the form is dissatisfied with the outcome.

# 5. Addressing Difficulties Approach

5.1. This section is used for resolving behavioural or attitude-related issues among Club members or Volunteers following a complaint being made. It enables the addressing of complaints upheld against a member for any identified misconduct. It recognizes that personal or health-related factors might influence behaviour and aims to provide support accordingly. The procedure below encourages continuous communication and learning to promote awareness of rules and best practices. The aim is to find the best resolution. It also ensures reasonable adjustments for Club members with 'Protected Characteristics' or health issues should they be required.

#### 5.2. Addressing Difficulties Approach - Investigation

5.2.1. Used to investigate an escalation of the Resolving Differences Approach, any breaches of activity endangering the physical or psychological safety of Club members or Volunteers or any incident whereby the Membership and Admin team consider it necessary to do so.

#### 5.3. Investigation Protocol:

- 5.3.1. If the investigation has come about due to an escalation from the Resolving Differences Approach, the investigator will assess the correct application of the Resolving Differences Approach, as well as the fairness of the outcome, and any new evidence that may impact the case.
- 5.3.2. The investigation process will usually be overseen or led by the Chair who will undertake the investigation or assign appropriate officers to ensure impartiality and fairness.
- 5.3.3. Investigations for conflicts involving the Club Chair, will be overseen or led by the Vice Chair, a Committee member or designated Volunteer.
- 5.3.4. Efforts are made to resolve issues informally where possible.
- 5.3.5. The person/s (including either party) in question may be suspended during the investigation if deemed necessary in the interests of the person/s, the Club or both.
- 5.3.6. Where possible a meeting should be arranged with the person raising the matter of concern, to determine the facts. If this is not possible the investigator may wish to use the information already provided or another appropriate methodology, having respect for people's confidentiality and personal preferences.
- 5.3.7. Subsequently the subject of the matter of concern should also be met with, if possible. Again, if this is not possible the investigator may wish to use the information provided from alternate sources, utilising an alternate methodology, but having respect for people's confidentiality and personal preferences
- 5.3.8. Additional meetings with involved individuals might occur for further evidence or clarity.
- 5.3.9. All such meetings must be carried out in person, either online or face to face.
- 5.3.10. An appointed support person for the subject of the cause for concern and a note-taking companion for the investigator are allowed during meetings.
- 5.3.11. The investigating officer communicates the decision within 21 days, extendable by an additional 14 days if required.

- 5.3.12. If the investigation involves a committee member other than the Chair, the Committee will assign an appropriate officer/s to ensure impartiality and fairness.
- 5.3.13. The investigation process for conflicts involving the Club Chair, will be dealt with by the Vice Chair, or the Committee who will assign appropriate officers to ensure impartiality and fairness.

#### 5.4. Mediation and Discussions:

Both the complainant and the subject of the difficulty should, where appropriate, be given the opportunity to present their perspectives in a meeting facilitated by appointed officers, with the option of involving additional support persons where needed.

In cases where disputes persist, parties will continue to be encouraged to consider further mediation as a means of improving relationships and resolving conflicts amicably.

#### 5.5. Decision Making:

If mediation is not utilised, the investigating officer will make a decision on the outcome of the investigation based on the findings of their investigation, either upholding or dismissing the complaint. If the complaint is upheld the investigating officer will, in conjunction with support from the Committee, make a judgement on the outcome of the investigation. This outcome will then be communicated to the concerned parties through a personal call or face-to-face meeting.

5.5.1. Formal resolution of any investigation must include a written response to both parties, outlining the conclusion of the findings.

#### 5.6. Outcomes of an Investigation

5.6.1. Written reports must be prepared for outcomes of a Development Plan or more serious outcome. Written warnings will be stored for various periods of time dependent on the outcome type.

#### 5.6.2. No Further Action Required:

If no case or sufficient evidence is found, all investigation records are disposed of at the end of the process.

#### 5.6.3. Development Plan:

In case of a need for behaviour change, a development plan shall be created, listing required actions by the Club Member over 6-8 weeks or visits to the Club depending on which is the smaller. The plan may involve the Lead Coach for the Club. A development plan may be utilised in addition to a verbal or written warning. The detailed Development Plan will be provided in writing to the person receiving the outcome. Overseeing of the Club Member's behaviour may be assessed by observation or with the production of a Club Member's personal record.

#### 5.6.4. Verbal Warning:

- 5.6.5. Issued for serious situations, lasting for six months. However, a verbal warning will be kept on file for a period of a further 2 years. After this period, the record is destroyed, and the incident cannot be used in the future.
  - 5.6.5.1. Any subsequent outcome given to a Club Member who has already received a Verbal Warning or higher outcome; within the previous 2 years, shall have the outcome reviewed by a panel made up from a quorum of 60% of the committee. The quorum will make a decision based on the findings, taking into account previous behaviour. The decision of the outcome will be final and made by a majority.

#### 5.6.6. Written Warning:

- 5.6.7. Applied for more serious situations, the warning remains on record for 12 months before being destroyed. Whilst the record is destroyed it will not be expunged until a further 5 years has passed. The written warning may be used in further investigations where appropriate.
  - 5.6.7.1. Any subsequent outcome given to a Club Member who has already received a Written Warning outcome; within the previous 5 years, shall have the outcome reviewed by a panel made up from a quorum of 60% of the committee. The quorum will make a decision based on the findings, taking into account previous behaviour. The decision of the outcome will be final and made by a majority.

#### 5.6.8. Dismissal of Club Member or Volunteer:

5.6.8.1. Implemented when serious misconduct has been judged to have taken place, leading to immediate dismissal from the Club, with a permanent record kept in a confidential file. Such an outcome will

trigger reporting of the incident to the appropriate Archery Affiliating Body.

# 6. Examples of Serious Misconduct

This list is not exhaustive and is provided for example only.

- 6.1. Breach of safe shooting rules and guidelines
- 6.2. Inappropriate contact with a vulnerable person
- 6.3. Failure to comply with safety instructions from any Club member
- 6.4. Theft, fraud, or dishonesty
- 6.5. Physical violence or threatening behaviour
- 6.6. Use of archery equipment while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- 6.7. Falsification of records, including receipts
- 6.8. Breach of confidentiality, particularly concerning personal records
- 6.9. Willful or reckless damage to Wymondham Archers' property whether owned, hired or leased.
- 6.10. Unfair treatment based on gender, sexuality, race, disability, bullying, or harassment
- 6.11. Making or posting abusive, racist, transphobic, homophobic, inciteful, or hateful comments in public, including online platforms and social media
- 6.12. Comments that do not align with the values of Wymondham Archers or any of its Affiliating Bodies
- 6.13. Remarks made alongside references to Wymondham Archers Club Members, the sport of archery, Wymondham Archers as a Club, or its partners and volunteers
- 6.14. Behaviours undermining Wymondham Archers Club, local/regional associations, or any UK Archery Affiliating Body
- 6.15. Actions that could bring Wymondham Archers into disrepute

## 7. Referral to the UK Affiliating Body for Archery

7.1. Club members or Volunteers dismissed for serious misconduct, or those who resigned during an investigation that may have led to dismissal, will be referred to the appropriate UK Archery Affiliating Body. The Affiliating Body will consider whether to include the individual in a permanently excluded member list, preventing their future membership.

# 8. Addressing Difficulties Approach - Appeal

- 8.1.1. Club members or Volunteers may appeal within 21 days of receiving a Written Warning or being Dismissed from the Club.
- 8.1.2. The findings of the <u>Addressing Difficulties Approach</u> will remain in place during the appeal process.

- 8.1.3. The Chair will appoint an Appeals Panel, usually from existing Committee Members, but may also enable non-Committee members where they can bring a particular skill (AGB member, NAA Committee Member, Legal or Judiciary) to be part of the panel.
- 8.1.4. The Appeal Panel will review the case, ensuring adherence to the Address Difficulties Approach and that fairness has been shown.
- 8.1.5. The Appeals Panel can recommend reinvestigation in exceptional circumstances but does not guarantee reinstatement of a Member Dismissed from the Club.
- 8.1.6. The full Committee and those involved in the Appeals Panel will decide on any return, aided by the Local or Regional Association or Affiliating Body if needed.
- 8.1.7. The Appeal Panel will communicate its decision within 21 days, extendable by 14 days if necessary.
- 8.1.8. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

# Complaints From Non-Members towards Club Members Whether Within or Outside of Club Premises:

- 9.1. Non-members affected by Club Members or Club activities may raise a cause for concern in writing to the Membership Secretary Role within six months from the date of the incident.
  - 9.1.1. Any person wishing to express a cause for concern can do so using the <a href="Let Us Know Form"><u>Let Us Know Form</u></a> found on our website.
  - 9.1.2. The Membership Secretary Role will coordinate the investigation, with the support of the Committee, an adjacent Club, the Local or Regional Association; to ensure fairness.
  - 9.1.3. The Membership Secretary Role will determine the best approach within this procedure for dealing with the concern.
  - 9.1.4. The investigation will determine if the complaint is upheld or not, communicating the decision to the originator of the cause for concern within 21 days, extendable by 14 days if needed.

- 9.1.5. The investigation outcome may result in further investigation, remedial action, action from a local or regional association or referral to the National Affiliating Body, where necessary.
  - 9.1.5.1. The originating person will be informed of the outcome in writing no more than 14 days following the outcome decision.
- 9.1.6. Unsatisfied persons can appeal within 21 days, with the Appeal Panel who will review the procedure adherence and fairness, to decide on whether good practice was followed or to invoke a potential reinvestigation.
- 9.1.7. The final decision of the Appeals Panel is shared with the person raising the cause for concern and may include recommendations for change.
- 9.1.8. Persistent non-compliance with Club procedures may result in any individual, or group of individuals or the Club being reported to the National Affiliating Body for Archery.

# 10. Vexatious or Persistent Complainants

10.1. From time to time a Club may be subject to Vexatious or Persistent Complainants. This section outlines how Wymondham Archers may deal with such complaints and complainants.

#### 10.2. What are vexatious or persistent complaints

- 10.2.1. Determining what constitutes vexatious or persistent complaints is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the complaint-handling processes. The Club will investigate such complaints using this process. Below highlights key criteria that can help in identifying such complaints:
- Frequency of Complaints: If a complainant repeatedly submits similar or related complaints, even after they have been addressed and resolved, it may indicate persistent behaviour.
- Lack of Merit or Substance: Complaints that lack reasonable grounds, evidence, or relevant information to support their claims can be considered vexatious.
- Intent to Harass or Annoy: A complaint pursued with the sole intention of causing annoyance, harassment, or disruption without valid reasons can be classified as vexatious.
- Refusal to Specify Grounds: When a complainant consistently refuses to specify the grounds or basis of their complaint despite assistance or requests for clarification, it may suggest a vexatious approach.

- Unreasonable Nature of Complaints: Complaints that are clearly unreasonable, irrational, or beyond the scope of the Club's responsibilities may be categorised as vexatious.
- Inappropriate Conduct: If the manner in which the complaint is raised involves abusive language, threats, or any form of inappropriate conduct, it may be deemed a persistent or vexatious complaint.
- Disruption of Normal Operations: Complaints that significantly disrupt the regular functioning of the Club, leading to a considerable diversion of resources and time, can be considered vexatious.

By considering these factors, Wymondham Archers can effectively distinguish genuine complaints from those that are vexatious or persistent, allowing them to handle each case appropriately and ensure a fair and just resolution process.

#### 10.3. Handling Vexatious or Persistent Complaints - Process

10.4. In order to handle Vexatious or Persistent complaints Wymondham Archers should adopt the following.

#### 10.4.1. Appoint a Dedicated Contact Person:

Wymondham Archers will designate a specific Club official, preferably a committee member, as the primary point of contact for handling complaints of this nature. This individual will be well-versed in the Club's policies and procedures.

#### 10.4.2. Clarify Communication Channels:

Ensure that all persistent or vexatious complaints are submitted in writing to the designated Club official. The Club should establish clear communication channels by providing a dedicated email address or a physical mailbox for receiving such complaints.

#### 10.4.3. Thorough Investigation Protocol:

Regardless of previous complaints from an individual, the Club will implement a protocol for a fair and impartial process to deal with each complaint and maintain comprehensive records of all communications and actions taken during the investigation process.

#### 10.4.4. Issue Warnings as Necessary:

If a member's behaviour is deemed vexatious or persistent, the Club may issue a formal warning that clearly outlines the unacceptable behaviour and potential consequences if the behaviour continues.

#### 10.4.5. Restrict Communication:

If warnings do not yield results and the behaviour persists, the Club will consider limiting communication to written correspondence only. This will help maintain professionalism and minimise potential conflicts.

#### 10.4.6. Seek Legal or Affiliating Body Advice if Required:

If the situation becomes legally complex, the Club will seek legal or affiliating body advice to ensure that the Club is following all necessary protocols and is not inadvertently violating any regulations or laws.

#### 10.4.7. Regular Policy Review:

The Club will regularly review policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing the concerns of vexatious or persistent complainants and incorporate any necessary updates or changes to improve the handling of such cases.

By following this procedure, Wymondham Archers Club can effectively manage and address issues stemming from vexatious or persistent complainants while maintaining the integrity of the Club's operations and values.

# Appendix 1: Investigating Officer Guidance Notes

#### Purpose and Overview of Investigation:

To ensure that all parties have sufficient time to understand the facts and conduct a thorough investigation, the following would be prudent to undertake.

- Conduct a fair fact-finding exercise to determine what happened objectively.
- Present all allegations against Club members clearly.
- Collect evidence and confirm facts.
- Give the Club member or Volunteer a chance to explain and provide supporting evidence.
- Meet with other relevant Club members or Volunteers involved in the case.
- Review all evidence.
- Make a decision on whether there is a case and the appropriate course of action.
- Write a report.

#### Preparation for Investigation:

- Obtain a copy of the procedure and the Volunteer Addressing Differences and Difficulties form (<u>Let Us Know</u> - form).
- Gather other relevant supporting documentation and written statements.
- Familiarise yourself with the materials and decide on relevant people to meet, including the Club member concerned.

#### Investigating Interview:

- Attempt mediation where possible by enabling both parties to meet together with supporting people on both sides.
- Present allegations and concerns clearly.
- Stick to the facts and avoid assumptions.
- Question any discrepancies.
- Challenge the Club member or Volunteer when necessary.
- Remain impartial and avoid passing judgement.
- Ensure a comprehensive understanding of the situation.
- Be prepared for adjournments to re-interview witnesses.

#### **Decision Making:**

- Gather all evidence and make a decision.
- Consider the Potential Outcomes of Investigation.
- Approach the Club member or Volunteer under investigation appropriately.
- Inform the decision to the Club member face-to-face or through a personal call within the set guidelines.

• Write a report where necessary, keeping this secure.

The above will need to be completed within the timescales highlighted above in the <u>Addressing Difficulties Approach and Differences section</u>.

Appendix 2: Let Us	Know <u>Form</u>	Tick where appropriate.
I would like to let you know how well Wymondham Archers are doing.		Check box
I am a member of Wymondham Archers and want to inform you of a cause for concern about another member or circumstance.		Check box
I am not a member of Wymondham Ard inform you of a cause for concern about Archers member or circumstance.		Check box
How do you feel about your observations remaining confidential?  We will keep your details confidential, should you indicate that you would like this.	Use my details considerately in completion of the investigation.	Check box
But, if information is shared with us that we consider triggers our safeguarding protocols we will be notifying any relevant people with regard to protecting children and vulnerable adults.	I would like my details to remain confidential to other Club Members.	Check box
Please pass on my comments.		Check box
First Name:		
Family or Surname:		
Contact Telephone Number:		
Email Address:		

Please Let Us Know the Details below.
When did, or when does, what you are telling us about, happen?
Use a separate sheet if required.

Please let us know what you know about what happened and how you feel about it.
Use a separate sheet if required.

Were other people with you, who were they?
Use a separate sheet if required.

If others were involved did you speak with them to let them know how you felt at the time?
Use a separate sheet if required.

What would you like to see happen now?
Use a separate sheet if required.
Date
Signed:
Name: (Print)