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# Grievance policy

**June 2025**

## Executive Summary

The council fosters a culture in which any workplace problems, complaints or concerns can be raised within a supportive framework, and we will ensure that all genuine grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly. Most grievances can be resolved informally. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, the formal grievance process can be followed. This policy sets out the council's approach to resolving both informal and formal grievances. The policy outlines the grievance process, the roles of those involved and support available.



# When would I use this policy?

This policy should be referenced when:

- You have a concern, problem or complaint at work, for example:
  - things you are being asked to do as part of your job
  - terms and conditions of your employment
  - the way you're being treated at work
  - discrimination at work
- You are a manager and one of your team has raised an informal or formal grievance.
- You have been asked by HR to hear a formal grievance as a Hearing Manager.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We foster a culture in which you can raise any workplace problems, complaints or concerns in a supportive framework, and we will ensure that all genuine grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly.
- 1.2 Most grievances can be resolved informally. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, you may choose to raise a formal grievance.
- 1.3 This policy outlines the grievance process, the roles of those involved and support that is available to you.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.
- 1.5 This policy has been developed in accordance with the ACAS Code of Practice on Grievances and in consultation with Unison.

## 2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees except for Chief Officer level or any other nominated statutory posts. For these postholders, the principle will apply, however reference should be made to the separate nationally agreed terms and conditions of employment for policy and procedural guidelines. This policy does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.
- 2.2 If your complaint relates to bullying or harassment, you should raise it under the separate Bullying and Harassment policy.

- 2.3 Issues that are the subject of collective negotiation or consultation with the trade union will not be considered under this policy.
- 2.4 If you have a grievance that relates to ongoing disciplinary proceedings against you, you should raise this during the disciplinary procedure (for example during the disciplinary meeting or appeal stage).
- 2.5 If you raise a grievance during disciplinary proceedings that is unrelated to those proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance procedure will normally run independently in parallel.
- 2.6 This procedure cannot be used as a way to appeal an outcome from another policy; in those cases the appeal process should be followed.
- 2.7 Grievances raised about the same issue by two or more employees (or by a union representative on their behalf) will follow this policy but will usually be dealt with collectively. See section 9 for more details.
- 2.8 Wherever possible a grievance should be dealt with before an employee leaves the council's employment. Grievances raised after employment ends will not be dealt with in line with the council's formal grievance policy.
- 2.9 Where an employee raises a concern as a 'protected disclosure' in compliance with the public interest disclosure provisions of the 1998 Act, the matter will normally be dealt with under the council's Whistleblowing policy.
- 2.10 The Council recognises the right of employees to raise grievances relating to their employment. However, if an employee continues to raise grievances which appear to be repetitive and unfounded, this may be regarded as vexatious and could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.
- 2.11 A flowchart outlining the informal and formal grievance process can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.0 General Principles**

- 3.1 At any stage of the procedure, where specified people are designated to hear the grievance, appropriate substitutes may be used in cases of non-availability or where otherwise considered appropriate.
- 3.2 Where timescales are specified in the procedure, these may be varied on account of unavoidable circumstances – for example the need of the manager hearing the grievance to carry out further investigations - or by mutual consent.
- 3.3 At any stage of the procedure, the manager hearing the grievance will have the right to determine who they require to be present in order to gather the

information they need to make a decision. The aggrieved employee will be notified in advance who will be in attendance and in what capacity.

- 3.4 Where an employee has a disability, concern or a specific support need which makes any part of procedure more difficult the HR Officer should be advised so that additional support may be considered.
- 3.5 If it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that all those participating have access to the necessary technology. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.
- 3.6 A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made, either by the person holding the meeting or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes. We may use electronic support to support the note taker, for example using Teams to transcribe the meeting or recording the meeting for the note taker's reference. Where we intend to record meetings, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.
- 3.7 The aggrieved employee or any person acting on their behalf, are not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting held under the grievance procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal. In certain limited circumstances, we may permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording. Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

## **4.0 Mediation**

- 4.1 Depending on the nature of your grievance, we may suggest mediation as a means of trying to resolve it. This involves the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss your grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. We will use mediation only where you, and the other parties involved in your grievance, agree to do so.

## **5.0 Fairness and respect**

- 5.1 We recognise that a grievance procedure can be stressful and upsetting. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect. We will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in a grievance procedure and will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under our disciplinary procedure.

## **6.0 Confidentiality**

- 6.1 All parties involved in a grievance must respect confidentiality, this includes any witnesses interviewed as part of the investigation. Any records will be kept securely and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **7.0 Support**

- 7.1 Support for all parties involved in a grievance is available through the employee assistance programme (EAP). Further details can be found on the [intranet](#).

## **8.0 Raising an informal grievance**

- 8.1 In the first instance, you should raise any grievance that you may have informally with your line manager. If your grievance is about your line manager, you should raise this with your Senior Manager/Director or the HR & OD Service Manager.
- 8.2 The relevant manager will meet with you to give you the opportunity to explain your grievance and seek to identify whether the issue can be resolved informally. Many concerns can be resolved informally. It is advisable for managers to keep a written note on the nature of the grievance, what was decided/actions taken and the reasons for the actions.
- 8.3 While we encourage the informal resolution of complaints, we recognise that this is not always possible or appropriate, for example if your grievance relates to an issue such as discrimination. Therefore, if the informal process does not resolve matters or is not appropriate, you should raise a formal grievance under this procedure. If it is decided after initial investigation that a grievance has been incorrectly raised as a formal grievance when it could be resolved informally, the HR team reserves the right to ask you to try and resolve it informally in the first instance.

## **9.0 Raising a formal grievance**

- 9.1 Where your grievance has not been resolved informally, or if your grievance is serious in nature, you should raise the matter formally in writing.
- 9.2 It is important that you set out clearly the nature of your grievance and indicate the outcome that you are seeking. If your grievance is unclear, we may ask you to clarify your complaint before we hold a grievance meeting.
- 9.3 You should complete the grievance form found on the [intranet](#) and send it to your HR Officer.
- 9.4 **Stage 1 – Investigation**

- 9.4.1 HR will allocate an appropriate manager (the Hearing Manager) who has not been involved in the case so far and has the appropriate skills and knowledge to hear your grievance.
- 9.4.2 Your grievance will be kept confidential as far as possible. However, before proceeding to a grievance meeting, we may have to carry out an investigation. This will usually be conducted by the same manager who will hear your grievance. The relevant manager will write to you confirming that they are conducting the investigation and the timescale for completion.
- 9.4.3 You will be given a copy of any evidence collated during the investigation in advance of the grievance meeting. However, in some cases, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, we will provide you with an appropriate summary of the evidence.

## **9.5 Stage 2 - Hearing your grievance**

- 9.5.1 The grievance meeting will be held within 10 working days of receiving your written complaint. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay and provided with a revised estimated timeline.
- 9.5.2 You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative.
- 9.5.3 HR will provide support and guidance at the meeting to ensure the process is followed appropriately.
- 9.5.4 At least 3 working days prior to the meeting, all documents/ evidence and names of witnesses should be exchanged. The Hearing Manager will determine whether it is appropriate for witnesses to be called.
- 9.5.5 The purpose of the meeting is for you to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel should be taken to resolve the matter. If more information comes to light, it may be necessary to adjourn the grievance meeting to conduct a further investigation and reconvene the meeting when this has been done.
- 9.5.6 If you are unable to attend the grievance meeting because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the manager conducting the meeting as soon as possible. If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the grievance meeting may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other documentation available.
- 9.5.7 If your chosen companion is not be available at the time proposed, we will postpone the hearing to a time proposed by you, provided that the alternative

time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

9.5.8 Following the meeting, the Hearing Manager will inform you in writing, usually within 5 working days after the meeting, of the outcome and any action that will be taken as a result of your complaint. Any other parties involved in the grievance will also be appropriately informed of the outcome.

9.5.9 The Hearing Manager may consider postponing the decision to give more time for deliberation/clarifications however this must be done without unreasonable delay. An estimated timescale for resolution should be communicated to all parties. If it is necessary to clarify any of the evidence presented, including recalling witnesses, all parties will be recalled, even if the point of clarification only concerns one party.

## **9.6 Stage 3 – Appeal**

9.6.1 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your grievance, you may submit a formal appeal.

9.6.2 The appeal should be submitted to the HR & OD Service Manager using the Appeal Submission form, stating your grounds of appeal and the resolution sought. The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.

9.6.3 The appeal will be held in accordance with the Council's Appeals Policy.

## **10.0 Collective grievances**

10.1 If you and another employee (or more than two of you) have identical grievances and you all wish to have it addressed in one grievance process, you can raise a collective grievance.

10.2 If you are raising a collective grievance, the requirements set out in this policy are varied as follows:

### **10.3 Raising a formal grievance**

10.3.1 You must make it clear on the grievance form that it is a collective grievance. The complaint must be submitted on one form and must clearly identify each employee raising the collective grievance. You and your colleagues will need to nominate one of you to act on behalf of all of you throughout the grievance process. Your grievance form must identify whom you have appointed to be the nominated representative.

10.3.2 If you and your colleagues are all members of the same trade union, your trade union representative may raise the collective grievance on your behalf.

## **10.4 Stage 2 - Hearing your grievance**

10.4.1 If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative. Following the meeting, there will be one identical outcome. Your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing and any action that will be taken as a result of your collective complaint.

## **10.5 Stage 3 – Appeal**

10.5.1 If you, or any of your colleagues, are not satisfied with the outcome of your collective grievance, you may submit a formal appeal. The appeal should be submitted to the HR & OD Service Manager using the Appeal Submission form, stating your grounds of appeal and the resolution sought. The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.

10.5.2 Your appeal must be submitted in one document and must clearly identify those withdrawing from the process and those wishing to appeal. You must also identify whom you have appointed to be the nominated representative throughout the appeal stage.

10.5.3 If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance appeal meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative. Following the appeal meeting, there will be one identical outcome. Your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing. The outcome of the collective appeal is final.

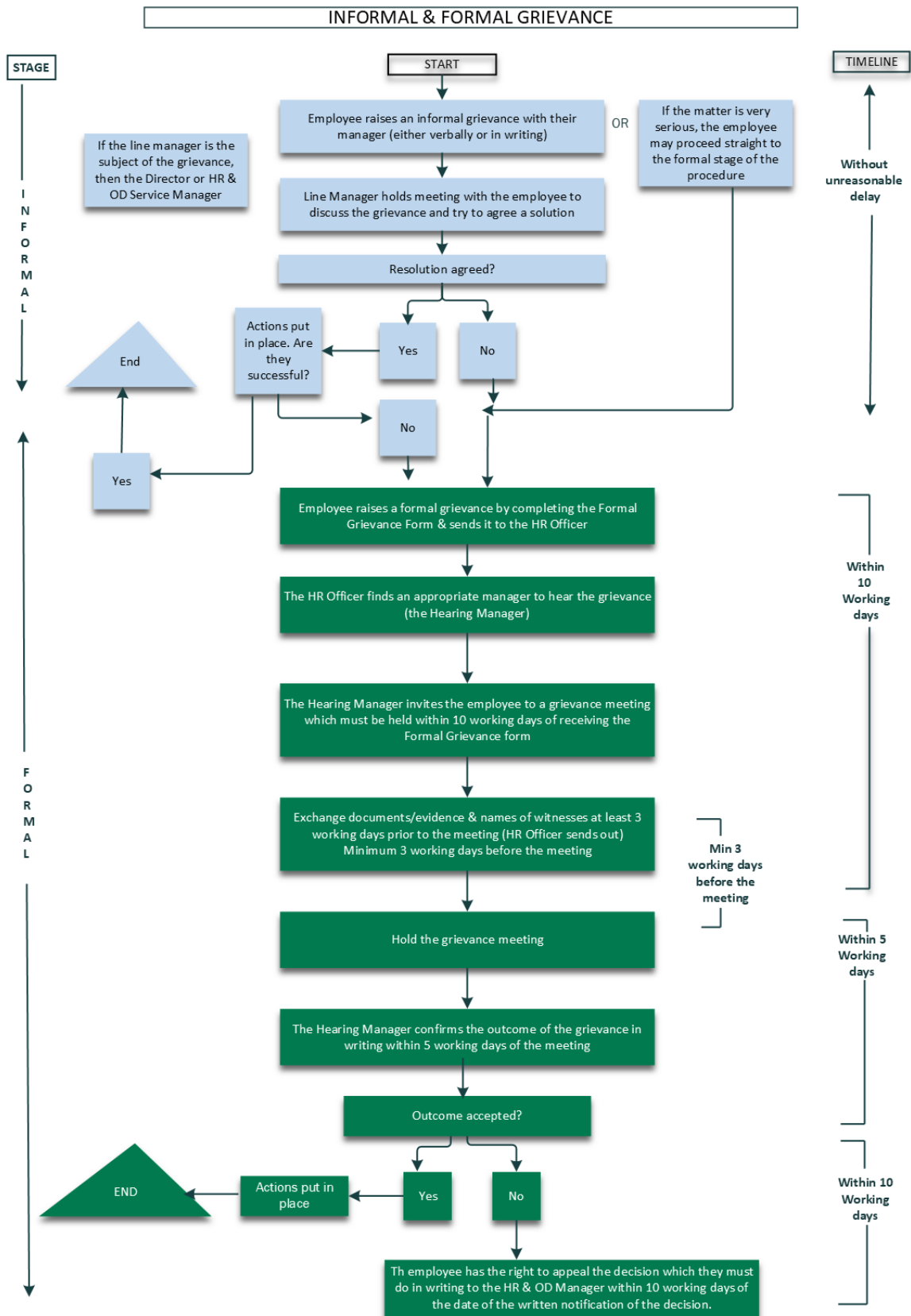
10.5.4 If only one employee wishes to appeal, the normal appeals process will apply.

## **10.6 Dealing with your grievances individually**

10.6.1 We reserve the right to hear your grievances individually if you do not all voluntarily agree to the collective grievance process, if your grievances are not identical, or there are exceptional circumstances.



# Appendix 1: Grievance process flowchart



## **Appendix 2: Change log**

2025 Policy issued.