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**How to… write an investigation report**

A structured approach to writing a report can help the investigating manager cover all of the facts, provide a detailed record for the disciplinary hearing panel and the employee, and support a reasonable and fair process.

Remember that the member of staff may be entitled to a copy of the report under the Data Protection Act.

The report should include:

* A summary of the issue under investigation and any relevant background
* A summary of the methodology of the investigation / how the information was gathered
* A list of staff interviewed
* A list of relevant policies or procedures consulted
* A list of relevant documents considered and a summary of findings in relation to these.
* A summary of witness evidence.
* A summary of the comments / witness evidence from the employee under investigation
* The findings reached and the rationale for reaching it
* Mitigating factors considered
* In the event of lengthy / complex investigation, an executive summary will be helpful.
* A recommendation for any next steps
* Appendices of any relevant information.

It may be useful in the report to arrange the evidence into three groups:

* Uncontested facts – where all parties agree something happened or did not happen.
* Contested facts – where not all parties agree, and when the manager therefore needs to make a decision on the evidence.
* Unsubstantiated claims – in which case the investigating manager can say there were unable to reach a conclusion.

The manager may make the following recommendations:

* That there is not sufficient evidence that an act or omission occurred, or that their reasonable belief is that it did not. In this case they can recommend that no action is taken.
* That are reasonable grounds to believe that the allegations are true, and
* That the matter should be referred to another manager to consider whether disciplinary action is required.

The manager should not suggest any possible sanctions or prejudge what the outcome of the disciplinary hearing should be.

Where a recommendation is that the matter should be referred to a disciplinary hearing, it is good practice to set out why they think this, and in particular, how they have reached this conclusion, including referring to the relevant evidence.