



Tackling Workplace Grievances in 2025

A Practical Guide for Leaders & Teams

By HRthrive – where people and performance grow together

Why This Guide Matters

Workplaces have shifted dramatically since the pandemic. Some of us thrive in hybrid work arrangements; others prefer the energy of the office. Add in cost-of-living pressures, AI's growing role in workplaces, and heightened awareness of wellbeing and diversity – it's no surprise that **grievances are rising across the board**.

At HRthrive, we see one truth again and again: **conflict doesn't have to derail your organisation**. Handled with care, it can strengthen trust, fairness, and belonging. Left unchecked, it can escalate into costly tribunals, high turnover, and a damaged culture.

This guide is here to give you **practical, step-by-step advice** for 2025 and beyond. It's longer than your average HR blog because we know you need more than soundbites. And it's written in plain, people-focused language – because HR shouldn't feel like legalese.

The New Grievance Landscape (Post-2020 to Now)

A few trends you should be aware of:

- **Hybrid & remote work conflicts**
Who comes in when? Who gets flexible hours? Misunderstandings can quickly become inequities.
- **Technology frustrations**
Employees are raising issues about intrusive monitoring software, data protection, and digital burnout.
- **Wellbeing & mental health**
Poor workload management, lack of breaks, or unsympathetic managers can escalate into formal complaints.
- **Belonging and inclusion**
Grievances about discrimination, microaggressions, or failure to accommodate neurodiverse colleagues are now common – and rightly taken seriously.
- **Generational expectations**
Gen Z expects transparency, feedback, and career opportunities. Silent treatment or “that's how we've always done it” responses can lead directly to disputes.



Step 1: Build a Culture That Prevents Complaints

(Because prevention is easier than process)

You can't stop all grievances, but you can reduce them. Three golden rules:

1. **Communicate early and often** – Hybrid isn't about one-size-fits-all. Clear expectations save countless headaches.
2. **Train your managers** – Most employees don't escalate straight to HR; they test the waters with their manager first. If a line manager mishandles that moment, you've lost trust.
3. **Normalise feedback** – Make it part of everyday culture to speak up. That way, raising an issue isn't scary – it's just part of being human at work.

Pro tip: Use **pulse surveys** or anonymous digital check-ins to spot brewing tensions before they formalise.

Step 2: Handling Complaints Informally

Often, what staff want is simply: *to be listened to.*

- Create a safe space for initial conversations.
- Document (yes, even informal chats). Note issue, date, what was agreed.
- Allow support (colleague, union rep, interpreter, carer) if needed.
- End every meeting with an agreed **next step and follow-up date.**

In 80% of cases HRthrive supports, informal handling is enough – provided employees feel **seen, heard, and respected.**

Step 3: Formal Grievances – How to Get It Right

When issues escalate:

Writing & Raising

- Must be **in writing**, as per company grievance policy.
- Policy should highlight *who* to contact.
- Serious issues (e.g. harassment, safeguarding) may skip informal stages.

Investigations

- Assign an **unbiased investigator** with no stake in the issue.
- Keep confidentiality watertight.
- Be transparent about process and timelines.

Hearings

- Aim to hold within **5 working days** of investigation completion.
- Employee can be **accompanied** (colleague, union rep, interpreter, carer).
- Two-way: listen, clarify, and ask what "resolution" means for them.





Step 4: Decisions and Appeals

Decision

- Put it **in writing** with clear reasoning.
- Be timely – long silences undermine trust.
- Provide info on right to appeal.

Appeals

- Must be heard by someone not previously involved – ideally more senior, or independent HR in small businesses.
- Same rights apply (accompaniment, explanation, etc.).
- Focus is on reviewing fairness of original handling, not recommending entire case (unless unfairness is proven).

Step 5: Mediation & External Support

Sometimes you simply need a neutral third party. **Mediation** can:

- Defuse tensions before lawyers get involved.
- Encourage honest conversations in a safe structure.
- Save relationships that would otherwise collapse.

At HRthrive, we provide **trained mediators** who create space for genuine resolution – tailored to your business and people.

Special Considerations for 2025

AI & Digital Monitoring

Grievances are emerging where staff feel “spied on” or monitored unfairly. Be transparent about why tools are used, involve staff in policy design, and provide opt-outs where practical.

Neurodiversity & Adjustments

Complaints around lack of adjustments are surging. It’s not just about compliance; it’s about tapping into talent. Ensure your grievance process covers accessibility at every stage.

Hybrid Inequities

Watch for complaints where remote workers feel overlooked compared to in-office staff. Train managers on **performance evaluation bias**.

Mental Health

Stress-related grievances are among the fastest growing. Mental Health First Aiders, supportive flexible policies, and genuine workload management go a long way.



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Practical Checklist (Save This!)

- ✓ Accessible grievance policy (easy to find, plain language).
- ✓ Training for managers in listening + fair handling.
- ✓ Documented informal conversations.
- ✓ Clear investigation and confidentiality commitments.
- ✓ Timely hearings and decisions, in writing.
- ✓ Appeals handled independently.
- ✓ Consider mediation before tribunals.

Need Support Right Now?

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