

CASE STUDY: Developing the complete Dispute Resolution Professional



Need

- **Create a team of Dispute Resolution Caseworkers which would provide support and guidance to complainants; mediation; and investigations.**
- **Ensure consistency, skills maintenance, and professional development through supervision of the worldwide DRC network**

Project

- **To develop a bespoke eight-day training package and package of ongoing support.**
- **To train 46 DRCs over 18 months.**

Outcomes

- **Increased use of mediation.**
- **Improved quality of grievance investigations and reports.**
- **Widening of project scope.**
- **Confidence in reporting B&H issues up.**

The Brief

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the Government Department responsible for promoting British interests overseas and supporting British citizens and businesses around the globe. It is a complex organisation with a network of embassies and consulates working in over 170 different countries. The FCO employs approximately 6,000 UK-based staff who work either in the UK or in our posts overseas; and its overseas posts employ around 10,000 local staff.

The FCO aims to offer the best possible support to those who may be involved in a dispute at work resulting from the behaviour of a colleague, ensuring that it complies with best practice guidance on resolving workplace disputes. To achieve this, it developed an innovative project; to train a group of support personnel to take on three possible roles: grievance advisor; mediator; and investigator.

This team were to be called Dispute Resolution Caseworkers (DRCs) and were considered so innovative that the role was mentioned in the Houses of Parliament in early 2010.

The FCO required a comprehensive accredited training programme that was able to integrate all three aspects of the role into one seamless training event. The FCO undertook an intensive tendering exercise which CMP Resolutions won, in part because of our ability to provide bespoke training that allowed for all three elements of the role to be trained altogether; and because trainee DRCs could also be seamlessly assessed and receive accreditation from both ILM and OCR.

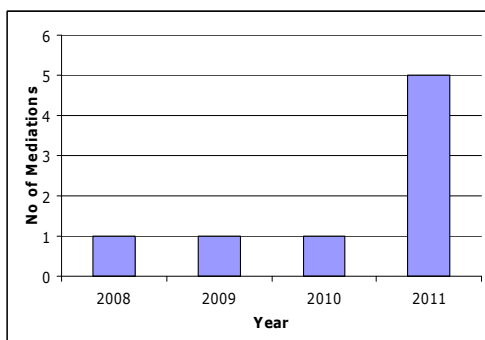
The Project

CMP Resolutions and the FCO worked together to develop bespoke materials and content for the DRC training course. The training was delivered over eight classroom days, with subsequent post-course distance learning. While the DRCs were being trained, the ER team developed the related FCO policies and created a DRC handbook. A series of roadshows and promotional literature publicised the new initiative across the FCO.

A critical part of the project was to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the DRCs role. To achieve this CMP provided supervisory support including face to face refresher sessions and one-to-one remote supervision. In addition CMP hosted and ran a series of webinars bringing together DRCs from around the world to share practice and ideas, and receive new input from CMP on particular areas such as promoting mediation, working with challenging witnesses in investigation, and group mediations.

CMP also worked with the FCO's Diversity Strategy Unit providing training for First Response Officers overseas and in the UK. By working with CMP on both aspects, the two roles (FRO and DRC) have been integrated; FRO refer cases over to the DRCs, and the roles between them can provide support to staff over a significantly wider geographical area.

Outcomes



Mediation was initially slow to take off, but 2011 has seen an increase in uptake with a 100% success rate.

The training has ensured a level of consistency and high quality in all parts of the investigation process including report writing; this has proved so effective that the DRC remit is being widened to include misconduct investigations.

The FCO continues to monitor how staff are affected by bullying, harassment and discrimination through its annual staff survey. Indicators from the 2010 survey are that reported bullying behaviour has decreased from the previous year and staff confidence in reporting bullying and harassment has increased.