



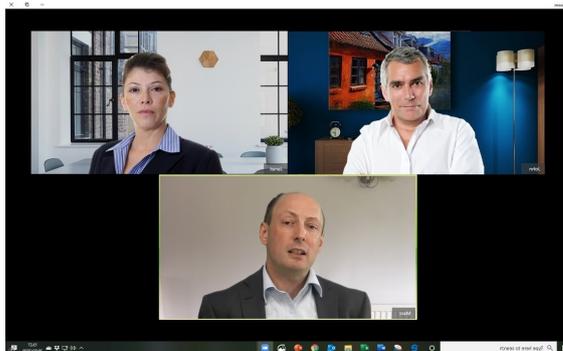
This is a regular look at recent news in the world of mediation, focusing in particular on the workplace and throwing in some of my own views for good measure. In this edition all the articles look at the effects of the pandemic on the workplace and the impact on mediation. The 'front page' article explores how effective workplace mediation can be when it is taken online. We look too at online bullying, stress and resulting conflict and issues around miscommunication.

Marc Reid

Online workplace mediation. Can it really work?

The pandemic has led to a rapid change in working practices for most people and definitely for workplace mediators. We can't meet face to face so work has been forced online. But can online mediation really work?

This article by a leading Scottish mediator, Graham Boyack (click [here](#)) shares the experiences of the workplace mediators of Scottish Mediation. They considered some of the concerns around online mediation such as confidence in using the technology, security and confidentiality, but pointed also to some of the advantages. Particularly in Scotland the benefit of people being able to participate in a mediation without having to travel is a major plus. Graham concludes that the current experience will enable us to learn lessons and improve our working ways as a result. I would agree with this. In the past I have chosen not to offer online mediation as an option as I didn't believe it would be as effective as face to face mediation. Without the option of doing face to face



meetings I've had to switch to virtual mediation meetings via Zoom. My experience has been positive. Yes there are added complexities such as managing the technology, ensuring confidentiality and signing documents remotely. These can be overcome but can you still

replicate the positive impact of bringing people physically together who have been in conflict? Almost is my answer. You can achieve a lot through virtual meetings and help the participants reach an agreement as you would in a normal mediation. What's really missing for me is that added element of human connection. It is the bit which really adds the 'cement' to the whole process. However, online or virtual mediation still works, and it's much better than no mediation!

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

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A virtual bully is still a bully

Frequently mediation is used to address situations where an employee feels they are being bullied by another employee. This can happen just as easily, if not more easily, when working remotely as this article from an employment lawyer makes clear (click [here](#)). As the article indicates, if a relationship is already difficult, working remotely could make it worse. Not meeting face to face may mean you can shelter from the unpleasant behaviour but you cannot avoid it completely. The situation still needs to be addressed. The article outlines sensible actions such as ensuring policies are updated to include cyber-bullying, communication with employees and training for managers. It doesn't mention online mediation, but that is definitely an option not to be overlooked!

Managing stress during pandemic



This article by expert mediator Anna Shields in HR Magazine (click [here](#)) looks at how the current crisis can increase our stress levels.

It highlights a selection of approaches to help you minimise the potential for stress and to manage issues that may result from stressed employees. Looking after ourselves at this time is really important, especially if we also have responsibility for managing others. Our ability to manage effectively will be significantly diminished if we are not ensuring our own wellbeing is a priority. Anna also suggests leaders 'walk the talk' - modelling the behaviours we expect from our employees. All very sensible.

Our latest book '8 Stages of Workplace Conflict— and how best to resolve each stage' is still available to download for free from our website. Just go to www.mediation4.co.uk and click on the download link.

Employee conflict in the 'new normal' – and how to deal with it?



My latest blog (click [here](#)) looks ahead to possible consequences of the general

return to work that the easing of lockdown will bring about. My view is that we are facing a period of great uncertainty and change. Add to this groups of employees who have had very different experiences during lockdown and we have a work environment that is a potential tinder box. In the blog I look at 5 ways employees can deal with the situation to prevent difficult relationships escalating into damaging workplace conflicts. Even so, I suspect we could see increased need for workplace mediation in the coming months.

Think before you type - the risk of online miscommunication

This article from regional news site Ross-shire Journal (click [here](#)) highlights one of the added risks of remote working - the enhanced possibility for miscommunication. The written word is much more open to misinterpretation than the spoken word, and even on video calls, there is less ability to take in all the signals that you would in a face to face meeting. So miscommunication can result which could escalate into conflict. The article suggests a variety of tips to help prevent misunderstandings - I particularly like 'don't email / message in anger'. Always wait till you have calmed down before re-reading and only send if you still think it is OK. I'd also add, don't assume your interpretation of the other's intention is accurate.

Website: www.mediation4.co.uk