

HANDLING GRIEVANCES - BRIEFING FOR MANAGERS

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To define what is and isn't a grievance matter
- To familiarise yourself with the DCC grievance procedure
- To understand management responsibilities in a grievance matter
- To understand the investigation process.
- Handling a meeting
- Handling an appeal

What is a grievance?

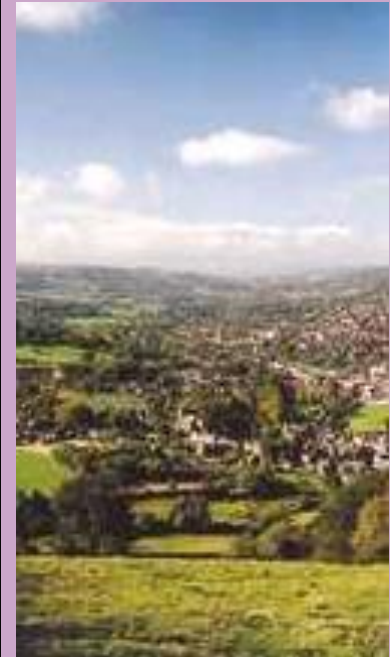
“a concern, problem or complaint raised by an employee about an alleged deficiency in the Council’s treatment of them”

- Terms & Conditions
- Health & Safety
- Work Relations
- Working Practices / Organisational Change
- Bullying / Harassment / Discrimination

Remember:

Do not have to state it is a grievance

Must state the anticipated outcome



Grievances – Causes & Effects

Some Causes of Grievances

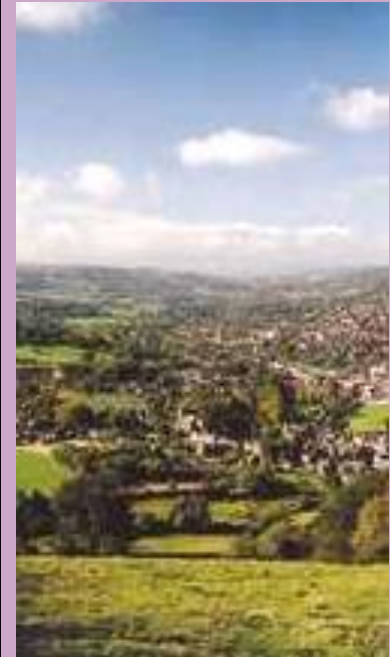
- Economic
- Environment
- Supervision
- Work Group
- Miscellaneous



Grievances – Causes & Effects

Some effects of grievances

- Engagement
- Morale
- Relationships
- Productivity



What is not a grievance?

- Where specific procedures exist already
- Issues subject to collective negotiation with the trade unions
- Trivial, frivolous, vexatious or repetitive claims
- False or malicious accusations
- Avoids problems escalating

Why have a grievance procedure?

- Provide employees with a course of action regarding complaints
- Provide points of contact and timescales
- Provide a way to resolve issues fairly and openly
- Handled well - Provides a way of maintaining effective working relationships
- Avoids problems escalating

The basic procedure

Informal

Formal

**1. Try to resolve
informally**

**2. Use grievance
procedure**

**3. Employees states
grievance in writing**

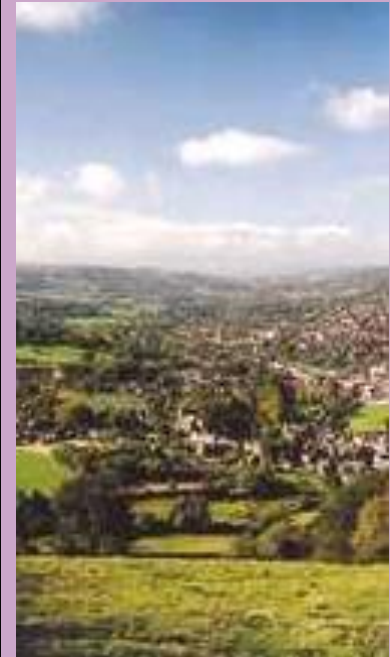
**Hold meeting (may be
accompanied)**

**Decide on appropriate
action**

Right of appeal

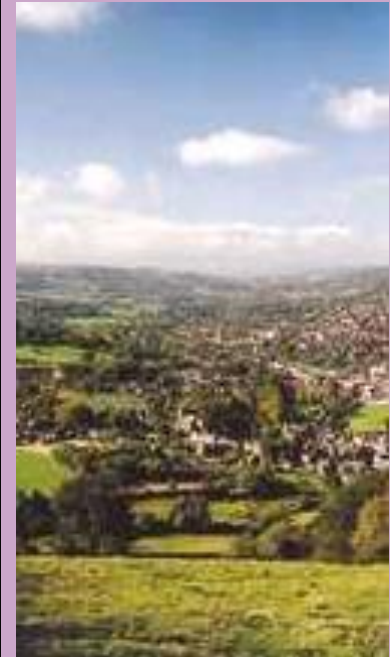
Consider Mediation

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How to avoid grievances

- **Monitoring team relationships**
- Team awareness
- Personality types
- “Petty” issues
- Individual team members



How to avoid grievances

- **Act as a Role Model**
- Professionalism
- Conduct
- Office gossip / politics

How to avoid grievances

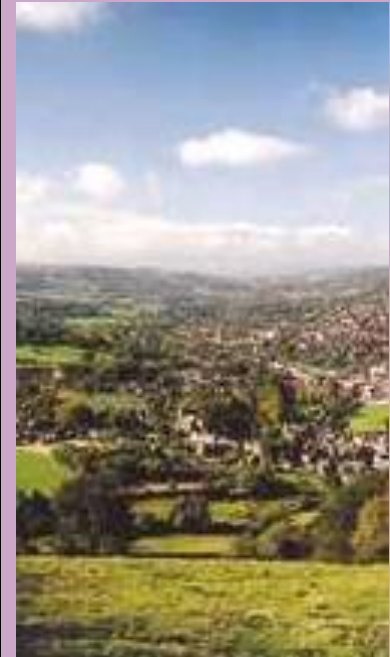
- **Integrity**
- Private & Confidential
- Fairness

How to deal with grievances

- **Dealing with Issues**
- Timely
- Proactively
- Knowledgably

How to deal with grievances

- **Use of official processes**
- Policies / procedures – availability / awareness
- Aids investigation & shows considered seriously
- Informal – but don't discourage use of procedure
- Follow correct procedure
- Involving more senior managers



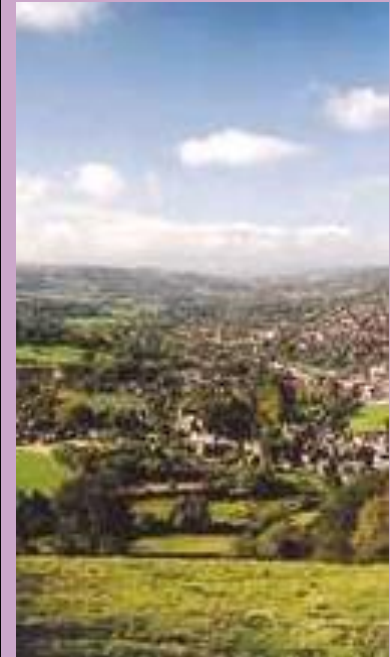
How to deal with grievances

- **Participative approach**
- Mediator role
- Avoid taking sides
- Speak to both parties

Undertaking an Investigation

Responsibilities of investigator

- Consider information required
- Gather the facts promptly
- Establish the exact nature of the grievance and any evidence to substantiate or refute it
- Summarise findings
- Present the evidence at the hearing



Undertaking an Investigation

Things to remember

- Timeliness
- Be thorough and fair
- Impartiality
- Mitigation
- Confidentiality
- Evidence
- Witnesses
- Notes
- Discrepancies
- Resolutions

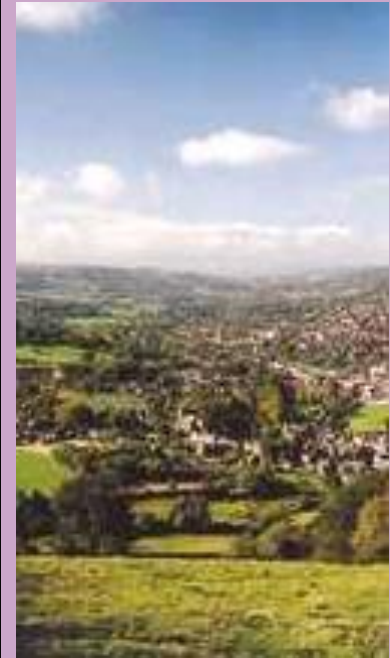
Undertaking an Investigation

Derbyshire
County Council

How to avoid problems:

- Second grievances
- *Impartial / Independent*
- Ill Health
- Flexibility
- For or against?
- Accuracy
- Action

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Preparing for a grievance meeting / hearing

- Understand the procedure
- Full investigation
- Understanding of the issue
- Facts and documents
- Time, date, venue
- Give notice
- Attendees?
- Witness Statements

Holding a grievance hearing

- Privacy
- Introductions
- Reasons
- Explanation and consideration
- Conflict
- Assess the evidence

Do's & Don'ts of Conducting a Hearing

DO

- Avoid interruptions
- Put the employee at ease
- Allow them to fully explain their complaint
- Listen actively to what they have to say
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Avoid negative reactions – e.g. anger / impatience
- Summarise at the end in order to confirm your understanding

Dos and Don'ts of Conducting a Hearing

Don't

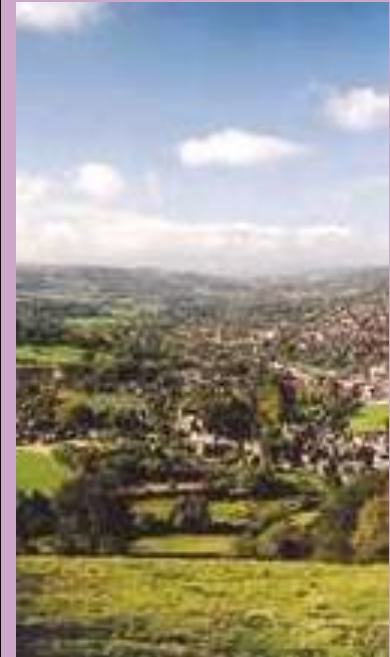
- Interrupt (unless you need to keep the discussion track)
- React negatively e.g. criticism or disapproval
- Be judgmental
- Allow personal likes / dislikes to influence you
- Make a decision until facts have been investigated and checked

The Right to be Accompanied

The person accompanying can:

- Address the hearing on the employee's behalf
- Confer with the worker during the hearing
- Sum up the case
- Respond to any views expressed

They should not however respond on the employee's behalf to any direct questions asked of them



Skills to handle a grievance

- Record keeping
- Listening skills
- Objectivity
- Empathy
- Verbal communication
- Contextualization

Use of Mediation

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- What is mediation?
- How does it work?
- When is it suitable?
- When is it not suitable?

What to consider before using mediation

- What is the conflict about?
- Do the parties want to resolve the issue?
- Are they seeking to apportion blame?
- Is it the right time to intervene?
- Has the manager tried to resolve the issue?
- Are both parties willing to participate and do they understand that it is voluntary?

Further Reading

- **ACAS – Getting it Right / Dealing with Grievances**
- **CIPD Guide – Managing conflict at work – a guide for line managers**
- **ACAS Guide – Mediation An Employers Guide**