

## GUIDELINES FOR AN INVESTIGATORY MEETING

The key point to remember is that this is NOT a disciplinary meeting. It is an investigation into the allegations made against an employee and, most importantly, their opportunity to put their side of the story.

### **Do not**

- Get into arguments or disputes over what's being said, simply make notes and keep an open mind
- Reveal the sources of the allegations
- Allow your opinion to influence proceedings

### **Make sure that you do**

- Ask open questions and get all the information that you will need to make a decision
- Explain what will happen next – (you'll take 24 hours to decide whether or not disciplinary measures may be called for, and if so arrange a further meeting in line with your existing disciplinary process).

## ACTIVE LISTENING

1. **Be quiet.** Let the other person talk. Actively listen to what **they** have to say. Allow time for the discussion to continue without interruption and try to separate the conversation from any other messages you may wish to communicate.
2. **Look at the person**, and suspend other things you are doing. Listen patiently to what the other person has to say, even though you may believe it is wrong or irrelevant. Indicate simple acceptance, not necessarily agreement, by nodding or perhaps injecting an occasional "mm-hmm" or "I see"
3. Listen not merely to the words, but the feeling content. **Try to understand the feeling the person is expressing**, as well as the intellectual content. Most of us have difficulty talking clearly about our feelings, so it is important to pay careful attention.
4. Be sincerely interested in what the other person is talking about. **Avoid direct questions and arguments about facts**; refrain from saying, "That is just not so", "Hold on a minute, let's look at the facts", or "Prove it." You may want to review evidence later, but a review is irrelevant to how a person feels now.
5. Restate what the person said or restate the person's feeling briefly, but accurately. At this stage you simply serve as a mirror. **Encourage the other person to continue talking.** Occasionally make summary responses such as, "You think you are in a dead-end job", or "You feel the manager is playing favourites." In doing so, keep your tone neutral and try not to lead the person to your pet conclusions.
6. **Ask clarification questions once in a while.** When the other person touches on a point you want to know more about, simply repeat his statement as a question. For instance, if he remarks, "Everybody's working really late", you can probe by replying, "You say no one's going home on time?" With this encouragement he will probably expand on his previous statement.

7. **Listen for what is NOT said**, evasions of pertinent points or perhaps too-ready agreement with common cliches. Such an omission may be a clue to a bothersome fact the person wishes were not true.
8. Be aware of your own feelings and strong opinions. **Do not get emotionally involved** yourself. Try simply to understand first and defer evaluation until later
9. If you have to state your views, say them only after you have listened. If the other person appears to genuinely want your viewpoint, **be honest in your reply**. In the listening stage, try to limit the expression of your views since these may influence or inhibit what the other person says.

### **Verbal Signals**

- 'I'm listening' cues
- Disclosures
- Validating Statements
- Statements of Support
- Reflection/mirroring Statements

### **Non Verbal Signals**

- Good eye contact
  - Facial expressions
  - Body language
  - Silence
  - Touching\*
- \* = appropriate, non-invasive or threatening

### **Effective Questioning**

There are two main types of question:

CLOSED.

Questions that start 'Do, could, would, should, is, are', etc, or are statements said with a rising inflection towards the end. These should be used for confirming information only.

OPEN.

Questions that start with 'Who, what, why, when, where, how'. These should be used for gathering information, as it is virtually impossible to answer them with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. They can also be used to deal with objections ("*What else do I need to know about that?*" "*How do you think we should deal with that?*" etc)

Always think about the response you are trying to get and use questions to steer the conversation in the right direction.

### **Remember**

- Confirm the outcome in writing
- If there is a review period make sure that you record the date for follow up
- If allegations made are entirely false, conduct an investigation into the people that made them