



This is a regular look at recent news in the world of mediation, focusing in particular on the workplace and throwing in some of my own views for good measure. This edition features the launch of the ACAS Early Conciliation scheme and some interesting developments in how mediation is used in the family and commercial sectors. If these initiatives prove positive, it is quite possible similar approaches could be used in workplace mediation.

Marc Reid

ACAS Early Conciliation scheme launches

ACAS's new Early Conciliation scheme went live on April 6th and has already received over 4,000 calls. Although the name is new, ACAS have actually been running a similar service since 2009. Pre Claim Conciliation has saved the British economy nearly £19m according to ACAS (click [here](#)). Whereas PCC was voluntary, all claims will now need to go through Early Conciliation. All the key questions on the service are answered in a very good 2.5 minute video ACAS have produced (click [here](#)). Clearly it is too early to say how the new service is going but the Yorkshire Post (click [here](#)) reports that 140 employees in Yorkshire applied to the service in the first 3 weeks. It's positive that disputes are kept out of the courtroom. However, earlier use of mediation would mean many of the cases that will end up in Early Conciliation could have been resolved before reaching that point.



Massive fall in Employment Tribunal claims

Figures released show new Employment Tribunal claims raised in the last 3 months of 2013 dropped by an enormous 79% compared to the same period in 2012. In this Telegraph article (click [here](#)) a Government Minister trumpets this drop as a great success, justifying the introduction of Tribunal fees, and calling it 'proof' of the scale of false allegations under the previous system. No doubt the drop is partly attributable to claims being brought forward to beat the fee introduction deadline, so time is needed to see where the figures settle. Fees though are here to stay so yet another good reason to avoid Tribunals and use mediation early on!



Want to share a thought or make an enquiry? We'll be glad to hear from you:

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Family mediation changes. A model for the workplace?

New reforms for the UK Family Justice System will compel separating couples to attend mediation awareness sessions to encourage them to mediate (click [here](#)). Much misreporting has suggested that it is the mediation rather than the information session that is compulsory; this is an important difference as a key tenet of mediation is that participants engage voluntarily. The concept of mandatory awareness sessions though is appealing as often people have wrong pre-conceptions about mediation. This approach could easily apply in the workplace; before



Half a million neighbour complaints in 9 months!

This Guardian article (click [here](#)) quotes research which found that between Jan-Sept 2013 nearly 500,000 complaints were made to councils about neighbours. Noise is the major cause with over 200,000 complaints. This is a salient reminder that potential conflict exists all around us. The article highlights the risk that a neighbour dispute puts off potential buyers when selling your house. More importantly, nobody wants the stress of living next to a difficult neighbour. I wonder how many of those complainants actually had a calm, reasoned chat with their neighbour before writing to the council? Good communication will often prevent

'Workplace Conflict Resolution Workshop' Oxford, June 19th, in association with Morgan Cole. For Managers who want to learn smarter ways to manage workplace conflicts. For more info email enquiry@mediation4.co.uk

Mediating small commercial claims - a new approach

It's not one of my typical reference journals but this edition of At Home 'the premier UK celebrity and lifestyle magazine' has a good article (click [here](#)) on how a new partnership aims to increase the use of mediation to resolve small commercial claims (up to £10,000). The traditional route is the Small Claims Court but costs have recently increased dramatically, plus it takes a long time. QualitySolicitors have teamed up with Small Claims Mediation to offer a fixed fee solution which aims to resolve cases flexibly and quickly. It's another great example of an innovative solution to help those in dispute find a way forward without the pain, time and expense of a lengthy legal battle.

So what are the 3 Pillars of Conflict Resilience?

This is the question answered in the latest Mediation4 blog (click [here](#)). Companies are increasingly aware of the benefits of employee engagement and are willing to invest heavily in strategies to raise engagement levels. However, poorly managed conflict can be devastating to morale in a company, negating engagement investment. As such, it makes good business sense to consider a strategic approach to ensure conflict resilience in an organisation. Mediation is an element within this, a part of the 'Process' pillar. To find out what the other elements, and the other two pillars are, you will need to read the blog!



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