



Yorkshire Ambulance Service



NHS Trust

An Aspirant Foundation Trust

Issue Resolution (Grievance): Management Guidance

July 2013

Produced by: Human Resources Department

Section	Contents	Page
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Preventing issues in the workplace	3
3.	What are the early warning signs of issues developing?	4
4.	Managing the Issue Resolution (Grievance) Process	4
	Appendix 1 – Scenarios	7
	Appendix 2 – Conducting an Issue Resolution (Grievance) Meeting	9

1. Introduction

The following management guidance document has been written to support managers to resolve issues using the principles outlined in the Issue Resolution (Grievance) Policy.

Issues at work may include two workers simply don't get on, or that an individual has concerns regarding their work or working conditions.

The Trust is committed to supporting positive working relationships within the organisation, but recognises that issues may arise. We believe that informal resolution is the most appropriate method to ensure a positive outcome to any issues raised.

2. Preventing Issues in the Workplace

The quicker issues can be recognised within the organisation, the greater the chance that an issue can be resolved before it escalates. Identifying issues at an early stage can give you a better chance of:-

- Identifying the underlying causes
- Reaching a sustainable agreement
- Resolving the issue

There are a number of practices you can put in place as a manager within your area to ensure issues are less likely to develop within your teams, these include:-

1. Ensure there is good quality and regular communication between you and your team, making sure you take the time to understand and explain any changes the organisation is making and the reasons why
2. Ensure you are accessible and visible to your team so that they can approach you with any issues or concerns early on. If an employee presents you with an issue make sure you take action as swiftly as possible to either resolve the issue or escalate it to the relevant manager for further action. If the issue cannot be resolved ensure you go back to the employee and explain the reasoning.
3. Make sure employees are aware that their contribution is valued and that you take the time to thank both individual employees and teams when targets have been achieved or a good outcome has been achieved for patients.
4. Encourage initiative within your team and ensure that PDRs are carried out in a timely manner so you can identify and support employees who want to develop themselves.

5. Ensure any employee relations issues are handled appropriately and as swiftly as possible, if employees see other members of the team underperforming or not contributing it could potentially lead to wider team demotivation.
6. Make sure employees understand all relevant formal procedures within the organisation for example absence reporting, booking training and arranging annual leave. Frustrations can be caused if employees don't understand how to follow procedures appropriately; this can also lead to an inconsistent approach. Ensure all this is covered as part of a local induction process.

3. What are the early warning signs of issues developing?

Before issues develop people may simply feel unhappy about colleagues or situations that are troubling them. You might notice the following symptoms.

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Example</u>
Motivation drops	Fewer people volunteer to take on new tasks and there is little employee input at team meetings or briefings.
Behaviour changes	People start to make derogatory remarks towards each other and there is less positive discussion at work.
Productivity falls	There are likely to be more queries and complaints if people are not cooperating with each other.
Sickness absence increases	Unhappiness may lead to people taking time off as they do not want to come to work.
Responses to staff attitude surveys or questionnaires	May indicate underlying dissatisfaction.

4. Managing the Issue Resolution (Grievance) Process

Having formal processes in place allows the Trust to give reasonable consideration to any issues which can't be resolved informally and to deal with them fairly and consistently. However, pursuing the formal route should be a last resort rather than the first option.

It is recognised that there are occasions when it is not possible to resolve issues through an informal process and an employee or group of employees may need to raise their issues through a more formal process. If this is the case then the process outlined in the Issue Resolution (Grievance) Policy should be followed. Further guidance on how to effectively manage this process is included below. Guidance on how to conduct an Issue Resolution (Grievance) meeting or appeal meeting is included in Appendix 2.

The employee concerned should write to you and outline their issue in writing (via email or letter) and this letter must include what actions would resolve the issue to their satisfaction. You should then write to the employee concerned and invite them to attend a meeting with you within 14 days of the date of the letter or email. If the employee does not provide appropriate information in relation to what the issue is and what resolution they are seeking then you should write back to them and inform them they must provide this information prior to a meeting being arranged.

You should carry out any appropriate research to enable you to be able to answer the employee concerns at the meeting or if you feel that the actions necessary to resolve the issue are outside your scope of responsibility you should arrange for another manager with the appropriate level of authority to hold the meeting.

You should ensure you take appropriate notes at the meeting to aid you in responding to the concerns of the employee and where possible either address the issues or provide a satisfactory rationale as to why you are not able to provide the resolution they are seeking. This increases the likelihood that the issue will not be escalated further.

Once the meeting has been held the employee concerned should be written to within 14 days with a response to the specific issues raised. Correspondence sent to an employee should:-

- Clearly outline the issue(s) that has been raised
- Provide a response to the issues identified
- Set out clearly any action that is to be taken
- Clearly state the right of appeal

If the nature of the issue requires discussion with other managers to provide an appropriate response then this should be done in a confidential and timely manner. There is no need for these discussions to be formally arranged and minutes taken however it may be helpful to make summary notes of discussions or information gathered to aid your response.

If a meeting is not arranged within 14 days of receipt of the statement of issue being submitted then the employee has the right within the policy to resubmit their issue to the next level of management.

Collective issues should follow the same process as individual issues as indicated in the policy however it may be useful to suggest that a lead representative is nominated to represent the collective and attend the meetings.

Appendix 1 – Scenarios

Scenario 1:

What happened?

Two colleagues get on with each other and work well together. You are on station one day and you notice that relations seem frosty and they are refusing to crew together. This is starting to cause issues in the wider team.

What do you do?

As the employees' line manager you talk to each one of them in private. It turns out that one individual had suffered a family bereavement which he has not told any of his colleagues about. The other colleague made a tasteless joke about the illness that the family member had died from.

What is the outcome?

After further discussion the worker who suffered the bereavement agrees to explain to his colleague why he is upset. His colleague apologies profusely and this seems to help repair relations and the team begins to function effectively again.

Scenario 2:

What happened?

An employee has not completed his statutory and mandatory training and you are getting pressure from your manager to ensure your team are compliant.

What do you do?

You call the employee into your office to express your concerns that they haven't been on the update training. The employee makes you aware that they have had the training cancelled on 3 separate occasions with no explanation and they were planning to submit a grievance in relation to this. You explain to the employee that you were unaware of this and agree to speak to training school on behalf of the employee.

What is the outcome?

You are able to find out that the training courses were cancelled due to a lack of sufficient numbers, there is an almost full course running next week which you arrange to book your member of staff on, you also express your concerns to the training manager that your employee was not informed of the reason for

cancellation which has caused some frustration, the manager agrees to review the communications processes. You explain this to the employee who is happy with the outcome.

Scenario 3:

What happened?

You have refused an annual leave request for an employee due to a high number of staff due to take leave on the date requested. The employee had requested the date for their Mum's 80th birthday and had planned to take her away for the day; they did not make you aware of this. The employee is unaware that other staff are off that day and has requested annual leave days previously that have been refused and is planning to submit a grievance because they feel singled out. A member of your team makes you aware that the employee is frustrated.

What do you do?

You approach the employee and explain the rationale behind refusing the annual leave request; you also make them aware of an individual who would potentially be willing to swap shifts with them so they can take the day off anyway. You look into issues of previous refusal of leave and find it was for 'peak' times and that requests were always submitted quite close to the occasion, you reiterate to the employee the importance of putting annual leave requests in as far in advance as possible.

What is the outcome?

The employee is happy with the explanation and speaks to the member of staff who it turns out is able to swap shifts on this occasion. When planning future leave the employee starts to put in requests further in advance and therefore gets leave approved more often. The employee decides not to submit the grievance.

Appendix 2 – Conducting an Issue Resolution (Grievance) Meeting

The following provides guidance on the key points that should be considered when conducting an Issue Resolution (Grievance) Meeting.

- Remember that an Issue Resolution (Grievance) Meeting is an occasion where discussion and dialogue may lead to an amicable solution.
- Make introductions as necessary.
- Invite the employee to restate their issue and how they would like to see it resolved.
- Put care and thought into resolving issues. They are not normally issues calling for snap decisions and the employee may have been considering the issue for a long time. Make allowances for any reasonable 'letting off steam' if the employee appears under stress.
- Consider adjourning the meeting if necessary to investigate any new facts that may arise.
- Sum up the main points.
- Tell the employee when they will expect a response ensuring you are compliant with the timescales outlined in the policy.