DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Grievance Procedure

To be used in conjunction with the People Policy Statement

Employee Performance & Rewards

1. Purpose & Definition	Detailed Info
2. Scope	Detailed Info
3. Procedure Principles	Detailed Info
4. Confidentiality	Detailed Info
5. Risk Assessment Before Suspension	Detailed Info
6. Counter Claims/Allegations	Detailed Info
7. Individual Grievance Procedure	
7.1 Key Stages	Detailed Info
7.2 Stage 1 – Information Resolution	Detailed Info
7.3 Stage 2 – Formal Meeting	Detailed Info
7.4 Stage 3 – Appeal Hearing	Detailed Info
8. Welfare	Detailed Info
9. Case Review & Learning	Detailed Info
10. Levels of Hearing & Appeal	Detailed Info
Flowchart	Flowchart
11. Document Reference	Detailed Info
12. Document Management & Version Control	Detailed Info

1. Purpose & Definition

1.1. This procedure has been developed in accordance with the principles of the ACAS Code of Practice, specifically for dealing with grievance issues.

1.2. For the purpose of this procedure, a grievance is defined as a complaint, concern or problem raised by an employee against the specific actions (or omissions) taken by the Service (or a manager representing the Service) or colleague that fails to fulfil a reasonable duty to that employee.

1.3. This procedure supports the Service's commitment to fair working practice and gives employees the opportunity to raise and discuss individual employment issues e.g. interpretation or implementation of policy, Health and Safety, work relations, new working practices, working environment, equality of opportunity and fairness.

1.4. This procedure must not be viewed as a means of questioning or reversing management decisions.

2. Scope

2.1. The Grievance Procedure applies and is available to all current employees so that any grievances they may have can be properly considered.

2.2. For those staff conditioned to the Gold Book and/or Directors of DWFRS, Levels of Hearing & Appeal will be applied.

2.3. A grievance procedure does not apply where an alternative route for resolving disputes is otherwise specifically provided including:

- Pay and grading issues that can be resolved using an existing scheme, such as the job evaluation scheme.
- Allegations that fall under the whistleblowing policy.
- The outcome of considerations relating to discipline, dismissal, the management of absence.
- Complaints relating to harassment and/or bullying.
- Appeals against the rejection of applications under the Flexible Working Policy.
- Appeals against disciplinary outcomes which should follow the disciplinary procedure Disciplinary procedure.
- Matters in relation to change management proposals during the consultation period, which can be appropriate raised as part of the consultation. Where an appropriate route has been exhausted, the employee may then have recourse to the grievance procedure if applicable.
- Involves a medical matter which must be dealt with by an independent Medical Appeal Panel appointed by DWFRS and identified by the National Joint Council (NJC) for this purpose.

2.4. It is not appropriate to use the grievance procedure to air views of general dissatisfaction without being able to identify the specific actions or behaviour of management of individual(s) that creates this feeling. Nor is it appropriate to raise a grievance regarding a level of 'duty' that it is reasonable to expect in the circumstances; for example, a member of staff feeling aggrieved as he/she is expected to undertake a task that is clearly a reasonable demand of the job.

2.5. Individual grievances cannot be raised where the same issue has been (or is currently being) aired collectively via the Trade Union Consultation Protocol or where it has been through a formal consultation process with staff or their representatives prior to implementation. In these circumstances, a grievance would only be appropriate where an individual manager has implemented an action plan, strategy, policy, etc in an unreasonable way, differing from that agreed through the consultation process.

3. Procedure Principles

3.1. A grievance may be raised personally by the employee or through a Trade Union representative or colleague.

3.2. An employee raising a grievance has a right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or colleague at all meetings within the formal stages of this procedure, including any subsequent appeal. The Service reserves the right to refuse to accept a companion whose present would undermine the grievance process, e.g. where a companion is a potential witness. Where the chosen companion is unavailable on the day scheduled for the meeting or appeal, the meeting may be rescheduled, provided that an alternative time is proposed within seven working days of the scheduled date.

3.3. As the purpose of the procedure is to secure a mutually acceptable resolution of a grievance, meetings will be arranged for dates and times when those involved can reasonably be expected to be available. Employees must make all reasonable efforts to attend meetings, and the Service will make reasonable efforts to accommodate those with a genuine reason for not being able to attend. If employees fail to attend without explanation or if it appears that insufficient attempts to attend have been made, the hearing/appeal hearing may take place in their absence.

3.4. If it is not possible to respond within the time limits in this procedure, the employee should be told when a response can be expected.

3.5. When an employee wishes to raise a grievance against their immediate manager, it should be raised with the next level of management, normally the immediate manager's line manager. The manager against whom the grievance has been raised will be notified of the grievance by the person with whom it has been raised.

3.6. Where a group of employees wish to raise the same grievance and feel that it can be dealt with collectively, they may opt for a spokesperson for the group. The procedure will be followed as for individual grievances and all communications will pass through the appointed spokesperson. It will be the responsibility of the spokesperson to communicate with the rest of the group about the progress of the case. In such cases, it is not necessary for all those involved to be present at meetings and appropriate representative numbers should be agreed at each stage. To initiate a collective grievance, the issues should be raised with the immediate line manager responsible for employees concerned with the procedure will start at that level.

3.7. Where either the Authority or the recognised Trade Union determine that the matter is a collective issue, it may, at any stage, be transferred to Stage One of the Services negotiation procedure.

3.8. It will be considered a disciplinary offence to either encourage any employee to give a misleading statement or to withhold evidence during a grievance investigation, or to personally interfere with or coerce witnesses. It will also be considered inappropriate for others to encourage an individual to submit a grievance where the individual would rather attempt to deal with the matter informally.

3.9. Abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in or conducting grievance procedures will not be tolerated, and the Service will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

3.10. As soon as a manager receives notification of a grievance, the information should be forwarded to Professional Standards informed in order that they can provide appropriate advice and guidance on handling the grievance.

3.11. It may be appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by way of mediation, depending upon the nature of the grievance. This may involve the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss the issues raised with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. Agreement for the use of mediation is voluntary and will be used only where all parties involved in the grievance agree. Where mediation takes place outside of working hours, payment will not usually be made, however, time in lieu (standard rate) will be considered on application.

3.12. Managers shall make every effort, subject to the requirements of the Service, not to implement any proposed change until the grievance has been dealt with.

3.13. Grievances should be raised within three months of the management decision, action or event causing the grievance, unless otherwise agreed.

3.14. Grievances raised by an appellant in relation to discipline and dismissal will be heard at the appeal stage of the disciplinary procedure.

3.15. Accessibility – if any aspect of the grievance procedure causes difficulty on account of a disability, or if assistance is needed because English is not the first language, this should be raised by the employee with the relevant Senior HR People Partner/HR People Partner who will make appropriate arrangements.

4. Confidentiality

4.1. All grievance forms and related papers, documents or accounts connected with a grievance issue will always be treated in confidence.

4.2. All correspondence, including emails and reports relating to a grievance must be marked as Confidential.

4.3. It must be accepted that in the process of resolving grievances, disclosure may be made to nominated individuals to ensure appropriate monitoring for training, development and performance/procedural issues.

4.4. If any person involved in this procedure fails to maintain reasonable confidentiality or seeks to unduly influence any party involved in the grievance, their action may be interpreted as harassment (particularly if this results in victimisation). This is considered as Gross Misconduct and will result in disciplinary action under the Disciplinary procedure, not excluding dismissal.

5. Risk Assessment before Suspension

5.1. In cases where action may be considered necessary under the Disciplinary procedure, suspension may need to be considered. An HR Case Manager will carry out a risk assessment before making a decision to suspend a member of staff.

5.2. The decision to suspend is not a disciplinary sanction; it is a protective measure for parties involved with the grievance and for the Service. For example, in exceptional circumstances, where there is cause to believe the aggrieved or other involved parties may cause harm to others, themselves or the organisation, the line manager will make an early disclosure to the HR Case Manager who will determine any appropriate additional action, including suspension on full pay.

6. Counter Claims/Allegations

6.1. All related issues, counter claims/allegations from any of the involved parties may be dealt with as part of one investigation. A determination of this is made by an HR Case Manager. Attempts by those parties involved, to submit the same or intrinsically linked issues under a different procedure will not be accepted, other than in case of malicious allegations which will be considered under the Disciplinary procedure.

7. Individual Grievance Procedure

7.1. The following sets out the key stages of the grievance procedure:

- Stage 1 – Informal Resolution
- Stage 2 – Formal Meeting
- Stage 3 – Appeal Hearing.

7.2. **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

7.2.1. The Service encourages employees to resolve any conflicts and grievances that arise in the workplace as quickly as possible through informal means. Employees should raise issues directly with their immediate line manager, by completing form HR099, to try and resolve matters informally. Employees should aim to resolve most grievances quickly and informally by discussing them with their direct line manager. Where the grievance is a complaint against the line manager with whom the grievance would normally be raised, the employee can approach the next level of management, normally the immediate manager's line manager.

7.2.2. Employees are encouraged to use informal approaches as set out above before using the formal procedure. If the informal approaches do not bring about a satisfactory outcome, or they are not satisfied with the reply from the line manager, they may proceed to the next stage, which is the formal stage. Employees may be asked to demonstrate how they believe they have exhausted the informal process when submitting a formal grievance.

7.2.3. Employees and line manager will meet to discuss the grievance raised and expected resolution and will complete HR099 with a view to seek an informal resolution.

7.2.4. Where an employee is concerned about a matter relating to relationships at work, or feels that there may have been a misunderstanding, they may wish to raise the matter directly with the person involved. There is an expectation that where reasonable the employee will make efforts to resolve the matter informally before they access the formal process.

7.2.5. If raising the matter directly with the person involved, employees may wish to ask a colleague, Trade Union representative, their manager, or an intermediary to intervene informally on their behalf. A typical approach by a third party would involve separate initial meetings with the parties, followed by a meeting where all parties seek to reach agreement.

7.3. **Stage 2 – Formal Meeting**

7.3.1. The formal procedure should be used if it has not proved possible to resolve the issue through the informal channels described above. Management reserves the right to reject a formal grievance until it can be demonstrated the informal process has been reasonably undertaken. In some cases, or particularly serious cases, which may include allegations of bullying, harassment, or unlawful discrimination, that suggest major problems, the Chief Fire Officer has the discretion to appoint an appropriate external person to hear the case.

7.3.2. **Making a Formal Complaint**

7.3.2.1. The employee must complete form HR100, asking formally for the matter to be considered under the Grievance Procedure. The HR100 form is to be used with details to be given of:

- The issue about which the employee is aggrieved.
- What, if appropriate, informal methods have been used to resolve the situation.
- The remedy sought.

7.3.2.2. This form must be submitted with the HR099 to the HR Professional Standards team via professional.standards@dwfire.org.uk for a suitable investigator to be appointed.

7.3.3. Where the grievance is unclear, the employee will be asked to clarify the complaint before any further action is taken, in order that the grievance can be dealt with.

7.3.4. **The Formal Grievance Meeting**

7.3.4.1. An Investigating Officer will be allocated by the HR Professional Standards team.

7.3.4.2. A formal grievance meeting will be held as soon as reasonably practicable and, subject to the need to carry out prior investigations, normally be within 10 working days of the written grievance being received or extend by mutual agreement.

7.3.4.3. At the formal meeting, the employee will be asked to explain the nature of the grievance and what action they consider should be taken to resolve the matter.

7.3.4.4. If an employee fails to attend the meeting without explanation, it may take place in their absence.

7.3.4.5. The manager hearing the grievance will carry out an investigation as part of the formal stage (refer to Levels of Hearing and Appeal).

7.3.4.6. The investigation will be proportionate to the grievance and may include meeting with any employee against whom the grievance has been raised, interviewing any witnesses, examining any documentation.

7.3.4.7. Following the formal meeting, the employee will be informed in writing of the outcome within 7 working days. An explanation of the decision and the employee's right of appeal will also be included in the notification.

7.4. **Stage 3 – Appeal Hearing**

7.4.1. If an employee remains dissatisfied with the formal decision, they may appeal within 7 working days of receiving the written confirmation. For the appeal to be considered, the criteria specified in the Formal Grievance Meeting should be stated so it is clear what the grounds of appeal are.

7.4.2. Appeals must be made in writing to the Head of People Operations with the grounds of appeal clearly stated. Information required in the written notice of appeal is as follows:

a) The reason for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the previous grievance stages i.e. is this due to:

- The decision not to uphold the grievance is not proportionate, or
- The proposed action to resolve the grievance.

b) Details of how the previous outcome was not proportionate and the outcome sought to address this.

c) The name of the manager who dealt with the Formal Stage.

d) The names of any witnesses the employee wishes to call.

e) Any supporting documentation the employee wishes to be considered.

7.4.3. The Professional Standards Team will arrange for the appeal to be heard without unreasonable delay by the next level of management (someone who has the authority to review and change a previous decision), supported by the Senior HR People Partner or a HR People Partner – normally within 10 working days. Wherever practicable, the appeal must be heard by a manager who has had no previous involvement in the case.

7.4.4. The appeal is not usually a rehearing of the original grievance, but rather a consideration of the specific areas with which the employee is dissatisfied in relation to the original grievance. The manager conducting the appeal will usually confine discussion to those specific areas rather than reconsider the whole matter afresh. The manager who dealt with the formal grievance will be required to attend any rehearing or appeal hearing to present the rational for their decision.

7.4.5. Following the appeal hearing, the employee will usually be given a written explanation of the decision with reasons within seven working days. The outcome will be final. The exception to this is when an extension to this timeframe is necessary to deal with the issues raised and this has been mutually agreed.

7.4.6. In particularly serious cases, which may include allegations of bullying / harassment, or unlawful discrimination, that suggest major problems, the Chief Fire Officer has the discretion to appoint an appropriate external person to hear the case.

8. Welfare

8.1. It is acknowledged that the grievance process may be a difficult period, and it is important to consider the welfare of employees involved within a grievance procedure from the aggrieved, to the person subject of the grievance.

8.2. Managers should consider the appointment of a contact officer for both/all parties for the duration of the grievance and resolution process. This should not include Union/Unison Representatives.

9. Case Review & Learning

9.1. At the conclusion of a grievance procedure, a case review will take place, led by a member of the HR team, including investigating managers and supporting Senior HR People Partner/HR People Partner. The case review will identify lessons learnt throughout the process which will be monitored within HR governance frameworks.

10. Levels of Hearing and Appeal

10.1. The formal stages of the Grievance procedure shall be dealt with by the appropriate Commander, Manager or Member as follows:

Employee raising grievance	Chair of Formal Stage Meeting	Chair of Appeal Stage Meeting
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Chief Fire Officer
Directors	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Chief Fire Officer	Member Panel of Fire Authority
Area Manager	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Deputy Fire Officer
Group Manager	Area Commander	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Station Manager	Group Manager	Area Commander
Watch Manager	Station Manager	Group Manager
Fire Fighter	Watch Manager	Station Manager
Corporate Staff	Line Manager	Senior Manager

10.2. Where a grievance is against the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the formal meeting will be held by the Chief Fire Officer and appeal will be to a Member Panel of the Fire Authority.

10.3. Where a grievance is against the Chief Fire Officer, the formal meeting will be held by a Member Panel of the Fire Authority and the appeal will be held by an independent third party.

10.4. Member Panel of the Fire Authority meetings will be arranged by Legal Services to the Fire Authority.

10.5. Member Panel of the Fire Authority meetings will comprise of a panel of three members.

10.6. All members will be appropriately trained in the Service's Grievance and Appeals process.

10.7. The Director of People Services to the Fire Authority shall have responsibility for the provision of professional Human Resources advice to the Member Panel of the Fire Authority grievance and appeals meetings.

11. Document Reference

11.1. Supporting Information References

PE-SI-0052 - Stage 1 Informal Grievance Managers Guide

PE-SI-0050 - Stage 2 Formal Grievance Investigating Officers Guide

ACAS Code of Conduct - Discipline & Grievances at Work

DWFRS's Code of Ethics

Data Protection Act 1998

11.2. Forms

PE-FO-0069 - Grievance Investigation Report

PE-FO-0080 - Stage 1 Informal Grievance Form

PE-FO-0079 - Stage 2 Formal Grievance Form

11.3. Document References:

Disciplinary Procedure

Pay & Grading – Corporate staff

Bullying & Harassment

Compliments & Complaints

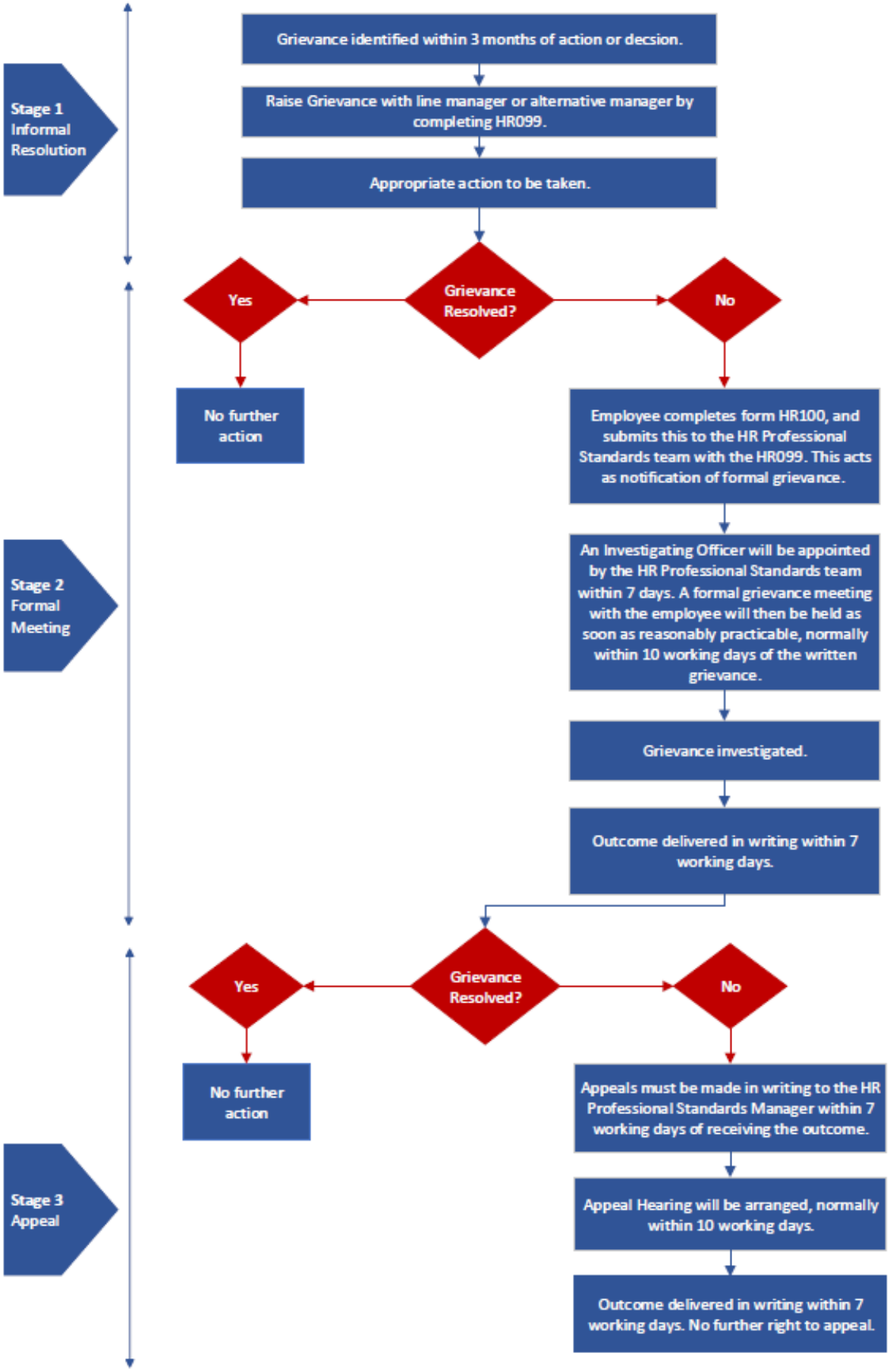
Information Security Management Procedure

11.4. Impact Assessment Link(s)

IA112624 - Grievance Policy and Procedure

PIA112624 - EPR 1 - Grievance Policy and Procedure

Flowchart


Stage 1 Informal Resolution
Grievance identified within 3 months of action or decsion.
Raise Grievance with line manager or alternative manager by completing HR099.
Appropriate action to be taken.
Grievance Resolved?
Yes
No
No further action
Stage 2 Formal Meeting
Employee completes form HR100, and submits this to the HR Professional Standards team with the HR099. This acts as notification of formal grievance.
An Investigating Officer will be appointed by the HR Professional Standards team within 7 days. A formal grievance meeting with the employee will then be held as soon as reasonably practicable, normally within 10 working days of the written grievance.
Grievance investigated.
Outcome delivered in writing within 7 working days.
Grievance Resolved?
Yes
No
No further action
Stage 3 Appeal
Appeals must be made in writing to the HR Professional Standards Manager within 7 working days of receiving the outcome.
Appeal Hearing will be arranged, normally within 10 working days.
Outcome delivered in writing within 7 working days. No further right to appeal.

12. Document Management

Policy Statement Reference: People			
Owner:	**Review Date:**	**Author:**	**Status:**
Sadie Price	01/03/2026	Sarah King	Published

12.1. Version Control:

Page & Par Ref	Date	Changes Made	Authorised By
Entire document	23/07/2025	Number changed due to migration to new system	Connor Pepper

Top of doc