

Grievance Policy Guide

Guide for employees

This guide provides information and advice on how to raise and deal with a genuine work related complaint or concern.

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Getting help

Contact your line manager if you have any queries about this guide.

Line managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0845 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0845 6042787 / 5456 4747

For web access go to:

<https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



Grievance Policy Guide

Guide for employees

Overview

This guide provides advice on how to raise a genuine work related complaint or concern and the approach that should be taken to resolve the issue in a timely manner.

This should be read in conjunction with the *Grievance Policy*.

Royal Mail Group's aspiration is that the majority of workplace issues are resolved informally; however where this cannot be achieved managers should follow the approach detailed in this guide to resolve the issue.

Making a complaint

Complaints can be made through the *Grievance Policy* where an employee has a problem or complaint about their work, or an employee is concerned about their employment.

An employee can make a complaint to their line manager verbally or in writing. They should provide:

- Full details of the complaint
- The practical steps that could be taken to resolve the issue

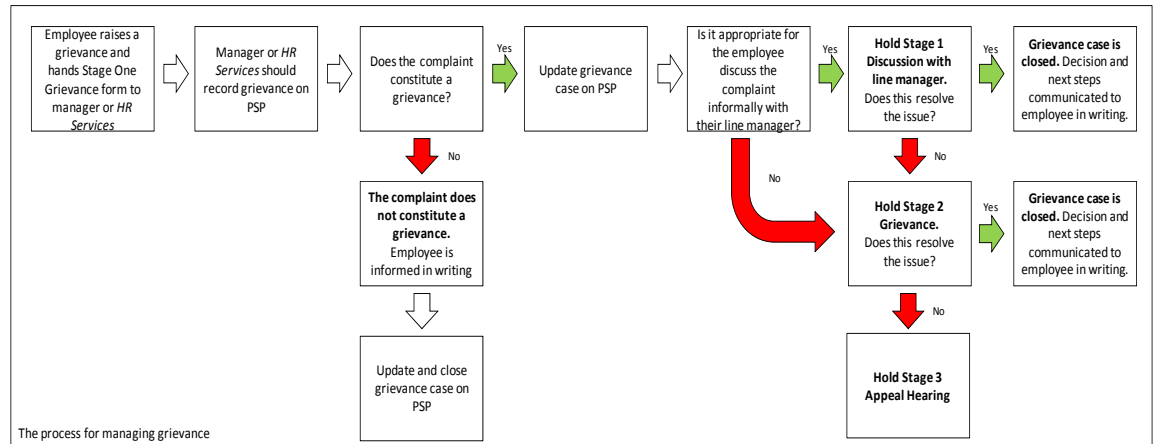
A *Stage One Grievance form* can be used and should be given to the line manager.

In some cases, raising a complaint under the *Grievance Policy* may not be appropriate and, instead, raising an issue under one of the following policies may be more suitable:

- If the complaint is about harassment, bullying or victimisation, this should be raised through the *Stop: Bullying and Harassment Policy*
- Where the employee has a serious concern about wrong-doing within Royal Mail Group, these should be raised through the *Speak Up: Whistleblowing Policy*
- Complaints against decisions made through procedures with appeal mechanisms should be pursued at the appeal stage of that procedure. These procedures are the:
 - *Conduct Policy*
 - *Attendance Policy*
 - *Stop: Bullying and Harassment Policy*
 - *Improving Performance Policy*
 - *Trial Process*

The process for managing a complaint

Having received a genuine complaint, the line manager should follow the process detailed in the diagram below.



Recording the complaint

The first step that the manager should take having received a complaint is to record the grievance via Managing My Team. In addition to the complaint the manager should record any potential witnesses on the system. It is the line manager's responsibility to consider the grievance.

In cases where a complaint is received by HR Services, they will input the grievance and the line manager will be notified via e-mail that they will be considering the grievance.

The employee will automatically be sent a letter advising them their grievance has been registered and that their line manager will be considering it.

It is important that all complaints are recorded, whether the manager believes that they are valid under the Grievance Policy or not.

Is the complaint a grievance?

Having recorded the grievance on PSP, the manager should consider whether the complaint is a grievance before continuing with the process.

Information on the types of concerns that constitute a grievance and how to judge whether a complaint is a grievance can be found in the *Grievance Policy*. The manager will need to carefully consider the information provided on the *Stage One Grievance Form* in order to decide whether the complaint is a grievance. Following this decision, the manager should follow one of the actions outlined below:

The complaint is a grievance

Where the manager decides that the complaint is a grievance, the case should progress to the next appropriate stage. This is set out in more detail in the remainder of this guide.

The manager should update the Grievance Record of their decision through Managing My Team.

The complaint is not a grievance

Where the manager decides that the complaint is not appropriate to be heard under the Grievance Policy, the employee should be informed in writing the reasons why and that the complaint will not be heard. Typically this will be because there is a more appropriate policy under which to hear the complaint and this should be explained fully to the employee so that they are able to raise a complaint under the relevant policy.

Managers with PSP access will need to update the *Grievance Record* with the reasons why the complaint is not going to be heard as a grievance.

Is it appropriate for the grievance to be resolved informally?

Employees and managers should ideally work towards trying to settle any grievances informally through the Stage One Discussion. Where the issue cannot be resolved informally the issue will be then considered under the Grievance Policy and will move to *Stage Two*.

However, there are exceptions to this, where the complaint:

- Is of such a personal and sensitive nature that the employee does not feel they can raise it with their immediate manager
- Is not appropriate because the grievance relates to their immediate manager
- Has been made in a resignation letter or exit interview
- Has been raised via Just Say It
- Has been raised through HR Services Complaints process

In these situations the employee's complaint should be heard directly by their second line manager as a *Stage Two Grievance*.

Stage One - Discussion with line manager

The manager may decide that they need to hold a meeting with the employee in order for them to be able to understand the complaint; or they may decide that they have all the relevant information and can respond to the issue. The manager should discuss the resolution informally with the employee.

If a meeting is required the employee should be invited to attend in writing, and the letter should also confirm the time, location and whether any adjustments are required to be able to hold the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is for the manager to:

- Obtain more details of the complaint
- Clarify their understanding of the matter
- Try to resolve the complaint

At the meeting every effort should be made by both the manager and employee to discuss what could be done to resolve the grievance.

During the meeting, managers should encourage discussion through:

- **Active Listening:** being attentive while the employee is speaking; paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said
- **Using leading questions:** to encourage the employee to give further details
- **Treating the employee as an individual:** not making a judgement based on experience of similar cases, but listening to the employee's personal circumstances

Following the meeting, the manager should write to the employee with their decision in respect of the complaint raised. This should usually be within five working days of the complaint being received, although with complex cases it may take longer and the manager should let the employee know.

Next steps: The grievance is resolved

Where the employee accepts the decision made by their manager in respect of the complaint raised there will be no further action.

The manager should update the Grievance Case through Managing My Team with the agreed next steps and further actions. The employee should be allowed to annotate a copy of the notes made during the Stage One meeting and copies of these notes, both with and without their annotations, should be held on their file.

Next steps: The employee is not satisfied with the outcome

If the employee is not satisfied with the outcome they can complete a Stage Two Grievance Form. This form will help the employee identify their key concerns and provide practical steps to help them resolve their complaint. The *Stage Two Grievance Form* should be completed and sent to their line manager within five working days of receiving the Stage One outcome.

It is the responsibility of the line manager to pass this form to an appropriate manager, along with any other relevant paperwork. Normally, this will be the second line manager, although in some situations it may be more appropriate for this to be another manager (Manager dealing with Stage Two).

Where the employee does not have access to the *Stage Two Grievance Form*, they can request a copy by contacting the HR Services Advice Centre.

Stage Two - Resolving grievances formally

Complaints will be heard at Stage Two when:

- An employee has tried to settle their grievance informally without success
- In certain situations, as explained above, a complaint will move straight to a Stage Two Grievance

On receiving the Stage Two Grievance the manager dealing with Stage Two should:

- Record that a Stage Two grievance has been made by the employee on Managing My Team
- The manager should invite the employee to the meeting in writing, using the *Invitation letter at Stage Two* which can be found on PSP. This meeting should typically within five days of receiving the grievance

In most situations the manager dealing with the Stage Two Grievance will have received the Stage Two Grievance Form from the line manager who managed the Stage One Discussion. However, in some situations this will come from the HR Services Advice Centre.

Before the meeting

- The manager dealing with the grievance should read the Stage Two Grievance Form and any additional information provided
- If the complaint has moved directly to the formal stage the manager should also read any background information
- Where the complaint is against another person, it is recommended to interview them as part of the investigation
- The manager dealing with the grievance should ensure that written records are treated confidentially and are shared with the employee prior to the meeting
- In certain circumstances Royal Mail Group may believe it appropriate to withhold

some information e.g. to protect a witness

During the meeting

- The manager dealing with the Stage Two Grievance and the employee should discuss the issue with the aim of finding a satisfactory solution
- The employee should be given the chance to explain their complaint and how they think it could be resolved
- At the end of the meeting the manager should give a summary of the main points and should confirm when a decision can be expected
- The manager should treat the issue confidentially; however they may need to speak to others to obtain the relevant information or to seek advice from within the business. Where this is required the manager should ensure that the number of others involved is kept to a minimum
- Where additional information is required, the manager should take the time to obtain this before making a decision
- The manager should ensure they take a supportive and positive approach to the Stage Two Grievance Meeting. It is important to remember that the purpose of this meeting is for the manager and the employee to work together to resolve the issue that the employee has raised and to agree actions that will help the situation

After the meeting

- Following the meeting the manager should write to the employee with their decision, ideally within five working days of the meeting being held. Where there will be a delay the manager should let the employee know
- The employee should be advised that they can appeal where they are not satisfied with the action taken

Where the manager has access to PSP they should update the *Grievance Record* via Managing My Team in order to record the progress made with the complaint.

Next steps: The grievance is resolved

Where the employee accepts the decision made by their line manager in respect of the complaint raised, there will be no further action.

The line manager should update the *Grievance Case* via Managing My Team with the agreed next steps and further actions. The employee should be allowed to annotate a copy of the notes made during the Stage Two meeting and copies of these notes, both with and without their annotations, should be held on their file.

Next steps: The employee is not satisfied with the outcome

Where the employee believes that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved they can appeal, and should complete a *Stage Three Grievance Form*. The form asks for the employee to provide the reasons for the appeal and how they think that their complaint could be resolved.

The employee should send the Stage Three Grievance Form to the manager who heard Stage Two, who should then send the form and case papers to:

**Employee Relations Case Management Team,
HRSC Sheffield,**

**4th Floor,
Pond Street,
SHEFFIELD.
S98 6HR**

**Stage Three
Appeal
hearing**

The Employee Relations Case Management Team will contact the business unit and ask them to appoint a manager with the authority and independence to consider the appeal. Where possible this should be a manager not previously involved in the case. For advice on identifying a suitable manager contact the Senior HR Manager on the business unit.

The Employee Relations Case Management Team will provide the appeal manager with the case papers. Where the manager has access to PSP they will be given access to the case through *Managing My Team*.

Before the Appeal meeting

- The appeal manager should read the case papers to gain an understanding of the complaint
- The appeal manager should contact the employee to acknowledge receipt of the appeal. It is also an opportunity to clarify any aspect of the appeal that may not be clear
- Where necessary the appeal manager will carry out any further investigations
- The employee should be invited to attend the appeal meeting in writing (*Invitation to Stage Three Appeal Letter*)

At the Appeal meeting

- The employee should be given the chance to present their appeal and explain how they think their complaint could be resolved
- The appeal manager and employee should discuss with the aim of finding a satisfactory solution
- At the end of the meeting the appeal manager should give a summary of the main points, close the meeting and confirm when a decision can be expected

After the Appeal meeting

- Following the meeting the appeal manager will review the case
- They may need to carry out some further investigation before making a decision
- The employee should be notified of the decision in writing. This should provide an explanation of the decision and, where appropriate, set out what actions are required and by whom in order to resolve the complaint
- The employee should be told that the decision of the appeal manager is final

The Appeal decision should be recorded through *Managing My Team* on PSP. The case will then be considered as closed and no further appeal will be allowed.

The Appeal manager should also inform the manager who heard the grievance at Stage Two of the outcome of the Appeal. They should also discuss any actions

required to be taken as a result of the Appeal decision.

All case papers should be sent to the Employee Relations Case Management Team for filing.

How to manage potential grievances that arise in resignation letters or exit interviews

An employee does not have to mention the word grievance or complaint in their resignation letter or exit interview for a grievance to be identified.

- In cases where it is not clear whether the employee wishes to raise a complaint, the manager should send *Grievance Exit letter A* and, where they have access to PSP, record the potential grievance
- If the employee confirms that they do wish to raise a complaint, or it is clearly stated in their resignation letter, *Grievance Letter B* should be sent by the manager

Where a complaint is made in a resignation letter, this should be dealt with as a Stage Two Grievance, unless the complaint has already been dealt with under the Grievance Procedure.

If the complaint has already been investigated then this should be made clear to the employee in writing. Managers should access PSP and add the letter to the Grievance Record via Managing My Team and close the case.

If a grievance is identified in an exit interview the interviewing manager will need to ask the employee to complete the *Stage Two Grievance form*. Again the complaint will be dealt with as a Stage Two Grievance.

Grievance documentation

Any hard copy documents relating to grievances should be sent by special delivery to:

**HR Services Archives
Royal Mail
Pond Street
SHEFFIELD
S98 6HR**

The paperwork should include a Case Paper Despatch Header, which can be found through Managing My Team or via HR Help.

Right to be accompanied

Employees are entitled to bring a companion to any Grievance or Appeal meeting under this procedure. The employee must tell the manager holding the Grievance meeting who their chosen companion is in good time before the meeting.

For more information on who may accompany an employee and the rights and expectations of their companion, refer to the *Right to be Accompanied Guide*.

Keeping records

Records should be kept of all discussions and contact made with any employees who raised a complaint or during grievance investigations. Any records should:

- Be accurate
- Be up to date
- Contain details of any discussions between the manager and the employee
- Be held securely and locally in accordance with the Data Protection Act

More information on how to keep good records can be found in the *Keeping Records Guide*.

**Where to go
for more
information**

The Getting help box on the front of this guide tells you where to find more information. Guidance is also available on the *Policy and Information Site* on PSP.

In addition the following guide should also be read in conjunction with this document:

- *Right to be Accompanied Guide*: explains the legal rights to be accompanied, who may be a companion and what role they can take