

NHSScotland Workforce Policies Investigation Process

Guide to questioning approaches

Questioning approaches to use	
<p>Open questions: Encourage the employee/witness to open up. They can provide a rich source of information that the investigating manager can then go on to explore in more detail.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to me exactly what you saw... • Describe exactly what happened... • Talk me through what you heard...
<p>Closed / specific questions: Usually give a Yes, No or definite answer. They can be helpful to gather specific facts and can help focus an overly talkative employee/witness.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What time did you leave your workplace? • How many times did that happen? • Did you speak to your manager about that? • Who else was there?
<p>Probing questions: Can test the strength of an employee/witness's account and challenge any inconsistencies. It is important to phrase these questions so they are inquisitive. rather than interrogative.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you say she was aggressive what exactly do you mean by aggressive? • You mentioned earlier that X... tell me more about that.
<p>Feelings questions: Can help to focus an employee/witness on what is important to them and reveal their beliefs. They are particularly helpful in bullying and harassment investigations. In other investigations, they should be used sparingly as the meeting is mainly to establish the actual facts of a matter.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did that behaviour make you feel? • What was important to you about that? • What is your main concern about what happened?
<p>Asking "What else?": Helps the investigating manager to probe deeper beyond the initial information provided. However, care needs to be taken to ask this sensitively and without leading the employee/witness.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else can you tell me about what happened? • What else do I need to know about the matter?
<p>Summarising questions: Provide an opportunity to check that the correct information is recorded. They also allow the employee / witness to reflect on what they have said, to correct any inaccuracies and to give further details where there are gaps.</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So can I clarify that what you are telling me is that you left your workplace at 10am because there was a problem at home and you did not return to work. Have I got that right?

There are some types of questions that can hinder an investigation and should be avoided wherever possible.

Questioning approaches to avoid	
Interrogative questions: The aim of the investigation is to establish the facts rather than interrogate someone. Although sometimes necessary, "Why" questions can make people defensive and close up.	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instead of "Why did you do that?", use "What made you decide to do that?"
Leading questions: These can lead the interviewee to provide the answer the investigator hopes or expects to hear.	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instead of "Do you think he was perhaps over reacting?", use "What did you think of his reaction?"
Multiple questions: Lead to confusion and the interviewee will answer what they heard first, last or the part they are most comfortable answering.	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instead of "What is your role, do you like it and why?", ask each question individually.