



When Work Gets Difficult

Practical first steps for pay problems, bullying, unsafe practice and pressure to do something inappropriate.

Employment signposting primarily for Great Britain. Northern Ireland has separate employment advice through the Labour Relations Agency. Individual rights depend on the circumstances.

Separate safety from the dispute

If someone is at risk now, obtain urgent help through emergency and safeguarding arrangements. Do not wait for a pay dispute or grievance to be resolved. For non-urgent matters, name the issue and the outcome you need. Different parts of the same situation may need different routes: a missing wage payment and an unsafe visit schedule are not the same problem.

If pay is missing or looks wrong

Compare your payslip, agreed rate, hours, deductions and payment received. Check the relevant pay period and whether a timesheet was processed. Contact payroll or the responsible manager with a clear calculation and request a written explanation and payment date. Keep lawful copies of your own employment records. If unresolved, seek advice promptly from Acas, a union or a qualified adviser. Do not assume waiting for an internal answer protects legal deadlines.

If treatment at work feels wrong

Write down what happened, when, who was present and its effect. Specific examples are more useful than labels alone. Reasonable, respectful feedback is different from humiliation or intimidation. You do not have to confront the person directly if you feel unsafe or unable to do so. Use another manager, HR or the relevant policy. A formal grievance can be appropriate when an issue is serious or informal action has not worked.

If you are pressured to act outside your role

State what you cannot safely or honestly do and ask for competent support. Do not sign for care that did not happen or for competence that has not been assessed. Explain any immediate need for cover so the person receiving care is not abandoned. Keep a factual record through authorised systems and escalate continuing risk. "We are short staffed" does not make an unsafe task safe.

Speaking up and getting advice

A concern about wrongdoing affecting others may be whistleblowing, but protection is not automatic for every complaint. Seek advice about the correct route and relevant time limits. Do not publish confidential care records or assume anonymity online will protect you. Before resigning or making another irreversible decision, obtain individual advice. This guide cannot determine your legal entitlement or predict an outcome.

A message you can adapt

"I am raising a concern about [specific issue]. On [date], [facts]. The effect is [impact or risk]. I have already [action taken]. Please confirm [action needed] and when I can expect a response." Keep confidential details within the appropriate secure channel. For urgent danger, telephone the relevant help route first rather than relying on a message being read.

Your next steps

- Is urgent help needed now?
- What did I observe, and what is uncertain?
- Which policy or contact fits this issue?
- What action am I requesting?
- When will I follow up?
- Do I need prompt independent advice about deadlines or safety?

Sources and further help

Acas: [If wages are not paid](#)

Acas: [Raising a workplace problem](#)

Acas: [Bullying at work](#)

Acas: [Whistleblowing](#)

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