

Informal Resolution Procedure for Grievances and Harassment Complaints

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Grievances and complaints of harassment and/or bullying should be resolved informally whenever practical.
- 1.2 The purpose of an informal resolution is to provide a swift solution to problems, maintaining staff confidence and satisfaction within the role.
- 1.3 This procedure should be used before formal action is pursued, except in cases where it is felt that an informal resolution is not practical or appropriate to the circumstances, for example in cases of serious allegations of misconduct.

2.0 Responsibilities

- 2.1 Employees and managers should work cooperatively to seek an informal resolution to their issues wherever possible.
- 2.2 It is the employee's responsibility to raise their concerns with the manager as early as possible, providing any relevant information to assist the manager in resolving the problem.
- 2.3 It is the manager's responsibility to facilitate an informal resolution in a timely manner, assessing the problem with initial fact-finding and proposing solutions.
- 2.4 When a manager feels an informal resolution is not practical or appropriate at any stage in the informal process, HR advice should be sought via Service Desk. HR can also advise on appropriate informal resolutions where a manager is unsure of suitable informal action.

3.0 What to do when a complaint is raised

- 3.1 Grievance and harassment/bullying complaints require sensitivity and confidentiality in their handling. Any action taken should be done with the prior consent of the employee raising the concern.
- 3.2 If a situation arises where the manager is asked to assist in resolving the complaint, the manager must meet with the employee to listen to their problem within 2 working days.
- 3.3 Some initial fact-finding should be carried out to establish a basic understanding of the situation. While it is not your responsibility as a manager to carry out a formal investigation, it is important that you fully understand the situation before taking action.
- 3.4 Once you have carried out an initial investigation, you must inform the employee of what steps you plan to take to resolve the issue, committing to a set timescale for this that is proportionate to the circumstances and proposed solutions.

4.0 Informal Steps to Resolve a Complaint

4.1 Once the facts of the concern have been gathered, appropriate action should be facilitated by the manager to resolve the complaint informally, or a meeting should be held to discuss with the employee why no further action will be taken.

4.2 Managers should ensure they keep a record of key information:

- Date the complaint was raised
- Results of initial fact-finding
- Notes of any meetings carried out
- Informal steps taken to resolve the complaint
- Agreed outcomes
- Follow-up actions

All records must be kept confidential and held in accordance with GDPR.

4.3 A variety of solutions may be available depending on the circumstances of the case. Below is a non-exhaustive list of informal steps that could be taken to resolve an issue informally:

- Encourage the employee to have an open and respectful conversation with the individual concerned, where appropriate
- Have a private word with the person being complained about, explaining the complaint fully, gathering their side, and asking them to change their behaviour if appropriate
- Arranging a meeting with both parties. The meeting should:
 - Be arranged in a private area with plenty of notice
 - Give space for both parties to give their accounts and understandings
 - Be treated objectively, taking both sides into account
 - Try to reach a mutual agreement for next steps:
 - An informal agreement for behaviour change and to move forward
 - An agreement in changing interaction dynamics to cause less friction
 - If mutual agreement cannot be reached, offer mediation between the parties
 - Confidentially note any actions and outcomes agreed in the meeting
- Continue to monitor the situation, making confidential written records of any improvements or further issues
- If mediation is agreed to, inform HR via Service Desk to have this arranged

4.4 If the nature of the complaint is structural, procedural, or otherwise not related to an individual's behaviour, a meeting should be held with the employee to discuss the options available to resolve the issue.

- 4.5 If the issue cannot be resolved in the timeframe initially committed to, advice should be sought from HR on next steps. An ER Consultant will advise on whether the complaint should become formal, in which case, the Formal Grievance/Formal Harassment Process will be followed.

5.0 Employee wellbeing and treatment

- 5.1 Employees should be made aware of the support available to them, including CareFirst, the staff forums and trade unions.
- 5.2 There may be cases where an employee feels that the line manager is not a sufficiently neutral party to deal with the issue. In these cases, they may seek assistance from the grandparent manager, another line manager within your wider team, or the Service Manager to take the above informal steps, reporting any outcomes back to you.
- 5.3 No employee should be subject to unfair or unequal treatment on the basis that they have raised a complaint, even if no further action is taken.