

Grievance Policy and Procedure

headlam

At Headlam we want to be seen as the leading, most trusted experts in flooring, and we want to make Headlam a great place for our colleagues to work.



Colleagues are **encouraged to tell us** when they are **concerned** about something that's happening in the workplace, or when they don't feel our **shared values** are being demonstrated.

Colleagues will be invited to a meeting to discuss their concerns in more detail. They can be supported by a colleague or a Trade Union Representative.



Concerns will be investigated thoroughly. There is no time limit on how long it takes to investigate a concern. It will depend on the nature and complexity of the issues raised.

Raising a concern will **not be viewed as a negative thing**. It is an **opportunity** for us to reflect on something that has happened, **make improvements where we can, keep improving everywhere,** and make sure we are always doing the right thing.



Colleagues should **put concerns in writing to their Line Manager** in the first instance. If they do not feel able to do this, they can write to their Line Managers' Manager, or the HR Department.

Colleagues will be **notified of the Company's decision in writing**. They will have the opportunity to appeal if they do not agree with the decision.



Grievance Policy and Procedure

Purpose:	<p>At Headlam we want to be seen as the leading, most trusted experts in flooring, and we want to make Headlam a great place for our colleagues to work. We know that in order to achieve this we must create an environment where colleagues feel empowered to tell us about any workplace problems or concerns that they have, and where they trust that all genuine problems are investigated and resolved quickly and fairly.</p> <p>We believe that many problems can be resolved informally through open and honest communication. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, colleagues may choose to raise a formal complaint.</p> <p>This policy outlines the problem-solving process and the support that colleagues who raise a complaint can expect to receive from Headlam.</p>
Scope:	<p>This policy applies to colleagues at the Headlam group of Companies, who work in UK Distribution, Head Office or PLC in the UK only.</p> <p>This policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment.</p>
Issuing Department:	The HR Department
Issue/Last Review Date:	January 2024
Date of Next Review (if applicable):	January 2025

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Introduction

At Headlam we want to be seen as the leading, most trusted experts in flooring, and we want to make Headlam a great place for our colleagues to work. We believe this can be achieved through our shared values:



And always, do the right thing!

Furthermore, we believe that all colleagues should be treated fairly and respectfully by their colleagues, line manager(s), associates e.g. customers and contractors, and by the company itself. Further information regarding this can be found in our Inclusion and Respect Policy.

Occasionally colleagues may feel that they have not been treated fairly or in line with our shared values, and we encourage them to tell us when they feel this way. We operate a clear, open and fair framework for addressing any such problems that we become aware of.

Informal approach to a grievance

Many problems can be resolved informally, without the need for colleagues to raise a formal complaint. We encourage all colleagues to speak to their line manager about their problem in the first instance as this will give the line manager the opportunity to resolve the situation quickly and on an informal basis.

Where colleagues feel unable to speak to their line manager about their problem e.g. if they consider their line manager to be the cause of it, or a contributing factor, colleagues can contact their line manager's manager or the HR Department. Alternatively, colleagues can refer to our Speak Up Policy.

Whilst we generally encourage colleagues to attempt informal resolution in the first instance, it should be noted that there may occasions where the Company considers the matter too serious to be dealt with informally and will therefore insist on a formal approach, even if this is not the colleague's preferred option. For example, where one of our core values has been materially breached i.e. serious breaches of Health and Safety, harassment or discrimination. In these situations, the colleague will be informed that the Company intends to deal with their concern formally and will expect the colleague to cooperate fully.

Formal approach to a grievance

Raising a grievance formally

Colleagues should set out their concerns in writing in the first instance, and submit it to their line manager. If the concern involves the line manager, colleagues should instead submit their letter to the line manager's manager or the HR department. In this case, they are required to explain within their letter why they are not submitting it to their line manager in the first instance.

Initial Review

Upon receipt of the written letter, the company may deem it appropriate to revert to informal attempts to resolve the problem. However, if the colleague is not satisfied with the outcome, they may insist on the matter being dealt with formally.

Invite to a grievance meeting

Upon receipt of the written letter, the company will write to the colleague giving them 48 hours' notice to attend a grievance meeting. The letter will set out:

- The date/time/location of the meeting
- The name of the chairperson and anyone else who will be in attendance e.g. a note taker
- The colleague's right to be accompanied to the meeting by a colleague or a Trade Union Representative

If the grievance is urgent, the company and the colleague may agree to waive the usual 48-hour notice period, and to hold the grievance meeting as soon as possible.

The chairperson

The meeting chairperson will usually be the line manager of the colleague who is raising the concern. If this is not appropriate (e.g. if the colleague considers their line manager to be the cause of, or a contributing factor to the problem) an independent manager will be appointed to chair the meeting. The independent manager will be of equal or greater seniority than the colleague's line manager.

The grievance meeting

During the grievance meeting, colleagues will be asked to further explain the nature of their problem, to describe examples of the treatment they have received (if applicable), and to discuss any supporting evidence they want to submit. The chairperson will ask any questions they consider necessary to fully understand the problem.

While colleagues will be given every opportunity to explain their grievance fully, they should confine their explanation to matters that are directly relevant to their problem. Focusing on irrelevant issues or incidents that took place long before the matters in hand is not helpful and can hinder the effective handling of problems. The chairperson will intervene if they think the discussion is straying too far from the key issue. The chairperson may also intervene to ensure the meeting can be completed within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the nature and complexity of the problem.

The chairperson will adjourn the meeting for as long as is necessary to consider their decision. During the adjournment the chairperson may need to:

- Reflect on the discussions which took place during the meeting
- Seek advice from the HR Department
- Carry out investigations into the matters raised
- Interview witnesses

The decision

Once the chairperson has made their decision they may either:

- Reconvene the meeting to issue their decision verbally, and then confirm the decision in writing shortly afterwards, or
- Issue the decision in writing

Written decision

All decisions will be communicated or confirmed to the colleague in writing by the chairperson.

The written letter will:

- Confirm whether the complaint is upheld (either entirely or partially)
- Explain how the decision was reached
- Set out the actions which will be/have been taken to resolve the problem
- Inform the colleague of their right to appeal against the decision

Investigations prior to the grievance meeting

Before the grievance meeting takes place, the chairperson may conduct some investigations based on the information provided within the written statement e.g. checking CCTV or gathering documents pertaining to the problem. If any evidence is gathered in the course of these investigations, colleagues will be given a copy during the grievance meeting (or beforehand if time allows) for discussion during the meeting.

In exceptional circumstances, the evidence which is collected may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, this will be explained to the colleague and an appropriate summary of the evidence gathered will be provided instead.

Appeal

A colleague may appeal against the decision made by the chairperson.

Lodging an Appeal

Colleagues will have five days from receipt of their written decision within which to lodge their appeal.

All appeals should be lodged in writing. The person/department to which appeals should be addressed will be stated on the decision letter.

When lodging an appeal, colleagues should clearly state the reason why they feel the original decision was unfair or incorrect, for example:

- Important evidence was not taken into account

- New evidence has come to light since the problem-solving meeting
- The grievance process was not carried out properly or fairly

Please note that complaints which colleagues have about any disciplinary sanction they have been issued with will normally be dealt with via the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, as part of a colleague's right to appeal.

Complaints raised while colleagues are subject to disciplinary proceedings will usually be heard only when the disciplinary process has been completed. Insofar as a complaint has any bearing on the disciplinary proceedings, it can be raised as a relevant issue in the course of those proceedings.

The Appeal Chairperson

Upon receipt of the appeal, an appeal chairperson will be appointed. Where possible, the appeal chairperson will be a manager of equal or greater seniority to the grievance chairperson, who has not been involved in the investigation or the circumstances giving rise to the problem.

Notification

Once an appeal is lodged, the colleague will receive a letter inviting them to attend an appeal hearing. The letter will set out:

- The date/time/location of the hearing
- The name of the chairperson and anyone else who will be in attendance e.g. a note taker
- The colleague's right to be accompanied to the hearing by a colleague or a Trade Union Representative

The Appeal Hearing

The Appeal Hearing will normally take place within 14 days of receipt of the colleagues written letter of appeal.

During the appeal hearing the colleague will be given the opportunity to discuss their grounds of appeal.

The appeal chairperson will then adjourn the appeal hearing for as long as is necessary for them to consider everything which has been discussed, review any new evidence which has come to light, carry out any further investigations which may be necessary, and/or to review the original evidence and paperwork pertaining to the case. During the adjournment, the appeal chairperson may seek advice from the HR Department.

The Decision

Once the appeal has been thoroughly explored, the appeal chairperson has the following options:

- **Do not uphold the appeal**
The original decision will remain in place
- **Partially uphold the appeal**
The appeal chairperson may find that some elements of the original decision, or the problem-solving process, was incorrect. They will adjust the findings accordingly.
- **Uphold the appeal**

The appeal chairperson may find that the original decision was incorrect. They will adjust the findings accordingly.

Once the appeal chairperson has made their decision they may either:

- Reconvene the hearing to issue their decision verbally, and then confirm the decision in writing shortly afterwards, or
- Issue the decision in writing

Depending upon the level and complexity of the investigations which are needed, the decision will normally be made within one week of the appeal hearing taking place.

Written Outcome of Appeal Hearing

All appeal outcomes will be communicated or confirmed to the colleague in writing by the appeal chairperson. The letter will set out:

- Whether or not the appeal is upheld entirely, partially, or not at all
- Details of how the decision was reached

The decision of the appeal chairperson will be final.

Collective Complaints

In the event that a number of colleagues (more than two) have an identical problem which they wish to have addressed collectively, they can raise a collective grievance. To do this, they should submit one letter which clearly sets out the nature of the complaint, and this should be signed by all complainants. The letter should clearly nominate which representative(s) will attend the grievance meeting on behalf of all complainants.

The process for addressing collective complaints is the same as it would otherwise be, but the representative will be speaking on behalf of all complainants.

The outcome will be communicated to all complainants in writing in the usual way, and the usual appeal options will apply.

Confidentiality

The company will respect the privacy of all colleagues involved in grievance procedures, whether they be informal or formal. Details of the problem will only be shared with those who need to know for the purposes of carrying out their role. All colleagues involved in grievance procedures are asked to respect the privacy of others at all times, and not to share details with anyone.

If, as a result of a grievance being raised, the company finds that a particular individual is guilty of mistreating their colleague, appropriate action will be taken to address this, in line with the company's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (if the matter is sufficiently serious). The guilty individual has a right to privacy, and therefore the colleague who raised the problem will not be privy to details of the action taken. They will be assured that the company has taken all reasonable steps to prevent the problem reoccurring. If the problem does reoccur, the colleague should notify their line manager or the HR Department.

Postponement

Where a colleague has good reason for being unable to attend a grievance meeting, it will be rearranged. The colleague will be provided with written confirmation of the new hearing date.

Where a colleague's chosen companion is unavailable to attend on the original scheduled date of the meeting, the colleague may request that the meeting be rescheduled to an alternative date/time, within five working days of the original scheduled date. The colleague will be provided with written confirmation of the new meeting date.

Unless there are special circumstances mitigating against it, if the colleague is unable to attend a grievance meeting after it has been rearranged once, the chairperson will proceed with their investigations, and with making a decision, in the absence of a meeting. If a colleague does not wish for this to happen, they should notify the chairperson in writing that they are withdrawing their statement and no longer wish for their problem to be addressed.

Trade Union Representation

Headlam does not recognise Trade Unions. However, we do appreciate that all colleagues have the legal right to be accompanied to grievance meetings and appeal hearings by a representative from a Trade Union which they are a member of. If they prefer, they may choose to be accompanied by a workplace colleague who is not connected with the case.

Role of Companion

During both the grievance meeting and the appeal hearing, the colleague's chosen companion has the right to:

- Address the meeting at the start, to put forward the colleague's case
- Sum up the colleague's case at the end of the meeting
- Respond on the colleague's behalf, at the end of the meeting, to any view expressed at the hearing
- Confer with the colleague during the meeting and request short adjournments to confer in private
- Make notes

Companions are not permitted to answer questions on behalf of the colleague, or to address the meeting if the colleague indicates that they do not wish this.

Witnesses

It may be necessary for the chairperson of a grievance or appeal meeting to interview witnesses, or colleagues accused of inappropriate behaviour. Such witnesses and colleagues will not be entitled to written notice of their interview and they will not be entitled to have a companion present.

Mediation

It may be appropriate for the grievance to be dealt with by way of mediation, depending on the nature of your grievance. This involves the appointment of an independent mediator, who will discuss the grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. Mediation will be used only where all parties involved agree.

Withdrawal

A colleague who wishes to withdraw their written statement and halt the grievance process may seek to do so at any point by notifying the nominated chair person in writing. However, please note that some grievances may be considered so serious that the company is not prepared to halt the grievance process once it has started.

Continued working

Colleagues are expected to attend work as normal whilst their grievance is being resolved (whether that be informally or formally). If the grievance is sufficiently serious, and there is a need to make urgent temporary amendments to normal working practices whilst the grievance is being resolved (e.g. change of shift, workload or line manager), the company will make such changes. Making such changes does not imply guilt; it is merely a holding measure to protect those involved until the grievance is resolved.

Written records

At all stages of the grievance and appeal process, the chairperson(s) will make written notes.

Abuse of the grievance policy and procedure

The company expects anyone embarking upon formal grievance procedures to be doing so with the genuine intention of resolving their issue. Any colleague who is suspected to have raised a false or malicious complaint will be investigated and, if proven, subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

The company does not expect colleagues to abuse the grievance policy and procedure by insisting that trivial problems are dealt with via a formal grievance process. The company will always advise colleagues if they feel their grievance is best resolved informally. In extreme cases of suspected policy abuse, the company reserves the right not to accept the formal complaint, and to take disciplinary action against the colleague raising it, particularly if their actions cause upset to others.

End of Policy