

How much time and money is workplace conflict costing your organisation?



Strategic mediation strategy to minimise the impact of change

By Timmy Kurtoldum, Mediation Manager, CiC



UK statistics show that office workers spend more than two and a half hours per week trying to resolve conflict

We are a leading conflict management and accredited workplace mediation provider. Our comprehensive courses and mediation provision helps to improve employee relationships, increase productivity and reduce the costs and time of formal procedures within organisations.

Our services include:

- Complimentary meditation awareness session
- Internal mediation training
- External mediation provision for two person
- Team facilitations
- Conflict management courses
- CPD mediation days

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Typically, up to 30% of a manager's time is said to be spent dealing with conflict. But for Bart's Health NHS Trust in London – the largest NHS Trust in England with 15,000 staff – the introduction of an internal mediation process helped to minimise the impact of managing conflict on this large and complex organisation.

The Trust was created in 2012 following the merger of Barts and The London NHS Trust, Newham University Hospital NHS Trust and Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust and at the time of merger consisted of six local hospital sites. The complexity of the merger and the different management structures involved, as well as different working cultures, loyalties and sheer scale and number of changes for staff meant high levels of potential conflict.

Mediation as an approach was first introduced by CiC alongside the existing Employee Assistance Programme, working closely with HR to roll out a mediation training programme. Over time, the new Trust developed an accredited, multi-disciplinary team of internal mediators who could resolve workplace conflict, with the aim of reducing the number of cases being escalated to formal processes.

The Trust's internal mediators were selected from clinical and non-clinical staff following publicity in staff newsletters, magazines and the Intranet. The adverts outlined the core skills needed from an effective mediator. Applicants were asked to submit a short statement outlining why they would make a good mediator, how they met the criteria of patience and empathy and provide evidence of problem solving and dispute resolution. The consent and commitment of the individual's line manager was essential.

Internal mediators attended a five-day training programme delivered by CiC, using role play, peer coaching and case study discussion, helping managers identify the most effective strategies for mediation in terms of stabilising short term situations, as well as facilitating harmony, growth and productivity for the longer-term.

The Trust's calculations estimate that 66% of recent cases that had progressed to employment tribunals could have been resolved by mediation. Yet with the new system, it was estimated the organisation could save more than £200,000 each year in legal fees, as well as the saving management time (estimated at around 47 hours for each case).

Among managers using the approach in the years since its introduction there has been a high level of success, and those involved agree it's a positive way of working that has minimised the impact of conflict on individuals, teams and patients.

The Trust also believes the internal mediation service supports recruitment and retention by demonstrating and encouraging a supportive environment, where conflicts are dealt with informally and constructively, and also helps improve productivity levels due to reduced time spent on bullying, harassment and disciplinary cases. Ultimately, staff not distracted by unresolved problems are more focused on their job and the patients. The ongoing challenge, though, is to ensure there is a constant stream of interest in the mediator training programme and a good supply of new applicants and to balance this also work with CiC to offer external mediation support for more complex cases.

CiC's bank of experienced mediators are all trained in Professional Workplace Mediation, accredited by the Mediators Institute of Ireland. We work in the public and private sectors, with schools and universities, law firms, local councils, care trusts, international news agencies and international charities. We offer a range of services, including complimentary mediation awareness sessions, internal mediation training, external mediation provision, team facilitations, conflict management courses and CPD mediation days.

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