

Step 4 The grievance meeting

When an employee raises a formal grievance, the employer should hold a meeting with them. A grievance meeting is sometimes called a 'hearing'.

The employer should hold the meeting 'without unreasonable delay' – ideally within 5 working days. They should allow employees enough time to prepare for the meeting.

To keep the procedure fair, the employer should:

- consider information or evidence from all sides
- see if a similar grievance has happened before and aim to follow the same fair procedure

The employee, employer and any companions should make every effort to attend the meeting on the date set.

Employers should [keep a confidential record](#) of:

- what's said at the meeting
- evidence they've gathered
- any decisions or actions taken

Preparing for the meeting

The employer can arrange for someone not involved in the grievance to:

- take notes at the meeting
- act as a witness to what's said in the meeting, if necessary

They should also:

- arrange for an interpreter if the employee has difficulty speaking English
- consider whether [reasonable adjustments](#) are needed for a disabled employee or anyone they bring with them

The employee can bring any evidence about the grievance, for example relevant emails, to show and discuss at the meeting.

The right to be accompanied

By law, any employee or worker can bring a 'companion' (relevant person) to a grievance meeting. This is known as 'the right to be accompanied'.

The right to be accompanied applies when the grievance is about an employer breaching a legal or contractual duty. This could include duties implied into the contract, for example the duty of care.

If the employer is not sure whether the right to be accompanied applies, it's good practice to allow the employee to be accompanied.

The person must choose their companion from one of the following:

- a colleague
- a workplace trade union representative who's certified by their union to act as a companion
- an official employed by a trade union

Under discrimination law, the employer needs to consider a disabled employee's request to bring someone else for additional support, such as a carer.

It's up to the employer to agree if the person wants to bring anyone else. It can depend on the contract – for example, some employment contracts might allow for a partner or legal representative.

Requesting a companion

If the employee wants to bring a companion, they should make a 'reasonable request' to their employer.

To make a reasonable request, the employee should:

- tell their employer the name of the companion and whether they're a colleague or a trade union representative
- give their employer enough notice, so they can make arrangements for the companion to attend the meeting

The companion should also be given enough time to prepare for the meeting, for example to look at any evidence.

What happens in the meeting

The meeting is the chance for the person who raised the grievance to:

- explain the grievance
- show any evidence they have

It's also the chance for the employer to ask questions, so that they know what steps to take.

What the employer should do

In the meeting the employer should ask the person who raised the grievance to:

- provide more information about it
- discuss how it could be resolved

The employer should also:

- remain impartial
- do their best to understand the feelings of the person raising the grievance
- take notes or appoint someone else to take them
- go through the evidence

- consider if they need to investigate further

- take care in deciding on any actions – usually the employer will not need to make an immediate decision
- sum up the main points at the end

They should give the person who raised the grievance the chance to:

- explain their side
- express how they feel – they might need to 'let off steam', particularly if the grievance is serious or has lasted a long time
- ask questions
- show evidence
- provide details of any witnesses the employer should contact

What the companion should do

With the permission of the person raising the grievance, the companion is allowed to:

- take notes
- set out the case of the person raising the grievance
- respond for them to any comments or points made at the meeting
- talk with them during the meeting

The companion cannot:

- answer questions put to the person raising the grievance
- prevent anyone else at the meeting from explaining their side of things

Investigating the grievance

The employer might need to take some time to investigate so they can make a fair decision.

If necessary they can set up another grievance meeting once they have found out more information.

[Find out more about investigations](#)

At the end of the meeting

The employer should:

- give the employee copies of the meeting record and notes taken
- ask the employee to confirm the notes are accurate
- tell the employee when they will get a decision

The amount of time needed for a decision should be in line with your organisation grievance policy, if there is one.

If there are delays, for example if further investigation is needed, the employer should explain how long the delays will be and why.

The employer can withhold some information in certain circumstances, for example to protect a witness.

Sharing information

Under data protection law (UK GDPR), the employer should get consent from the person who provided information before sharing it.

This might mean the employer needs to make some information anonymous before sharing it.

You can find out more about data protection on the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\) website](#).

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