



News Release

EMBARGO: Date and time of release

Plans for resolving disputes in British workplaces given industry thumbs up

The Minister for Employment Relations, Edward Davey, received the endorsement this week of the mediation community, for his plans to change Britain's approach towards resolving disputes at work.

In a meeting between the Minister and members of the Civil Mediation Council's Workplace Committee, chaired by Clive Lewis OBE and comprising representatives from the private mediation sector, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the employment relations experts Acas, proposals to promote workplace mediation as an alternative to the current litigious route were discussed.

The Government's proposals include the setting up of a sector-specific pathfinder project in the retail sector, and the setting up of two regional pilot schemes intended to encourage use of mediation amongst small businesses.

It is clear that mediation presents a less costly, less stressful and more empowering way of tackling workplace disputes and the CMC are pleased that the Government share this view.

Paul Randolph, from the Civil Mediation Council, commended the initiative: "It is most encouraging to see the Government adopting such a pro-active approach to promoting the increased use of mediation in workplace disputes. We also warmly welcome the fact that the Government clearly looks to the CMC as a valuable partner in this initiative, working together to ensure that mediation becomes a recognised part of any process to resolve workplace and employment disputes. "

Adviser to the CIPD, Mike Emmott, was particularly enthusiastic about the potential to reorientate organisational attitudes towards disputes: "We welcome the Minister's support for helping organisations to migrate from a risk-averse, compliance-based culture to one that focuses on informal methods of resolving conflict. The Department for Business's proposals for pilot schemes to train individuals in mediation skills will help drive this agenda forward."

Andrew Wareing; National Operations Director in Acas, was equally supportive: "Resolving disputes through discussion and agreement rather than confrontation is at the heart of Acas's ethos. We are delighted that Mr Davey, is making such a strong commitment to promoting the mediation approach to workplace disputes. We look forward to working with the private mediation industry to support the implementation of the government's proposals."

These talks follow less than a month after publication of the report on the consultation Resolving Workplace Disputes and demonstrate the Government's commitment to changing the face of dispute resolution in Britain's workplaces.

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Notes to editors

The retail pathfinder project will bring together large retailers, who have invested in mediation services, to share best practice and strengthen the performance of their in-house mediation schemes. In the long term, the pathfinder will explore how these organisations can work with SMEs and Micros, within their supply chains, to promote the benefits of mediation.

The regional pilots will involve the training of volunteers in workplace mediation skills from businesses located in two different regions. . These new mediators will form local mediation networks ensuring that SMEs and Micros, within their network, have access to an independent mediator in the event of a workplace dispute.

The report, 'Resolving workplace disputes: Government response to the consultation' can be found at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/employment-matters/docs/r/11-1365-resolving-workplace-disputes-government-response.pdf>