



Workplace Investigations FAQs

Do you need help with a workplace investigation?

At Narrow Quay HR, we are specialists in carrying out workplace investigations for clients. We have set out a summary of the work we are asked to do and how we do it.

What sort of things are we asked to investigate?

We cover areas such as disciplinary allegations, employee grievances, bullying and harassment, allegations of discrimination, whistle-blowing, employee fraud, parental complaints and breakdowns in trust and confidence at board level.

Why use an external investigator?

Time - An investigation can be very time consuming; some of the investigations we have carried out have involved interviewing numerous witnesses and reviewing hundreds of pages of documents. It can be the case that your managers, senior members of staff or HR team, who are often tasked with carrying out investigations, simply don't have the time to do them.

Experience - Quite often the matters raised are sensitive and complex. We can be, for instance, asked to investigate allegations of bullying and harassment against several individuals, who themselves are raising their own allegations. We use our skill and experience to carry out a thorough, impartial investigation and unless your managers have been trained to carry out investigations this can be a very challenging task. Our expertise means that we can navigate the issues which may arise as part of an investigation.

Impartiality - Sometimes situations arise where the managers who would normally carry out

the investigation have been named as part of the matters raised or have had previous dealings with the complainant or those being complained about. This can mean that it would be inappropriate for them to carry out the investigation, so organisations often call in some external resource. Additionally, you may be faced with an investigation which is so sensitive, perhaps involving very senior members of staff, that an impartial investigator can be a real benefit, both as a fresh pair of eyes and in terms of reassurance for those involved.

What experience do we have?

The majority of HR consultants at Narrow Quay HR are former employment lawyers with over 70 years' experience between us. We understand how employment law requires investigations to be carried out properly, to produce a report that will be balanced and impartial and that will stand up to scrutiny, potentially in an Employment Tribunal. Our investigations work makes up a significant proportion of the work carried out at the consultancy, meaning that we are dealing with investigations on a regular basis.

What steps do we take when you instruct us?

The first step is for us to find out some details from you about the issues under investigation. That may be a phone call or by you sending relevant documents through to us. We will then



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Meet Our Team

consider this and let you know how much we think the investigation is going to cost. We charge for our investigation work on the basis of a day rate so once we've taken some initial information from you we will let you know how many days we think it will take us to conduct the investigation and provide you with an investigation report. We'll break it down so you can see what's involved and how the time will be spent.

We'll then work with you to prepare the Terms of Reference. This sets out the areas that we are asked to look into, the list of the people that we have been asked to interview and the likely timescale of the investigation. This is a critical stage in an investigation and is often overlooked. The Terms of Reference document can be updated and changed over time, as the scope of an investigation may change, and it is worth noting that sometimes it becomes apparent that we need to interview other people and in that case we will discuss that with you and discuss the most proportionate approach.

What is the process we follow?

As a starting point, we will ask for all the relevant documents. So, for example, in the case of an investigation into a grievance that will be the grievance letter and the supporting documents and relevant policies. Having read the background documents and policies, we will then set up the interviews.

We take notes of the interview and after the interview send them to the interviewee to check, amend and approve. It's often the case that the people we interview will send us further documents, which we will consider and add to the documentary evidence. When we have interviewed everyone, we will then prepare our investigation report.

What do we include in the report?

We set out the key elements of the Terms of Reference, the process we followed, then analyse the evidence we have received and set out our findings and conclusions. We do this in a logical and clear way; setting out the evidence we have analysed in relation to each allegation and then stating our findings and conclusions. If we have been asked to do so then we also set out our recommendations for the next steps. We will add as appendices to the report the notes of the interviews we have carried out and the documentary evidence we have collected.

In a disciplinary matter, our role is to gather all the evidence and then at most we would recommend whether, based on the evidence we have seen, we think it would merit being heard in a disciplinary hearing. Critically, investigators are not decision makers and we will not make recommendations on possible sanctions for example as that would be to overstep our remit.

Our aim is to make our reports speak for themselves, so that the key evidence is referred to and our findings, conclusions and recommendations are clear. We can attend any subsequent disciplinary or grievance hearings in the role of investigating officer following the conclusion of an investigation if required.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at enquiries@narrowquayhr.co.uk, or visit narrowquayhr.co.uk.

What Others Say...

"Sarah's advice has been excellent throughout."

Education Client

"Caitlin always considers our situation holistically, taking the bigger picture view, and delivers a creative, original and well considered opinion."

Director of HR



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