



Respect and Resolution Policy

Fforwm Partneriaeth Cymru
Welsh Partnership Forum

GIG Cymru yn
Gweithio mewn Partneriaeth

NHS Wales
Working in Partnership



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1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 We seek to ensure that all employees have access to a policy to help deal with any requests for resolution relating to their employment fairly, constructively and without unreasonable delay.
- 1.2 We aim to encourage fairness and positive relationships within the workplace. We aim to prevent bullying, harassment and any form of unacceptable behaviour.
- 1.3 We recognise that a positive working environment and good working relationships have a beneficial impact on employee wellbeing, engagement and patient experience. A positive working environment can also lead to better performance, improved employee retention and reduced stress related sickness absence. Focusing on resolution is good for our organisation, it is good for you and it is good for our patients and service users.
- 1.4 We recognise conflict and disagreements in the workplace happens but should not always be viewed negatively. When conflict is managed well it leads to healthy, resilient and positive working relationships. We strive for a workplace where everyone can engage with each other constructively and use the toolkit available to seek their own resolution as far as possible.
- 1.5 If this happens, we will support employees and managers to work together to resolve any issues and conflict constructively and quickly.
- 1.6 We commit to resolving issues at the earliest opportunity without resorting to a formal policy. As a last resort it may be necessary to use the formal part of this policy to resolve disputes or issues. This policy sets out our commitment to helping you seek a resolution.
- 1.7 This policy applies to all employees.
- 1.8 This policy has been agreed by the Wales Partnership Forum.
- 1.9 This policy constitutes the formal grievance policy.
- 1.10 The Core Principles of NHS Wales are central to this policy and apply throughout.

2. USING THIS POLICY

- 2.1 This Resolution Policy is aimed at securing constructive and lasting solutions to workplace disagreements, conflicts and complaints. Issues that could cause disagreements, conflicts or complaints may include but are not limited to:
 - (a) terms and conditions of employment;
 - (b) health and safety;
 - (c) work relations;

- (d) bullying and harassment;
- (e) new working practices;
- (f) working environment;
- (g) organisational change; and
- (h) discrimination.

2.2 The status quo at the time you make your request for resolution will normally remain in place throughout the policy.

The status quo will continue until the request for resolution has been resolved or the formal procedure has been exhausted, other than in exceptional circumstances where it would be a breach of legal requirements or safety issues which may impact upon the status quo.

2.3 Everyone should ensure that issues are dealt with in a fair and consistent way and dealt with quickly and supportively.

2.4 Every workplace in the NHS in Wales should be free from bullying and harassment. We are committed to ensure all staff are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect. This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs at work and out of the workplace, such as on business trips, at work-related events, social functions or online. It covers bullying and harassment by staff (which may include contractors and agency workers) and also by third parties such as patients and visitors to our premises.

Conversely, staff who have experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination (such as racism) may have experiences not being believed, not taken seriously, or not having issues addressed. They may feel discouraged from raising issues, poorly treated or revictimized through the process, resulting in significant detrimental mental health impacts on individuals. Such allegations should come in at the formal stage of the respect and resolution process, where appropriate, and if there was evidence in line with initial assessment we would move to disciplinary or capability processes.

Whilst it would not be appropriate for an employee to specify a pre-determined sanction (such as disciplinary action) as a potential resolution, staff must be given a reasonable expectation that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that behaviour inconsistent with NHS Wales values will be actively identified and addressed, particularly in situations where there is evidence of repeated patterns of behaviour or causing relationship breakdown, balancing confidentiality with the need to keep the individual updated.

Compassionate leadership principles and approaches should be applied throughout, supported by training in applying the policy in an anti-discriminatory and culturally competent manner.

In particular, the culture of blaming those who have raised experiences of racism, whilst denying NHS Wales organisations are systemically racist, needs to be actively acknowledged and addressed.

3. INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- 3.1 It is our aim that we each take ownership of our relationships so that they are as healthy as possible. To help this, a [toolkit](#) has been developed which includes these useful approaches:
- (a) Reflecting Tips on how we can have healthy relationships
 - (b) Having a Cuppa Conversation
 - (c) Discussing with an appropriate leader/manager
 - (d) Taking part in an independently Facilitated Conversation
 - (e) Accessing accredited Mediation.
- 3.2 It is expected that the variety of tools and resources available are used to help resolve the issue(s) prior to raising a formal request for resolution. This can be done with the support of your line manager though this may not always be necessary.
- 3.3 Most disagreements can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with your colleagues or line manager. If you feel unable to speak to your manager, for example, because the issue involves them, then you should speak informally to a more senior manager, your Trade Union Representative or a member of Human Resources. If this does not resolve the issue, you should follow the formal part of the policy below.

4. FORMAL REQUEST FOR RESOLUTION

- 4.1 This step of the policy constitutes a formal grievance.
- 4.2 If your issues cannot be resolved informally by using the resources outlined in the toolkit, you should put your request for resolution in writing and submit it to your line manager (or a more senior manager if the issue involves your line manager) or a member of Human Resources.
- 4.3 Human Resources will appoint someone impartial, of sufficient seniority to consider the request. This appointment usually takes place within seven days of receiving the request. This person will be known as the Chair and will decide on the outcome of your request.
- 4.4 Your written request for resolution should contain a description of the nature of your issue, including any relevant facts, dates, names of individuals involved and the desired resolution you hope to achieve. In some situations, we may ask you to provide more information.
- 4.5 An employee may make a complaint or raise an issue in Welsh and may also respond in Welsh to any allegations made against them and they should be advised of this at the beginning of any proceedings. Any subsequent proceedings should be conducted in Welsh or a simultaneous translation service provided.

5. FORMAL RESOLUTION MEETINGS

- 5.1 The Chair will meet with you to discuss your request for resolution. This should happen within 14 days of the chair being appointed. The purpose of this meeting is to allow you to explain your issue, explain how you think it should be resolved, enabling a decision to be reached based on the available evidence and representations you have made. The focus of this meeting will be seeking a resolution.
- 5.2 Depending on the detail included within your request for resolution the Chair will either explore the issues with you at this meeting and decide on an outcome or will initiate an investigation to enable your request to be considered further.
- 5.3 If a detailed investigation is necessary, the Chair will appoint an investigator. This will normally be an employee of the organisation who is impartial. At this stage, the terms of reference and the timescales will be agreed.
- 5.4 The level of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the issues involved and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from you and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents.
- 5.5 The Chair will make a decision based on the information gathered at the formal resolution meeting(s) and with reference to any investigation, if appropriate.
- 5.6 If it is possible the Chair will provide you with a verbal decision at the end of the meeting. In any event, we will write to you, usually within seven days of the formal resolution meeting, to inform you of the outcome and any further action that is intended to resolve the issues. We will also remind you of your right of appeal.
- 5.7 An accurate record of the meeting will be made and will be available upon request.

6. APPEALS

- 6.1 If your issue has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may appeal in writing within 14 days of the date on which the decision was communicated to you in writing.
- 6.2 We will hold an appeal meeting, normally within one month of receiving your written appeal. This will be dealt with impartially by a more senior person than the Chair who has not previously been involved in the case (although they may ask anyone previously involved to be present where relevant for points of clarification).
- 6.3 This person will be known as the Appeal Chair. The Appeal Chair will be appointed by Human Resources and will usually be appointed within seven days of the appeal being received. The focus of this meeting, again, will be on seeking a resolution.
- 6.4 We will confirm our final decision in writing within seven days of the appeal meeting. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.

7. RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED

- 7.1 You may bring a companion to any investigatory meeting, resolution meeting or appeal meeting to help and support you. The companion may be either a Trade Union Representative or a work colleague.
- 7.2 At the resolution and appeal meetings your companion may address the meeting to put and sum up your case, respond on your behalf to any views expressed, ask questions and confer with you during the meeting. Your companion should not answer questions on your behalf. You may adjourn and talk privately with them at any time during the meeting.
- 7.3 All witnesses will also have the right to be accompanied.

8. COLLECTIVE REQUEST FOR RESOLUTION

- 8.1 This part of the policy applies where more than one employee wishes to invoke the policy on the same issue. This would constitute a formal collective grievance.
- 8.2 If resolution is required for a collective issue the stages of this policy will be followed in accordance with sections 3 to 7 above. All employees who are in support of the collective request for resolution will need to be identified on the submission.
- 8.3 The number of employees attending the formal meeting to represent the collective group will be agreed at the outset (but should not normally exceed three employees plus their companion).
- 8.4 Where this policy fails to reach a resolution to the collective issue, either side may refer the matter to the Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS) for advice or conciliation.

9. OVERLAPPING REQUESTS FOR RESOLUTION AND DISCIPLINARY PROCESSES

- 9.1 Where you raise a request for resolution during a disciplinary process, the manager will discuss with you and your representative before a decision is made on whether the disciplinary policy should be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the request for resolution. Where the request for resolution and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.
- 9.2 There may be occasions when disagreements or conflict have been resolved using the toolkit however the organisation may feel that a disciplinary process is required where core values or standards have been breached.
- 9.3 In some circumstances, such as in cases of harassment or discrimination, it may be decided by the Chair that it is more appropriate to suspend the resolution process and progress the matter under the appropriate disciplinary policy.

10. LEARNING FROM EVENTS

- 10.1 Where appropriate we will reflect and learn from the resolution process. This stage is not a requirement but is encouraged and may be useful in helping develop healthier working environments and relationships.
- 10.2 This review should be conducted in partnership where appropriate, with a view to developing and supporting a healthy working culture. These discussions should be focused on positive outcomes and change (see [toolkit](#)).

