

The process

If an employer decides to suspend someone, they should support them during the suspension.

It's important for the employer to:

- make clear the suspension does not mean they've decided that person has done something wrong
- make sure the suspension is as brief as possible
- keep in touch with the suspended person, and [support their mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [carry out a fair investigation](#), in line with the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures

Telling the person you're suspending

As an employer, once you have decided to suspend someone you should let them know as soon as you can.

It's good practice to:

- explain the reason for their suspension
- make clear it does not mean you have decided they've done something wrong
- make clear you will listen to their point of view and consider it before making any decisions
- set out what the next steps will be
- confirm they'll continue to get their pay and benefits during suspension
- explain their responsibilities during suspension, for example what they can and cannot do
- give them a copy of the organisation's suspension policy, if there is one
- check you have up to date contact details for them, including an emergency contact person
- name someone they can contact if they have any concerns, for example their manager or someone in HR
- let them know what support is available and encourage them to use it

You should tell the person face to face if possible. This can help you:

- break the news sensitively
- answer any questions they have
- ask if they need any immediate support

You should also let them know what support is available. You should encourage them to get support if they need it at any stage of the suspension.

If you cannot meet face to face, you could tell them on a phone or video call.

Putting it in writing

There's no legal requirement to give written notice for suspension. But it's best to put it in writing to avoid misunderstandings. This could be in a letter or email.

Follow your organisation's policy on this if there is one.

[Use our letter template for suspension during an investigation](#)

How much to tell the person you're suspending

By law, there are no rules on how much to tell someone about the reason for the suspension or investigation.

As an employer, you will need to decide what's appropriate to say, so that you:

- keep things confidential
- carry out a fair investigation
- support the person you're suspending

Being suspended can make someone feel like they've already been judged. And they could be worried about what will happen.

It's best to tell the person you're suspending as much as you're able to. This can help them understand the situation, and show you're following a fair procedure.

For example, it could help to tell them:

- what the investigation is about
- why they're involved
- the reason you decided to use suspension

How long suspension should last

There is no minimum or maximum amount of time you should suspend someone for. But you should keep it as short a time as possible while you investigate.

The longer you suspend someone, there's a higher chance it will:

- affect their health and wellbeing
- become unreasonable to keep them suspended
- lead to a breakdown in trust, which could breach the employment contract

You should review the suspension regularly to make sure it's still needed.

Keeping in touch

It's important for the employer and employee to keep in touch during suspension so that the employer can:

- update the employee about the investigation's progress
- [support the employee's mental health and wellbeing](#)

You should:

- agree with the employee how regularly to contact them during suspension
- make sure the employee knows who they can contact if they have any concerns, for example their manager or someone in HR

If the employee is not sure who to contact for support or information while they're suspended, they should check:

- their organisation's suspension policy, if there is one
- with the person who managed their suspension
- with their trade union representative, if they're a member

If you hold an investigation meeting

If you need to invite the suspended person to an investigation meeting, you should:

- let them know in writing – for example, in a letter or email
- confirm the date, time and location
- give them reasonable notice

There's no legal right to be accompanied to an investigation meeting. However, it's good practice to allow it if they ask to bring someone, for example a trade union representative.

If you give a warning or take disciplinary action at this stage, [the right to be accompanied](#) will apply.

If the employee is off sick or absent

If the suspended person cannot or does not attend the meeting, you should contact them and rearrange the meeting.

You should also check if it would help to make other arrangements. For example:

- holding the meeting somewhere else if they're worried about coming to the workplace
- asking them to answer some questions in writing

In some circumstances, an employee might still be too sick or not willing or able to attend. If you decide it's reasonable to carry on with the investigation without them, you should tell the employee. It's good practice to put this in writing. This could be in a letter or email.

For more about holding investigation meetings, including when someone is absent, [read our advice on carrying out an investigation](#).

Keeping it confidential

It's important that everyone involved keeps the suspension confidential wherever possible.

The employer and the suspended person should:

- discuss what they'll tell people who work with the suspended person
- not share any personal information unless necessary, in line with data protection law

If either side does not keep it confidential and this causes a breakdown in trust, they could breach the employment contract.

There might be some circumstances where the employer or suspended person will need to discuss the suspension with someone else. For example, if:

- the employer needs to tell the person or team investigating the matter
- the suspended person needs to discuss with their line manager what to tell others about why they're off work
- the suspended person does not agree with their suspension or how it's being handled, and decides to raise it with their employer

[Find out more about data protection from the Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#)

Telling an employee what to do during suspension

If someone is suspended, they will not usually have access to the workplace or work systems. But there might be some situations where it's appropriate to have some access. For example, if they need to attend an investigation meeting.

If the organisation has a policy on what someone cannot do during suspension, the employee and employer should follow this.

The employee should make sure they're available to return to work. This is because the employer can end the suspension at any time.

Talking to others at work

It's common for an employer to ask the suspended person not to talk to others at work about the investigation. This is to keep things confidential and help protect the investigation. However, if they need to speak to someone at work for another reason, this is usually reasonable.

The employer should tell the employee about their right to be accompanied if they're invited to a disciplinary hearing. The employee can discuss the investigation with their companion. Find out more about the right to be accompanied in our [advice on carrying out an investigation](#).

If an employee does not agree with their suspension

As an employee, if you feel there's a problem with your suspension, you should raise the issue with your employer. It's best to do this informally at first. You can do this by [talking with your employer](#).

This includes if you do not agree with:

- your suspension and want your employer to reconsider their decision
- how your suspension has been handled

If that does not resolve the issue you can [raise a grievance](#). This is where you make a formal complaint to your employer.

If you're a member of a trade union, you could also talk to your trade union representative.

If you raise an issue, it's up to your employer to decide whether the suspension will continue.