Title: **Grievance - Group Procedure**

Business functions: **Applicable to all functions across Sanctuary Group**

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Sanctuary Group:
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Objective

To outline a process for dealing with employee concerns and grievances relating to such things as pay, conditions and work situations.

Document applies to

Employees raising a grievance

Managers handling the grievance and investigation

Review

January 2026	Addition at Section 1, to highlight data protection complaints.
January 2025	Changes in light of new legislation, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. Also, changes from HR to People Services and Pulse to replace Solis.
October 2024	Formal review - minor changes reflecting change from HR to People Services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Formal Grievance Procedure - Stage 1 (Grievance)
Appendix 2 - Formal Grievance Procedure - Stage 2 (Appeal)

1. Introduction

- An employee grievance is a concern, problem, or complaint that an employee has about their work, the workplace, or someone they work with (this includes management). Something has made them feel dissatisfied and they believe it is unfair and or unjust on them. This also includes concerns regarding discrimination, bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment).
- It is important that grievance concerns are not confused with concerns of a whistleblowing nature. Please refer to the whistleblowing policy and also speak to your People Business Partner, if you have any concerns of the nature of your grievance.
- The Group takes its duties under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 seriously and more details can be found in the Bullying and Harassment - Group Procedure. The Grievance - Group Procedure is an appropriate formal way to raise concerns about any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment.
- Complaints relating to data protection matters, including concerns about the handling, processing and sharing of personal data, data breaches, or responses to individuals' rights requests fall outside of this procedure. These complains are managed separately by the Data Protection team in accordance with the Data Protection - Group Policy and Procedure.

2. Informal procedure

2.1 Employee guidance:

- Every effort should be made where possible, to exhaust informal routes to resolve any workplace issues Where the employee feels an informal approach is not appropriate, you may want to discuss this with your People Business Partner in the first instance.
- You should approach your line manager with any concerns, or if you feel unable to speak to your line manager, you may approach another manager or your People Business Partner.
- You do not have the right to be accompanied to any meeting or mediation held under the informal procedure.

2.2 Manager guidance:

- A record must be kept of the informal grievance and outcome.

3. Formal procedure

3.1 Process maps:

- Formal Grievance Procedure - Stage 1 (Grievance) - **Appendix 1**.
- Formal Grievance Procedure - Stage 2 (Appeal) - **Appendix 2**.

3.2 Employee guidance

3.2.1 Raising a grievance:

- If you feel that the informal procedure is not suitable, or has not fully resolved your concerns, you may wish to raise your grievance formally in writing to your line manager, or another appropriate manager.
- When raising a grievance, it is important to detail what actions you may have already taken to resolve your concerns informally, where possible. It is helpful to detail how your grievance can be resolved.
- You should be aware that, if you are raising a grievance against another employee of Sanctuary Group, the individual(s) concerned will be made aware of this.
- If you are raising a grievance in conjunction with other employees (a collective or group grievance), then it should be agreed for a maximum of two individuals to represent the group concerned.
- You have the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting by a current work colleague, staff council representative, or trade union representative. Please note, it may not always be appropriate for your selected work colleague to be your companion, for example, if they are too closely involved in the matter, impartiality etc. The People team will advise if this is not a suitable companion.
- In the case of collective grievances, should you wish to be accompanied, this will be by one companion only, even if two employees attend the meeting to represent the group.
- If your companion cannot attend on a proposed date, you can suggest an alternative date so long as it is reasonable and is not more than five working days after the proposed original date.
- Upon receipt of a formal grievance and with your agreement, you may be allocated an appropriate nominated person to support you during the grievance process. This will not replace your line manager and in some cases may be your line manager, where appropriate. The role of this nominated person will be to check in with you regularly to ensure that you are receiving support whilst your grievance is ongoing. If you have not been appointed a nominated person and feel this would be beneficial, please feel free to request one.
- Once you have formally raised your concerns, your manager, or the manager assigned to hear the grievance, will invite you to a meeting to discuss your concerns. They will usually then carry out an investigation, which may include speaking to others and gathering any relevant documentation, before providing you with an outcome letter explaining their decision within 14 calendar days.
- Dependent upon the nature of the concerns that you are raising, this may constitute a whistleblowing, should your manager and People Business Partner believe this to be the case, they will discuss this with you. Please note that where the concerns are of a whistleblowing nature, they will be dealt with via the Whistleblowing - Group Procedure.
- Where there are concerns of both a grievance and a whistleblowing nature, these elements will be dealt via the appropriate procedure and may be managed concurrently.

3.2.2 Appealing the decision:

- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your grievance, you may submit a formal appeal. This could be for example if you have new evidence to show or if you believe your grievance outcome is wrong.
- You should appeal in writing to the manager as outlined in your grievance outcome letter within seven calendar days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.
- Your appeal should clearly state the grounds of your appeal, i.e., the basis on which you consider that your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved.
- If you appeal the decision, the senior manager will invite you to an appeal hearing to understand your reasons. They may carry out further investigation, if this is appropriate or required. They will then notify you of the outcome of your appeal by writing within 14 calendar days.

3.3 Manager Guidance

3.3.1 What happens when a grievance is raised?

- If an employee raises a formal grievance, you must inform your People Business Partner before any formal action takes place and may assist with the meetings.
- Formal grievances will normally be received in writing. For those occasions whereby a grievance is raised verbally, please take notes, and then send an email to the employee summarising their concerns, asking for them to confirm that you have captured their concerns correctly.
- A representative from People Services must be in attendance at all grievance and appeal meetings where allegations of discrimination or whistleblowing are being made, including harassment and sexual harassment.
- Employees have the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting by a current work colleague, staff council representative, or trade union representative. Where the employee opts to be accompanied by a trade union official, Sanctuary reserves the right to ask to see official identification from the representative.
- Upon receipt of the grievance, you should acknowledge this in writing, and invite the employee to a meeting to fully understand their concerns and how their grievance can be resolved.
- Where a formal grievance is raised then you should discuss with your People Business Partner whether an additional nominated person is required to provide support to the employee that has submitted a grievance. Where necessary, this should be discussed and agreed with the employee.
- You will then need to carry out an investigation to determine whether the employee’s concerns can be upheld, and what action may be appropriate to resolve the situation.
- Please note where it is unclear if the concerns are of a grievance or a whistleblowing nature, please liaise with your People Business Partner for guidance.

3.3.2 What is an investigation?

- An investigation should usually take place after the grievance hearing, depending on the nature of the grievance.
- Any grievance investigation should be impartial and thorough and may be carried out by either the hearing manager or an appointed investigation officer.
- Investigations aim to look into the employee's concerns to establish whether they can be upheld or not.

- Investigations may involve:
  - interviewing the employee who has raised the grievance;
  - interviewing the employee(s) who the grievance has been raised against;
  - interviewing any other relevant individuals (for example, potential witnesses); and
  - obtaining and analysing any documentary evidence.

3.3.3 How are investigations carried out?

- Establish what needs to be investigated, who needs to be interviewed, and what documents could be useful.
- Arrange interview meetings with any relevant individuals.
- Request that a notetaker be present at any meetings to act as an independent witness and record what has been discussed.
- Collate all information and evidence, including:
  - a clear description of the grievance and the impact on the individual bringing the grievance;
  - the aspects of the grievance that can be upheld and with what evidence; and
  - the aspects of the grievance that cannot be supported, with reasons.
  - In some circumstances it may be necessary for a grievance report to be compiled.

3.3.4 What happens after an investigation?

- Either:
  - Invite the employee to a meeting to discuss the findings of the investigation and follow this up with an outcome letter
- Or:
  - if the grievance meeting took place prior to the investigation, proceed to the outcome letter.
  - If the investigating officer makes any operational recommendations as a consequence of the grievance investigations, it is the responsibility of the investigating officer to liaise with the relevant manager to discuss their recommendations.

3.3.5 Outcome letter:

- The outcome letter must be based on information gathered in the investigation report and the grievance hearing.

- The outcome should be provided in writing to the employee within 14 calendar days.
- If this is not possible, or if further investigation is required following the grievance meeting, the employee must be notified of the delay, the reasons for this, and when they can expect to receive an outcome.
- All outcome letters must be reviewed by the relevant People Business Partner or People Business Manager prior to being sent to the employee.

3.3.6 Anonymous complaints or grievances:

- When an anonymous grievance is received, managers should seek advice from their People BP and decide which is the correct procedure to apply. Some complaints might be appropriately directed to the Whistleblowing - Group Procedure.
- Anonymous complaints should be taken seriously and investigated as would any other grievance or whistleblowing.
- There may be some occasions when insufficient detail has been provided by the complainant, and we have no way to establish more details. In this instance, it may be more appropriate to take other steps such as a period of monitoring or an open surgery/drop in event at the location in question. It might also be appropriate for operational management to make themselves more visible and available for employees, or else check in during My Performance reviews and staff meetings on the broader wellbeing of the team, encouraging openness.

3.3.7 Post-employment grievances:

- If a grievance is raised by an employee who has resigned, is on garden leave, or is working their notice period, the standard grievance procedure will apply.
- If an employee raises concerns in their resignation, the People Business Partner will write to them, inviting them to a meeting to discuss their concerns. If the individual wishes to proceed, the standard grievance procedure will apply.
- Should a grievance be raised post termination of employment, within 14 calendar days of the last date of employment, the Group will:
  - invite the ex-employee to a meeting to discuss the grievance within 14 calendar days from receipt of the grievance (where practicable);
  - conduct any investigation required; and
  - respond in writing to the ex-employee within seven calendar days (where practicable) from the date of the meeting with the ex-employee.
- Should the ex-employee not wish to meet with the manager dealing with the grievance, the manager should still conduct stages 2 and 3 of the above. There is no right of appeal against the decision made.

4. Mediation

4.1 What is mediation?

- A voluntary and confidential process where impartial mediators are appointed to support two or more people in reaching an agreement.

4.2 When can mediation be helpful?

- Can be used at any stage; however, it is especially effective when used at the initial stages of any disagreement before conflict escalates.
- Can be used prior to formal procedure, or as an agreed outcome to a formal procedure.
- May be appropriate in the following circumstances:
  - for conflict involving colleagues or between a line manager and their employee(s);
  - to rebuild relationships after a formal dispute has been resolved; or
  - to address a range of issues, including relationship breakdown, personality clashes, communication matters, perceived bullying and harassment.

4.3 How to arrange mediation:

- Should an employee wish to use mediation to help resolve a workplace dispute, they should contact their line manager or People Business Partner who will make the referral.
- If full mediation is not required, a 'facilitated meeting' can be arranged with the affected parties, facilitated by a People Business Partner, as part of the informal process.

5. Grievances and disciplinary action

- If the grievance procedure indicates that a breach of rules, policies or procedures has taken place by the person bringing the grievance or any other employee, then evidence collected during this procedure can be used in a disciplinary hearing.
- A separate investigation for the purpose of a disciplinary hearing may not therefore be necessary. This also reduces the stress on employees who would otherwise be involved in two separate investigations.
- Employees are encouraged to raise issues at any point. However, they should be aware that if the issues they have raised result in disciplinary proceedings being instigated against another person, they will be expected to offer evidence in any investigation into the matters raised.
- Any disciplinary action will be managed in line with the Disciplinary - Group Procedure.

6. If a grievance is raised against you

- If a grievance is raised against you, as part of the process, you will be notified, and the matter will be discussed with you.
- You may wish to have an appropriate nominated person to support you throughout the grievance process. Please liaise with your People Business Partner if this is something you would value.
- You will receive an outcome letter, or verbal feedback as appropriate, advising what the outcome of the grievance is specific to any concern raised in respect of you and what next steps, if appropriate are being taken.

7. Keeping records

- Records of grievance related matters are confidential, and all parties involved in any grievances are to maintain the confidential nature of the process. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.
- Records should detail the nature of the grievance and any subsequent action taken, to include any notes of investigation meetings carried out.
- Once the matter has concluded, all records should be kept on employee files as appropriate.
- Cases are also recorded on Radar for the purposes of case management, monitoring and assessment of any emerging trends.
- Records are held on the employee's personnel file and OneSanctuary in accordance with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.