Grievance Policy

Applies to	All employees
Policy owner	HR Manager
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A grievance is any concern, complaint or problem you have in connection with your employment. We want you to feel comfortable raising issues with us, and we are committed to dealing with all grievances fairly, promptly and consistently.

This policy sets out the process for raising a grievance - informally in the first instance, and formally if the matter cannot be resolved that way. It applies to matters relating to your employment only. If you have a concern in a different capacity - for example, as a customer - a separate process applies.

Please read this policy alongside our Harassment and Bullying Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, all of which may be relevant depending on the nature of your concern.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend it.

1. Our commitments to you

When we receive a formal grievance, we will:

- investigate it fully and fairly
- act promptly and without unreasonable delay
- keep you informed of progress throughout
- treat the matter in confidence, as far as possible
- not treat you less favourably for having raised a grievance
- be mindful of the impact of the process on your wellbeing and offer appropriate support

If your grievance relates wholly or partly to a potential whistleblowing matter, we may handle it under our Whistleblowing Policy instead.

2. Stage 1 - Informal resolution

Before using the formal procedure, we ask that you first try to resolve the matter informally by speaking to your line manager. In our experience, most grievances can be resolved this way - quickly and without the need for a formal process.

You do not need to put anything in writing at this stage. A conversation is usually enough.

If your grievance involves your line manager, or you have good reason not to approach them, speak instead to their manager or to the HR Manager.

If informal steps do not resolve the matter, or if the nature of your grievance means informal resolution is not appropriate, you can move to the formal procedure.

3. Stage 2 - Formal grievance

Submitting your grievance

Put your grievance in writing and send it to your line manager, or to the HR Manager if your line manager is involved in the grievance. Your written grievance should include:

- a clear description of your complaint, with as much specific detail as possible
- relevant dates and the names of any individuals involved

- any evidence you want us to consider
- a description of any informal steps you have already taken
- what outcome you are hoping for - this is important, because if we do not know what you want, we cannot help you achieve it

We will acknowledge receipt of your grievance promptly in writing.

Investigation

We will appoint someone to investigate your grievance who has, wherever possible, had no prior involvement in the matter. The investigation may include reviewing relevant documents, interviewing you and others who can provide relevant information, and considering any evidence you have submitted. We ask you to cooperate fully with the investigation.

The grievance meeting

We will invite you to a meeting to discuss your grievance without unreasonable delay. This is your opportunity to explain your complaint fully and tell us what outcome you are seeking. Please make every effort to attend.

You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a colleague or trade union representative. Please let us know in advance who you plan to bring. See section 6 for full details of your right to be accompanied.

We may need to meet with you more than once as the investigation develops. After the final meeting, we will write to you with our decision, usually within five working days. In complex cases, or if more time is needed to complete the investigation, we will keep you informed of the likely timescale.

Recording of meetings

We will not record grievance meetings without telling you. You are welcome to make your own recording, but please let us know in advance that you intend to do so.

Confidentiality and the outcome

We will tell you our decision and what, if any, steps we intend to take as a result. There may be occasions where we cannot share all the details of what we are doing - usually because another person involved has a right to confidentiality that must be weighed against your right to be informed. We will tell you if that is the case and explain why, as far as we are able to.

4. Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are not satisfied with our decision, you have the right to appeal. Your appeal must be submitted in writing within five working days of receiving our decision letter. Your appeal should explain clearly why you are appealing and include any new information or evidence you want us to consider.

We will appoint someone to hear your appeal who was not involved in the original grievance process, wherever possible. We will invite you to an appeal meeting, usually within 10 working days of receiving your appeal.

You may again bring a colleague or trade union representative.

We will write to you with our final decision, normally within 10 working days of the appeal meeting. There is no further right of appeal beyond this point.

5. Mediation

Depending on the nature of your grievance, we may suggest mediation as a way of resolving the matter. Mediation involves an independent, impartial person working with both sides to find a solution that works for everyone. It can be particularly effective in disputes between colleagues.

Mediation is not something we can require - it works only if everyone involved agrees to it. If it is offered, we will explain how it would work in your situation. Agreeing to mediation does not affect your right to use the formal grievance procedure if mediation does not resolve the matter.

6. Your right to be accompanied

You have the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to any formal grievance or appeal meeting. Please let us know in advance who you plan to bring - it is your responsibility to arrange their attendance.

For the avoidance of doubt, your right to be accompanied does not extend to legal representatives or family members.

If you choose a colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may need to rearrange the meeting if their absence from their own duties would cause operational difficulties.

Your companion can help you explain your case and respond on your behalf. You can confer with them during the meeting. They may not, however, answer questions put directly to you or prevent us from asking questions or putting our own views across.

7. Group grievances

If a number of employees wish to raise substantially the same grievance, we will treat it as a group grievance and follow the same process as for an individual grievance. We may agree with the group to appoint a representative to act on everyone's behalf, which often makes the process more straightforward.

8. Grievances raised during a disciplinary or performance management process

If you raise a grievance while a disciplinary or performance management process is already underway, we will consider the most appropriate way to handle both matters. Depending on the circumstances, we may:

- pause the existing process while we investigate the grievance
- deal with both matters at the same time, as part of the same overall process
- run both processes concurrently but independently

Our aim is to deal with both matters as fairly and promptly as possible, without one unduly delaying the other. We will tell you which approach we are taking and why.

9. Temporary changes during the grievance process

In most cases, the investigation will take place while you continue in your normal role and working environment. However, there will occasionally be situations where it is appropriate to make temporary changes - for example, to avoid contact between parties involved in the grievance while the investigation is ongoing. Any such change will be temporary and we will act reasonably and treat you fairly in making it.

10. Questions and administration

The HR Manager is responsible for administering this policy. If you have any questions, please speak to your line manager in the first instance or contact suebailey@ansteyhorne.co.uk.

Related policies: Disciplinary Policy - Harassment and Bullying Policy - Sexual Harassment Policy - Whistleblowing Policy - Data Protection Policy

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment.