

CASE STUDY: Using an external provider as a back up to internal investigation processes; reducing formal complaints by introducing mediation



Kirklees Council is the largest employer in Kirklees and the Metropolitan Borough of Kirklees is the seventh largest metropolitan authority in England. Kirklees is committed to the training and development of its staff.

Need

To establish a partner organisation to provide investigations and other dispute resolution services when required.

Project

- Nine independent investigations.
- Sixteen mediators put through the accredited Certificate in Mediation Skills programme.
- Additional dispute resolution support for complex or senior cases.

Outcomes

- Investigations which are timely, professional and provide value for money.
- Mediators embedded in the Council able to provide early and local conflict resolution to reduce the numbers of formal processes.

The Brief

Kirklees Council has procedures for averting workplace problems, but in a large organisation, inter-personal relationships do occasionally become problematic and the Council is committed to resolving these. Their existing HR professionals within the Council undertake investigations but identified a need for external back up to take cases when:

- A speedy response was essential
- Existing resources were over-stretched
- When the issues or the nature of the case meant specialist skills were required

The council needed a reliable external supplier to provide investigations to a professional standard. Critically, they had to be confident that they would achieve best value when they outsourced work.

The Project

CMP provided a timely 'back up' investigation service integrating with the Council's own internal investigation provision. CMP provided a full investigation service; undertaking interviews, gathering and evaluating evidence, and producing a report with findings. Post-case debriefs are included so that learning can be extracted from the investment. We also provide 'buddy' support to internal investigators at various stages of the process for complex or senior cases.

The council has also used CMP's Neutral Assessment service to provide an independent review of a conflict situation where no clear allegations had surfaced, but the team was clearly unhappy and unproductive.

After working together for some time, Kirklees also became persuaded of the need to introduce a mediation service internally as part of its approach to resolving workplace tensions. CMP successfully bid for the tender to work with the Council to introduce its internal mediation scheme; the council now has some 16 trained mediators.

Outcomes

CMP has met the Council's needs and addressed issues swiftly and sensitively in order to resolve them. Time to complete an investigation has been reduced and there have been fewer appeals against decisions. Internal investigators are more confident in applying their skills.

Teams or individuals undergoing mediation or neutral assessment have had issues resolved with sustainable long-term solutions.