



Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure

Minor Disagreements

It is recognised that disagreements may arise among Playgroup staff or between staff and committee. These can usually be resolved informally by discussion, if necessary with the help of an area organiser or local authority adviser.

Disciplinary Procedure

A more serious situation arises when a dispute cannot be resolved, or when the committee is dissatisfied with the conduct or activities of an employee.

Instant dismissal is possible only in extreme circumstances of gross misconduct. Examples of such would be:

- Theft or fraud
- Ill treatment of children
- Assault
- Malicious damage
- Gross carelessness which threatens the health and safety of others

Otherwise an employee will not be dismissed without appropriate warnings.

Any disciplinary matter will normally be sanctioned in three stages:

1. An oral warning
2. A written warning
3. Notice of dismissal

A colleague or trade union official may accompany the employee at each stage if s/he wishes and that colleague or trade union official may speak on her/his behalf. There will normally be the one member of staff (usually the Playgroup Leader) and one member of Committee attending the meeting, however in certain circumstances, the assistance of a PLA representative may be sought if it would be more appropriate, particularly if a matter reaches a third stage.

Issues of conduct which may lead to formal disciplinary proceedings include, but are not confined to:

- Time-keeping
- Inappropriate language or manner with colleagues, parents or children
- Inappropriate use / theft of Playgroup resources

First Stage

- a) The employee should be interviewed by the Playgroup Leader / Deputy who will explain the complaint (if the complaint is regarding the Playgroup Leader/ Deputy, a Committee member will perform the interview)
- b) The employee will be given full opportunity to explain her/his case
- c) If an oral warning is considered appropriate, the employee will be told:
 - What action should be taken to correct the conduct

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- That s/he will be given reasonable time to rectify matters
- That if s/he fails to improve in the period specified, or if improvement is not sustained, then further action will be taken
- That a record of the warning will be kept
- That s/he may appeal against the decision

Second Stage

If the employee fails to correct her/his conduct and further action is necessary:

- a) The employee will be interviewed and given the opportunity to state her/his case as before, possibly with a member of the Committee / Playgroup Leader
- b) If the need for disciplinary action is established, a letter will be sent to the employee
- c) The letter will:
 - Contain a clear reprimand and give the reason for it
 - Explain what corrective action is required and that reasonable time will be given for improvement
 - Warn that failure to improve in the period specified, or failure to sustain the improvement, will result in further action being taken
 - Explain that s/he has the right to appeal against the decision

Third Stage

If the employee still fails to correct her/his conduct then:

- d) The employee will again be interviewed and given the opportunity to state her/his case as before to the Playgroup Chair (unless an alternative Committee member is more appropriate)
- e) If the decision is to dismiss, the employee will be given notice of dismissal, stating the reasons for the dismissal and giving details of the right to appeal

If progress is satisfactory within the time specified, the record of verbal warning on the individual's file may be disregarded in further disciplinary matters, however the Committee reserves the right to take into account the employee's whole disciplinary record in determining appropriate sanctions. A period of monitoring may be included to confirm that improvement is satisfactorily sustained.

Appeals

At each stage of the disciplinary procedure, the employee must be told s/he has the right to appeal against any disciplinary action, and that the appeal must be made in writing to the Playgroup secretary within 5 working days of a disciplinary interview. The Playgroup committee will normally hear the appeal, and it will be heard as soon as possible. Procedure will be informal and the employee may take a colleague, friend or trade union official to speak for her/him.

- The employee will explain why s/he is dissatisfied and may be asked questions
- The supervisor or chair will be asked to put their point of view and may be asked questions
- Witnesses may be heard and may be questioned by the appeals committee and by the employee and the supervisor or chair
- The committee will consider the matter and make known its decision

A written record of the meeting will be kept.

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If the employee remains dissatisfied s/he may appeal to the Pre-School Learning Alliance or local authority. It is hoped to set up an appeal committee at branch or county level capable of sitting to hear appeals within two weeks of being asked to do so. Procedure will be as above.

Suspension

If the circumstances appear to warrant instant dismissal, an employee may be suspended while investigations are made.

Grievance Procedure

If an employee is dissatisfied s/he must have the opportunity for prompt discussion with her/his immediate superior. For the Play Leader of a Playgroup this would normally be the committee Chair. For other Playgroup staff it would be the Play Leader. If the grievance persists, there should be a sub-committee of the Playgroup committee set up for further discussion at which the employee may, if s/he wishes, be accompanied by a colleague or friend.

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