

Grievance Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this procedure is to resolve any complaints, concerns or problems that may arise during the course of employment, both quickly and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

All A F Blakemore employees have the opportunity to raise a complaint through the procedure i.e. full-time, part-time, casual employees and those on temporary or fixed term contracts.

2. Key Principles

- a) Complaints will be handled sensitively and everyone will be treated with dignity and respect.
- b) No employee will be disadvantaged in any way if they raise a complaint under this procedure.
- c) Both the manager and the employee should actively participate in finding a reasonable solution to any complaint raised.
- d) Complaints will be handled as speedily as possible, and normally within the time frame as set out below.
- e) Complaints will be dealt with in confidence. However, occasionally it may be necessary to share information with others as part of the investigative process. The employee will be kept informed of other persons involved in the investigation.
- f) At all stages of the procedure the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

3. The Procedure

Stage One - Raising a Grievance Informally

Any employee who has a grievance relating to their employment should initially try and resolve the grievance/complaint informally through discussion with their immediate line manager, in an attempt to resolve the issue at the earliest opportunity.

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the employee should raise it formally with their immediate line manager as set out within stage two of the procedure.

Should the employee's grievance be in any way connected to their line manager, they should follow stage two of the procedure and put their grievance in writing to the next level of management.

Stage Two - Raising a Formal Grievance

The employee should write to their Line Manager, clearly stating the nature of their grievance. The employee must also send a copy of the formal grievance to the Human Resources department.

The Human Resources department will arrange a grievance hearing with the employee and the Manager, normally within 14 days of the formal grievance being raised.

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The purpose of the grievance hearing is for the manager to understand the employee's complaint and for both parties to discuss possible solutions. Both the employee and manager should be open to and make constructive proposals towards reaching a solution.

The Human Resources Department will confirm the outcome of the grievance hearing to the employee in writing, normally within 7 days of the hearing.

Stage Three – Grievance Appeal Process

If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily and the employee wishes to appeal, they must do so in writing within 7 days of receiving written confirmation of the outcome of the grievance hearing, setting out the grounds on which the appeal is being made. The appeal letter should be sent to the next level of management within the division and a copy sent to the Human Resources Department.

The Human Resources Department will arrange an appeal hearing, normally within 14 days of receipt of the appeal letter, confirming the information in relation to the grievance appeal in writing, enclosing a copy of the hearing minutes and investigative notes (as appropriate) from the formal grievance hearing (stage two).

The Human Resources Department will confirm the outcome of the grievance appeal hearing to the employee in writing within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the appeal hearing is final.

4. Special Complaints Procedure

In the event of a complaint falling within the broad category of harassment, bullying or discrimination the complaint will be dealt with by way of a special complaints procedure. The matter will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and investigated by the Human resources Department.

Stage 1 – Informal Discussion

In the first instance, the special complaint should be raised with a Human resources Business Partner either verbally or in writing, at which point the matter will be discussed with the employee in full.

Stage 2 – Formal special complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved at stage 1, a full investigation will be carried out by a Human Resources Officer/Manager who will recommend an appropriate course of action.

Stage 3 – Special complaint appeal process

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily and the employee wishes to appeal, they must do so in writing within 7 days of receiving written confirmation of the outcome of their complaint, setting out the grounds on which the appeal is being made. The appeal letter should be sent to the Human Resources Director/Human Resources Business Partner who will review the circumstances of the case and recommend a course of action.

5. Additional Procedure Notes

Seeking help in putting the complaint in writing. Help can be sought from the line manger (as appropriate) a work colleague, a trade union representative, or DIAL UK, a national organisation for a network of 120 local Disability Information and Advice Line services on 01302 310 123. The Retailtrust helpline can also be contacted for advice with regard to employment issues on 0808 801 0808

Adjourning a meeting. If it is felt that further investigation is necessary before a decision can be made or a solution can be proposed, then it may be necessary for an adjournment to be called. In such cases, all reasonable efforts will be made to meet the time-frames as set out within each stage of the procedure.

Making adjustments for an employee who is disabled or who has special needs. In these circumstances, reasonable adjustments as appropriate will be made to ensure that the employee is not disadvantaged during the grievance process as a result of their disability or special needs.

Postponing a meeting at any stage of the procedure. If the work colleague or employee representative (trade union official) cannot attend on the proposed date, an alternative date will be arranged, as long as it is not more than 7 days after the proposed date. This may be extended by mutual agreement.