

Resolution at Work  
Supporting Creative Conflict Management



## Neutral Assessment Services

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### About Resolution at Work

Resolution at Work provides a range of services to enable clients to positively manage conflict within the workplace. We have a team of associates with a wealth of experience as HR practitioners, trainers, mediators, employment lawyers and conflict resolution experts. Resolution at Work provides services linked to resolving workplace issues; this includes conducting neutral assessments, acting as independent mediators, conflict coaches or independent investigation officers in complex matters. In addition, we provide associated training services designed to enable others to attain the necessary skills to resolve workplace issues.

### Neutral Assessments

For complex matters or group conflicts a neutral assessment can be a powerful alternative to formal processes providing effective and informal conflict resolution options. As, it is not part of a formal process it can more effectively identify underlying causes, potential solutions and provide risk-assessed recommendations. It is empowering for those involved as they have an opportunity to be listened to, their view taken into account and obtain feedback on the outcomes.

#### Q. What is a neutral assessment?

Neutral assessment is a process where an independent and neutral person is appointed to assist in understanding the causes of complex employment issues and helping to identify potential solutions.

It is not the assessor's role to impose any solution or make a judgement on the issues and it is not about apportioning blame or deciding who may be right or wrong. Rather the assessor reviews the relevant information and background, explores the issues, identifies potential causes and solutions and makes recommendations.

The focus is on future solutions, which allows greater freedom and flexibility to both clarify

the real issues and explore creative solutions that would not be possible in a formal process.

Any recommendations made will depend on the individual circumstances but these could, for example, include mediations with individuals, small group facilitation, organisational learning, staff development support/coaching or acknowledgements regarding contributory factors.

#### Q. When can neutral assessment be used?

Neutral assessment can be used in a variety of situations to explore complex HR issues, particularly where there are a large number of employees or a team. For example, this may include situations where there are:

- Collective or counter grievances
- Loss of engagement, increased absence/turnover etc.
- Loss of trust between team members
- Concerns over a culture of bullying and harassment/inappropriate behaviour
- Where there are no specific disputes or allegations, but it is clear that there is something wrong such as team members appearing stressed and relationships becoming strained
- To restore team/working relationships following the damaging impact of formal processes

#### Q. What are the potential benefits?

- It allows employees an opportunity to be listened to and talk to someone who is neutral and empathetic; this may in itself enable people to move on and think about the future.
- It allows an opportunity to test the impact of possible options or solutions and to discuss these with those concerned.
- It may help to overcome barriers to finding a solution.
- It allows organisations to demonstrate their commitment to their values and to positively resolving conflict.
- Provides an opportunity to confront conflict but in a way that allows people to talk confidentially about their concerns.

#### Q What is the process?

The process may differ depending on the circumstances, however it generally includes the following:

- Obtaining a background briefing to the issues and / or reviewing any relevant documentation. This will include information regarding how long the situation has been ongoing and the current position.
- Agreeing the objectives.
- Communicating the process and timescales.
- Interviewing the key individuals confidentially on a face to face basis. The notes of the interviews will remain confidential and will not be shared or disclosed. The interviews will aim to identify the issues and explore future solutions.

- For those who do not wish to be interviewed there can be an option for others to provide written submissions.
- The information will be analysed and a non-attributable report prepared which will include risk assessed recommendations. An executive summary which preserves confidentiality will be shared with all concerned.
- Opportunities for feedback to all concerned will also be provided.
- Undertaking a review and evaluation of the process and agreed outcomes.
- Support can be provided with regard to implementing recommendations/ agreed actions and ensuring they are progressed.



# What our clients say

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Whenever we have used a Neutral Assessment approach, we have received very positive feedback. The approach has also been recognised in national awards with one of our clients winning a CIPD Wales award for Employee Engagement following our working with them in this way and to our being a finalist at the CIPD People Management awards in London and Cardiff for different projects. <https://tinyurl.com/neutral-RAW>

“Resolution at Work associates gained the trust of everyone through their non-confrontational, non-judgemental style. The staff realised that they could speak to either of them without reprisal, enabling them to get to the crux of the matter.

The neutral assessment process provided a new platform from which all could progress, delivered quick wins and allowed us to develop our group plans.”

“It has been of real value to those individuals taking part; it has helped them to feed listened to and enabled them to focus on future solutions.”

“It has resulted in achieving a resolution much quicker than we would have achieved through formal procedures.”

“It has been a very valuable process and gave us much more than we expected.”



“The team were happy to open up to you and your colleague as they trusted you and could tell you were acting independently. A team that was in crisis is now firing on all cylinders and we have discovered a most valuable service to add to our HR resources.”

“Using the neutral assessment as a tool to really understand the issues in particular areas of our organisation has been really powerful. Non-judgmental and transparent, this approach allowed us to work with our staff to address concerns, celebrate what was working and move forward in a structured way. Listening and acting on the results have made a huge difference and impacted on performance, retention and engagement levels.”

All Neutral Assessments are undertaken by independent workplace practitioners who are professional experts with a minimum of 10 years' experience at senior level, CIPD qualified and/or employment lawyers/accredited workplace mediators. All have undertaken or contributed to neutral assessments; our various backgrounds and experience enables us to share our respective experience and knowledge to add further value for clients

## Alison Love



Alison is an accredited workplace and employment mediator with over 40 years practical experience as an HR practitioner, employment lawyer and business leader. Alison is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, a non-practicing solicitor, accredited workplace and employment mediator and conflict management coach and trainer. Alison is chair of the CMC Employment Workplace Group Wales and has been recognised by CIPD Wales Awards 2019 for her outstanding contribution to people development.

## Sarah Embleton



Sarah joined Resolution at Work in 2019. Sarah worked as a senior employment lawyer for Bristol based law firm Burges Salmon from 2000 – 2018. Sarah had a particular focus on complex employment matters with an emphasis on discrimination cases and senior executive disputes. Sarah has conducted alternative dispute resolution, mediations and workplace investigations.

## Dorothy Johnson



Dorothy holds a number of board positions and has worked across public, private, charity, not-for-profit, and community sectors. With over 40 years' hands-on experience, Dorothy has dealt with a wide range of employee relations issues and has a practical, pragmatic approach which quickly gains the confidence of those she works with. Dorothy is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management.

## Hayley Hughes



An experienced and commercially astute HR and L&D professional with 30 years front line HR operations experience across manufacturing, banking and telecommunications industries. Hayley combines a professional approach, passion for accountability and driving results with the ability to actively listen, adopt powerful questioning and provide balanced feedback. Hayley has a degree in economics, is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and is an accredited workplace investigator.

## Dionne Dury



Dionne is an accredited workplace mediator and conflict coach with over 11 years' previous experience as an employment lawyer. Dionne joined Resolution at Work in 2016 and now leads the South West region. Dionne has extensive experience delivering conflict resolution training, carrying out mediations (individual and group), conducting complex neutral assessments and workplace investigations. Dionne is a member of the CMC Employment and Workplace Group. She also sits on the Restorative Justice Bristol board.

For further information on how these services work in practice and discuss options on a confidential basis please contact us on 0800 489235 or email [info@resolution-at-work.co.uk](mailto:info@resolution-at-work.co.uk)