

Guidance for Scribes Supporting Investigating Officers

Introduction

A key aspect of an Investigator's role is to gather evidence which often comes from interviewing people relevant to the investigation. Having a scribe for investigatory interviews can allow an investigator to focus on exactly what the interviewee says and consider what additional enquiries are necessary to establish the facts of the matter. A scribe can also help by reading back answers given during the meeting and checking that what has been recorded is accurate. It is also important for the investigator to be able to corroborate that their understanding of the information provided is aligned to the scribes.

Appointing a Scribe

Essentially the scribe should have the necessary literacy and digital skills to complete the task. Taking account of their other duties, they should be available to undertake the scribing within the timescale set. Investigating Officers should ask about holidays or time off arranged to determine their suitability or to build their availability into their Investigation Plan and timescale.

It is important that the scribe understands the requirement for discretion and confidentiality when participating in the formal investigation process. That includes not sharing any information relating to the investigation with anyone other than the Investigating officer.

Preparing for Interviews

Prior to any interviews being conducted it is essential that there is a common understanding of the process by both the Investigating Officer and the scribe. This is best established by having a planning meeting which covers the line of questioning; the use of the proforma for recording questions and answers; the level of detail required and dealing with any anticipated problems. Regardless of how experienced the scribe and Investigating Officer are they should still meet for this purpose as each investigation has its own circumstances.

The scribe can use the investigator's planned questions to prepopulate the interview proforma leaving space for follow up questions as required. The proforma is better used digitally with a laptop to capture responses as this will save time when drafting statements and make it easier to increase the space needed to detail the answer provided.

Recording Information

The notes recorded at the interview will become an interviewee's witness statement. The notes should therefore record:

- the date and place of the interview
- names of all people present
- an accurate record of the interview
- any refusal to answer a question
- the start and finish times, and details of any adjournments

Where the interviewee is not accompanied to the interview, the notes should also record that they confirmed they were willing to proceed unaccompanied.

While the notes taken do not need to record every word that is said, they should accurately capture the key points of any discussion and contain as much of the interviewee's responses as possible.

At the planning meeting the scribe should agree with the Investigating Officer how they will intervene if necessary during the interview. The reasons for the scribe's intervention might be because they:

- are struggling to keep up with recording the interviewee's answers.
- need to clarify an answer given

It is important that scribes do not make assumptions about what the interviewee is trying to convey or interpret what the person is saying.

Drafting Interview Statements

All answers provided in the interviewee's statement should be chronological i.e. be presented in the order the questions were asked, regardless of the order of any pre-agreed interview question set. The statement should be a record of the meeting, capturing questions asked as well as detailing the answers.

The employee statement, when complete, should accurately reflect their account of events and the testimony they have given. The scribe may be unable to capture all responses verbatim, therefore may be required to use paraphrasing or summarise parts of responses at the time however, the detail of specific answers to key areas of enquiry should be reflected wherever possible.

Once a draft statement has been produced it should be passed to the Investigating Officer for review and endorsement before being sent to the interviewee for signature.

Other Involvement

It would be extremely rare for a scribe to have any further involvement in an investigation once the interview statements have been concluded.