Selsey Community Forum
Grievance Policy

Introduction

Selsey Community Forum is committed to providing employees with a fair and effective way to raise concerns, problems or complaints relating to their work or employment. The purpose of this Policy is to encourage concerns to be addressed promptly and, where appropriate, informally before they escalate. Where informal resolution is not appropriate or has not resolved the concern, employees may raise a formal grievance.

This Policy is intended to reflect the principles of the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures. This Policy does not form part of the contract of employment unless expressly stated otherwise.

Scope

This Policy applies to employees of Selsey Community Forum. It may be used to raise concerns relating to matters such as:

- working conditions;
- working relationships;
- treatment by colleagues or managers;
- pay or benefits;
- working hours;
- health and safety;
- discrimination;
- bullying;
- harassment;
- sexual harassment;
- victimisation;
- reasonable adjustments;
- statutory employment rights;
- management decisions;
- workplace procedures; or
- another issue affecting the employee's employment.

Some concerns may be more appropriately dealt with under another procedure. These may include:

- disciplinary appeals;
- whistleblowing;
- safeguarding;
- bullying and harassment;
- sexual harassment;
- flexible working;
- redundancy consultation; or
- another specific procedure.

Selsey Community Forum will determine the most appropriate procedure having regard to the substance of the concern.

Principles

Grievances will be handled:

- fairly;
- objectively;

- promptly;
- sensitively;
- consistently; and
- with appropriate regard to confidentiality.

Employees will not be subjected to unlawful detriment for raising a genuine grievance. The fact that a grievance is not upheld does not, by itself, mean that it was raised improperly.

Informal Resolution

Employees are encouraged, where appropriate, to try to resolve concerns informally before raising a formal grievance. This may involve speaking with:

- their line manager;
- another manager;
- HR, where applicable;
- another appropriate person; or
- the individual concerned, where the employee feels comfortable doing so.

Informal resolution will not be appropriate in every case. For example, an employee may reasonably choose to raise a formal grievance immediately where the concern involves:

- serious harassment;
- sexual harassment;
- discrimination;
- serious bullying;
- safeguarding;
- serious misconduct;
- a breakdown in trust;
- a senior manager; or
- another matter where informal discussion would be inappropriate.

Employees are not required to confront another individual personally before using the formal procedure. Where an informal discussion takes place, the aim should be to:

- understand the concern;
- identify possible misunderstandings;
- explore practical solutions;
- clarify expectations;
- consider support; and
- seek an early resolution.

A brief record of any agreed actions may be kept where appropriate. An informal discussion does not itself amount to a formal grievance process.

Mediation and Facilitated Conversations

Where appropriate and agreed by those involved, Selsey Community Forum may consider:

- mediation;
- facilitated discussion;
- informal conflict resolution; or
- another appropriate intervention.

These approaches are voluntary and will not be suitable for every concern. They may be particularly useful where the issue relates to:

- communication;
- working relationships;
- misunderstandings; or
- interpersonal conflict.

Raising a Formal Grievance

Where an employee wishes to raise a formal grievance, they should normally do so in writing. The grievance should be sent to:

- the employee's line manager; or
- another appropriate manager, Trustee or other nominated person where the grievance concerns the line manager or the employee reasonably does not feel able to raise it with them.

Where necessary, Selsey Community Forum may identify an alternative person to receive the grievance. Employees should raise grievances without unreasonable delay where possible.

What the Written Grievance Should Include

The written grievance should explain the nature of the concern as clearly as reasonably possible. Where appropriate, it should include:

- what happened;
- relevant dates;
- people involved;
- any steps already taken to resolve the matter;
- relevant supporting information; and
- how the employee would like the matter to be resolved, where they are able to suggest an outcome.

Employees are not expected to prepare a legal document. A clear explanation of the concern is sufficient.

Verbal Grievances

Where an employee has difficulty putting a grievance in writing because of disability, language, literacy or another reasonable reason, Selsey Community Forum will consider an alternative way for the grievance to be recorded. Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

Initial Assessment

On receiving a formal grievance, Selsey Community Forum will consider:

- the nature of the concern;
- whether another procedure is more appropriate;
- whether immediate action is required;
- whether an investigation is needed;
- whether safeguarding or health and safety issues arise;
- whether interim measures are necessary; and
- who should handle the grievance.

Grievance Investigation

Where necessary, Selsey Community Forum will carry out a reasonable investigation before reaching an outcome. The investigation may include:

- speaking to the employee;
- interviewing witnesses;
- reviewing documents;
- reviewing emails or messages;
- considering relevant policies;
- reviewing system or other evidence where lawfully available; and
- gathering other relevant information.

The scope of the investigation will depend on the nature and seriousness of the grievance.

Investigator and Decision-Maker

Where reasonably practicable, the grievance should be handled by someone who:

- is sufficiently independent of the matters raised;
- has appropriate authority; and
- can approach the issue impartially.

In smaller organisations, it may not always be possible to use someone entirely unconnected with the matter. Where necessary, an external HR adviser or another appropriate person may be involved. Depending on the circumstances, an appropriate Trustee may also be appointed to investigate, hear or determine a grievance, provided they are sufficiently independent of the matters raised.

Grievance Meeting

A grievance meeting will normally be arranged without unreasonable delay. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- allow the employee to explain their grievance;
- clarify relevant facts;

- understand the employee's preferred resolution;
- identify any further investigation required; and
- consider possible ways forward.

Right to Be Accompanied

An employee has a statutory right to be accompanied at a formal grievance meeting where the grievance concerns the performance of a duty by the employer in relation to the employee. The companion may be:

- a fellow worker;
- a certified trade union representative; or
- an official employed by a trade union.

The employee must make a reasonable request to be accompanied. Where appropriate, Selsey Community Forum may allow another companion, including as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled employee.

Role of the Companion

The companion may:

- address the meeting;
- put or sum up the employee's case;
- respond on the employee's behalf to views expressed at the meeting; and
- confer with the employee.

The companion may not normally:

- answer questions on the employee's behalf;
- prevent the employee from answering questions; or
- prevent Selsey Community Forum from explaining its position.

Selsey Community Forum will not unreasonably refuse a statutory companion.

Companion Unavailable

If the employee's chosen statutory companion is unavailable at the proposed time, the employee may propose a reasonable alternative time. Where the statutory requirements are met, the meeting will be postponed to the proposed alternative time provided it is reasonable and falls within five working days of the original meeting date. Selsey Community Forum may agree to a later date where this is reasonable in the circumstances.

Reasonable Adjustments

Selsey Community Forum will consider reasonable adjustments throughout the grievance process where an employee is disabled. Adjustments may include:

- alternative communication formats;
- additional breaks;
- remote attendance;
- accessible meeting locations;
- additional time;
- changes to meeting arrangements;
- allowing an alternative companion; or
- another appropriate measure.

Failure to Attend

Employees are expected to make reasonable efforts to attend grievance meetings. Where an employee cannot attend for a genuine reason, an alternative date or arrangement will normally be considered. If an employee repeatedly fails to attend without good reason, Selsey Community Forum may consider the grievance on the available information. Before doing so, Selsey Community Forum will consider:

- the reasons for non-attendance;
- health or disability;
- whether written submissions can be provided;
- whether remote attendance is possible; and
- whether another reasonable arrangement is appropriate.

Further Investigation

The grievance meeting may be adjourned or reconvened where further investigation is required. The employee may be asked for additional information where reasonably necessary. Where relevant new evidence emerges, the employee should normally be given an appropriate opportunity to comment on it before a final decision is reached.

Confidentiality

Grievance matters will be handled sensitively. Information will only be shared where there is a legitimate need to know. Participants may be asked to maintain appropriate confidentiality to protect:

- individuals involved;
- witnesses;
- personal information; and
- the integrity of the process.

Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Nothing in this Policy prevents an employee from:

- obtaining legal advice;
- seeking trade union support;
- making a protected disclosure;
- reporting a crime;
- raising a safeguarding concern; or
- exercising another statutory right.

Witness Confidentiality

Requests from witnesses for confidentiality or anonymity will be considered carefully. Anonymity will not automatically be granted. Relevant considerations may include:

- risk of intimidation;
- safeguarding concerns;
- the nature of the evidence;
- fairness to the employee;
- whether the evidence can be tested; and
- whether disclosure is necessary for a fair process.

Where possible, sufficient information should be provided to allow the employee to understand and respond to material evidence.

Grievance Outcome

Once the grievance has been investigated, Selsey Community Forum will decide whether it is:

- upheld;
- partially upheld;
- not upheld; or
- otherwise resolved.

The employee will normally receive the outcome in writing without unreasonable delay. The written outcome should normally explain:

- the decision;
- the main reasons;
- any action Selsey Community Forum intends to take where appropriate; and
- the employee's right of appeal.

Actions Following a Grievance

Possible actions may include:

- no further action;
- management guidance;
- changes to working arrangements;
- clarification of responsibilities;
- mediation;
- training;
- review of policies or procedures;
- reasonable adjustments;

- management action;
- a separate disciplinary investigation;
- safeguarding action; or
- another appropriate measure.

The employee raising the grievance may not always be entitled to detailed information about confidential action taken against another employee.

Complaints About Another Employee

Where a grievance concerns the conduct of another employee, the grievance procedure will determine whether the complaint is substantiated. If disciplinary action against another employee may be appropriate, that matter will normally be dealt with separately under the Disciplinary Policy.

The person raising the grievance will not usually be entitled to receive confidential details of any disciplinary sanction imposed on another employee. They may, however, be told that appropriate action has been taken where this is reasonable.

Grievances About Bullying, Harassment or Sexual Harassment

Where a grievance includes allegations of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination or victimisation, Selsey Community Forum will also consider any applicable Equality, Harassment, Sexual Harassment or other relevant policy or procedure. Appropriate steps may include:

- risk assessment;
- interim working arrangements;
- safeguarding the individuals involved;
- support;
- separating reporting lines;
- preventing retaliation; and
- considering whether disciplinary action may be required.

Victimisation and Retaliation

Employees must not be subjected to victimisation or retaliation because they have:

- raised a genuine grievance or concern;
- supported another employee's grievance;
- acted as a witness;
- raised discrimination or harassment concerns; or
- exercised another legally protected right.

Any such conduct may itself be addressed under the Disciplinary Policy.

Malicious or Deliberately False Complaints

A grievance that is not upheld will not automatically be regarded as malicious or false. However, where there is evidence that an employee knowingly made a deliberately false allegation in bad faith, this may be considered under the Disciplinary Policy. This provision must not be used to discourage employees from raising genuine concerns.

Grievances Raised During a Disciplinary Process

Where an employee raises a grievance during disciplinary proceedings, Selsey Community Forum will consider the relationship between the two matters. Depending on the circumstances, Selsey Community Forum may:

- pause the disciplinary process;
- deal with the grievance first;
- deal with both matters concurrently; or
- continue the disciplinary process where the grievance does not materially affect it.

There is no automatic requirement to suspend disciplinary proceedings simply because a grievance has been raised.

Grievances Raised After Employment Ends

A former employee may raise concerns about matters relating to their employment after it has ended. Selsey Community Forum will decide the appropriate way to respond taking account of:

- the nature of the concern;
- whether meaningful investigation remains possible;
- legal or regulatory requirements;
- ongoing risks;
- the interests of current employees; and
- the circumstances in which employment ended.

The full procedure may not always be appropriate after employment has ended.

Collective Grievances

Where the same or substantially similar grievance is raised by more than one employee, Selsey Community Forum may consider whether it is appropriate to deal with the matter collectively. This may include using:

- employee representatives;
- trade union representatives;
- a nominated spokesperson; or
- another agreed arrangement.

Collective grievances may be managed through a separate process where appropriate. The fact that several employees share the same concern does not mean the issue should simply fall outside the grievance framework.

Appeal

An employee may appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal grievance. The appeal should normally be submitted in writing within **five working days** of receiving the written outcome, unless Selsey Community Forum agrees to accept a later appeal. The appeal should explain the grounds relied upon. These may include:

- relevant evidence was not considered;
- the decision was unreasonable;
- the investigation was materially inadequate;
- the procedure was materially unfair;
- new evidence has become available;
- the proposed resolution is inappropriate; or
- discrimination or another legal issue may have affected the outcome.

Appeal Meeting

An appeal meeting will normally be arranged without unreasonable delay. Where practicable, the appeal will be handled by someone who:

- has appropriate authority;
- was not responsible for the original decision; and
- can approach the matter impartially.

In smaller organisations this may not always be possible. Where appropriate, the appeal may be heard by an independent Trustee or suitably experienced external person**.** The employee has the statutory right to be accompanied at the appeal meeting where the statutory requirements apply.

Nature of the Appeal

The appeal may involve:

- a review of the original decision;
- consideration of particular grounds of appeal;
- consideration of new evidence; or
- a rehearing,

depending on what is fair and appropriate in the circumstances. The scope of the appeal will depend on the grounds raised and what is fair and appropriate in the circumstances.

Appeal Outcome

The appeal decision may:

- uphold the original outcome;
- vary the outcome;
- overturn the decision;
- require further investigation; or

- result in another appropriate resolution.

The employee will normally be informed of the outcome in writing without unreasonable delay. The appeal decision will normally be final within Selsey Community Forum's internal procedure.

Records

Appropriate records may be kept relating to:

- the grievance;
- informal discussions where relevant;
- investigation;
- evidence;
- meetings;
- outcomes;
- actions; and
- appeals.

Records will be:

- factual;
- proportionate;
- stored securely;
- accessible only where there is a legitimate need; and
- retained in accordance with Selsey Community Forum's applicable data protection and record-retention arrangements.

Personal information will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and Selsey Community Forum's Data Protection Policy.

Responsibilities of Managers and Others Handling Grievances

Managers, Trustees or other individuals involved in handling grievance matters should:

- listen impartially;
- avoid assumptions;
- address concerns promptly;
- consider informal resolution where appropriate;
- recognise when another procedure applies;
- consider reasonable adjustments;
- manage confidentiality appropriately;
- avoid retaliation;
- keep suitable records; and
- seek advice where a matter is complex or sensitive.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are expected to:

- raise concerns without unreasonable delay where possible;
- explain their concerns clearly;
- provide relevant information;
- engage constructively with the process;
- attend meetings where reasonably possible;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality; and
- consider practical ways of resolving the matter.

Training

Managers, Trustees and other individuals who may be involved in handling grievances should receive appropriate guidance or training for the role they are undertaking. This may include:

- informal resolution;
- investigation;
- discrimination and harassment;
- reasonable adjustments;
- accompaniment rights;
- confidentiality;

- appeals;
- mediation;
- data protection; and
- overlapping disciplinary issues.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, ACAS guidance or Selsey Community Forum's organisational arrangements.

Version Control

Version Number	Date of Update	Amendments
1.0	October 2025	Policy reviewed
2.0	October 2026	Reviewed and updated in line with the current ACAS Code of Practice and 2026 consultation proposals