

resolving workplace disputes

from ICAS, Europe's leading EAP provider



WHY OFFER DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES?

Analysis of calls generated by the ICAS Employee Assistance Programmes demonstrates that a frequent cause of stress and tension in the workplace is unresolved conflict. This can be at any level in the organisation, vertically and horizontally; and between individuals and teams. The symptoms of stress and tension reduce the effectiveness of any organisation; our Dispute Resolution Services tackle the causes.

- Sickness absence now costs the UK £11 billion a year (CIPD Absence Management 2005)
- Organisations training their managers in mediation skills dealt with almost 50% fewer formal disciplinary cases a year compared with those who do not (CIPD Managing Conflict at Work Survey 2004)
- Only 36% of respondents had used an external mediator (CIPD Managing Conflict at Work Survey 2004)

BENEFITS OF ICAS' DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICES

Our Dispute Resolution Services

- provide a coherent strategy for managing disputes and resolving differences
- provide transferable skills and people development
- maximise the positive energy of conflict
- encourage early resolution of disputes reducing the risk of stress, absence and litigation

THE ICAS MEDIATION APPROACH

Ad Hoc Mediation Service

This service can be used to encourage individuals to use mediation and to tackle disputes at all levels, peer, manager/subordinate, or team. It enables individuals or teams to improve their relationships and discuss the practicalities of working together. We take a pragmatic approach offering a range of options.

Mediation offers organisations:

- a proven method for catching disputes early, and thus helping to forestall grievances
- an opportunity to foster joint problem-solving attitudes to differences
- an avenue for rebuilding and improving disruptive working relationships
- an additional option to demonstrate that everything that could be expected of a "reasonable" employer has been offered to staff in dispute

Mediation Training Service

Our Mediation Service delivers training accredited by OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examining Board), providing a nationally accepted qualification.

The full Certificate in Mediation Skills is an intensive, 6 day programme, offered as three, two day modules, and requires some home study for certification. The full programme is aimed at those who are likely to act as mediators within an organisation on a regular basis and enables participants to develop the skills required to be able to mediate to a high level of competence.

One and two day uncertificated "introduction" modules, and a certificated Diploma in Mediation Skills and Practice are also available.

Human Resource professionals will find that mediation skills increase the effectiveness of managing workplace grievances, harassment and bullying complaints, and conflict situations.

Managers and Leaders will discover that mediation skills enable a more effective approach to managing difficult people situations, handling change, dealing with conflict, and responding constructively to unacceptable behaviour or performance.



INTERNAL MEDIATION SERVICE CONSULTANCY

In some organisations an internal mediation service may be the preferred option.

Through ICAS' Dispute Resolution Services we can provide a full consultancy service, ensuring that the application, process, implementation and evaluation of an internal service is appropriate and meets "best practice" standards.

We can also undertake a procedural review to support the introduction of an internal mediation service, and provide supervision for internal mediators.

An Internal Mediation Service

- promotes a culture of collaboration and active listening
- provides fast access to early resolution for staff in dispute
- when embedded into the culture of the organisation, reduces the number of formal grievances and disciplinaries

NEUTRAL ASSESSMENT

Neutral assessment is an independent, external evaluation of difficult situations.

The facilitator uses mediation techniques to:

- interview key parties
- check desired outcomes
- explore ways forward from all perspectives
- report back to the organisation and the parties on dispute resolution options

Neutral assessment

- is a relatively informal way of evaluating workplace difficulties and encouraging forward movement
- encourages all those involved to reflect on their role in the situation and how they might collaborate
- provides a detailed report that will help the Company decide which route to take on the basis of independent fact-finding

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Our experience indicates that there are a number of different approaches that are useful in this field. Consequently our training is customised and we work with the referring client to develop a programme in line with the organisational objectives and delegates' needs. This may involve a working with dignity approach, anger management, constructive communication or indeed mediation skills and processes.

Whichever approach is most suitable we have a wide range of very experienced affiliate trainers, and evaluate training using a BSI formula.

CASE STUDY

CLIENT: THE FIRE SERVICE

Situation: Following a management decision to make changes to working practices the fire fighters and officers threatened strike action, however the fire officers subsequently withdrew from the strike. During the strike and following the return to work, working relationships between the fire fighters and the fire officers deteriorated rapidly.

Solution: Mediation was offered to the officers and fire fighters, and following discussions all watches engaged in the process. Mediation gave everyone involved the opportunity to:

- have an honest but constructive discussion with each other
- explain their different views and actions
- voice their anger and feelings of hurt and resentment
- focus on what they have in common

Results: As a result of ICAS services there is now clear evidence of:

- improved communication between fire fighters and fire officers
- closure and resolution of some issues between individual watch members
- improved working relationships

WORKPLACE INVESTIGATION SERVICES

In today's busy workplace it is often difficult for an organisation to find a manager who is available, willing and who has the skills and experience to carry out an investigation to the required level.

Our Investigation Services

- provide a speedy response to a need for a formal investigation
- ensures best practice and a process consistent across all investigations
- offer training for your managers so they can challenge those involved, and establish the facts, objectively
- result in a report that enables informed decisions to be taken on a "reasonable probability" basis.

CASE STUDY

CLIENT: A SERVICES ORGANISATION

Situation: The organisation was experiencing difficulties persuading managers to undertake internal investigations and union representatives were expressing concerns about how thoroughly, effectively and sensitively they were being carried out.

Intervention: ICAS provided a rapid response investigation service with initial site meetings, investigation interviews, and a report process in line with the company's requirements, enabling the line manager and the HR Manager to make an informed decision based on facts that had been independently verified.

Results: Investigations;

- were completed within the time scale set out in the Company policy
- were procedurally correct, avoiding potential issues with Employment Tribunal expectations
- provided an objective set of facts on which to base informed decisions
- resulted in a process which was accepted as fair and unbiased by the parties involved

ICAS dispute resolution services are provided in association with Conflict Management Plus Ltd.

If you would like to find out more about how ICAS can help protect your organisation against the risks associated with workplace disputes then please call ICAS on **0800 068 68 58**

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