LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Grievance (Complaints) Policy

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Responsible work team:	**Professional Standards Unit**

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1 Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the London Fire Brigade's (LFB) provisions for raising and resolving concerns, problems or complaints relating to employment. It explains how concerns will be handled both informally and formally and is separate from the LFB's Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392, which deals with allegations of misconduct.

1.2 Everyone working within the LFB has the right to an inclusive working environment where they are treated with dignity and respect, in line with the LFB's values, and feel safe, supported and enabled to perform at their best. The LFB expects all individuals working in or with the organisation to be treated with dignity and respect.

1.3 This policy is underpinned by the LFB's values, which guide how concerns are raised, considered and resolved:

- Service – we put the public first.
- Courage – we step up to the challenge
- Learning – we listen so that we can improve
- Teamwork – we work together and include everyone
- Equity – we treat everyone fairly, according to their needs
- Integrity – we act with honesty

1.4 The aim of this policy is to resolve workplace concerns constructively and at the earliest appropriate opportunity, while ensuring procedural fairness and consistency for all involved.

1.5 For the purposes of this policy, references to the LFB mean the organisation, which retains overall responsibility for ensuring that concerns and grievances are handled fairly, consistently and lawfully. In practice, concerns and grievances are managed by the manager appointed to handle the concern, with advice and support from People Services teams, including the HR Helpdesk, the HR Business Partner team and the Professional Standards Unit (PSU), as appropriate. The PSU, as the function responsible for oversight of professional standards within the LFB, provides organisational oversight and assurance of the grievance process and dignity-at-work concerns to support fairness, consistency and alignment with LFB policies, values and professional standards.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies in full to employees of the LFB, irrespective of role, grade, or work location.

2.2 The policy provides a practical framework for addressing individual workplace concerns and grievances whether raised informally or formally.

2.3 This policy applies to individual grievances only. Collective concerns are managed through separate collective consultation or dispute resolution arrangements and are not dealt with under this policy.

2.4 Where the LFB or a recognised Trade Union determines that a grievance is a collective issue, it may, at any stage, be transferred to the appropriate collective consultation or negotiating arrangements.

2.5 This policy does not replace or override other LFB policies, collective agreements or formal procedures that contain their own processes or appeal routes for addressing employment-related concerns. These include, but are not limited to, matters relating to recruitment, discipline, due to service, sick pay, sickness absence, flexible working or whistleblowing. Where a concern falls within the scope of another policy, collective agreement or formal procedure, that procedure will normally apply. In such cases, the grievance may not be accepted under this policy, and the

employee will be informed of the reasons and, where appropriate, directed to the relevant procedure.

2.6 Where a grievance is raised during another formal process, including a disciplinary process, the LFB will consider how the grievance should be managed and whether it affects the fairness or continuation of that process. Where a grievance is raised during a disciplinary investigation or hearing, the interaction between the grievance and disciplinary process will be managed in accordance with Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392. In all other cases, the manager responsible for handling the concern, with advice from the HR Business Partner team or the PSU where appropriate, will determine the most appropriate way to proceed in a fair and proportionate manner, having regard to the circumstances of the case.

2.7 The grievance process is intended to address concerns about decisions taken and how matters have been handled. It is not intended to be used to reopen or challenge decisions made under other formal processes where a specific right of appeal already exists.

2.8 Concerns relating to conduct that may amount to misconduct will be considered separately under Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392. The grievance process does not determine disciplinary outcomes. However, where information gathered during the grievance process indicates that there may be matters which should be considered under Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392, the manager responsible for handling the grievance, with advice from the HR Business Partner team or the PSU where appropriate, will determine whether a referral is appropriate. The reasons for that decision will be recorded and communicated to the employee by the decision maker. Any referral will be managed in accordance with the procedures set out in the Discipline Policy.

2.9 Agency workers, contractors, consultants and self-employed individuals (third parties) are not covered by the general workplace grievance route in this policy. Employment related concerns about contractual terms, pay or management arrangements should normally be raised with their employer.

2.10 Where a concern involves bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation (referred to in this policy as dignity-at-work concerns - see section 3.6), it will be considered seriously and handled in line with the dignity-at-work provisions set out in this policy. Where the concern relates to the conduct of an individual who is not employed by the LFB, the LFB may, where appropriate and within its control, liaise with the relevant employer or organisation to support the fair consideration of the concern.

2.11 If there is any uncertainty about whether this policy applies, or which procedure or route is most appropriate, advice should be sought at an early stage to ensure the concern is handled fairly and consistently. This may include seeking advice from the HR Helpdesk, the HR Business Partner team or the PSU, as appropriate.

3 Types of concerns

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, a concern or grievance is a concern, problem or complaint that an employee raises with the LFB in relation to their employment. Concerns may be raised informally or formally and may relate to any matter within the scope of this policy.

3.2 Managers are expected to support employees in raising concerns or grievances and in identifying the nature of the concern. Employees may also seek advice or support from their recognised Trade Union representative or workplace colleague before raising a concern. Managers may seek

advice from the HR Helpdesk, the HR Business Partner team or the PSU where appropriate. The manager responsible for handling the concern will confirm how the concern will be managed.

3.3 Grievances should be raised within three months of the management decision causing the grievance, unless otherwise agreed. Where a grievance is raised outside this period, the manager will take into account the circumstances of the case.

3.4 There are two types of concern under this policy. Employees do not need to determine which type applies.

General workplace concerns

3.5 These concerns relate to general matters including but not limited to:

- management decisions or management practice
- the application or interpretation of policies or procedures
- health and safety matters

Dignity-at-work concerns

3.6 These concerns include, but are not limited to:

- allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation.
- behaviour that is inconsistent with LFB values and that undermines dignity and respect at work or makes someone feel unsafe.

3.7 Because of their nature, these concerns may require additional safeguards.

3.8 The manager appointed to handle the concern remains responsible for the case. The PSU will provide advice, support and oversight where appropriate, including advising on the most appropriate handling arrangements.

4 Principles

4.1 Concerns raised under this policy will be handled fairly, consistently and in a proportionate manner, in line with the principles set out in this section.

4.2 The following principles apply to all concerns, whether raised as a general workplace grievance or a dignity at work concern:

- Concerns will be taken seriously and considered on their individual merits.
- Individuals will be treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.
- Managers and others involved will act impartially and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Concerns will be handled without unreasonable delay and in a proportionate manner.
- Information will be handled confidentially in line with this policy.
- Appropriate adjustments to the process will be considered to support individuals' needs, including disability, language or health-related needs.

4.3 No employee will be treated less favourably, subjected to retaliation, or placed at any disadvantage for raising a concern in good faith, participating in a grievance process, or supporting another person in raising a concern. Such behaviour may be addressed under Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392, where appropriate.

4.4 The purpose of the grievance process is to understand and address concern. Outcomes will focus on resolving issues, restoring working relationships where possible, and preventing recurrence.

4.5 Not all concerns require a formal investigation, formal grievance meeting or formal outcome. The approach taken will be appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the concern raised and will be determined by the manager appointed to handle the concern, with advice where appropriate. Informal resolution may be considered where appropriate, as set out in Section 8.

4.6 Where a concern raised under this policy overlaps with, or indicates potential matters under, another LFB policy or formal procedure, including Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392, the manager appointed to handle the concern will determine the most appropriate way to proceed. The manager may seek advice from the HR Business Partner team or the Professional Standards Unit (PSU), where necessary. This may include pausing, adapting or redirecting the grievance process to avoid parallel or conflicting processes. Any such decision, and the reasons for it, will be explained to those involved by the decision-maker.

4.7 Information gathered under this policy may be used in other relevant LFB processes where this is fair and appropriate.

5 Equality Act 2010

5.1 LFB is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equality, dignity and respect at work.

5.2 LFB will make reasonable adjustments to support individuals raising or responding to concerns, in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

5.3 Further information about equality, bullying and harassment, protected characteristics and examples of unacceptable behaviour is available on Hotwire. This policy should be read alongside the relevant equality and dignity-at-work guidance.

6 Confidentiality

6.1 LFB is committed to handling concerns raised under this policy sensitively, respectfully and with appropriate confidentiality. Managers and others involved in handling concerns are required to maintain confidentiality so that individuals feel able to raise concerns without fear that information will be shared unnecessarily.

6.2 Information relating to a concern will be shared only on a need-to-know basis and only to the extent necessary to consider the matter fairly, take appropriate action and meet legal or organisational obligations.

6.3 Absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. In some circumstances, information may need to be disclosed to investigate a concern properly, protect individuals, or comply with legal or regulatory requirements. Where this occurs, disclosure will be handled carefully and proportionately.

6.4 All individuals involved in the process, including complainants, respondents, managers and witnesses, are expected to respect confidentiality and not to discuss the matter unnecessarily. Unauthorised disclosure of information may be addressed under Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392. Further information is available in Hotwire.

7 Investigations and fact-findings

7.1 Not all concerns raised under this policy will require a formal investigation. Where further information is needed to understand a concern, the manager appointed to handle the concern may undertake proportionate fact-finding or a formal investigation.

7.2 Fact-finding and investigations will normally be carried out by a manager who has not been directly involved in the matters raised and who has appropriate authority and independence. Managers may seek advice from the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) where appropriate. For dignity-at-work concerns, the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) will provide advice, oversight and guidance on the most appropriate handling arrangements.

7.3 The outcome of any fact-finding or investigation will be used to determine the most appropriate next steps. This may include informal resolution, progression of a formal grievance, or consideration under another LFB policy or procedure, in accordance with sections 2.5, 2.6 and 4.6.

7.4 Further guidance on conducting fact-finding and investigations is available in the LFB Fact-finding Guidance on Hotwire.

8 General workplace concerns

8.1 General workplace concerns should, where appropriate, be resolved as early and informally as possible. Employees are encouraged to discuss concerns with their line manager in the first instance. Where the concern relates to the line manager or it is otherwise not appropriate to do so, the concern may be raised with another manager with appropriate authority and independence.

8.2 Informal resolution may include discussion with the relevant manager, clarification of decisions, facilitated conversations, mediation, or other reasonable steps to address the concern. Informal resolution is encouraged where appropriate but is not mandatory. Mediation is voluntary and may not be suitable or available in every case. Where appropriate, opportunities for informal resolution may continue to be considered after a formal grievance has been raised, provided this is appropriate, safe and agreed by those involved.

8.3 If a concern cannot be resolved informally, the employee may raise a formal grievance under this policy.

8.4 Formal general workplace grievances will normally be handled by the employee's line manager. Where this is not appropriate, an alternative manager with appropriate authority and independence will be identified, with advice and support from the HR Business Partner team or the PSU where required. Managers are responsible for responding promptly, listening to the issues raised and seeking to resolve concerns fairly, proportionately and at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

8.5 Where it becomes apparent that a general workplace concern may involve dignity-at-work issues, the handling arrangements will be reviewed in accordance with sections 2.5, 2.6 and 4.6. Any change, and the reasons for it, will be explained to those involved by the decision maker.

9 Dignity-at-Work concerns

9.1 Dignity-at-work concerns may involve a power imbalance, repeated or one-off behaviour, or conduct that causes distress or makes someone feel unsafe. Such concerns may arise within or outside the immediate workplace, including online or work-related social settings.

9.2 Employees who are unsure how to raise a dignity-at-work concern, or who require advice before doing so, may seek advice from the Professional Standards Unit (PSU).

9.3 Once a dignity-at-work concern is raised, it will be considered by the manager appointed to handle the concern, with advice from the Professional Standards Unit (PSU). The grievance will normally be managed in accordance with the procedure set out in Section 10.

9.4 Where a dignity-at-work concern indicates potential misconduct, the matter may, following advice from the Professional Standards Unit (PSU), be considered under the Discipline (conduct) policy - Policy number 392. In accordance with sections 2.5, 2.6 and 4.6, the grievance process may be paused, adapted or redirected where necessary to ensure the matter is handled fairly and without parallel or conflicting processes.

9.5 The LFB recognises that dignity-at-work concerns may not always be raised immediately. A delay in reporting will not, of itself, prevent a concern from being considered.

9.6 Because of the nature of dignity-at-work concerns, the manager appointed to handle the concern may consider additional interim measures where appropriate to safeguard and support those involved, including complainants, respondents and witnesses, and to ensure a fair process for all parties.

9.7 Where interim measures are implemented, the manager should explain the reasons for those measures to those affected, taking into account confidentiality, the privacy of others and any other relevant considerations. Information about the wellbeing support available is set out in Section 12 of this policy.

10 Grievance process

10.1 Wherever appropriate, concerns should be resolved at the earliest opportunity. Informal resolution may include discussion with the relevant manager, clarification of decisions, facilitated conversations, mediation, or other reasonable steps to address the concern. Informal resolution is encouraged where appropriate but is not mandatory and may not always be appropriate.

How to submit a formal grievance

10.2 A formal grievance should be submitted using LFB's confidential online grievance system in Hotwire.

10.3 Where an employee is unable to access the system, for example due to sickness absence or lack of IT access, the grievance may be submitted in writing to the appropriate manager with the PSU copied, or directly to the PSU, who will arrange for it to be recorded in the system.

Acknowledgement of a formal grievance

10.4 Once a formal grievance has been submitted, the employee will be contacted by the manager appointed to handle the grievance. Where possible, the acknowledgement will confirm who is responsible for handling the grievance and the proposed next steps. The grievance will normally be heard within seven days of being received, unless otherwise agreed.

Availability of the manager hearing the grievance

10.5 Where the manager who would normally hear the grievance is unavailable, for example due to sickness absence or annual leave, appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure the grievance is acknowledged and progressed without unreasonable delay. This may include allocation to another suitable manager.

What to include in a formal grievance

10.6 When submitting a formal grievance, the employee will be asked to set out:

- The nature of the concern.
- Any informal steps already taken, where applicable.
- The outcome or resolution being sought.

Grievance meeting

10.7 Where appropriate, the manager hearing the grievance will arrange a formal grievance meeting with the employee to discuss the concern. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague. The purpose of the meeting is to enable the employee to explain the grievance, ensure the issues raised are fully understood, explore a possible resolution and ensure the concern is considered fairly.

Consideration, adjournment, and outcome

10.8 The manager hearing the grievance will consider the information provided and decide on an appropriate outcome. Where further information or clarification of facts is required, the grievance meeting may be adjourned and further fact-finding or investigation undertaken. Where necessary, the manager may seek additional clarification from those involved before reaching a decision.

10.9 A written response will normally be provided within seven working days of the meeting or the conclusion of any follow-up action. The response will set out the decision, including whether the grievance is upheld, upheld in part, or not upheld, and the reasons for that decision. Where it is not possible to meet this timescale, the employee will be informed of the reasons and provided with a revised timeframe. The outcome of the grievance should not be unreasonably delayed.

If no acknowledgement or outcome is received

10.10 If an employee does not receive an acknowledgement or outcome within the expected timescale, they may contact the PSU for advice to ensure the grievance is progressed.

Appeal

10.11 An employee who is not content with the outcome of their formal grievance has the right to appeal in accordance with Section 11 of this policy.

11 Appeals

11.1 Following the conclusion of the grievance, if the employee remains dissatisfied, they may submit an appeal in writing within seven working days. Where the employee does not provide the reasons for the appeal in advance of the appeal meeting, they will be invited to explain the reasons for their appeal during the meeting.

11.2 The purpose of the appeal is to consider the employee's reasons for challenging the grievance outcome and determine whether the original decision should be upheld, varied or overturned.

11.3 Appeals should be heard by a manager who is more senior than the original decision-maker, who has had no previous involvement in the matter and has the authority to review and, where appropriate, change the original decision (see Appendix 1). Where this is not reasonably practicable, the appeal may be heard by a manager of equivalent seniority who is independent of the matter and has the appropriate authority to review the decision. The reasons for this should be recorded and explained to the employee by the appropriate manager.

11.4 You have the right to be accompanied at the appeal meeting by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

11.5 The appeal meeting should normally be held within seven working days unless otherwise agreed. Where this is not possible, the employee will be informed of the reasons and kept updated by the decision maker.

11.6 A written response will be provided within seven days of the appeal meeting, unless otherwise agreed. The response will set out the final decision and the reasons for it. This concludes the internal grievance process unless paragraph 11.7 applies.

11.7 Where a grievance is raised by an employee covered by Grey Book terms and conditions, relates to an issue of a serious nature and remains unresolved following the appeal stage, the matter should be considered for review at the appropriate corporate level of the organisation, in accordance with the Grey Book.

11.8 Whether a grievance should proceed to a corporate review will be considered by the Head of the Professional Standards Unit, in consultation with the relevant Head of Service, taking into account the circumstances of the case and any representations made by the employee and, where appropriate, their representative. The outcome of the corporate review concludes the internal grievance procedure.

12 Support and wellbeing

12.1 LFB recognises that raising, responding to, or being involved in a grievance can be stressful and may affect wellbeing. Support is available to individuals involved in the process, including complainants, respondents, and witnesses.

12.2 Managers have a responsibility to consider wellbeing throughout the grievance process and to ensure that individuals are signposted to appropriate support options at relevant stages.

12.3 Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Access to occupational health and wellbeing services.
- Trade union representation or support.
- Management support and guidance.
- Reasonable adjustments to support health, disability, language, or other needs.
- Signposting to internal or external sources of advice.

12.4 The HR Helpdesk, the HR Business Partner team and the PSU can provide advice about the process and signpost to appropriate sources of support. They do not replace line management responsibility for supporting staff.

12.5 Up-to-date information about wellbeing services, employee support arrangements, accessibility options and contact details is available on Hotwire. This should be used as the primary reference point, as services and contact details may change over time.

12.6 Support may continue to be available after a grievance or dignity-at-work concern has concluded, where appropriate, including in relation to any follow-up actions or workplace adjustments.

13 Records management and information governance

13.1 Records relating to concerns raised under this policy, including the nature of the grievance, the grievance submitted, notes of meetings, investigation material, decisions, actions taken, the reasons for decisions, outcomes, appeals and any subsequent developments, will be created and maintained accurately and securely.

13.2 Records created as part of this policy will be managed in line with data protection legislation and LFB information governance requirements. Access to records will be controlled and limited to authorised individuals for defined purposes, such as case management, advice, audit, or legal compliance. Further information is available in Policy number 0351 - Data protection and privacy policy.

13.3 Individuals may be provided with relevant information where appropriate, subject to the need to protect the confidentiality and privacy of others and any legal restrictions on disclosure.

13.4 Records will be retained and disposed of in accordance with LFB retention schedules and will not be kept for longer than is necessary.

13.5 Anonymised information from grievance records may be used for organisational monitoring, reporting and other lawful organisational purposes, including internal audit and learning.

13.6 Copies of grievance meeting records will normally be provided to the employee. In exceptional circumstances, information may be withheld where this is necessary to protect the confidentiality, privacy, or safety of others, or where there are legal restrictions on disclosure.

14 Monitoring and review

14.1 LFB will keep the operation of this policy under review to ensure it is applied fairly, consistently and in line with the LFB values and ACAS Code of Practice and relevant legal requirements.

14.2 LFB may review anonymised themes and trends arising from the operation of this policy to support learning, inform training and guidance, and improve organisational practice.

14.3 This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or organisational need.

Appendix 1 - Management levels

Role	Appropriate management level	Notes
Grievance Chair	Should be one grade above the employee raising the concern, typically Station Commander or FRS E equivalent.	Should not have been directly involved in the matter. Where this is not reasonably practicable, appropriate safeguards and transparency should be in place.
Appeal Chair	Should be more senior than the original decision-maker. Where this is not reasonably practicable, an independent manager of equivalent seniority may hear the appeal.	Must have had no prior involvement in the case. Where an appeal is heard by a manager of equivalent seniority, the reasons should be recorded and explained to the employee by the appropriate manager.
PSU	Provides advice, oversight and specialist support where appropriate in relation to grievances.	The manager hearing the grievance remains responsible for the case.

Appendix 2 - Key definitions

The following definitions are provided to support understanding of key terms used in this policy. They may assist managers and employees in interpreting the policy and in determining whether a concern falls within the scope of the grievance process.

Concern
A problem, issue or complaint raised by an employee about their work, working environment, treatment at work, or the way a matter has been handled, whether raised informally or formally.

Grievance
A concern raised by an employee relating to their work or working environment. A grievance may be addressed informally or, where appropriate, through the formal grievance procedure set out in this policy.

General workplace concern
A concern relating to working arrangements, management decisions, the application or interpretation of policies or procedures, working relationships, or other employment-related matters that do not involve allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation.

Dignity-at-work concern
A concern involving allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation, including behaviour that undermines dignity, respect or safety at work or is inconsistent with LFB values.

Manager appointed to handle the concern
The manager allocated responsibility for considering the concern or grievance, determining the appropriate route, overseeing any fact-finding or investigation, and issuing an outcome. This manager will be independent of the matters raised and of appropriate seniority.

Fact-finding
A proportionate process undertaken to gather sufficient information to understand a concern and determine the appropriate next steps. Further information is available in the LFB Fact-finding Guidance.

Investigation
A structured fact-finding process undertaken to establish the relevant facts where the nature, seriousness or complexity of a concern requires formal examination before a decision is reached.

Professional Standards Unit (PSU)
The LFB function that provides advice, assurance, oversight and where appropriate, investigative support in relation to grievances and dignity-at-work concerns to ensure fairness, consistency and alignment with LFB policies and professional standards.

People Services
LFB support functions providing advice and guidance on employment processes, including the HR Helpdesk and the HR Business Partner team.

Informal resolution
Early and proportionate steps taken to resolve a concern constructively, which may include discussion, clarification, facilitated conversations or other reasonable measures. Informal resolution is not mandatory and will not prevent formal consideration where appropriate.

Misconduct
Behaviour that may breach LFB standards of conduct and may be considered under the LFB Discipline Policy (PN392). The grievance process does not determine disciplinary outcomes.

Additional interim measures
Temporary measures that may be considered during the handling of a dignity-at-work concern to safeguard and support those involved, ensure a fair process and protect the integrity of the grievance process.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	16/03/26	SDIA	L-19/03/26	HSWIA	20/03/26	RA	N/A

Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
	This policy replaces PN0394a, PN0394b, PN0394c, PN0394d and PN0529 which have now been cancelled.	09/02/2024
Throughout	Para 1.3 - values added, minor changes made throughout, please re-read to familiarise yourself with the content. Impact assessment dates added.	12/07/2024
Throughout	Comprehensive review completed following consultation with representative bodies. Amendments include clarification of roles and responsibilities, grievance procedures, dignity-at-work concerns, investigations and fact-finding, appeals, governance arrangements, alignment with related Brigade policies and current best practice, together with general drafting and accessibility improvements throughout.	08/10/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Harassment	Complaints
Equalities	Grievance

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	**FOIA exemption**	**Security marking classification**