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'TRIAGE' APPROACH TO INVESTIGATIONS

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THE TCM GROUP 'TRIAGE' APPROACH TO INVESTIGATIONS

Having worked with organisations from all industries, we have developed a unique system of conducting investigations to provide an independent, objective, robust and comprehensive investigation service world-wide.

The TCM Group has over 20 years' experience in helping organisations embed a fair and just culture. This has included providing conflict resolution solutions, leadership development and training, through to investigations and culture audits.

A triage approach underpins all of the work which we carry out here at The TCM Group. We believe that every complaint, concern or conflict is unique. Each can be assessed, against a set of pre-determined criteria to determine its severity, and the most suitable resolution approach. This is a key feature of the TCM Resolution Framework™. We believe that the majority of complaints, concerns and conflicts can and should be diverted away from formal investigative procedures.

However, there do of course remain issues for which a formal response is the essential resolution method. This should never fall into the hands of an untrained staff member. To support those responsible for conducting investigations into a wide range of workplace issues, we have created this practical guide.

Our unique 'TRIAGE' system provides investigators with a simple, easy-to-follow guide to conducting a comprehensive investigation.



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TERMS OF REFERENCE

The most important aspect of an investigation is to understand what is to be investigated. This is why the terms of reference for the investigation are paramount. This outlines what is to be investigated so that the investigator has a clear remit to adhere to whilst conducting their enquiries, without straying into areas that may misdirect their focus.

Practical tips:

- ✓ Read the complaint carefully and identify what is being alleged.
- ✓ Agree with the commissioning manager what is to be investigated and within the scope of your remit.
- ✓ For complex complaints, identify common themes to provide succinct areas for investigation.

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REVIEW

An investigator has to review all the necessary documentation. This includes: the initial complaint or allegation, and organisational policies and/or procedures. They must then identify any additional evidence or witnesses that may need to be included in the investigative process.

Practical tips:

- ✓ Make a list of all the individuals who are to be interviewed as part of the investigation process.
- ✓ Ensure you outline realistic, achievable timescales in light of the complexity of the investigation.
- ✓ Ensure you have available, and have read, any and all policy documentation which is relevant to the case.





INTERVIEW

A good proportion of evidence that the investigator will analyse will be drawn from witness interviews, so excellent interviewing techniques are essential. Creating an open and safe environment for witnesses to feel comfortable to share as much information as possible is key. The investigator must also be skilled to draw pertinent, reliable, information from the witness.

Practical tips:

- ✔ Interview the complainant(s) first, followed by any key witnesses, and then the respondent to they can fully respond to any allegations and share their side. Further interviews with witnesses can then be arranged, followed by any re-interviews of key parties.

At times, it may be necessary to alter the order of interviews dependant on the specific needs of a case.



ANALYSIS

Analysing the documentary evidence at hand prior to undertaking any further interviews, or evidence gathering, enables the investigator to establish any potential flaws in the early stages of the investigation. A lack of policies or directives covering the allegations or complaint to be investigated, for example, allows an investigator to explore other potential areas to be included or reviewed.

Practical tips:

- ✔ Draft a list of additional evidence that you require from all the information gathered. This helps ensure you don't miss any key information.
- ✔ Prioritise your evidence. Digital evidence may only be available for a specific period so time is of the essence.
- ✔ Explore alternative solutions. Is it evident that, for example, mediation may be a more suitable resolution approach?





GATHERING

Gathering evidence in a timely manner is important, particularly if such evidence is time-critical. Some organisations only store CCTV images, for example, for a set time period and so it is important to identify and gather evidence swiftly. Other evidence, such as policies, will be available for longer and so prioritising evidence gathering is a skill for the professional investigator.

Practical tips:

- ✔ Use your interviews to identify any additional evidence that may be important to the process.
- ✔ Request additional pieces of evidence as soon as possible, to prevent costly delays.
- ✔ Collate all your evidence, interviews and other documentary evidence and review 'as one'. Don't miss out any important pieces of the jigsaw.



EVALUATE

Once the investigator has compiled and collated all the necessary evidence and interview notes, they must begin to draw their conclusions by evaluation of all the details available to them at the time of the investigation.

In workplace investigations, the investigator will collate all the information and evaluate their findings based upon the 'balance of probabilities'. The commentary of their rational and findings need to be clearly constructed within the investigation report in a way that a lay person could read. The reader needs to understand what took place, how, and why the investigator came to their conclusions.

Practical tips:

- ✔ Include an initial 'Executive Summary' at the beginning of the report, that outlines the key findings in a clear and concise manner.
- ✔ Ask a relevant colleague to proof-read the Investigation Report prior to its final submission.
- ✔ Be sure that you thoroughly understand the content of the report as you may later be questioned on its contents.

WHAT NEXT?

This simple TRIAGE process is a constantly referenced process throughout the investigation and allows a workplace investigator to conduct a fair, thorough, and objective investigation that would withstand internal and external scrutiny.

We hope that you're able to apply these key steps, and the associated practical tips, to the way that you and other staff members conduct investigations within your organisation.

Remember, if you have a particular case for which you feel a little out of your depth, or your internal staff are too busy to prioritise an investigation amongst a busy workload, we are here to help.

World Class Investigation Services

We undertake one-off investigations into even the most complex workplace cases. Our panel includes some of the most highly qualified investigators in the UK, with backgrounds including Senior Police, HR Directors and Lawyers.

We can also handle your cases on an ongoing basis, through a contractual arrangement. All our investigators are thoroughly trained, and quality assured, to ensure for an impartial, fair, structured and rigorous assessment of the evidence.

Accredited Investigation Training Courses

We also deliver a portfolio of investigation skills training courses, for organisations or individuals looking to enhance their own capacity to conduct effective investigations. Our '**Practical Investigation Skills**' course is our most popular option and provides delegates with Accredited Investigator Status.



We also offer a selection of shorter courses and advanced training options.



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