

Step 4: The grievance meeting

When an employee raises a formal grievance, the employer should arrange to hold a meeting within 5 working days ideally.

The employer should allow employees enough time to prepare for the meeting.

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

- take notes at the meeting
- act as a witness if necessary

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

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

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

- the meeting
- evidence they've gathered
- any decisions or actions taken

The employee:

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should do their best to attend the meeting on the date set

- can bring any evidence about the grievance (for example, relevant emails) to show and discuss at the meeting.

4. The right to be accompanied

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

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

- a colleague
- a trade union representative
- 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 spouse or legal representative.

Allowing time

If the employee wants to bring a companion, they should tell their employer who that person is as soon as possible. This is so arrangements can be made in good time.

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
- take care in deciding on any actions (usually the employer will not need to make an immediate decision)
- consider ending the meeting and resuming it at a later date, if they need to investigate statements and facts from the meeting
- 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
- speak for them
- 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.

At the end of the meeting

The employer should:

- give the employee copies of the meeting record and notes taken
- tell the employee when they will get a decision.

The amount of time needed for a decision should be in line with your workplace 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 (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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