

Informing and consulting your employees about workplace matters

It's useful for an employer to discuss any important workplace matters with employees.

These discussions often take place through a workplace group ('forum') that includes the employer and employees (or representatives).

Whether you choose to use a workplace forum or something else, it's important to get your employees' views on the best way to inform and consult with them.

1. Benefits of a workplace forum

A workplace forum should be used as a way to discuss and try and resolve issues together.

It also provides a way for:

- the employer to present their ideas to employees, and listen to their views and any concerns
- employees or representatives to raise ideas and questions with senior management and get their responses

A workplace forum is a good way to:

- build trust and between you and your employees
- test out ideas and get feedback in a confidential environment
- improve staff performance, engagement and productivity
- improve staff wellbeing – for example, through less stress in the workplace
- get decisions made quickly with everyone's involvement
- get decisions made in a way that reduces the risk of disagreements later on

Having this type of forum may make it easier to consult with staff on [business transfer \(TUPE\)](#) or [redundancy situations](#).

A workplace forum works best when:

- it includes representatives from all parts of the business or organisation
- representatives are trained to understand the role and have the skills required, for example they're able to work constructively with people who have different views
- employers and employee representatives feel confident about speaking and listening to each other
- it deals with issues that matter to or could affect the wider workforce instead of just individual employees
- it looks at all possible options to resolve a problem, rather than just one or two

Example

The managers of a textiles factory plan to buy new equipment, to improve productivity. They could use the forum to get feedback from employees who will use the equipment. This feedback could include the issues they currently experience with the current equipment

and any suggestions for improvements.

For the employer, this would reduce the risk of spending money on equipment that's wrong or does not improve productivity.

For employees, this means they can feel involved in the decision-making. It's also likely that managers will be more aware of how the decision could affect employees, for example their workload or morale.

The law

You must 'inform' and 'consult' with employees about:

- any possible [redundancies](#)
- [changes to employment contracts](#)
- a [business transfer \(TUPE\)](#)
- changes to pension arrangements

In terms of the law:

- 'inform' means management is communicating with staff to ensure they're updated about workplace matters
- 'consult' means management actively seeks and considers employees' views before making a decision

If there are 50 or more employees

If there are 50 or more employees in your workplace, they have the right to [request an formal agreement](#) to be informed and consulted on significant matters and decisions. These commonly include:

- working conditions
- new ways of working
- the output and quality of the business's goods or services
- training
- health and safety
- new equipment
- staffing levels
- physical and mental wellbeing

This agreement is also known as:

- an ICE agreement (as it's part of the 'Information and Consultation of Employees' regulations)
- an information and consultation agreement

Employees can also request this agreement [if there's already an agreement](#) but they feel it does not meet their current needs.

If an information and consultation agreement is set up, it does not mean you have to change any business decisions you plan to take. But it does mean:

- employees will be able to give their feedback and raise any concerns
- you'll be able to make a more informed decision

If you want to set up a formal agreement

You can set up a workplace forum without a request from employees.

You can also start setting up an information and consultation agreement if you feel a formal process is needed. Starting this process is known as 'giving notice'.

If you give notice:

- the information must be in writing, dated, and provided so that as many employees as possible will see it, for example by emailing all your employees
- you must tell employees you're doing this because it's a 'requirement of the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations'

If you're already using a workplace forum to inform and consult, you may want to [check you're doing this in the best way](#) for you and your employees.