

## GRIEVANCE POLICY

### Introduction

We aim to create a culture where all team members are treated fairly and with respect to establish great working relationships and to ensure all team members are working within a safe and fulfilling working environment. We recognise, however, that at times you may wish to raise a concern or grievance relating to your employment or the way in which you feel you have been treated.

The purpose of this policy is to provide you with the information you need, if you want to highlight and express problems or concerns, so that they may be resolved.

### What is covered?

This policy details the options available to you, and the process that will be followed, to help resolve any concerns that you raise. Covered below are right to be accompanied, grievance meetings and appeals.

### Who is the policy for?

This policy applies to all team members. This policy does not cover self-employed, contractor or agency workers. This policy does not form part of your terms and conditions of employment, and we reserve the right to amend this policy at any time. We reserve the right to adapt and amend the procedure according to the circumstances of the grievance raised.

We have separate policies on Diversity and Inclusion and Bullying and Harassment which you should consult if you wish to raise a concern relating to those issues.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about any actual or proposed disciplinary action or dismissal. Any concerns that you have about these should be dealt with by appealing through the Disciplinary Procedure.

**Note:** *If you have a disability or otherwise require further support as part of this process for example if you have difficulties understanding English, you should discuss this with your Manager as soon as possible.*

### The Informal approach

If you are unhappy about the way you have been treated, or have a concern regarding your working environment, you should speak to your Manager in the first instance. If you cannot speak to your immediate Manager for any reason (such as because your concern involves your Manager), then please speak to their Manager or contact the Human Resources representative.

Many concerns at work can be resolved informally, and we would encourage this method of resolution first, before making your grievance formal. The Manager's aim is to help resolve your concerns at the earliest opportunity by discussing the issues with you and identifying the most appropriate way forward. Your Manager may be able to support you informally by:

- Answering your questions
- Helping you understand how a policy, our standards, or a process works
- Helping you consider how to resolve the issue
- Providing an alternative view
- Conducting a resolution meeting between you and the team member you have a concern about. The resolution meeting should take place in a private area and is an opportunity to talk to the other person concerned honestly and respectfully in the presence of your Manager or an impartial third party such as

Human Resources. All parties need to be polite and can suggest positive solutions. A summary of the discussion may be put in your file, following the discussion, outlining any agreements made to address the issue. If this approach does not resolve the concerns, they will be escalated to the formal process.

- Solving the problem

All of this can be achieved on an entirely informal basis and this approach often brings a quicker solution than the formal process for resolving concerns. Should you feel unsure on when you can raise your concerns, please remember that you can speak to your Manager when you have a one-to-one meeting or ask to have a meeting.

In some cases, we may not follow a formal process until an informal approach has been explored. To determine an appropriate solution, we may ask you what informal steps you have taken to try and resolve your concern(s).

## The Formal approach

Where attempts to resolve the matter informally do not work, or the issue is of a serious nature, it may be appropriate to raise a formal grievance in writing to your Manager. To raise a formal grievance this must be done in writing, by letter or email with as much detail as possible to an appropriate Manager, to enable them to fully understand your concerns. If your immediate Manager is not available or your concerns are regarding them, then address your correspondence to a more senior Manager or a member of our Human Resources team.

You should confirm in the document that you are raising a grievance under this policy and wish for it to be addressed formally. You should provide any documents that you want to be considered in resolving your grievance. It is preferable if these documents are included at the same time as your grievance.

As the purpose of your grievance is to resolve your concerns, you should include what you would like the outcome of the grievance to be. The clearer you are about your preferred resolution, the easier it may be for us to provide suitable outcomes or recommendations.

**Please note**, that whilst we will consider your preferred outcome, it may not be the outcome decided upon based on the evidence collated throughout the process.

## How we carry out a Grievance meeting

Once your grievance is received, it will be heard by an impartial Manager (e.g., a neutral party that has no other involvement in the matter being investigated) this could be your Manager or another Manager.

The Manager will invite you to a grievance meeting, usually within seven calendar days, to discuss your concerns. At, or before, the grievance meeting you should notify the Company of any witnesses you think should be spoken to or any documents or information that should be looked at to support the Manager in reaching a decision on your grievance.

You will receive a letter with at least 24 hours' notice of the grievance meeting and the letter will inform you:

- Where and when the meeting will take place
- The name of the person conducting the grievance meeting
- The name of the notetaker
- Your right to be accompanied (see below)

During the grievance meeting, you will have the opportunity to talk about your concerns and how you would like them to be resolved. The investigating Manager will ask you questions to form a clear understanding of the situation and to establish the facts and will focus on issues that are relevant and recent.

During the grievance meeting you can:

- Ask questions
- Ask for specific team members to be spoken too
- Suggest for any other relevant evidence to be reviewed
- Ask for an adjournment to the meeting at any time, for example if you need to discuss a matter with your representative, clarify an issue or seek further advice.

At the end of your grievance meeting, the Manager will investigate what you have told them. which will usually involve speaking to any witnesses you have named and refer to any relevant documents. They may need to speak to you again and if so, a further meeting will be arranged. All grievances will be thoroughly investigated within a timely manner. We may adjourn the meeting if we need to carry out further investigations, after which the meeting will usually be reconvened.

We ask that you co-operate fully and promptly with any investigation and make every effort to attend the grievance meeting. If you fail to attend your grievance meeting without an acceptable reason, we may have to proceed with the meeting in your absence and make a decision using the information collated.

## Your right to be accompanied

At your grievance meeting you are entitled to be accompanied by an impartial team member or an official Trade Union representative (e.g., a neutral party that has no other involvement in the matter being investigated). You are not entitled to be accompanied by a legal representative or family members.

We may at our discretion allow team members that are under the age of 18 years old, or those with a disability or who have difficulty understanding English to be accompanied by, for example, a parent, guardian carer or support worker providing they are not a team member involved in the matter being investigated.

If you wish to be accompanied, you should tell the Manager conducting your meeting as soon as possible who you want to accompany you. It is your responsibility to arrange for your chosen representative to attend the meeting. If your preferred representative is not available at the time of the meeting and will not be available for more than five working days afterwards you will need to try and arrange a different representative. We may re-schedule the meeting should your representative's absence from their role cause operational problems.

Your team member or trade union representative can, if this is your preference, explain the key points of your case to the meeting and can respond to views expressed during the meeting on your behalf. You can also confer with them during the meetings. They must not however answer questions put directly to you or try to prevent the Company asking questions or outlining its arguments.

## Recording meetings

A notetaker will be present to capture notes of the grievance meeting and any appeal required. These notes will not be verbatim but will represent a true reflection of what was discussed in the meeting. You will be given the opportunity to read and comment on these notes and will be asked to sign to signify agreement. Where this is not practicable, for example the meeting was held remotely, you will be asked to confirm agreement via email. The notetaker may be the same person throughout the process, as they play no part in any decision making.

We do not allow any meetings to be recorded using any form of an electronic device.

## Confidentiality

We always take confidentiality very seriously and expect all those involved in a grievance process to uphold this. This included you not sharing items with others while your concerns are being addressed.

## What are the possible outcomes of a formal grievance?

The investigating Manager will decide on the appropriate course of action. This could mean:

- Upholding – they have formed a reasonable belief that the evidence supports your allegation(s) and will take steps to resolve the situation
- Not upholding – they have formed a reasonable belief that the evidence does not support your allegation(s)
- Partially upholding – they have formed a reasonable belief that the evidence supports some of the parts of your allegation(s) but not all and will take steps to resolve relevant parts

You will receive a letter which will include the findings of the investigating Manager and their conclusion as well as your right to appeal. Whether your grievance has been handled informally or formally, the Manager will consider the most appropriate option(s) available when considering how to resolve the situation for you.

These options include but are not limited to:

- An explanation for you as to why certain decisions have been made, to provide you with a better understanding of working practices etc.
- An informal resolution meeting between you and the team member you raised a concern about. This means talking to the other person concerned honestly and respectfully. and all parties need to be polite and can suggest positive solutions.
- Re-training/coaching for you or someone else

Disciplinary action for the team member you had concerns about (this outcome would be confidential).

## Your right to appeal

You have the right to appeal against your formal grievance outcome and you can do so in writing, within 7 calendar days of receiving your outcome letter. This must include the reason(s) for your appeal, please provide as much detail as possible together with any supporting evidence.

You will be invited by letter to an appeal meeting and where possible, this will be within 14 calendar days from receipt of the appeal letter. If you fail to attend without a proper excuse, we may have to proceed with the meeting in your absence and make a decision using the information already collated. The conduct of the appeal shall be a matter for the appeal manager who may call such witnesses and consider any documents as appropriate. The appeal manager may also adjourn the appeal to conduct any further enquiries that are necessary.

The appeal meeting will be held by a different, impartial Manager, at a higher level, where practical, than the Manager who heard the grievance and who has not been involved in the case. This Manager is authorised by the Company to make a different decision from the initial outcome. The outcome of your appeal will be provided to you in writing, where possible this will be within 7 calendar days of your meeting. This is the final stage of the process, and the appeal outcome is final.

## Collective Grievances

If you have an identical grievance to other team members and raise this together, we will decide on a sensible way of dealing with the collective grievance with all team members agreement. This means that the grievance will then only need to be put in writing once and can be addressed as one grievance meeting. In this instance you will need to agree for one person to represent the collective group.

Each team member's name should be listed on the grievance letter, and we will notify the outcome to each team member. A grievance with many people to interview may take longer, however, we will aim to resolve this within a reasonable timeframe and will keep you updated of any timescales.

## Grievances raised about the same concerns

If a grievance is submitted about something that has already been investigated and responded to, we may not re-investigate unless new issues are raised, new evidence provided, or the original issue continues.

## Record keeping

Records will be kept of the grievance raised, your outcome, any action taken and the reason for the action taken. These records are confidential and will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

## Some additional questions you may have:

### Can I be disciplined for raising a grievance?

Normally the act of raising a grievance would not result in any adverse action being taken. However, should our investigation lead us to believe that you acted maliciously and/or raised a false complaint, it may be necessary for us to commence disciplinary action against you.

### Can I raise a grievance on behalf of another Team Member?

You cannot raise a grievance on behalf of someone else, however you may raise any such concerns with your Manager or Human Resources. If you are aware someone you work with has a concern, please encourage them to come forward themselves.

### Can I raise a grievance about a disciplinary process?

Any issues raised during a disciplinary process, regarding the investigation or any matters linked, will either be considered during the disciplinary meeting itself, or at an appeal meeting. If you are dissatisfied with any disciplinary investigation, or disciplinary action you should raise the issue at your next meeting related to the disciplinary proceedings or submit an appeal under the appropriate process.

### Can I 'Whistle blow' using the grievance process?

For more details about Whistleblowing, please refer to our Whistleblowing Policy available from your Manager. However, where you are directly affected by the matter in question, or where you feel you have been victimised for an act of whistleblowing, you may raise the matter under this policy.

### Can I raise a grievance if I have left the Company?

We would rather you told us about your concerns before you leave, as then we have the opportunity to resolve them for you. If you choose to write to us after you have left, we will review your concerns. If we decide to investigate your concerns, please be aware the outcome will be final, and you will have no right of appeal.

## If you have any questions

If you have any questions regarding this process, please speak to your Manager or Human Resources.