



Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Grievance Policy & Procedure

Information sheet

For further advice contact: People Team

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Version control

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1.0	Beth Rees	April 2018	1.0
1.1	Beth Rees	May 2018	Reference to GDPR
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Equality impact assessment

- A business rationale assessment has been carried out and this policy contributes to Estyn's strategic objectives and delivery principles.
- An equality impact assessment has been carried out and this policy is not deemed to adversely impact on any people on the grounds of Welsh language, age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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Policy purpose

At Estyn, we are committed to creating and sustaining a positive working environment in which every employee feels respected, supported, and confident to raise concerns. This policy provides a clear, fair, and accessible framework for colleagues to raise issues, problems, or complaints relating to their employment.

This policy reflects our belief that open communication, early intervention, and mutual respect are essential to maintaining strong working relationships. By encouraging the informal resolution of concerns wherever appropriate, it aims to address issues promptly and constructively, reducing the risk of escalation or misunderstanding. This approach supports individuals to reflect, respond, and improve, while upholding Estyn's high professional standards and protecting organisational integrity.

We recognise that not all concerns can be resolved informally. For this reason, this policy sets out a clear formal procedure to ensure that grievances, including those relating to conduct or behaviour, are addressed fairly, consistently, and confidentially, and without unreasonable delay, promoting transparency and accountability in decision-making.

This policy and procedure follow the principles set out in the [ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance](#).

Scope

This policy applies to all Estyn employees, including those on fixed-term appointments. Staff on secondment or loan to Estyn can use this policy and procedures in respect of issues relating to the secondment or loan agreement.

It does not apply to:

- agency workers (temporary engagements)
- contractors
- peer inspectors

Principles

We are committed to fostering a workplace culture where employees feel safe, respected, and supported. We want all staff to feel confident in raising any concerns they may have, knowing they will be listened to and treated fairly.

Our policy is built on the principle that early and informal resolution is often the most effective way to maintain positive working relationships and a collaborative working environment. We actively encourage employees to raise issues promptly, so they can be addressed constructively, sensitively, and without unnecessary delay.

All grievances are treated seriously and managed with fairness, impartiality, and consistency. Employees who raise a grievance in good faith will not face any disadvantage or retaliation for doing so.

We recognise the importance of confidentiality throughout the process. Any information shared will only be disclosed to those directly responsible for managing or supporting the case, ensuring the process remains respectful, transparent and professional. Employees have the right to be accompanied to meetings, and any companion is also expected to respect and maintain confidentiality at all times, including not sharing documents, records or information related to the case, and not discussing the matter with others outside of any meeting or hearing.

Concerns should be raised early and informally where possible, with support available from relevant managers or the People Team.

Grievances will be handled promptly, within reasonable timescales, and any unavoidable delays will be explained and kept to a minimum.

Suspension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where it is essential to protect the integrity of the process, ensure the safety or wellbeing of those involved, or prevent interference with an investigation. If suspension is used, it will be treated as a neutral act, meaning it is not a disciplinary measure, does not imply fault, and does not suggest that any conclusions have been reached. It is simply a temporary step taken to support a fair and safe process. Any suspension will be kept as brief and proportionate as possible with regular check-ins and reviewed by the appropriate supporting manager.

Where appropriate, temporary measures may be put in place while a grievance is being considered (for example, restricted duties or alternative working arrangements). These measures are not disciplinary actions and will be kept under regular review.

Cases of alleged bullying and harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the [Dignity at Work Policy](#) via this policy. Cases of alleged sexual harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) via this formal policy.

Further detail on how to raise a grievance, including informal steps, mediation options, and the formal grievance process is provided later in this policy. Employees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these sections to understand the routes available for raising concerns, the support they can access, and the stages involved in reaching a fair and timely resolution.

Welsh language

This policy is available in both Welsh and English. Employees may pursue a grievance in either Welsh or English, including raising concerns, attending meetings, and receiving all related correspondence and documentation in their chosen language. Where required, simultaneous translation may be provided to support participation in meetings. Estyn is committed to supporting all staff to use their preferred language throughout the process.

Support and Wellbeing

We understand that being involved in a grievance, whether raising a concern, responding to one or being witness can be a difficult and stressful experience.

We also recognise that being the subject of a grievance can be a particularly challenging and stressful experience for all concerned.

We are committed to supporting employees in this position by ensuring they, as well as those raising a grievance, are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness throughout the process.

Anyone named in a grievance will be informed of the concerns raised and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Employees are encouraged to seek advice and representation from their trade union or a workplace colleague.

The people team will provide clear guidance on each step of the process, including estimated timeframes and next steps where appropriate and will be available to answer any questions or concerns at any point.

To support wellbeing of all parties during the grievance process, we will liaise with relevant parties to mutually agree a regular and suitable pattern of communication. This

should support individuals to feel informed, listened to, and supported, while also fostering openness, trust, and timely resolution. The arrangements can be adjusted by mutual consent as needed, with confidentiality and respect maintained throughout.

We encourage employees to access the support available. Support is offered throughout the process from the People Team, trade union representatives, supporting/line managers, and the [Employee Assistance Programme \(Vivup\)](#), which provides confidential wellbeing support.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where needed, particularly in cases involving health or disability-related matters, to ensure the process is fair and accessible.

Roles and Responsibilities	
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Complainant <i>(Employee raising the grievance)</i>	Responsible for raising concerns clearly and promptly, participating in the process constructively, and seeking early resolution where possible.
Respondent/s <i>(Individual/s subject to the grievance)</i>	Has the right to be informed of the grievance, to respond fully, and to be treated fairly. Responsible for cooperating constructively, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any retaliatory behaviour.
Line Manager / Supporting Manager <i>(of Complainant)</i>	Acts as the first point of contact for informal resolution. If the issue progresses, they may support the process unless directly involved in the grievance.
Witness <i>(Parties giving statements)</i>	Provide factual information and cooperate fully while maintaining confidentiality.
Representative /Companion <i>(of Complainant/Respondent/ Witness)</i>	Support the employee by helping them present or summarise their case, and by offering guidance during meetings in a way that does not disrupt proceedings. Companions should have the opportunity to contribute to specific questions where they can add value.
People Team	Provide impartial advice, ensure fair and consistent

	procedure, support documentation, attend meetings if required, and offer wellbeing guidance while remaining neutral.
Grievance Officer	Chairs the formal hearing, considers all evidence, and determines the outcome. Must be impartial and not previously involved in the case.
Decision Officer	Exceptionally it may be necessary to appoint a Grievance Officer from outside the organisation. If this is the case we will appoint a decision officer who will consider the findings presented by the grievance officer and determine the outcome.
Appeal Officer	Review the appeal and conduct the hearing independently, making the final decision. Ideally more senior than the decision officer.

Everyone involved in the grievance process is expected to maintain strict confidentiality, sharing information only with those directly responsible for managing or supporting the case.

Timeframes and contact

We are committed to responding to and managing any concerns raised in a timely and reasonable manner. However, we recognise that delays can sometimes happen due to the complexity of a case or circumstances such as working patterns, annual leave, public holidays, absence, or disability and any reasons for delay should be clearly documented by the people team.

In such cases, actions should be completed as soon as reasonably possible.

Appropriate levels of contact will be maintained throughout any grievance process.

Representation

Any employees involved in grievance meetings (e.g. the person raising the grievance, witnesses or if you are subject to a grievance) have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague at any formal stage of the grievance procedure.

Every effort will be made to accommodate representation requests, including rescheduling hearings if the chosen companion is unavailable. Where a companion is unable to attend on more than one occasion, the meeting or hearing may proceed with an alternative companion or without a companion, in line with ACAS guidance.

Employees are expected to inform either the people team or grievance officer in advance of any meeting who will be accompanying them.

All those involved in meetings and hearings are expected to act in a respectful and professional way. This helps ensure that everyone feels able to participate fully and that discussions remain constructive. Participants should allow others to speak, follow the chair's guidance, and engage positively with the process. If any issues arise that affect the smooth running of the meeting, the chair may take appropriate steps to address them, including pausing or rearranging the meeting if needed.

Companions are expected to respect the confidentiality of the process and any information shared during the proceedings.

Grievance Procedure

Our grievance procedure is designed to resolve concerns fairly, consistently, and as early as possible. The process has two stages:

Informal Stage - Wherever possible, issues should first be raised and resolved informally. This allows for open discussion, early support, and timely resolution without the need for a formal process. Informal resolution may involve direct conversations, mediation (summarised below), or support from CPM a manager or the People Team.

Formal Stage - A formal grievance should only be initiated once informal options have been fully explored and exhausted, or where the matter involves a serious breach (such as discrimination, bullying, or other significant concerns). This stage involves submitting a grievance in writing, followed by a structured investigation, documented findings, and a formal decision, with a right of appeal.

This two-stage approach ensures that concerns are addressed proportionately, while maintaining fairness, confidentiality, and consistency throughout.

Mediation

Where appropriate, we encourage the use of mediation to help resolve matters, it can be offered or suggested at any stage of the grievance process. It is a voluntary and

confidential process led by a neutral person (mediator), who is skilled and experienced and who's role is to support open and constructive conversations between the individuals involved.

The goal is to help both parties find a mutually agreeable way forward and to restore a positive working relationship wherever possible.

Taking part in mediation is entirely optional, but it can be a helpful step in resolving issues in a supportive and informal setting.

Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, employees are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity with their line manager. If the concern relates to their line manager, they should raise it with another suitable manager, for example the countersigning line manager if not connected to the matter. Employees may also seek guidance from the People team to help identify the most appropriate route for raising their concern.

Concerns should be raised in a timely manner so they can be addressed promptly with minimal disruption and resolved quickly through open and informal discussion wherever possible. Historical grievances will only be considered where there is a clear and justified reason for the delay.

However, where the matter involves a serious allegation (such as discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment), it may be appropriate to proceed directly to the formal stage, in which case a formal grievance should be submitted.

The People Team can provide advice, guidance, and overview of the process if required.

Informal resolution may include:

- A direct discussion between the individuals involved
- Support and guidance from a line manager or another suitable manager
- Mediation or facilitated conversations to explore solutions
- Practical adjustments or agreements to prevent issues from recurring

The aim is to reach a mutual understanding and workable solution, minimising disruption and maintaining positive working relationships.

If informal resolution is not successful or appropriate, employees should submit a grievance in writing, clearly outlining the issue, relevant facts, and the outcome they are

seeking. Grievances should be raised within a reasonable timeframe to allow timely and fair resolution.

Formal Grievance

Where the informal route has been exhausted, or where the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally a formal grievance should be submitted in writing to the People Team. The employee/s raising a grievance are encouraged to provide any supporting documentation they may have to help ensure the matter can be fully considered.

A formal grievance should set out a clear description of the issue, relevant facts and context (including dates, times, people involved), and any supporting evidence available. It should also outline any informal steps already taken to resolve the matter and the outcome the being sought.

Grievances will normally be acknowledged within two working days, and an impartial Grievance Officer (HEO or above) will be appointed to manage the case. Where a suitably independent person is not available within Estyn, an external Grievance Officer may be appointed. This could be one of Estyn's Non-executive Directors.

To support the integrity of the process, Grievance Officer will be provided with appropriate time away from their regular duties to carry out their responsibilities thoroughly and fairly.

Grievance Meeting

The grievance officer will meet with the individual who has submitted the grievance (complainant) to discuss the grievance in full, listen to concerns raised and explore possible resolutions. This meeting will take place within a reasonable timeframe from receipt of the grievance unless there are agreed noted exceptions. Employees will receive at least five working days' notice before a grievance meeting.

This meeting may be recorded (with consent) or typed, and notes will be shared with the complainant following the meeting.

Grievance Investigation

If, following the initial grievance meeting with the complainant, the grievance officer determines that an investigation is necessary, an investigation will be carried out to establish a fair and balanced understanding of the facts. The purpose of the investigation is to enable the grievance officer to make an informed and objective decision on how best to resolve the grievance.

Investigations should be completed as promptly as possible. However, delays may occur due to case complexity or the availability of key individuals. Any delays will be communicated to relevant parties to ensure transparency and manage expectations.

The grievance officer will:

- Consider the views and responses of all relevant parties. This may involve meeting with those involved in the case as witnesses or those subject to a grievance
- Collect and review any supporting documents and witness statements
- Base findings on evidence and sound judgement
- Where appropriate to do so, evidence and relevant documents will be shared with the subject/s of the grievance to ensure a fair process and redacted where necessary

Any meetings that take place during the investigation may be recorded (with consent) or typed, and notes will be shared with attendees following the meeting. Employees will receive at least five working days' notice before attending an investigation meeting.

Outcome

The investigation will be summarised in a written report, which informs the decision on whether the grievance is upheld (fully or in part), and what further action, if any, is required and/or recommended. In circumstances where the grievance officer is external to Estyn they will share their findings with the decision officer to consider and reach a decision on whether the grievance is upheld.

The findings will be shared with the complainant/s and with the employee/s who are the subject of the grievance and any other individual/s where appropriate. Information will be provided in a confidential and sensitive manner, with each individual receiving only the details relevant to them. This ensures that the complainant is informed of whether their grievance has been upheld, that the subject of the grievance understands the findings relating to them, and that confidentiality and privacy are maintained throughout.

If the findings indicate a possible breach of policy or behaviour inconsistent with Estyn's values, the matter may be referred for consideration under the Disciplinary Policy. In such cases, grievance findings may be used to inform that process. A separate disciplinary investigation will only be initiated if further detail is required.

Right of Appeal

Any employee who has raised grievance has the right to appeal a grievance outcome. Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of the notification of the outcome of the grievance.

The appeal will be dealt with impartially and will be heard by an appropriate person who will act as the Appeal Officer who will normally have the same seniority as the Grievance Officer, or higher.

The Appeal Officer will meet with the complainant to discuss their appeal and during the meeting the employee will explain the grounds for appeal and have an opportunity to comment on any new evidence. Employees may raise new evidence at appeal only where it was not reasonably available at the time of the original grievance hearing. The Appeal Officer will determine whether the new evidence is relevant and how it should be considered. Where new evidence is considered, it will be shared directly with those involved where appropriate and in line with confidentiality requirements.

The Appeal Officer will ask questions to gain a fuller understanding of the appeal.

After the meeting, the Appeal Officer will inform the employee in writing of the result of the appeal and the reason for the decision as soon as possible. There will be no further right of appeal.

An employee who has been subject to a grievance is not able to appeal. Where an appeal is submitted, the respondent may be informed that an appeal has been received and, where relevant, provided with any information or evidence relating to them that will be considered as part of the appeal. This ensures fairness while maintaining confidentiality.

Collective Grievances

Where two or more employees raise a shared concern, a collective grievance may be submitted. The group should nominate no more than two representatives to present the grievance. The grievance will be managed in accordance with the same principles and procedures outlined in this policy.

Record Keeping

All grievance documentation will be retained securely for six years after the last action, in line with data protection legislation. Records are retained to provide an accurate account

of how the grievance was handled and may be referred to if related issues arise in future. This supports consistent, fair, and informed decision-making and helps the organisation meet its legal, safeguarding, and duty-of-care responsibilities.

Records will include:

- The original grievance submission
- Notes of meetings and correspondence
- Investigation findings and the rationale for decisions
- Any appeal documentation and the final outcome

Access to grievance records will be strictly limited to individuals with a legitimate need to manage or support the case.

Grievance Process – Summary Flow

