

## **How to raise an issue in your workplace**

by  
**Primus Personnel and  
Vulnerable Workers Project**

It is usually better to try to resolve issues that you have with your employer at work and at the earliest stage possible.

Grievance and disciplinary procedures are important as they are intended to enable complaints and disputes to be settled fairly and consistently.

There are now legal requirements for both employers and employees to follow a standard procedure in resolving disputes in the workplace. Good employers have, however, been using these procedures for years.

Although the legislation only applies to employers and employees, and not to employment agency workers or employment agencies, those working for employment agencies are recommended to follow the principles of the statutory grievance procedures if you want to raise a complaint with your agency or employer that you are carrying out the work for.

### **Raising a grievance**

**A grievance is a complaint by an employee about an action that his/her employer has taken or is thinking of taking. There can be any number of potential issues, such as**

- you are asked to do something that is not within your contract of employment or that seems unreasonable;
- concerns about workplace practices - such as health and safety;
- how you are treated by your manager and/or colleagues;
- not being paid your full wages.

**You should, first, try to raise the matter informally with your employer by speaking to them about the issue. If, however, the matter is not addressed or if you are not able to talk informally to your manager, or if the complaint is serious, for example blatant discrimination or criminal activity, then you should follow the more formal standard procedure.**

The standard procedure is:

#### **Stage 1**

You should write a letter to your employer about the issue that you are complaining about.

### How to write your grievance letter

- Keep your statement brief, unemotional and to the point
- Keep your points brief - using bullet points is a good way of setting the details of your grievance out
- If possible, type your statement.

### What to include in your grievance statement

- Say that you are making a grievance in line with the statutory dispute resolution procedures
- Describe what has happened in date order with the most recent event last
- Include the names and job titles of any witnesses or people involved
- Say what you have done to try to resolve matters before making a formal grievance.

### Stage 2

The employer should then arrange a meeting with you to discuss your grievance. After discussion your employer should inform you of their decision.

### **You may want to consider some of the following to support your case:**

- Exactly what is the issue?
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
- Are there any witnesses who might support what you are saying?
- What affect the issue has upon yourself and the business?
- What actions you think should be taken to resolve the issue?

### Stage 3

If, after the grievance hearing, you think that the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, or if you have additional information that it wasn't possible to present at the grievance hearing, you should inform your employer that you wish to appeal.

It is recommended that you also put this in writing. Give the reasons why you are appealing. It might be useful for you to write down each point in the employer's decision that you disagree with, together with the reasons why you disagree.

Your employer should then arrange an appeal hearing. This should be heard by someone more senior than the person who made the original decision. The appeal hearing is the end of the process within the workplace and the decision made at that meeting is final.

### **Employment tribunal**

If you think that the employer has not met his/her legal obligation and broken your employment rights the only option open to you is to make a claim at an employment tribunal (see information sheet on 'Enforcing your rights').

You should remember that you will need to make an application to an employment tribunal within 3 months of the date of the incident that you are complaining about. This applies even if you have a grievance hearing that is still running.

### **Help and support**

It should be in your employer's best interest to have an open and frank meeting about your complaint. However, many employers feel defensive when having to deal with a grievance complaint. It can also be daunting for employees and workers to talk to your employer face to face about the issue especially if this is something that you have not done often.

For these reasons you have the right to bring a colleague (that is someone who works with you) or a trade union representative with you to the meeting. A trade union representative will be trained, and likely to be experienced in, dealing with grievance procedures.

The Vulnerable Workers Project can provide you with information about joining a trade union. ACAS also have a useful website on dealing with issues at work.

## Example of grievance letter

Mr A Worker  
1 Skivy Row  
Hardtown

Rollinginit Cleaning Company  
The Mansion  
2 Swish Place  
Fairtown

dd/mm/yy

Dear Mr/Ms Manager

I wish to make a complaint under the company's grievance procedure which, I have been advised, is required to comply with the statutory Dispute Resolution Regulations.

The nature of my grievance is:

- *[list what has happened in date order and include any names of people involved]*
- 
- 

I have tried to resolve the matter by

- *[say who you have spoken to, what you have done about the matter]*
- 

However, the matter, to date has not been resolved.

I am, therefore, requesting that you arrange a meeting to resolve my grievance. I understand that under the Dispute Resolution Regulations that I am entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at the meeting.

I hope that we can resolve the grievance satisfactorily and to our mutual benefit.

Yours sincerely

**A Worker**

**Vulnerable Workers Project**  
TUC/BERR working with building services workers in Tower Hamlets and the City