

Need

- Support strategic performance management objectives
- Provide additional support for staff wellbeing

Project

- Establish an internal mediation service
- Use of structured recruitment to ensure best candidates and cross-university representation
- Develop best quality mediators using quality training provision and support
- Access to collateral to manage, market and measure the mediation investment against its objectives

Outcomes

- Wide ranging mediation awareness and advocates result from a well run recruitment exercise
- Unions are on board and supportive of mediation
- Mediation normalised and encouraged through internal publicity including dedicated website
- Operating at 100% success
- Confidence of employees in reporting B&H issues

CASE STUDY: Introducing mediation in a university to improve performance and support employee wellbeing

The Brief

The University of York is an internationally acclaimed institution with over 30 academic departments and research centres. In 2010 it implemented a new strategy to improve performance management and employee wellbeing across the staff base. A key part of the plan was to develop an internal mediation service to:

- enable staff to resolve their disputes quickly and locally
- provide a constructive route for dealing with performance and discipline issues
- reduce the time and costs of managing grievance and disciplinary matters.

The University of York approached CMP Resolutions to provide the training and support for the implementation, as they felt CMP's experience of the Higher Education sector brought significant credibility.

The Project

The University worked hard to bring its Union side on board from the start and this is one reason for the overall success of the programme.

In addition, CMP worked with the University to run a recruitment process to selected candidates for the training. Sixty people attended three briefing sessions which outlined mediation and the application process. This resulted in a high application rate and excellent self-selection from applicants as well as creating additional mediation advocates.

The University selected the ILM endorsed 6-day Qualified Workplace Mediator course as being most appropriate to its needs and put 12 delegates through the training. To help HR and Unions understand and buy in to the programme, and to help them identify possible cases and encourage parties in to mediation, the University also asked CMP to deliver two 2-day ILM endorsed Core Mediation Skills courses.

The HR Project Manager revised and updated the grievance and disciplinary policies and created a dedicated communications plan. This planned sequence of activities promoted and raised awareness of the service, and included developing dedicated web pages about the mediation service; carrying out a series of face-to-face meetings with specific committees; designing and dissemination printed promotional materials.

Outcomes

"The implementation of mediation into the University has been very easy" says Alex Brierley (HR Project Manager). *"In the first quarter of the service going live, 4 mediations have been conducted, with a 100% success rate and really great feedback from the parties"*. This early success is down to a number of factors:

- Positioning the project as a dedicated HR project, and giving it a specific project manager, has meant someone is always moving things forward, for example getting the policies just right, linking to other related agendas, building a communication strategy
- Having the right culture, not only in terms of having the strategic backing (with related funding) but also ensuring Unions are on board and involved
- Getting added value from the enthusiasm of the mediators by using them as advocates for the service, giving presentations, developing materials for promotion and publicity.
- Using a constructive recruitment process which allowed for further awareness of mediation and developed enthusiasm for the new service across the university even among those who were not selected for the full training.

Where they are now

The University of York is moving mediation in to its mainstream HR business. This means having a dedicated mediation coordinator to manage ongoing communications and promotion; case management and strategic planning; and providing continual professional development and support for the mediators. Alex Brierley considers *"as the service matures and more evidence is collected as part of the strategic approach, we should begin to see the longer-term benefits of mediation, such as reduced grievances and improvements across the board in our staff surveys. It is early days yet for mediation but we are thrilled with how the first few months have gone"*.