



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 the issue of workplace bullying features in a couple of the articles, including the recent case involving the UK Home Secretary and also how Ireland have brought in workplace regulations which specifically address bullying. Plus I've touched upon some celebrity mediation, looking at the Vardy / Rooney case.

Marc Reid

Priti Patel and accusations of workplace bullying

It was the perfect irony that the report into accusations of bullying against British Home Secretary, Priti Patel, was released during anti-bullying week. There was plentiful press coverage but this article from an employment lawyer (click [here](#)) provides an informed and balanced view. As the article clarifies, bullying is not defined by law, unlike harassment, and instead is determined by company policies. The writer uses her expertise as a lawyer to suggest that the report findings would have resulted in disciplinary action if Ms Patel were an employee. But different rules apply for politicians! The key point for me is made at the end of the article with the writer confirming that employment lawyers increasingly advise employers to look at options like mediation to address bullying claims. This chimes with my own experience where a lot of the cases I have mediated have been based on bullying claims. By talking about the behaviours that have caused the issues the participants are able to focus on how they can improve the relationship going forward.

Furlough vs Non-furlough: potential for staff conflict



This article from the Portsmouth News (click [here](#)) talks to a local workplace mediator about the potential for employee conflict relating to furloughed vs non furloughed staff. I agree that this is a potential powder keg for organisations as furloughed workers return to work. Of course managers will have many issues to deal with in the coming months and they may not see potential employee conflict as a priority. The danger is that if it is ignored minor issues may escalate and then take up much more time and resource. It is better to nip them in the bud early, or even better, have an open conversation so that people have a chance to air any concerns and clear the air. If issues do escalate, then of course it makes sense to consider mediation.

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

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Rooney vs Vardy mediation

I don't usually quote articles from OK Magazine but this one highlights a case that has thrown mediation into the wider public arena so it is worth mentioning (click [here](#)). It's Rooney vs Vardy - not the England football strikers but their wives who have been engaged in a war of words for the past couple of years. It is due to go to court soon but they are trying to resolve it through mediation, after having previously tried and failed to mediate. The details appear to be trivial on the surface but clearly both want to make a stand as they feel their reputation is at stake. The fact is that by continuing a legal battle, both reputations (and their bank balances!) will suffer. Let's hope they recognise they can both 'win' by using the mediation opportunity to find a good resolution.

Can mindfulness solve conflict?



I was wondering if this article had misread research saying 'mediation is good for workplace conflict' and thought it said 'meditation is good for workplace conflict'! But no, the article (click [here](#)) has found research which shows that people who use mindfulness techniques are better able to handle conflict. It makes sense. Being able to step back and look at our thoughts (a key element of mindfulness) will certainly help gain perspective. So it's not saying that if you get into conflict a few minutes meditation will resolve it but adopting mindfulness and the techniques it promotes should help you be more self aware, better able to handle your emotions and therefore be more conflict resilient.

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.

Ireland's new bullying CoP



It is always interesting to note how other countries address workplace conflict and Ireland has just

brought in a new Code of Practice on workplace bullying (click [here](#)). It would appear that this code goes much further than the UK where bullying is not defined by law (see article on Priti Patel). What struck me most was the heavy emphasis on using workplace mediation and other informal means of resolution rather than resorting to formal means. A quick word count shows 'mediation' is mentioned 13 times in the 54 page code! Contrast this with the ACAS CoP on Disciplinary and Grievance which only mentions mediation in the Foreword!

Why managers don't 'do' conflict

My latest blog addresses the conundrum of why managers are not addressing workplace conflict (click [here](#)). It was prompted by an article which suggested that there was still a lack of training for managers in how to address conflict. I give my reasons in the blog for why I think this is only part of the issue. We can train managers to address conflict so they know how to do it, but that will not remove what I see as the major barrier that the risk / reward balance in addressing conflict is weighted in favour of avoiding action. The perceived risk of addressing an issue outweighs the benefit of resolving it. Until this misalignment of incentives is resolved, managers will continue to avoid conflict no matter how much training they receive.

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