

Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training

Acas

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Summary

Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) supports and improves workplace relations between employers and employees. To achieve this, it provides a range of services offering practical advice and expert support, preventing, and resolving workplace disputes. In addition to its dispute resolution services, Acas provides a range of products to prevent disputes from escalating further. One such product is its Certificate for Internal Workplace Mediation which equips delegates to prevent and resolve workplace problems before they escalate to formal processes. The course is delivered over five days (either in one week or in two blocks), and is delivered face-to-face, online or through a hybrid option, and either through an open access route where individuals book themselves onto a course, or a tailored workplace course. The course focuses on five key areas of mediation: causes of conflict, how to identify issues before they become bigger problems, when and how to take action, dealing with difficult situations, and how to encourage engagement with mediation.

Evaluation Aims

An evaluation of the training was undertaken using a mixed methods approach whereby a survey of 339 delegates who took part in the training between July 2021 to June 2022 was undertaken and achieved 125 responses. This was followed by organisational case studies with four organisations (involving interviews with four delegates and three senior leaders). The training was previously evaluated in 2014, and where possible, comparisons are made to demonstrate changes over time.

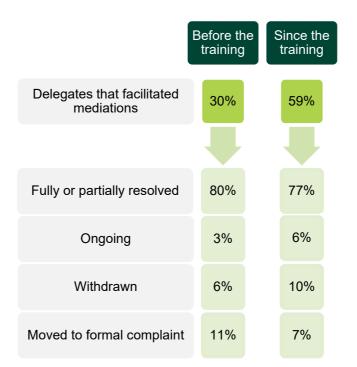
The primary objective of this evaluation was to deliver reliable evidence on the impact of the CIWM training, exploring how delegates have used their skills to resolve workplace conflict more quickly and effectively. This was achieved through exploring: delegates' perception of the training and post-course support, the extent to which it equips delegates with the skills needed, the barriers and facilitators to successful mediation, and the percentage of successful mediations carried out by (accredited) mediators.

Key Findings

Impacts of the training on delegates and organisations

The training equipped delegates with the necessary skills, tools, and confidence to undertake mediations. The proportion of respondents who had undertaken mediations before and since the training is presented in the figure below. Slightly fewer mediations had been fully or partially resolved compared to before the training, but a higher proportion of mediations were ongoing or had been withdrawn.





Delegates that facilitated mediations before and since the training by outcome

Compared to the 2014 evaluation, the proportion of mediations resolved by accredited mediators since the training was slightly lower (61% in 2023 and 68% in 2014), however the topics of mediation were more diverse and arguably may be more complex: pay and conditions, physical working conditions, and discrimination compared to disputes primarily focused on relations with superiors in 2014. Disputes such as these should be dealt with via grievance processes rather than individual mediation, which may contribute to the number of mediations being deemed as not resolved.

Delegates identified various ways that the skills they had developed through the training had been useful in their wider role such as effective listening in their day-to-day role and conversations, being more assertive in challenging situations with colleagues, being more consistently objective and feeling more assured when undertaking mediations because of an increase in confidence.

Delegates reported feeling validated from attending the training and gaining the accreditation (where gained), as this was perceived as adding additional credibility to their expertise. As such, the fact that almost twice as many delegates had participated in mediation since the training could be attributed to this.

Most delegates said that the training had some positive impact on their organisation, most commonly because of:

- Increased capacity to offer mediation due to having more people in the organisation capable of conducting mediations;
- Improvements in terms of awareness and confidence in conducting mediation (especially among managers and senior leaders); and,
- Integration of mediation into organisation processes and policy.



Those who said it had had no impact generally said this was because they had not had the opportunity to use their skills because there had not been a need for mediation, or they had not had capacity to assist in mediations, or due to a change in role.

Reasons for attending the training and perceptions of the course

The majority of delegates reported attending the training to build on their existing skills or because of an organisational need for mediators in the workplace. Prior to having trained mediators, the processes used by organisations to resolve disputes were perceived as less efficient and effective.

The results showed that delegates were overwhelmingly satisfied with the training and would recommend it to other people, which was consistent with the 2014 evaluation. Specifically, delegates reported that:

- The training materials were up-to-date and covered the relevant topics. Delegates continued to refer to materials following the training to refresh their skills and prepare for undertaking mediations.
- Tutors who delivered the course were perceived as knowledgeable, professional, and supportive, and delegates appreciated when they shared their own experiences of mediation as it reassured them about their own concerns or prior experiences.
- Delegates were satisfied with the structure of the course and the activities including the small group work, reflection time, and role play.
- Although the post-course question and answers¹ (QA) were perceived as difficult and more support would have been appreciated, the accreditation was important to delegates. It was evident that achieving accreditation gave delegates confidence and credibility to carry out mediations.

Barriers and facilitators of mediation

Several barriers and facilitators of mediation were identified. Facilitators reported were commonly actions taken to overcome the barriers that existed.

- Time pressures commonly limited participation because of the open-ended nature of mediation. This was mitigated by senior management support and having a pool of mediators within the organisation. Low engagement with mediation among the parties involved prevented successful mediation outcomes. Issues with engagement were commonly based on lack of understanding of mediation, concerns about the process, or the dispute not being appropriate for mediation (i.e., it had progressed too far). Delegates reported taking action to increase awareness of mediation by including it in policies and communications relating to other workplace practices and issues.
- Lack of awareness or understanding of mediation had an impact on perceptions and uptake of mediation. Delegates reported that where there was senior-leader support for mediation,

¹ The post-course question and answers refers to work completed by delegates following the training which enables them to gain the accreditation.



this helped promote it as a tool within the organisation, raising awareness of it among managers and employees.

- The accreditation provided by Acas facilitated mediations as it gave delegates the confidence and credibility to carry out mediations. It also increased the confidence in the tool among senior leaders, managers, and the parties involved who recognised they were qualified to use it.
- The tools and skills gained from the course such as the framework and use of active listening were useful for facilitating successful mediations and helped to create a safe space for employees to raise their concerns.
- Delegates also identified that they benefited from the opportunity to debrief following a mediation (within the constraints of confidentiality). This was more common in organisation with multiple mediators where they were able to encourage one another, whilst also learning from their experiences.

Long term impacts of the training

In the long term, delegates and senior leaders hoped to see fewer formal grievances and more conflicts resolved effectively and efficiently because they thought the training would improve their organisations capacity to resolve disputes using mediation. They felt that this would happen if mediation could be embedded in the culture of dispute resolution thereby being used more widely and early on when an issue becomes apparent and perceived as common practice. Senior leaders who were interviewed also believed that using mediation would have a positive impact on absence, productivity, and turnover in the long run, as they recognised the impact that disputes had on employee engagement and disruption to their work.



1 Introduction

Acas aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relationships and a range of services, providing fee-paying training as well as free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. This includes a wide and expansive range of official guidance and training to employers and other stakeholders such as HR professionals, business owners, managers, and employees. Previous Acas research suggests that workplace conflict costs UK employers an estimated £28.5 billion each year, an average of just over £1,000 for every employee. This estimate is based on the total cost to organisations in handling workplace conflict that includes informal, formal and legal processes as well as the cost of sickness absences and resignations.² Nearly half a million employees resign each year as a result of conflict³. Thus, handling disagreements and complaints early before employment relationships are damaged can help save businesses money.

Acas provides a range of services offering practical advice and expert support, preventing and resolving workplace disputes. In addition to its dispute resolution services, Acas provides various products designed to prevent disputes from escalating further. Part of the suite of 'upstream' interventions that Acas offers is the Certification in Internal Workplace Mediation (CIWM) which aims to equip people to carry out internal mediations and to develop better conflict management and interpersonal skills for day-to-day relationship management. Workplace mediation is a process where a neutral party (a 'mediator') assists in resolving conflicts between employees or between employees and employers. It aims to promote open communication, understanding, and finding mutually beneficial solutions. Investment in mediation can be worthwhile for employers, as it often leads to improved employee morale, increased productivity, reduced turnover, and potential avoidance of expensive litigation.⁴⁵

The CIWM training is a relatively intensive intervention delivered over five days (either in a one week period or split into two blocks) of training delivered either face-to-face or, since the Covid pandemic, online or a combination of both (hybrid). Trainees can take part through an open access route where individuals book themselves onto a course, or organisations can arrange a tailored course to be delivered in-house. The course focuses on five key areas of mediation: what causes conflict at work, how to identify issues before they become bigger problems, when and how to take action, what to do in difficult situations, and how to encourage people to take part in mediation. Delegates receive a certificate of attendance and those who successfully complete the post-course question and answers (QA) work will be awarded the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation. The CIWM is accredited by NCFE, a nationally recognised awarding organisation, which means the course is checked and meets a consistent standard. The work required to gain accreditation was changed because tutors felt the work was too onerous. The post-course question and answers differs to the portfolio work that delegates previously completed following the course. The question and answers approach asks

² Estimating the costs of workplace conflict (Acas, 2021): <u>https://www.acas.org.uk/estimating-the-costs-of-workplace-conflict-report</u>

³ Estimating the costs of workplace conflict (Acas, 2021): <u>https://www.acas.org.uk/estimating-the-costs-of-workplace-conflict-report</u>

⁴ Mediation at work (Acas)

https://www.acas.org.uk/mediation#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20mediation%20can%20help.as% 20going%20to%20employment%20tribunal

⁵ Mediation at work (CIPD) <u>https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/mediation-</u>

factsheet/#:~:text=Mediation%20is%20preferable%20to%20more,less%20stressful%20for%20those %20involved.

delegates to think about how they would address certain situations in an actual mediation, which is seen as a more practical assessment of their skills.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its services, Acas carries out regular reviews and evaluations. The CIWM training was previously evaluated in 2014, the results of which showed that the training received high satisfaction ratings, with participants valuing the skills acquired such as reframing (restating content with a neutral frame), being impartial, and acknowledging different viewpoints. The CIWM accreditation process was well-received, and respondents reported increased confidence in and a clearer framework for carrying out mediations. The training had a positive impact on relations between managers and employees, and participants believed it contributed to improvements in mediation within their organisations.

However, the process of gaining accreditation through the portfolio work was seen to be too timeconsuming and more work than expected. It was recommended that this process be improved by potentially decreasing the amount of post-course work necessary or offering more post-course support. It was also recommended that Acas could work on promotional materials aimed at widening the participation of non-HR professionals in the course as well as further raise the awareness of mediation and its purpose.

Research aims and objectives

In 2022, Acas commissioned IFF Research to undertake an evaluation of the CIWM training to explore perceptions and the impact of the training on delegates and the organisations they worked for and make comparisons with the findings from 2014. The overall aim of the evaluation was to deliver reliable evidence on the impact of the CIWM training, exploring what delegates learned and whether this enabled them to resolve workplace conflict more quickly and effectively.

This was achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- Explore delegates' perception of the training, including value for money and mode of delivery.
- Explore the effectiveness of the training, the extent to which it equips delegates with the soft and practical skills needed to become effective workplace mediators, and its potential for resolving disputes more quickly and effectively.
- Understand delegates experiences of gaining accreditation and assess perceptions of the quality of post-course support.
- Understand the percentage of successful mediations by (accredited) mediators trained by Acas one year after training was completed.
- Examine barriers and facilitators to successful mediation in the workplace.
- Understand the impacts of the training on the trainee and examine the wider effects of mediation training on their job/role including their soft skills, and the short- and long-term impacts on the organisation.

In collaboration with Acas, a logic model was developed to clearly illustrate the effects of the training on the delegates (the model is presented in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants). The model outlines the inputs and activities featured in the intervention (the training) and identifies—a priori—the



short and long-term outcomes and impacts we expected to see. It also shows which effects were evidenced by the evaluation. Further details of the logic model development are presented in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants.

A survey of 339 delegates who took part in the training between July 2021 to June 2022 was undertaken and achieved 125 responses (37% response rate). This was followed by organisational case studies with four organisations (involving interviews with four delegates and three senior leaders). Full details of the research approach are reported in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants.

Report structure and conventions

This report presents the survey and case study findings. The report divides the findings into three parts:

- Chapter 2 focuses on delegates perceptions of the training including the reasons for attending the training, expectations and experiences of the course and process for gaining accreditation, and any recommendations for improvement.
- Chapter 3 presents the findings related to the impact of the training on delegates and their organisation, as well as discussion of long-term impacts that were considered by interviewees.
- Chapter 4 explores the barriers and facilitators of mediation that were reported by delegates and senior leaders.

Delegates who responded to the survey are referred to as respondents throughout the report, whereas case study participants are described as interviewees and differentiated as a delegate or senior leader.

Significance testing was undertaken to explore differences within sub-groups and compared to the overall distribution or average. Differences were explored based on individuals' role and organisation size, type of event and mode of delivery, previous mediation experience, completion of post-course QA and accreditation and demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, and health condition). Event type is distinguished by referring to the workplace course and open access course. Only statistically significant differences have been commented on; significant differences were identified based on role, course type, and mode of delivery. Where possible, comparisons to the 2014 evaluation are made and recommendations for training delivery are presented based on the findings described.



Profile of survey respondents and case study organisations

Survey respondents

The profile of survey respondents (N=125) is presented in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Characteristics of survey respondents

Î	77% female
00	94% of white ethnicity
	28% aged 40-49 40% aged 50+
(-)	82% did not have a health condition which impacted their day-to-day life
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	47% worked in public sector 41% worked in private sector
	67% were HR or personnel specialists 98% had a HR department in their workplace

Table 1.1 Characteristics of survey respondents

Characteristic	Percentages
Sex	77% female
Ethnicity	94% white ethnicity
Age	28% aged 40 to 49
	40% aged 50+
Health	82% did not have a health condition which impacted their day-to-day life
Organisation size	83% worked in large organisations (250+ employees)
Sector	47% worked in public sector
	41% worked in private sector
Experience of HR	67% were HR or personnel specialists



98% had a HR department in their workplace

The profile of survey respondents is generally representative of the overall delegate population in terms of gender, age, and mode of delivery (N=339), and the survey data was weighted based on course type.¹ Full breakdown of the population characteristics is reported in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants. The sample was broadly similar in terms of gender and age (although bands reported differed) compared to the sample included in the 2014 evaluation (details of which are included in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants). However, the present sample included a greater proportion of delegates in HR roles (67% in 2023 and 52% in 2014) and working in large organisations (84% in 2023 and 74% in 2014).

The findings of the survey showed that three-quarters of respondents attended the open access course where individuals book themselves onto a course, and a quarter (25%) attended a tailored workplace course. HR or personnel specialists were significantly more likely to attend the open access course compared to workplace course (74% and 47%, respectively). Similarly, those who were aged 50+ were significantly more likely to attend the open access course compared to the workplace course (45% and 24%, respectively). Those working in SMEs were also significantly more likely to take part through the open access course (18%) than a workplace course (3%), likely reflecting the lower number of personnel required to be trained in small organisations and potentially lesser resources available or perceived need to offer training at a workplace level.

Most respondents did the course online (58%), while 40% completed it face-to-face and 2% accessed the course via the hybrid option. 70% of respondents had no previous experience conducting mediations.

Case study organisations

The four case study organisations and interviewees included:

- Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, a social enterprise employing 150-160 staff. The delegate interviewed was the HR Business Partner who undertook the training face-to-face and had gained accreditation. The senior leader interviewed was the HR and Organisational Development Manager who had also previously attended the Acas CIWM training.
- Medway Community Healthcare CIC, a social enterprise employing more than 250 staff. The delegate interviewed was the Learning and Organisational Development Lead who undertook the training online and had not gained accreditation. The senior leader interviewed was the HR Director.
- A medium-sized (50-249 employees) private sector organisation in the retail industry. The delegate interviewed was the HR Manager who undertook the training online and had gained accreditation. The second interview was with the Assistant HR Manager who had also attended the training.

¹ Weighting was applied based on course type as this was the sample variable available at the time of analysis.

• A large (250+ employees) public sector organisation in the health sector. One interview was carried out with the Organisational Development Lead who took part in the training online and had gained accreditation. No senior leaders were available for interview.



2 Perceptions of the training

The following chapter explores reasons why delegates attended the training, their reflections on various aspects of the training including the materials, activities, and tutor as well as the mode of delivery, and suggest any improvements to the training. The findings related to the post-course QA in terms of delegates' experiences of this process, in particular any barriers or facilitators to gaining accreditation are also discussed.

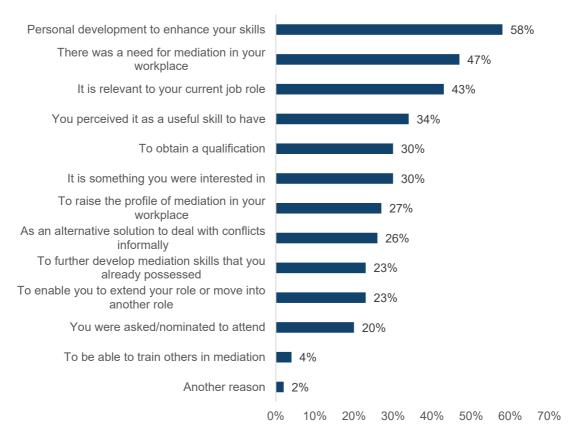
Motivations for attending the training

Reasons for attending the training

The most common reason respondents gave for attending the training was to enhance their skills through personal development (58%; see Figure 2.1). Personal goals were also the most chosen reason for attending the training in the 2014 evaluation, although only 28% of delegates chose this reason.

Figure 2.1 Most respondents attended the training for personal development.

Why did you go on the CIWM course?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B10. Base: All respondents (N=125)



Reason for attending the training	Percentage
Personal development to enhance your skills	58%
There was a need for mediation in your workplace	47%
It is relevant to your current job role	43%
You perceived it as a useful skill to have	34%
To obtain a qualification	30%
It is something you were interested in	30%
To raise the profile of mediation in your workplace	27%
As an alternative solution to deal with conflicts informally	26%
To further develop mediation skills that you already possessed	23%
To enable you to extend your role or move into another role	23%
You were asked/nominated to attend	20%
To be able to train others in mediation	4%
Another reason	2%

Table 2.1 Most respondents attended the training for personal development

Interviewees described attending the training to build on the skills they were already using to resolve conflicts. For example, one interviewee reported receiving training as a coach:

'I'm a trained coach and there are some overlaps with the skills between the coach and a mediator. But [before the course] I was being increasingly called on to do mediation and I would have to say to people that what I can do is I can facilitate a conversation, but I'm not a mediator. I wanted to do the course because I felt that I wasn't 100% confident that what I was doing was appropriate and correct'.

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Interviewees also described using similar principles to mediation in other forms of dispute resolution. Delegates felt the mediation training would enable them to build on these interpersonal skills.

'I would have done a lot of group facilitation when there was some conflict in the team and probably using very similar principles to what we use on the Acas Certificate in Workplace Mediation'.

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

The second and third most common reasons for respondents to attend the training were because of an organisational need for mediators (47%), or because the training was relevant to their current job role (43%). This was also found in the 2014 evaluation where a need for mediation in the workplace

(25%), and because it was relevant to their job role (16%), were the second and third most commonly reported reasons for undertaking training.

This finding could in part be explained by the fact that most respondents in the current evaluation worked as either an HR or personnel specialist (67%), or in a managerial role (includes owner/manager and supervisor/line manager), both of which are commonly involved in managing relationships within the workplace.

'I think being an HR professional you do automatically use elements of it [mediation] to try and resolve disputes, not necessarily in a structured or exact way, but I do think some of the learning that I received I could transfer to what I was doing beforehand [before the training] especially in relation to speaking to people separately, trying to find out what the problem is.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Social Enterprise, 150 employees; Note: also attended CIWM training)

In the case study organisations, the mediation and dispute resolution processes used prior to the training were not perceived as efficient or effective, and organisations were not confident in the approaches being taken. For example, one senior leader interviewed described how the use of external investigators was inefficient and impacted on teams:

'I wanted to reduce the formal escalations into grievances because it takes forever to get an investigator to come in. Then they have to do everything formally and then all the team take sides. It's so disruptive to a team. With mediation, we're actually bringing two people into the room and having a conversation about what they need to do to get on. How do we work together? What rules are we going put in place? So, we're trying to reduce time, reduce effort and try to resolve things before they escalate'.

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Organisations had various methods to resolve disputes, but most interviewees did not think an effective approach or structure was being used. Some organisations reported using informal facilitated discussions to resolve disputes where the two parties engage in a conversation about an issue with a third-party present. Others reported that people who were not trained were carrying out mediations.

Case study interviewees reported that they believed mediation would be more effective and less resource intensive than their existing approach because there was a clear framework to follow, and mediators would be properly trained with the necessary skills to carry out a mediation. One delegate also emphasised the need to intervene with an effective approach earlier on when a dispute arises:

'My facilitated conversations would be two or three individual meetings with this person, two or three individual meetings with the other person, then bring them together and then we'd have another couple of meetings. It was hours and hours of time...What's at the root is that people haven't dealt with things when they are much smaller. So, they've been allowed to fester and grow. And so therefore, sometimes we ended up in a mediation situation just because all the initial previous steps that should have been taken weren't taken.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

IFF Research

Interviewees emphasised the need for employees to receive training to equip them to undertake mediations, even in organisations where trained mediators were already present. For example, one organisation had an unmet demand for mediators even though it had trained mediators within the organisation because they lacked confidence to carry out mediations. The delegate described that the organisation was large (250+ employees) and although they had almost 40 trained mediators, it was difficult to get them to carry out mediations potentially because they had not carried out any mediations in a while. The delegate was motivated to attend the training to meet the organisation need for an additional mediator, but also with the hope that they would be able to support and motivate other mediators to undertake mediations.

Conversely, a delegate from another organisation explained that because the organisation was small, people worked closely with one another, and relationship issues were fairly common. It was important for their organisation to increase its mediator capacity to have a pool of people who could offer mediation. This was corroborated by a delegate interviewed from another small organisation, that they had noticed as the workforce had grown there were 'different opinions, different beliefs, different temperaments' which had led to more conflicts that would benefit from mediation.

'The motivation is to successfully resolve conflicts speedily with successful outcomes...because we are only a small team it was for staff to have that access to a trained mediator, so we needed the other two as well'.

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Respondents were more likely to report that they attended the training because it was something they were interested in if they completed the workplace course (where Acas deliver the training to a group within an organisation; 44%). Whereas 25% of those who took part in an open access course (where individuals sign up independently of their organisation) did so because it was something they were interested in. This suggests that the workplace course may attract a wider range of employees and be more accessible for them because they attend out of interest rather than it being a part of their role or because they are required to be trained as a mediator because of an organisational need. Indeed, 22% of those who attended a workplace training were not a manager or HR or personnel specialist, whereas only 9% of those on the open access course were in another role.

Choosing the Acas training

Delegates interviewed reported that the Acas course was specifically chosen because of its reputation: most delegates said it was important that the course provided accreditation (87%; higher than in the 2014 evaluation: 80%). It was clear from the interviews with delegates that Acas had a good reputation for delivering high quality training, and one organisation explained that they believed having mediators trained by Acas would be sufficient evidence in a tribunal case that the organisation had '*tried its best*'. Similarly, some interviewees had been recommended the course by colleagues or through HR networks, or from colleagues who had attended other training offered by Acas.

"By having that Acas brand, we are saying we're going do things properly this time. Do it by the book".

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Interviewees discussed that receiving training from Acas as well as a recognised qualification gave the mediator more credibility and confidence approaching mediation and encouraged buy-in from the



parties involved who believed the mediator was 'going to do it in a certain way as a result of the training... that it was going to be successful'.

'That it is a recognised training course by Acas, I think it just adds a bit more weight to it.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees; Note: also attended CIWM training)

One senior leader interviewee explained that they would recommend the Acas course specifically over other mediation courses available because they had previously had staff attend another course, but they did not feel competent to carry out mediations following the training. Whereas those in their organisation who had completed the Acas course did feel comfortable undertaking mediations.

'We previously for some reason deviated to the [organisation rd.] and I would never use them again because they're not any cheaper than Acas. It's the same cost but some of the staff left that programme had a belief that they couldn't mediate, whereas we didn't when we left the Acas programme.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

Perceptions of the training

Respondents and delegates who were interviewed reported high satisfaction with the structure of the training, the activities and materials, and the tutors. Delegates took part in the training both face-to-face and online and the findings show there are benefits and drawbacks of each mode and some impacts on perceptions of the training based on delivery type.

Expectations of the training

Prior to the training, delegates described that they expected that the course would teach them how to successfully undertake mediations, what to avoid doing, and what happens if mediation does not lead to a resolution. Interviewees also expected that the training would increase their confidence and enable them to be better equipped to carry out mediations using the proper tools and framework. It is evident from the findings reported in the following sections that the training met delegates' expectations.

All delegates interviewed reported that they were satisfied that their expectations had been met as they had learnt the skills to undertake mediation from attending the course. One delegate said that the training was better than they had expected because they did not realise how much there was to learn about mediation and how useful the training would be for them.

'I didn't know what I didn't know. I've walked away with so much. There's been so many takeaways. It's excellent.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

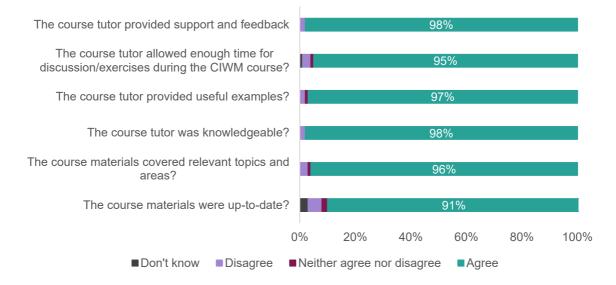
Training materials, activities, and tutor

The survey showed high levels of agreement that the course tutor was knowledgeable (98%), provided useful examples (97%), provided support and feedback (98%), and allowed enough time for discussions and exercises during the course (95%; see Figure 2.2).

IFF Research

Figure 2.2 Delegates were satisfied with the course tutor and materials.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that...



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B3. Base: All respondents (N=125)

This was supported by the case study interviews in which delegates described course tutors as knowledgeable, professional, and supportive. In particular, delegates reported it was useful when tutors shared their own experiences of mediation because it created a good learning environment and was reassuring for delegates as it showed that everyone had difficult situations to deal with and work through.

'They just created this wonderful learning environment. They were very upfront, very generous in sharing about their own previous experiences when things had not gone well. That was invaluable because you thought to yourself well, blimey, if that can happen to you, it can happen to anyone.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Perceptions of some aspects of the course differed depending on if respondents undertook training online or face-to-face. Respondents who completed the course online were significantly more likely to agree that the course tutor was knowledgeable (100%) compared to those who completed the training face-to-face (95%). On the other hand, one delegate who took part online highlighted the benefit of role plays during the course:

'I liked the breakouts that we did...although I was petrified by the role play, it really really benefited. There were lots of different characters and angles.'

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private sector, 50-249 employees)

Respondents believed the course materials were up to date (91%) and covered relevant topics and areas (96%). The handouts (or digital versions if delivered online) were reported to be high quality and very helpful, and one interviewee said that they were still using the materials following the training.

'I liked the handouts that we could take away; I still use those now.... I still go back through them each time I've got one [a mediation] which helps me prepare'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Interviewees felt that the design of the course was especially good as it combined small group work with reflection time as well as effective role play. They also reported that the training gave them all the tools, techniques and understanding of processes such as using the framework that they were expecting to gain from the course.

'I was very satisfied with it...and I think just to clarify that it's the way it was designed...there was group work in small groups but then there was self-reflection as well and my learning style was very much catered for.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

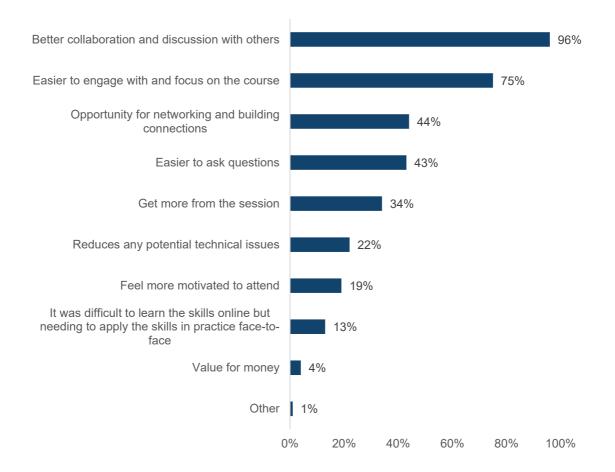
Mode of training delivery

Since the Covid pandemic, delegates could choose to attend the training online or through a hybrid of online and face-to-face, as well as the usual face-to-face course. More than half of respondents did the course online (58%) and very few chose the hybrid option (2%).

Respondents were asked how they would rather participate in Acas training sessions going forward and why they would prefer to participate in training in that way. In terms of preferred mode of delivery, most respondents expressed a preference for face-to-face training (57%), generally because they thought it enabled better collaboration and discussion with others (96%), or it was easier to engage with and focus on the course (75%; see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Face-to-face training is easier to engage with and provides better collaboration. Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions face-to-face?





Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B6. Base: All respondents who prefer face-to-face (N=70)

Table 2.2 Face-to-face training is easier to engage with and provides better collaboration

Reason why delegate prefers to participate in training sessions face-to-face	Percentage of delegates
Better collaboration and discussion with others	96%
Easier to engage with and focus on the course	75%
Opportunity for networking and building connections	44%
Easier to ask questions	43%
Get more from the session	34%
Reduces any potential technical issues	22%
Feel more motivated to attend	19%
It was difficult to learn the skills online but needing to apply the skills in practice face-to-face	13%



Value for money	4%
Other	1%

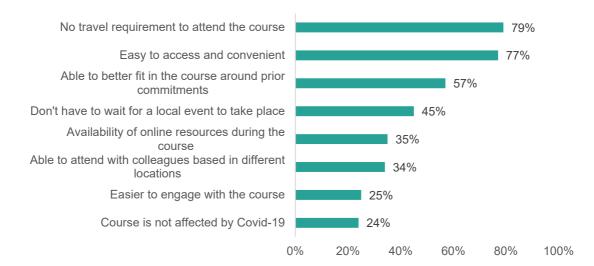
The preferred mode of delivery varied depending on the course type respondents engaged with (workplace or open access). This highlights that there may be additional benefits of face-to-face engagement when undertaking training with colleagues, whereas when completing the training with individuals from other organisations accessibility and convenience may be prioritised.

It was significantly more common among those who completed the course through their workplace (72%) to report that face-to-face was their preferred mode of delivery compared to those who did an open access course (51%). Conversely, respondents who completed a workplace course were significantly less likely to want to complete the training in a hybrid environment compared to those who took part in an open access course (7% compared to 28%).

Around one in five respondents would prefer hybrid (22%) or online training (18%). The most common benefits of online training were that there would be no travel requirements (79%), and it was easy and convenient to access (77%; see Figure 2.4). The reasons reported for preferring hybrid training drew on the benefits of both other modes: it allowed for better collaboration and discussion with others (71%), and it was easy to access and convenient (55%; see Figure 2.5). HR or personnel specialists were significantly more likely to have completed the course online (64%) compared to the overall sample.

Figure 2.4 Training delivered online is more convenient and accessible.

Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions online?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B7. Base: All respondents who prefer online (N=24)

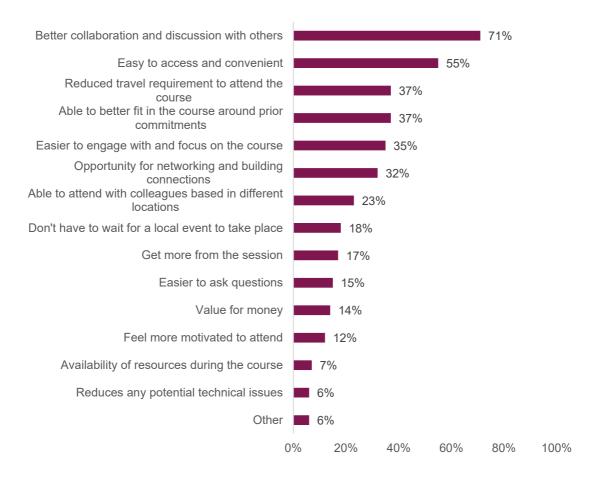
IFF Research

Reason why delegate prefers to participate in training sessions online	Percent age of delegat es
No travel requirement to attend the course	79%
Easy to access and convenient	77%
Able to better fit in the course around prior commitments	57%
Don't have to wait for a local event to take place	45%
Availability of online resources during the course	35%
Able to attend with colleagues based in different locations	34%
Easier to engage with the course	25%
Course is not affected by covid-19	24%

Table 2.3 Training delivered online is more convenient and accessible

Figure 2.5 Hybrid training provides better collaboration but is also easy to access. Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions in a hybrid way?





Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B8. Base: All respondents who prefer hybrid (N=28)

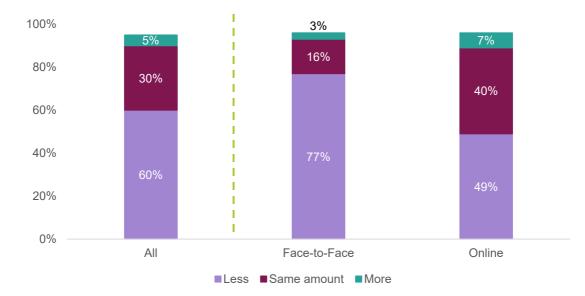
Table 2.4 Hybrid training provides better collaboration but is also easy to access

Reason why delegate prefers to participate in training sessions in a hybrid way	Percentage of delegates
Better collaboration and discussion with others	71%
Easy to access and convenient	55%
Reduced travel requirement to attend the course	37%
Able to better fit in the course around prior commitments	37%
Easier to engage with and focus on the course	35%
Opportunity for networking and building connections	32%
Able to attend with colleagues based in different locations	23%
Don't have to wait for a local event to take place	18%

Get more from the session	17%
Easier to ask questions	15%
Value for money	14%
Feel more motivated to attend	12%
Availability of resources during the course	7%
Reduces any potential technical issues	6%
Other	6%

Respondents were asked if they would expect to pay more or less for a course delivered online compared to face-to-face. It was generally felt by respondents that a course delivered online should cost less than if it was delivered face to face (60%; see Figure 2.6). Interestingly, those who completed the course face-to-face were significantly more likely to think that the course should cost less if it was delivered online (77%, compared to 49% of those who completed online). Meanwhile those who completed the course online were significantly more likely to think that it should cost the same (40%, compared to 16% of those who completed face-to-face) suggesting that the former group feel like they would miss out on something if the training was done online, but the latter group feel the value would be the same.

Figure 2.6 Delegates who took part in face-to-face training are more likely to believe online training should cost less.



All else being equal, how much would you expect to pay for a course delivered online compared to face-to-face?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. B9. Base: All respondents (N=125)

Overall satisfaction

Almost all respondents were satisfied with the course (96%) and would be likely to recommend it to a colleague (97%), and 85% agreed it provided value for money. These results are similar to the previous evaluation in 2014 which reported 94% of delegates being satisfied with the training and 94% recommending it to a colleague.

The case study evidence also showed that delegates were overwhelmingly satisfied with the course. All interviewees said they would recommend the training, some said they would recommend it to specific people involved in dispute resolution, while others said they would recommend it to union representatives and managers, or to anyone joining their HR team.

'I would definitely recommend it to other HR professionals, especially in positions if you're dealing with a lot of different levels...'

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private Sector, 230 employees)

Gaining accreditation

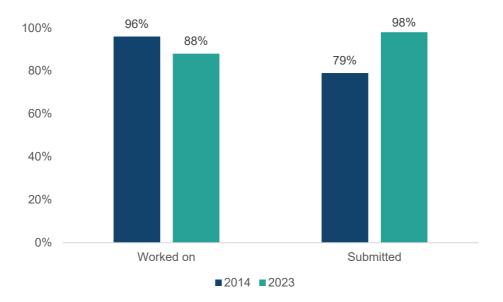
To gain accreditation following the training, delegates submit post-course QA work which is marked by the tutor and individuals are awarded accreditation if it meets the required standard. Previously, to gain accreditation, delegates completed a portfolio of work which the 2014 evaluation identified was difficult and required an unexpected amount of time and work to complete. The findings of this evaluation suggest delegates' experience of the accreditation process may have improved, however there are still some areas where more support is needed.

The majority of respondents had worked on their post-course QA (88%) since completing the course, and 98% of those had submitted their work (see Figure 2.7). Of those who had submitted their work, 89% had now gained accreditation. The results of the 2014 evaluation showed that 96% of delegates had worked on their portfolio, 79% of which had submitted their work, and 67% of those who had submitted had gained accreditation. These figures suggest that although the new approach for gaining accreditation had led to a slightly lower proportion of delegates working towards accreditation, a higher number of delegates who did engage with the work became accredited.

Figure 2.7 A greater proportion of delegates had worked on their post-course QA in 2014, but more had submitted their work in 2023

Have you worked on and submitted your post-course questions and answers?





Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. C1. Base: All respondents (N=125). C2. Base: All respondent who have worked on QA (N=110). An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service 2014.

Gaining accreditation was an important step in becoming a practicing mediator for many delegates. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of those who had gained accreditation said that they waited to be accredited before undertaking mediation, and 30% of those who were not accredited and had not carried out any mediations since the training said it was because they were waiting for their accreditation first.

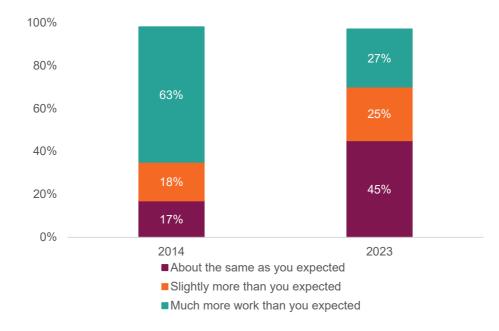
Barriers to gaining accreditation

Respondents reflected on their experience of completing the post-course QA and barriers included:

- Difficulty of the work and amount of work involved.
- Time needed to complete the work.
- The standard and detail of work required.

Just over half of respondents felt the amount of work involved was more than they had expected (52%), and just over a third found it difficult to complete (35%, of which 1% found it very difficult; see Figure 2.8 and Figure 2.9). In contrast, 81% of 2014 delegates said the work was more than expected, but fewer thought it was difficult to complete (22%) suggesting that although delegates may feel more prepared for the amount of work, the new format of post-course work may have made them harder to complete. The higher difficulty of completing the post-course QA may potentially explain why a lower proportion of delegates had begun working on their post-course work compared to in 2014.

Figure 2.8 The proportion of delegates who found the post-course QA more work than they expected was lower than in 2014.

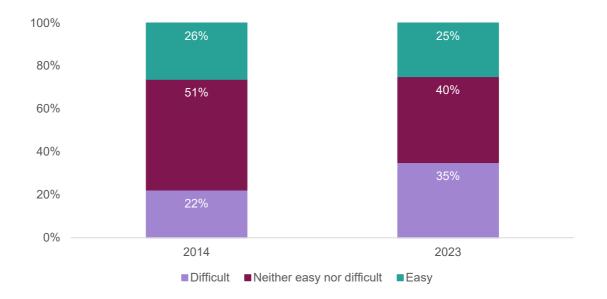


How do you feel about the amount of work that you've had to do to put your post-course questions and answers together?

Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. C4. Base: All respondent who have worked on QA (N=110). An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service 2014. Time to complete the post-course QA was commonly identified as a barrier to gaining accreditation. More than half of respondents reported that it was difficult because of the amount of time needed to complete the work (59%). Indeed, over a third of respondents said they could not complete any of their post-course QA during working hours (34%), and not having had the time to complete the work to a required standard was the most common reason that respondents had not worked on or submitted their post-course QA (43% of 16 respondents) or had not yet gained accreditation having submitted their work (67% of 11 respondents).

Figure 2.9 More delegates found the post-course QA difficult to complete than in 2014.

How would you rate the process of putting together the post-course questions and answers in terms of difficulty, compared to 2014 evaluation.



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. C5. Base: All respondents who have worked on QA (N=110). An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service 2014.

Other common reasons that respondents found the process of putting together the post-course QA difficult included:

- Completing the work to the necessary detail (71%).
- Being clear on what was required (60%).
- Identifying sources of evidence (43%).

The findings of the 2014 evaluation showed that the reasons for not working on the post-course portfolio were because respondents were unclear how to complete the work thoroughly or the workload requirements were too high. Delegates identified that they would have liked to have been more informed about the amount of work needed, which the results of the present evaluation suggest has improved as expectations were more realistic.

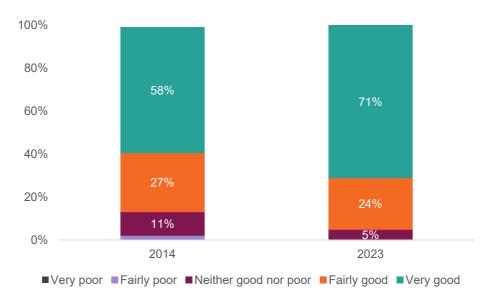
Enablers of gaining accreditation

Support from Acas tutors and employers helped delegates to complete the accreditation process through feedback and encouragement, as well as time allowances and financial help.

The feedback provided by tutors on the post-course QA is one way that Acas supports delegates to achieve accreditation. All respondents who had submitted their post-course QA had received feedback from their Acas course tutor, and most received this in less than a month which is in line with Acas's expectation for providing feedback (up to a week 34%, between a week and a month 48%). Nearly all of those who received feedback on their work reported that the quality of feedback was good (95%; of which 71% said very good and no respondents said it was poor), which is higher than reported in 2014 (85%; see Figure 2.10). The most common reason in the 2014 evaluation why delegates who had submitted work but not gained accreditation was because they had not received feedback from assessors (54% of 37 respondents). It is clear from the current evaluation that this has improved considerably.



Figure 2.10 The proportion of delegates who reported receiving good quality feedback had increased since the 2014 evaluation.



How would you rate the quality of the feedback that you received from your tutor?

Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. C13. Base: All respondents who received feedback (N=107). An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service

One delegate interviewed discussed the accreditation process, and mentioned that the opportunity to ask questions prior to submitting the work had been beneficial:

'There was an assignment that we did at the end...we were able to actually ask questions before we submitted it for marking. So I think basically everything that they did was actually covered.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

Organisational support was a key enabler of gaining accreditation, especially providing delegates with the time to complete the training and post-course QA. Almost one in five (19%) respondents were able to complete all their post-course QA during their usual working time and a further half of respondents completed some (38%) or most (10%) during this time. In 2014, only one in ten reported that they completed all their post-course QA during work time which may explain the lower proportion of accredited mediators achieved.

The majority (95%) of respondents felt that their organisation had been supportive in enabling them to work towards the accreditation, which is higher than reported in 2014 (88%). The most common examples of how respondents felt their organisation had been supportive were allowing time off for training (71%), paying for or financially contributing to their training (55%), and providing general encouragement (11%).

Recommendations for improvement

In line with the high satisfaction levels, more than half of respondents did not think any improvements to the training were needed (53%). This was especially true for those who completed the course face-to-face compared to those online (66% compared to 43%).

2014.

The main improvement suggested by respondents was offering face-to-face training (8% of all respondents; all who suggested this had attended online). It was common that delegates had taken part online due to the Covid pandemic so recognised that this was not possible at the time. However, they believed that face-to-face training would enable them to learn more from people's body language and facial expressions during the role play activities.

'My preference would have been face to face...Because you can really read the room...you can feel the heat go up. You can feel the temperature drop. All those things. I just feel that when you are dealing with people and their emotions, those small little micro expressions are just that little movement you see...If you've got somebody in front of you, you've got the whole data.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Other improvements reported by respondents included making changes to the assessment or postcourse QA (6% of all respondents, all of whom had submitted their post-course QA and half had gained accreditation) and offering more support with the post-course QA (5% of all respondents). Based on the barriers discussed, delegates would benefit from more time to complete the work, greater clarity on the requirements to meet the standard needed to receive accreditation, and help identifying resources to use.

Interviewees also identified the following specific improvements:

- Spending more time discussing the mediator's role and skills needed in transitioning from agreeing the agenda to action planning. This element of the process was felt to be particularly challenging as it required multi-skilling.
- Providing digital versions of the materials so that delegates can reference them more easily following the training. It was common that mediators used the course materials to prepare for mediations and they would be easier to access when working remotely or off-site if they were digital.
- Providing a template for the feedback forms that people fill in after mediation to support mediators in gathering useful information.

The most commonly identified suggestions for improvements in the 2014 evaluation related to issues with the post-course portfolio such as keeping delegates better informed about the amount of work involved, and the course content, including repetition of content or the course being too long. Some similar suggestions made in the 2014 evaluation were made in the current evaluation but only by a minority of respondents: three respondents suggested the course could be shorter, and four respondents said the course could be extended.

One improvement mentioned in 2014 which relates to the current findings, was to include training specifically for 'when mediation gets heated' or if, for example, 'a woman was mediating on her own amongst a group of men'. Greater focus on some of the more difficult circumstances and outcomes of mediation was identified by delegates interviewed when reflecting on the training materials, activities, and tutors, and is discussed further in Chapter 3.



3 Impact of the training

This chapter explores the impact of training on delegates and their wider organisation including longterm impacts.

- The first section outlines any course impact on delegates' immediate role by assessing skills acquired from the training, changes in mediation undertaken as well as any course impact on delegates' wider role in their organisation.
- The second section assesses any course impact at the organisational level by looking at awareness of, and support for, mediation, effectiveness of mediation and changes in internal policies.
- The final section of this chapter looks at any long-term impacts of the training particularly any changes to organisational perception and culture towards mediation as an effective dispute resolution tool.

Evidence of the long-term impacts of the training was not part of the aims of this evaluation and are difficult to establish but delegates and senior leaders did discuss changes which they attributed to having attended the training. Changes to the organisational culture towards mediation as an effective dispute resolution tool were reported, as well as reducing the volume of formal disputes and employee absence and turnover by increasing the number, and quality, of mediations undertaken.

Impact of the training on delegates

The training had a positive impact on delegates, improving their understanding and equipping them with the skills they needed to undertake mediations in their organisation. In addition, there was evidence that delegates benefited from these skills more widely, e.g., in the ways they communicated with colleagues.

Skills acquired by delegates

The most significant impact of the training reported by more than a quarter (26%) of respondents, was confidence in approaching mediation (Figure 3.1). Respondents who had previous mediation experience were significantly more likely to say this (42% compared to 19% of those with no previous mediation experience) potentially suggesting that the training bolstered the experience they already had, leading them to feel more assured in their practices.

The case study findings also showed that delegates felt they had gained confidence in undertaking mediations post-training. Both delegates and senior leaders discussed feeling validated from having attended the training and gained the accreditation because it was perceived to add additional credibility to their expertise. For example, one delegate described feeling more confident in their own competence in terms of what they should and should not do, which they felt had made them more efficient in delivering mediation. This compares to before the training where this delegate faced difficulty undertaking mediations because they lacked a process to follow and felt the understanding from managers negatively affected their confidence:

'So, I now know what I should be doing, what it's okay for me to be doing. I can get there quicker which for me also means getting there better.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

21% of delegates agreed having tools and skills to use in mediation was the most significant impact of the training while sixteen percent of delegates agreed that understanding the mediation process was the most significant impact of the training. This is consistent with the findings of the 2014 evaluation where increased confidence, greater awareness of mediation as a tool, and understanding of the importance of communication were reported by survey respondents.

Improved communication was highlighted by one interviewee:

'One thing that I did take from the training [is to] try to allow two sided conversations between parties...and becoming more confident in knowing when to stop the meeting'

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private sector, 50-249 employees)

Figure 3.1 The course gave delegates confidence and the tools and skills to use in mediation. What is the most significant impact that the course has had on you?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. G4. Base: All respondents (N=125)

IFF Research

Impact	Percentage of delegates
Confidence in approaching mediation	26%
Tools / skills to use in mediation	21%
Understanding the mediation process	16%
Reframing techniques	11%
Structuring the session effectively	11%
Improved communication	7%
How to approach conversations	6%
Listening to others	5%
Accreditation	5%
Understanding of others	3%
Knowledge	2%
Other	4%
Nothing	8%
Don't know	6%

Table 3.1 The course gave delegates confidence and the tools and skills to use in mediation

When asked about whether the training had equipped delegates with mediation skills and understanding of mediation, the majority of respondents agreed that it had (see Figure 3.2).

- 95% of respondents agreed that the training had enabled them to understand the mediation process and identify when internal workplace mediation is appropriate.
- 93% of respondents agreed that the training had enabled them to manage the mediation process and enhance their communication skills.

 90% of respondents agreed that the training enabled them to understand the causes and effects of workplace conflict and that the training gave them confidence in their mediation skills.

Figure 3.2 Delegates understood the mediation process and were able to identify when internal workplace mediation was appropriate following the course.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the course has enabled you to...



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. E1. Base: All respondents (N=125)The degree to which the training developed some skills varied between groups, potentially because of respondents' pre-existing skill levels.

- Those with no previous mediation experience were significantly more likely to strongly
 agree that the training had enhanced their communication skills (37% compared to 15% of
 delegates who had previous experience). This may be because those with previous
 mediation experience are likely to have developed enhanced communication skills through
 their prior mediations.
- Respondents who worked in an HR or personnel specialist role were significantly less likely to agree overall that the course enabled them to understand the causes and effects of workplace conflict (86% compared to 90% overall) perhaps reflecting a more acute pretraining understanding of workplace conflict due to the nature of HR roles.
- Respondents who took part in an open access course were significantly more likely to agree that the training gave them confidence in their mediation skills (41% compared to 18% of delegates who were part of the workplace course type). This suggests there may be benefits to attending a course with individuals from other organisations, potentially through learning from other people's experiences from outside their organisation or because activities during the course are more effective at building confidence. Respondents may also have experienced further benefits by not training with colleagues as this perhaps

encouraged unfiltered engagement, and open sharing of mediation experiences, that is not always possible when colleagues are present.

'We [delegates on open access course] all got to know each other quite well so it was quite a safe space to practise which was really good'

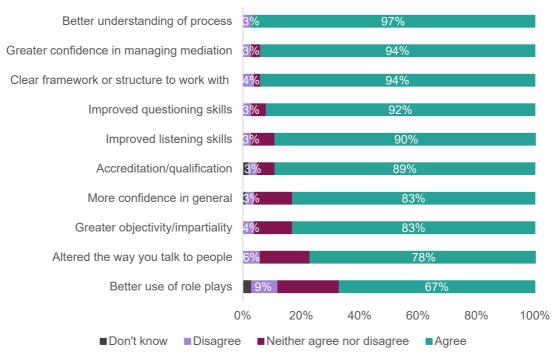
Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Delegates were also asked to what extent they agreed that the training had equipped them with skills that would help them to achieve successful mediation outcomes. Respondents agreed that the skills developed through the training would result in successful mediation outcomes. The majority of delegates agreed that they had better understanding of mediation (97%), as well as confidence (94%), skills, and tools to carry it out (specific percentages included in Figure 3.3).

Respondents who worked in an HR or personnel specialist role were significantly less likely
to strongly agree that an improvement in questioning skills or objectivity led to more positive
mediation outcomes (50% compared to 56% overall, and (41% compared to 50% overall,
respectively). This could be because this group already possessed strong skillsets in these
areas as part of their HR role so did not think that the training developed these skills to as
great an extent, or because they did not think these particular skills are as important when
trying to reach a resolution.

Figure 3.3 Delegates had a better understanding of the mediation process and greater confidence in managing mediation.

To what extent do you agree that the following skills developed by completing the course have/will help you to achieve successful mediation outcomes...



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. E2. Base: All respondents (N=125)



Fewer respondents agreed that skills developed in the course altered the way they talk to people (78%) or led to better use of role plays (67%) that would help them to achieve successful mediation. This suggests that the training may not be as effective at building these skills or that respondents might have felt that their existing manner of speaking with people was appropriate, as professional and sensitive use of language is key to the types of roles respondents occupied. Interviewees also expressed initial hesitations towards role plays, which may reflect lesser understanding of how role plays could be used within mediations or the nuances of dispute cases that cannot be conceptualised through a set of example role plays. One delegate reported that they initially found the roleplay activities challenging but saw the value in doing them:

'I think the role play, although some people found it embarrassing or difficult, was one of the best parts because it made you put into practice the things that you were learning. So, I thought it was a really good balance of the theory group work and practically applying your knowledge.'

Delegate (HR Manager, Private Sector, 230 employees)

Delegates felt that the training had provided them with the tools to support them in undertaking mediations. Some delegates discussed how they drew on their greater knowledge of mediation gained through the training to prepare the individuals taking part in mediation beforehand. Delegates also reported that the training provided a clear framework to use and a structure for going through the process, with two describing how they used materials from the course to assist them during mediations such as using the handbook or developing a 'crib sheet'.

'Getting the people prepared for mediation, when people go into mediation, they go in with preconceived ideas about what it's going to give them and I spend quite a bit of time explaining what it is and what it isn't and I got that from the course, that was really helpful.'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Delegates also shared positive experiences of using the skills they had developed during the training such as using objectivity and impartiality in a dispute where they might have previously been unintentionally biased towards one party. This was the case for delegates who had more previous experience of dispute resolution and therefore sought to solidify their previous mediation experience in an official manner through training.

For example, a delegate described how they thought they may have previously been unconsciously biased towards the manager in a dispute between an employee and their line manager:

'One thing that I did take from the training, which I think I'm definitely using a lot more of now, is being that impartial body. I think whether I meant to or not, I've had a tendency to lean towards the person that I perhaps agree with the most and felt that I had a bit of an allegiance to the manager in those meetings, whereas now I am growing in confidence to...keep my own opinions to myself to try and allow two-sided conversations between those parties.'

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private Sector, 50-249 employees)

As shown by the quote below, interviewees also identified setting ground rules and ensuring they are kept to, and multi-skilling to be able to actively listen, take notes, question, and summarise as skills developed that they had particularly used in mediations.

'Staying impartial... making sure they stick to the ground rules, multiskilling like active listening, trying to take down the important notes, summarising, asking the right questions in the right way, it's quite hard it's fairly challenging and I imagine the more you do the better you become.'

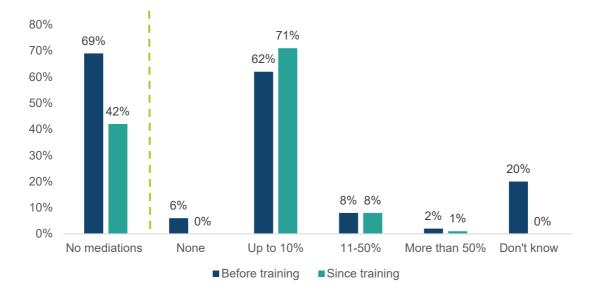
Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Mediations undertaken by delegates

Before the training, 30% of respondents had participated in workplace disputes or disagreements as a mediator (see Figure 3.5). Since the training, this rose to 59% of respondents having undertaken any mediations.

In general, those who said they had undertaken mediations before and after the training reported spending a similar amount of their working time, up to 10%, in a mediating role, either undertaking mediation itself or carrying out work directly related to mediating. Before training, 62% of respondents who indicated they had participated in any workplace disputes or disagreements as a mediator also said they spent up to 10% of their working time on mediation-related activities (see Figure 3.4). Of respondents who reported undertaking any mediations since the training, this figure increased to 71% of respondents. Interestingly, 6% of respondents said they spent none of their time in a mediating role before the training, even though they had said they had participated in mediations, suggesting this experience may not have been a regular part of their role.

Figure 3.4 Mediators spend up to 10% of their time in a mediating role before and after training.



Proportion of time spent carrying out mediations or work directly related to mediating before and after the training.

Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. A2. Base: All respondents (N=125). A5. Base: All previous mediators (N=35). D1. Base: All respondent (N=125). D3. Base: All respondents who have mediated since training (N=72).

Overall, respondents had undertaken 195 mediations in the year prior to the training.

Of these 195 mediations, 80% had been resolved:

- 61% had been fully resolved.
- 19% had been partially resolved (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Almost twice as many delegates had mediated since the training Mediations carried out before and since the training by outcome

	Before the training	Since the training
Delegates facilitated mediations	30%	59%
Fully or partially resolved	80%	77%
Ongoing	3%	6%
Withdrawn	6%	10%
Moved to formal complaint	11%	7%

Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. A3. Base: All previous mediators (N=35). D1. Base: All respondents (N=125).

Based on the training and research fieldwork dates, the period since the training ranged from approximately 10 months to 1 year and 8 months. Respondents had conducted 192 mediations since the training, of which:

- 77% had been resolved. Specifically:
 - 64% had been fully resolved which is a slight increase compared to pre-training.
 - 13% of had been partially resolved, which is a slight reduction compared to before attending the training.

84% of respondents who had partially, or fully, resolved mediation cases since training said that mediation was a major factor in the resolution of their most recent mediation case, similar to the proportion reported in 2014 (82%).

The proportion of mediations that had:

Moved to formal complaint since training had decreased from 11% prior to training to 7% following training.



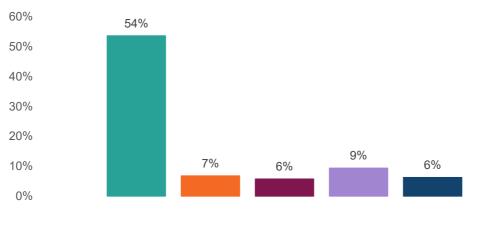
- The proportion of mediations that had been withdrawn, or are ongoing, had increased:
 - 6% of mediations had been withdrawn before training compared to 10% following training.
 - 3% were ongoing before the training compared to 6% following the training.

In terms of accredited mediators, 76% of respondents reported that they had received accreditation since the training. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of accredited mediators had waited to be accredited before undertaking any mediations, however 31% of accredited mediators said that they had not waited to be accredited before undertaking mediations. Since the training, accredited respondents had undertaken 157 mediations, of which:

- 54% had been fully resolved and 7% had been partially resolved (see Figure 3.6).
- This means that 61% of mediations carried out by accredited mediators had been resolved to some extent.

Figure 3.6 More than half of mediations carried out by accredited mediators had been resolved.





■ Fully resolved ■ Partially resolved ■ Proceeded to formal complaint ■ Withdrawn ■ Ongoing

Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. D1. Base: Accredited mediators (N=97).

Table 3.2 More than half of mediations carried out by accredited mediators had been resolved

Outcome of mediation undertaken by accredited mediators since training	Percentage
Fully resolved	54%
Partially resolved	7%
Proceeded to formal complaint	6%



Withdrawn	9%
Ongoing	6%

The 2014 evaluation reported that 83% of mediations carried out by accredited mediators had been resolved fully (66%) or partially (17%). However, this was calculated after excluding 26 mediations that were judged as not being appropriate for mediation which was not included as a response option in the current evaluation. If the proportion of resolved mediations from the 2014 evaluation is calculated based on all mediations carried out, then the results show that 68% of mediations carried out by accredited mediators were fully (54%) or partially resolved (14%) which is similar to the proportion found in the present evaluation.

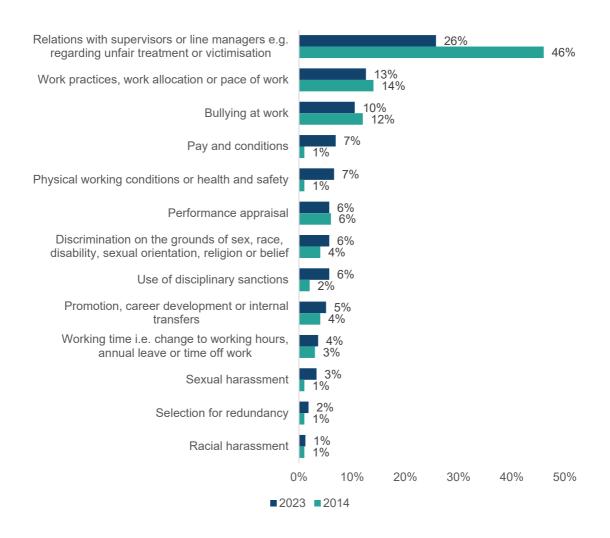
A similar proportion of mediations undertaken by accredited mediators proceeded to a formal complaint (6%) compared to in 2014 (7%, or 5% of all accredited mediations).

Assessment of the main focus of the mediations in the current evaluation suggests that the topic of mediations more commonly related to pay and conditions, physical working conditions, and discrimination compared to in 2014 when almost half of cases were about relations with superiors (see Figure 3.7). However, Acas advises that individual mediation is not a suitable course of action for subjects such as these, as they should be dealt with via grievance processes. This may be contributing to the number of mediations being deemed as not resolved. This suggests that delegates require a clearer understanding of what type of disputes are appropriate for mediation.

Figure 3.7 Mediations were less likely to be about relations, but more likely to relate to pay, working conditions and discrimination than in 2014.

Proportion of mediations since the training compared to 2014 by focus of dispute.





Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. D6. Base: All respondents who have mediated since training (N=74). Acas An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service 2014. D6. Base: Where cases have been mediated (N=96). An evaluation of the impact of the internal workplace mediation training service 2014.

The delegates taking part in case studies did not generally use mediation prior to the training. Instead, it was common for delegates to use mediation-related skills and principles to facilitate conversations informally between employees such as in their day-to-day role in HR and during appraisal meetings. Mediation-related skills refers to the skills typically interwoven into the role of HR employees, learned 'on-the-job' of the HR role (such as involvement in casework) or gained through the development of other skills such as coaching. These interpersonal and facilitation skills were true of delegates and senior leaders across all case study organisations.

Some confusion among individuals in the wider organisation about who is equipped to undertake mediations was reported by case study participants. Interviewees who worked in HR roles believed that there was some overlap between the skills used outside of mediations, and to undertake mediations. Interviewees recalled that they were often asked to conduct mediations despite lacking formal mediation training because colleagues were not aware of the distinction between mediation and other roles or skills. Colleagues tended to believe that interviewees were best placed to facilitate mediations as the skills needed during a mediation were seen as automatically used by HR staff in their day-to-day role. Despite this, interviewees expressed that these 'mediations' tended to be unofficial and were often unstructured:

'I'm a trained coach and there are some overlaps with the skills between the coach and a mediator. But [before the course] I was being increasingly called on to do mediation and I would have to say to people that 'what I can do is I can facilitate a conversation, but I'm not a mediator'. I wanted to do the course because I felt that I wasn't 100% confident that what I was doing was appropriate and correct'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

There was a distinction reported by interviewees between using mediation-related skills during dispute resolution and facilitating a mediation. This was because of the different focus of skills required. For instance, interviewees often indicated that the usual HR response would be to problem-solve during dispute resolutions, however mediations required other key focuses such as impartiality and objectivity. One delegate reflected on their tendency not to be impartial during discussions they took part in prior to the training:

'I think whether I meant to or not, I think that I have had a tendency to lean towards the person that I perhaps agree with the most and felt that I had a bit of an allegiance to the manager in those meetings'.

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private Sector, 230 employees

Before the training, interviewees were also asked to step in to facilitate conversations in a dispute when it was felt that line managers were not dealing with these quickly or effectively. Interviewees from two organisations reported that, before the training, line managers were typically the first port of call if an employee had an issue, but line managers were not always equipped with the skills or confidence to deal with difficult situations effectively. In one organisation, the delegate felt that line managers would avoid the need for mediation which would lead to the conflict escalating and needing external investigation.

In addition, some interviewees recognised that they were called upon to help resolve disputes as it was assumed that HR would follow professional principles when involved in a potentially sensitive situation. In one example, a senior leader described how other staff members were keen to mediate however not for the right reasons. Some examples include:

- Wanting to facilitate because they were close to an individual involved in a dispute.
- Staff who would see mediation as an opportunity to engage in workplace 'drama' and share this across the workplace.
- Staff who were motivated largely by the perceived authority of being a mediator.

This senior leader emphasised that the employees who attended the training were well-suited to being mediators because they were '*impartial, warm, empathetic, non-judgmental, and willing to listen*'.

Since the training, most delegates who were interviewed reported that more mediations had taken place although it generally was not used '*a huge amount*'. For example, the delegate from a large organisation estimated they had carried out four mediations since the training and tended to set aside one and a half days every six months for mediation, whereas a smaller organisation had undertaken two mediations since the training.

Interviewees within one organisation indicated that fewer mediations were taking place due to a better understanding of when mediation should be used. In this example, the delegates shared that the organisation had increasingly used mediations inefficiently before the training as they had felt that it was always a necessary tool to use in each dispute. Upon reflection, they realised that they had escalated disputes unnecessarily and had not adequately considered other dispute resolution tools that may have fit better for different disputes. Since the training, interviewees described how having a clear framework and structure for the mediation process (learned through the training) enabled them to first exhaust other dispute resolution tools, such as facilitating an informal conversation between the colleagues involved, before deciding to undertake mediation. This shows that an increase in mediation knowledge had led to resolving disputes quicker and more efficiently by not immediately choosing to conduct a mediation.

Experiences of the mediations conducted varied depending on the outcome. One delegate described that not all mediations they had undertaken had positive outcomes and this could have an emotional toll on the mediator because they felt personally invested, however after some reflection and support from their manager as well as undertaking another mediation which was successful, they explained that the process was rewarding. In addition, referring to the framework from the training helped to ground them as it provided structure. This is shown by the quote below.

'I did a lot of reflection and a bit of soul searching around could I have done anything differently, what were the reasons why they hadn't managed to agree... I think it does affect you personally because you're obviously invested in it. What helped was I looked at the framework and thought 'I'm there as a facilitator and it's not for me to take it on too personally', so I had to sort of step away from that and think it's not about me, but that did sit with me a bit afterwards.'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Alongside mediation, delegates participated in various activities, and roles, related to dispute resolution and conflict management both before and after the training (see Figure 3.8).

Since training, the most common activity was counselling (guidance to resolve personal problems), coaching (guidance to support someone to achieve a goal), and advising (offering knowledge and experience, as well as access to their network), mentioned by 73% of delegates. The second-most common activity was disciplinary or grievance procedures (69%), which is slightly lower compared to before the training (75% and 72%, respectively) which may be because delegates thought it more appropriate to undertake mediations instead of these activities.

- Conflict resolution and facilitating individual or group discussions was also a common activity undertaken, with 65% of respondents saying that they had participated in either of these since the training. This was higher than the year prior to the course (60% and 57%, respectively) suggesting the skills developed through the training may have enabled them to support or lead these activities to a greater extent.
- As with the year prior to the course, delegates who were in an HR or personnel specialist role were significantly more likely to have participated in counselling, coaching, and advising roles compared to the overall sample (83% compared to 75%; and 84% compared to 73% in the year prior to the course), likely due to the nature of their role.

Figure 3.8 Counselling, coaching, and advising were the most common activity delegates did before and after training.

Which other roles or activities in dispute resolution and conflict management do you personally play in your organisation, before and after training.



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. A6. Base: All respondents (N=125). D5. Base: All respondents (N=125)

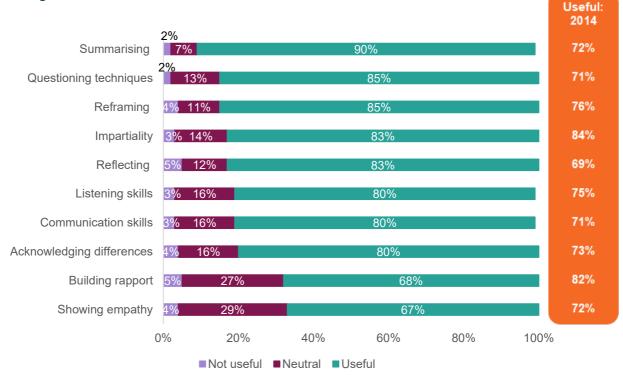
Impacts on delegates' wider role

One of the aims of the training is to develop skills that support delegates in their wider role as well as in mediating. Most of the skills developed during the training were identified as useful at least to some extent in delegates' wider roles (see Figure 3.9). The most useful skills gained were:

- Summarising, mentioned by nine-in-ten respondents followed closely by questioning and reframing techniques (85% each);
- Impartiality and reflecting both were said to be useful by 83% of respondents;
- Listening skills, communication skills, and acknowledging sources, which were all said to be useful by 80% of respondents; and
- Building rapport and showing empathy (67% each). The fact only around two-thirds said this could be because delegates felt that these skills may conflict with being objective which is a key part of mediating.

Figure 3.9 Summarising and using questioning techniques were the most useful skills to use in delegates' wider roles.

How useful have each of the following skills from the course been to you in your wider role in the organisation?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. E3. Base: All respondents (N=125)

In comparison, the most useful skill that delegates reported gaining in the 2014 evaluation was impartiality, mentioned by 84% of delegates. The degree to which building rapport and showing empathy were useful skills is much lower than in the 2014 evaluation where 82% and 72% of delegates, respectively, said these skills were useful in their wider role. There may be scope for tutors to further emphasise that these skills are not antithetical to being impartial and objective by refocusing on how building rapport and showing empathy play a key role in the mediation process by facilitating a comfortable and safe environment.

The case study research emphasised that delegates had utilised the skills developed through the training in their wider role. For example, delegates commonly described using effective listening in their day-to-day role and conversations, dealing with 'difficult people' and being more assertive. One delegate reflected on having a better structure to approach difficult situations with:

I have had so much more knowledge of how to resolve especially tricky disputes, I felt more confident, and I could give individuals more information which got better buy in from them that it was going to be successful... I definitely had more knowledge and structure.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees; Note: also attended CIWM training)

Delegates also highlighted how they used the skills acquired to be more assertive and solution driven. One delegate reported that they no longer allowed meetings they chaired to focus solely on identifying issues and problems and insisted on time being spent on potential solutions and thinking about positive ways challenges could be overcome. One senior leader interviewed also described how the training improved the way the delegate carried out their role in HR by taking on a facilitator role rather than problem solving, as well as communicating more calmly and dealing with emotive situations.

'In the HR world we tend to problem solve all the time and we like to problem solve but when you're in mediation, it's up to the individuals to come up with solutions. I think the benefits are learning what your role is, whereas in the informal part you could quite easily go back to having your HR hat on, whereas when you're officially in your mediation side of things, that training has taught me that you have to adapt into a different role.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees; Note: also attended CIWM training)

Impact of the training on the organisation

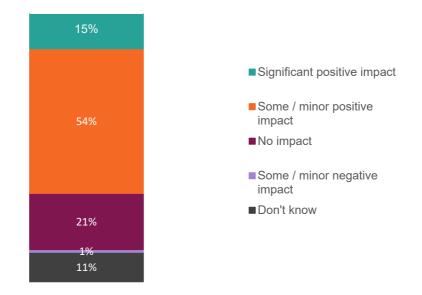
The impact of the training at an organisational level was generally positive as delegates and senior leaders identified improvements in terms of awareness and confidence in mediation, especially among managers and senior leaders, greater use of mediation to resolve conflicts, and integration of mediation into processes and policy.

Most respondents reported that the training had at least some positive impact on the wider organisation (68%; see Figure 3.10), which is similar to the 70% of respondents in the 2014 evaluation who reported the same. More specifically 15% said that the course had a significant positive impact on their organisation (this compares to 27% of respondents in the 2014 evaluation), while just over half (54%) of these respondents said that the course had some, or a minor, positive impact (this compares to 43% of respondents in the 2014 evaluation).

The most common reasons why that the training was reported to have had a positive impact included:

- An increased capacity to offer mediation within organisation (24%).
- Problems do not escalate and there are fewer formal complaints (14%).
- Raised awareness of mediation within the organisation (11%).

Figure 3.10 Most respondents said the training had a positive impact on their organisation. What impact has the course had on your organisation?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. F1. Base: All respondents (N=125)

The case study findings showed that senior leaders were keen to expand the number of, and quality within, mediators available. A lack of capacity was frequently shared as a hindrance to providing mediations and arriving at successful mediation outcomes. As such, the development of mediation skills was seen as crucial in widening the number of effective dispute resolution tools available to organisations. Since training, senior leaders found that staff who had engaged in mediation (in one case, this included the senior leader) had better ability and competency to offer mediation which therefore made the mediation process more efficient.

One way that organisations were ensuring trained mediators maintained competency was through support networks. A couple of organisations reported using networks or groups of mediators to help build confidence and learn from other mediators experiences. One interviewee from a large employer reported setting up a mediation network to build confidence amongst the mediators. Encouraged by the tutors on the course, this interviewee was also looking into giving mediators within their organisation shadowing opportunities to build up their confidence.

'The mediators that we have trained, it would be really good for them all to pick up additional pieces of mediation. So this is where we're bringing in the networking events and I'm inviting them all...at one point I said you can't shadow mediators because it's all private and confidential but when I spoke to [Acas tutor], he said "oh, we do that at Acas". So, I'm going to offer them that as a sweetener as well to say come along.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

Senior leaders also said there had been a reduction in the number of disputes that had escalated, which was received positively. This was primarily because the mediation process was being implemented early in a dispute before further breakdown between the parties involved. In one case, a senior leader who worked for a social enterprise in the community healthcare sector described staff as being exhausted, burnt out and under-appreciated which exacerbated existing issues and increased the likelihood of disputes occurring, as well as not being dealt with until they escalate. Therefore, intervening in disputes before they escalated was perceived as essential to the contribution of a harmonious workplace, and the course was seen to contribute well to this.

'Mediation always occurs when all other avenues have broken down, but actually you could do it much sooner and hopefully when there's a lot less heat.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

21% of respondents reported that the course had no impact on their organisation. The majority (81%) of these respondents said that there had been limited use of mediation since taking part in the training, including a lack of need for mediation within the organisation, not seeking opportunities to mediate, or workloads meaning they were unable to mediate, which means that these delegates were unable to utilise their skills.

Other reasons why delegates reported no impact from the course included:

- Change in role since taking part in the training meaning that delegates have not been able to assess any impacts as they are either no longer at their previous organisation or they are no longer in a role that requires their engagement with mediation processes so there is a lack of awareness of any impacts.
- A lack of shift in organisational culture including a continuation of suspicions related to mediation, senior management not allowing delegates to use mediation and perceptions of the delegates' role meaning that there is an unwillingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Delegates were not accredited, or were yet to receive their accreditation, so they did not feel confident undertaking mediations.

Awareness of mediation availability

Following the training, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents felt that staff in their organisation were aware of mediation as a form of dispute resolution, while 22% were unaware. This is an increase compared to just over half (54%) of respondents in the 2014 evaluation who reported staff were aware of mediation in their organisation.

Prior to the training, interviewees felt that although senior leaders supported mediation as a valuable tool, employees were concerned about mediation as being '*very full-on, heavy handed*' because the process was unknown. One interviewee felt that it was not a well-accepted tool, and it was viewed with suspicion as there was a feeling that one's involvement in mediation might be shared across the organisation. Since the training, this interviewee described that mediation had been promoted internally to resolve conflicts within teams and individuals. For instance, there was a review of the organisation's conflict and resolution policy. However, mediations in the organisation were still perceived with suspicion. It must be noted that it may be too early to gauge, or expect, a major shift of organisational culture at this level.

'When I meet up on a one-to-one basis to do the initial meeting with the individual parties, there's always a lot of "who's going to find out about this and where are you going to store this" and I'm constantly having to confirm that this is basically a confidential process, and I won't be saving anything.'

Trainee (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

Delegates interviewed identified that support from the senior team since they attended the training meant that managers throughout the organisation were more aware that mediation was available and that if a dispute arose mediation would be the first action taken by HR.

One example of internal promotion after the course was the development of a leadership and management programme for line managers by a large employer. This aimed to give line managers the skills they needed to recognise workplace issues before they escalated. This was particularly necessary for this organisation as line managers would previously avoid dealing with workplace conflicts, which would cause further issues in the future. A small organisation also reported taking steps to develop their managers through training and group sessions which included HR-related training focusing on grievance and disciplinary procedures.

'I wanted to reduce the formal escalations into grievances because it takes forever to get an investigator to come in. Then they have to do everything formally and then all the team take sides. It's so disruptive to a team. With mediation, we're actually bringing two people into the room and having a conversation about what they need to do get on. How do we work together? What rules are we going put in place? So, we're trying to reduce time, reduce effort and try to resolve things before they escalate'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Interviewees still believed that more could be done to promote mediation within their organisation. One case study interviewee described that they were confident that the organisation takes concerns seriously now but felt there was low awareness and understanding of mediation among employees. However, interviewees did think that having the accreditation helped both mediators and employees feel more confident in the process and that it was an effective tool that they could trust.

Workplace conflicts resolved more quickly and effectively

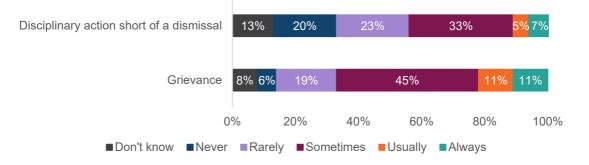
There was some evidence that organisations were more likely to use mediation since the training, however delegates also indicated that more could be done to encourage its use.

- Over half (55%) of delegates said that mediation is now encouraged more in their organisation, while 42% said that mediation is encouraged at 'about the same' level.
- Over half (52%) of respondents felt that mediation is used when necessary within their organisation, while 45% reported that mediation was used too little. No respondents felt that mediation was used too much. Similar proportions of respondents said that mediation was used when necessary (49%), or too little (47%), in the 2014 evaluation, and likewise no respondents said it was used too much.

Forty-five percent of respondents reported that a mediator is sometimes asked to be involved when an employee has a grievance, and 22% reported that a mediator was usually (11%) or always (11%) asked to be involved (see Figure 3.11). This is lower than the 2014 evaluation where 62% of respondents said that a mediator is sometimes asked to be involved in an employee grievance. The proportion of respondents reporting that delegates are usually or always asked to be involved in a grievance has remained consistent (11% each compared 9% and 11% respectively in 2014). Where there is a disciplinary action short of a dismissal, only 7% of respondents said that a mediator is always asked to be involved, while 5% said that a mediator is usually asked to be involved, and a third (33%) of respondents said that a mediator is sometimes asked to be involved.

Figure 3.11 Mediators were sometimes involved in disciplinary action short of dismissal and grievances.

If an employee has a grievance or there is a disciplinary action short of a dismissal, is a mediator asked to be involved...?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. F6. Base: All respondents (N=125). F7. Base: All respondents (N=125).

The proportion of delegates reporting that mediators were always and usually asked to be involved during a disciplinary action short of a dismissal is similar to the 2014 evaluation (4% and 3% respectively). However, the proportion of delegates who reported that a mediator is never involved in a disciplinary action short of a dismissal is more than double (45%) in the 2014 evaluation compared to now (20%). Forty-one percent of respondents reported that mediators were sometimes asked to be involved. The differences to the 2014 evaluation may indicate that there might be less capacity, or fewer accredited mediators, who can be asked to be involved in mediations now. This aligns with case study findings where interviewees felt that mediation was sometimes limited in use due to a lack of capacity.

Evidence from the case studies also supports that the main impact on the organisation was having more mediators trained and with a qualification. Interviewees explained that having more mediators within the organisation meant that mediation could be offered earlier on in a dispute and in less serious cases which commonly meant coming to a resolution was less time-consuming.

'We've got people with the right skills to address those situations, and in doing so should prevent things going down a formal route or a more time-consuming formal process.'

Delegate (HR Manager, Private Sector, 230 employees)

In addition, interviewees reported that having a more structured process for resolving disputes with a clear process to follow and confident mediators meant that the process was less emotionally draining for mediators compared to the previous process for resolving disputes. One interviewee described relief among employees who had taken part in mediation that they had not had to progress down a formal grievance process. Overall, interviewees felt that mediations were less heated and combative because having a clear structure reduced the length of the process, which meant that emotions were not unnecessarily being 'dragged out'.

Processes and policy

It was common for organisations to have made, or planned to make, changes to their policy or practice to include mediation as a result of the training (see Figure 3.12). Changes to wider organisational policies or practices was not the main aim of the training, but when asked 25% of



delegates said they had introduced mediation policies, and more than a third of respondents reported reviewing or revising existing policies or planning new policies.

Figure 3.12 Following the course, organisations reviewed their policies or made informal plans to introduce new policies and practices.

As a result of attending the CIWM course have you, or anyone working with you at the same organisation...



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. F3. Base: All respondents (N=125)

Table 3.3 Following the course, organisations reviewed their policies or made informal plans to introduce new policies and practices

Change to policy or process	Percentage of delegates
Reviewed one or more policies or practices	40%
Made general / informal plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices	38%
Revised one or more policies or practices	40%
Formalised plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices	25%
Introduced one or more new policies or practices	25%

Case study interviewees also noted that mediation was increasingly included in policies or organisational communications to raise awareness of mediation as a tool and increase its use. In one larger organisation, the process introduced outlined that the HR team should be used as a *'filter'* to

decide when mediation was appropriate or when managers should try to resolve a conflict in another way. Some examples of this include:

- One organisation included mediation in their bullying and harassment policy and referred to this in their internal communications relating to anti-bullying week. Another larger organisation had reviewed their conflict and resolution policy since the training.
- A couple of organisations reported including (or planning to include) information about mediation on their intranet so that staff could access details about the process and purpose of mediation.
- One interviewee was developing a booklet on mediation to provide more information on the process to employees and managers.
- In light of the training, one smaller organisation had made amendments to the appraisal process to include more opportunity for a two-way dialogue between manager and employee about how they are being supported.
- Another interviewee in a larger organisation had developed a leadership and development training programme for line managers to help them identify workplace issues and understand when mediation might be appropriate.

An interviewee from a smaller organisation described that their organisation was slow to accept changes to policy and processes, so they were using a '*dip-feeding*' approach to get managers on board with the use of mediation in conflict resolution:

'What I have learned from working in the business is that things aren't always necessarily accepted straight away because we are not necessarily a business that accepts change very quickly. So, we have to sort of like drip feed it in and then just keep on drip feeding it for it to become a part of practice.'

Delegate (Assistant HR Manager, Private sector, 50-249 employees)

Long-term impacts

Some of the senior leaders interviewed expressed how they expected long-term organisational impacts from the training. However, it is important to note that evidence of long-term impacts were not measured as part of this evaluation. This was due to it being too early to assess organisational shifts in the perceptions or use of mediation since the average length of time elapsed since training was 15 months. Senior leaders did describe some of the expectations they had, and the reasons for those expectations, rather than providing evidence for actual impacts.

A key long-term impact expected was an increase in the number of conflicts that are managed effectively and in a timely manner. Senior leaders shared how the clarity provided by having the mediation framework from the training had already allowed them to mediate in a more efficient manner. In one case, a senior leader described how a recent workplace dispute had been handled quite differently, in that instead of rushing to set up a meeting as they would have done previously, the trained mediator at their organisation referred to the mediation framework and planned the process accordingly. This meant that the dispute was handled in a controlled way, allowing the mediator involved to recall skills learned from the training in a calm manner.

IFF Research

A reduction in formal grievances was also experienced in one organisation because the process of resolving disputes was less time-intensive when using mediation. The senior leader identified that prior to the training managers would avoid resolving disputes because they lacked training, and instead conflicts were given to an investigator once they had become a formal grievance. As mediation could be offered at an early point, this led to fewer issues becoming formal grievances.

'I think it really helps being independent from the situation rather than the manager or a colleague. She [the trainee] can start to look things with the kind of fresh eyes. So, I think it's been good. It's definitely saved us time. It's saved us investigations and formal grievances and also as well we don't want anybody to leave.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Improved engagement and productivity were expected to follow naturally from other impacts of the training including good management of the mediation process and a reduction in staff time spent away from the workplace. Delegates felt that resolving disputes efficiently would mean that employees could focus on fulfilling their job role and continue to work productively and to a high standard. In one case, the senior leader explained that early evidence from their organisation indicated that having a more efficient and effective mediation process has meant that staff involved in disputes were taken away from their role for less time. Resolving disputes more quickly also meant the time parties spent working was less disrupted by ongoing issues with colleagues, there was less impact on wider teams, and the effort and stress involved in resolving disputes was reduced for everyone involved.

'In healthcare, we need every single person and the last thing we need is nurses or clinicians leaving because they can't get on with a colleague. So, the fundamentals of this is for retention and harmonious team working, which helps everybody.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Senior leaders recognised that skills gained from the training would result in a more harmonious workplace as it was hoped that employees would be involved in fewer disputes and, where they were involved, they would be more willing to engage due to the improved mediation processes. Employee engagement was also expected to improve beyond the mediation process; senior leaders felt that employees would be more likely to feel better about their work and workplace when disputes were managed effectively. Indeed, because of the training, interviewees described that relationships among employees had improved quickly because of the availability of skilled mediation which could be used immediately and effectively to resolve conflicts.

'Relationships have very quickly turned themselves around with immediate intervention, it's a tool that can be used very quickly, problems can be resolved very quickly i.e., on the day, and the actions from that can be introduced very quickly.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees; Note: also attended CIWM training)

Delegates perceived the mediation process to be emotionally draining and stressful for all parties involved; employees, managers and mediators felt tense and awkward during mediation meetings prior to the training. They expected this to improve due to better, and timelier, management of the mediation process. In one case, the senior leader interviewed explained that they had less contact



with unions in relation to disputes since the training as they were satisfied that there was a process in place with competent people to lead the mediation.

'There has been less contact through the unions... before the mediation it was the case that the unions were contacted straight away but since we've had mediation the unions seem to have taken a step back and they've allowed the mediation process to run without any interaction by them and they've been happy with the outcomes.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Another expected long-term impact mentioned was increased confidence in mediation as an organisation. Some interviewees reported that the organisation demonstrated greater belief in mediation, especially from managers. For example, one delegate emphasised that managers know and trust that mediation will be the first port of call even for minor disputes as a way of avoiding issues escalating. They hoped that in future mediation would be considered before any issue progressed to a formal grievance.

'It will be more of a 'let's try this approach' than it ever was before...I'd like to think it will be more of a 'have we considered this' before we just let things run through the formal'.

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Sharing learning and developing mediation skills was another long-term ambition that delegates discussed as they recognised the benefit of having support. Delegates described sharing mediation knowledge with colleagues and mediators. In one case, a delegate outlined a plan to create a network of peers who were experienced in mediation. The purpose of this network would be to listen to mediation experiences, provide tips to each other and gain further understanding of workplace disputes might be better managed.

'I like the sound of this mediation network...I think that whilst as a mediator, you're there to be neutral, you're there to be not judgemental, we absolve each other's emotions. And I feel [this network] it's part of that self-care.'

Delegate (Learning and Organisational Development Lead, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

For some case study organisations, the ultimate aim of staff attending the training was to improve staff retention and reduce sickness absence. While the interviewees were not able to formally say, or provide evidence, that the training had led to a reduction in employee absence or turnover, they did feel that offering mediation and resolving conflict sooner would contribute to this and hoped to measure this in the future.



4 Barriers and facilitators of mediation

This chapter presents the barriers and facilitators of mediation that were identified by delegates through reflecting on their mediation experience and their perception of the main factors which supported or prevented them from achieving a successful mediation outcome. The facilitators and barriers are closely aligned in that many of the factors recognised as a facilitator were responses to barriers posed. For example, low awareness and understanding of mediation processes or purpose and poor engagement with mediation were rectified by promotion of mediation within the organisation and have accredited mediators witch skills and credibility to undertake mediation. Moreover, time pressures and workload barriers were eased through senior leader support for mediation and having multiple mediators present in an organisation.

Barriers of mediation

Respondents and interviewees identified various barriers to successful mediation which related to three key themes. While time pressures on mediators themselves was common, low engagement with mediation among the parties involved and lack of awareness or understanding of mediation seemed to have a wider impact on perceptions and uptake of mediation.

Over a third (37%) of respondents reported that the primary barrier preventing the facilitation of a successful mediation outcome was that participants were not willing to fully engage (see Figure 4.1). Delegates interviewed also recognised this as a potential barrier, with one delegate describing that a mediation failed following the course because a participant did not take on the spirit or principles of mediation.

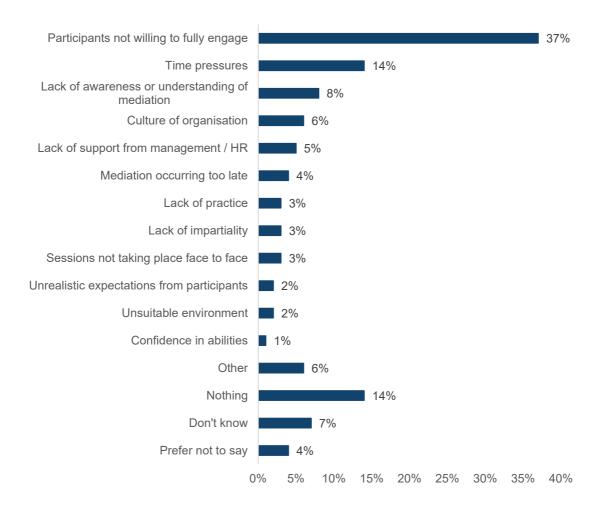
'I think one of the parties didn't actually take on board the principles of mediation and the spirit that we were doing it in. So, they did end up coming back to me and saying, "can I have the notes?". I said, "we don't keep notes". There is no record that I've done that. The only record is your initials. So, I do think the other party hadn't taken the spirit of mediation, and they were still harbouring things from previous.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)



Figure 4.1 Participants not willing to fully engage was the main barrier preventing successful mediation.

What are the main barriers which prevent you from facilitating a successful mediation outcome?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. D11. Base: All respondents (N=125)

Table 4.1 Participants not willing to fully engage was the main barrier preventing successful mediation

Barrier to facilitating successful mediation outcome	Percentage of delegates
Participants not willing to fully engage	37%
Time pressures	14%
Lack of awareness or understanding of mediation	8%
Culture of organisation	6%



Lack of support from management/HR	5%
Mediation occurring too late	4%
Lack of practice	3%
Lack of impartiality	3%
Sessions not taking place face to face	3%
Unrealistic expectations from participants	2%
Unsuitable environment	2%
Confidence in abilities	2%
Other	6%
Nothing	14%
Don't know	7%
Prefer not to say	4%

In another organisation, the senior leader interviewed reported that they hoped that having employees undertake training would encourage parties to fully engage. They reported that this had been successful as the organisation felt like employees were happier to engage with mediation as they viewed it as a way of avoiding the formal complaints process and appreciated having a safe space to discuss their issues.

'When it involves the managers...it's a safe space to air any concerns or any issues on both sides and the employees appreciate that because it is a safe space for them to do that.'

Senior leader (HR and Organisational Development Manager, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

The delegate interviewed in one organisation described that employees were concerned about the process of mediation, sometimes this was based on previous experiences of mediation in other organisations or because, due to confidentiality, the process of mediation was unknown.

'I think some people when it has been suggested have been not very open to it, I think quite concerned about it... Their impression of it is that it seems quite scary prospect to the individuals, and then it takes a little bit of time put aside to tell people more about it...so they understand what it really is, I think the initial perception of it is that it is quite a scary prospect.'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Other barriers preventing the facilitation of successful mediation outcomes included time pressures (14%). Time pressures was identified as a barrier significantly more often for those who took the workplace course compared to those who took the open access course (25% compared to 10%).

Workplace courses were more commonly attended by employees because it was something they were interested in; time pressures may be a greater issue for this group because resolving conflict may not necessarily be part of their job remit (those not in an HR or a managerial role were significantly more likely to attend a workplace course than an open access course). This group may have gained accreditation but in reality, the practicality of fitting mediation around their other responsibilities may be more difficult. Time was also a barrier significantly more often among those with no previous experience compared to those with previous experience (18% compared to 4%). This may relate to needing additional time to prepare for mediation compared to those with prior experience.

Time pressures were also noted by delegates interviewed. The mediation process took time to prepare for, often revisiting materials from the training and spending time speaking with parties to explain mediation and encourage engagement with the process before it began. They also emphasised that as mediation is an open-ended commitment, mediators could not be sure how much time away from their day job they would require. Furthermore, some delegates interviewed reported that they were commonly working over their capacity or had conflicting workloads which could make it difficult to find the time to dedicate towards mediation. This was particularly an issue in one large organisation (250+ employees) which had 40 trained mediators, but who were not undertaking mediations due to a lack of a confidence, which made them more reluctant to carry out mediations especially in the context of their ongoing capacity issues.

'They always give me the time and understanding that you are going to need preparation time and because mediation is open-ended, you don't know how long it is going to take on the day and if that's going to need to be followed up, there is always a recognised investment of time for it.'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Delegates interviewed also agreed that a lack of understanding and awareness of mediation among staff acted as a barrier to successful mediation outcomes (8%). One senior leader interviewed highlighted that due to a lack of awareness and understanding of mediation some employees had previously chosen to resign instead of going through mediation because they were put off by the process and felt that leaving the organisation would be a more positive outcome. Due to its confidential nature, interviewees also reported that employees often viewed mediation with suspicion, a perception which one delegate interviewed thought persisted even after the course. In this particular instance, it was because employees still had misconceptions about mediation and the degree of confidentiality offered which the delegate recognised as something they needed to work on clarifying more. As mentioned above, delegates interviewed reported spending significant time prior to the mediation process explaining how it worked. Whilst necessary, this reassurance was an additional time resource for the mediators to factor in. One interviewee adapted a factsheet published by CIPD to help structure this reassurance stage of the process better.

'Obviously the individuals have the right to say no. So, they might actually go, "no, I'm just going to leave. I don't want to deal with mediation". So, we do need to capture some data on it.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

'Another barrier is people's perception of it and what people think it is...as part of the actual framework you always spend one-to-one time with each party talking to them about what their issues are but I think there is a stage before that which is you need to know it is a voluntary process, you've both got to want to do it, but you need to know what it is.'



Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

Delegates interviewed also recognised that in some situations, a dispute may have progressed too far for mediation be successful as there is 'too much bitterness on both sides' to engage in the mediation process and they 'just want to be proved right, to be validated' (Delegate, Learning and Organisational Development lead Social Enterprise, 250+ employees). This highlighted the need to intervene early on when a conflict or dispute occurs. On the other hand, interviewees also recognised that some disputes were too serious for mediation to be the appropriate action which demonstrates a learned confidence of being able to identify when internal workplace mediation is appropriate.

'If you have one colleagues that physically hurts another colleague, you wouldn't put them in a room together for mediation. It's generally kind of the low-level dispute...'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

The 2014 evaluation also reported that employees not engaging with the mediation process (46%), time constraints (4%), understanding of mediation (18%), and appropriateness of mediation (7%) were barriers. As in the present evaluation, it was reported that employees did not understand the mediation process and in particular the fact it is voluntary, so mediators had to spend time explaining the nature of mediation prior to gaining engagement.

Facilitators of mediation

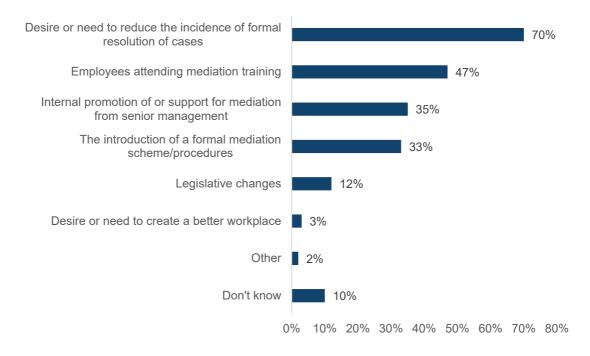
Various factors were reported to facilitate both the use of mediation as a tool and promote successful mediation outcomes. These mainly related to having an organisational drive to reduce formal disputes and having the practical tools and skills to undertake mediation.

In terms of encouraging the use of mediation, 70% of respondents thought that mediation was most encouraged by a desire or need to reduce the incidence of formal resolution of cases in their organisation (see Figure 4.2). This was followed by employees attending mediation training, mentioned by half of respondents (47%), and the internal promotion of mediation from senior management (35%). A third (33%) felt that the use of mediation was encouraged in their organisation by the introduction of a formal mediation scheme/procedures, but fewer (12%) respondents reported that legislative change had encouraged the use of mediation in their organisation.

Figure 4.2 Use of mediation was mainly encouraged by a desire or need to reduce the number of formal resolutions.

What, if anything, has encouraged the use of mediation in your organisation?





Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. F8. Base: All respondents (N=125)

A desire to reduce formal disputes was a strong theme in one case study organisation where interviewees reported that there had been an increase in the number of disputes and both formal and informal processes were being used as a way for line managers to avoid having difficult conversations with employees relying on external investigators instead. The senior leader interviewed recognised the need to resolve matters before they escalated but wanted trained mediators to undertake mediations, as opposed to having unaccredited mediators come in to run staff training which had happened previously and had made them realise that '*bad mediation is worse than no mediation*'.

'Once things get to a formal grievance, there were lots of opportunities where we could have resolved this issue between two people. But it's an easy thing for a manager to avoid the issue and just say, write it down, I'll get an investigator. It kind of takes the pressure off the manager to push it into a formal who's right, who's wrong grievance.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Having buy-in from senior executives into the use of mediation as a tool was also important to interviewees and encouraged the use of mediation as it supported the time and cost of mediation. Interviewees were supported to follow the process that they had been trained to do, even if this took extra time. As well as allowing the time for mediation, senior support also involved paying for employees to be trained in mediation, promotion of mediation (i.e., verbally to other senior leaders and managers, or through written comms such as newsletters), and encouragement of its inclusion within policies. Interviewees were supported to follow the process that they had been trained to do, even if this took extra time.

Involvement from senior executives also helped raise awareness of mediation by embedding it in the culture from the top-down. Another senior leader interviewed discussed how senior leaders were



encouraging a culture where employees felt safer in speaking up which they hoped would lead to greater use of mediation particularly when a conflict was between employees of different seniority:

'We're trying to introduce this thing called Just and Learn...it's all about actually trying to resolve issues...people don't come to work purposely wanting to make mistakes or fall out with people and things like that. So that encourages a lot of mediation, that encourages trying to self-resolve as well.'

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Interviewees also discussed how changes to existing policy and internal promotion had encouraged the use of mediation. By making the offer of mediation clear in their organisation as a first step to resolving conflict, organisations were able to prevent workplace conflicts escalating into bigger grievances.

Delegates interviewed also reported how attending the course and achieving Acas accreditation gave them confidence and credibility to carry out mediations. This helped encourage the use of mediation both among mediators themselves because they felt equipped to approach mediations, but also among senior leaders, managers, and the parties involved who recognised they were qualified to use it as a tool, knew what they were doing, and it would be a successful experience, even if a resolution was not reached.

'It gave me the kudos, the fact that I'm a qualified mediator with qualifications. And I think that goes a long way because some of the staff that I work with have got PhDs and Doctorates. They need to know that they've not just plucked me off the street to do a bit of talking and a bit of chatting. They know that I understand what I'm doing with it.'

Delegate (Organisational Development Lead, Public Sector, 250+ employees)

'I think it gives me more confidence on how to approach it and therefore I have opted to go down that [mediation] route more than I would have done before because of my confidence.'

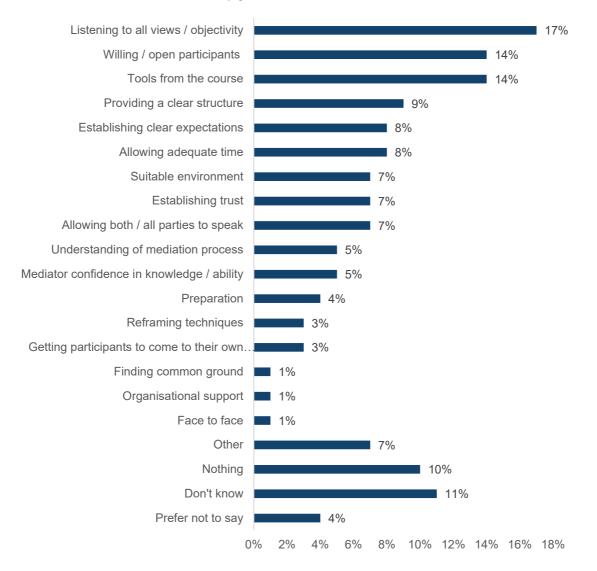
Delegate (HR Manager, Private Sector, 230 employees)

Respondents indicated that listening to all views and using objectivity (17%) and using the tools from the course (14%), as being the most common factors that help facilitate a successful mediation outcome (see Figure 4.3). Those with previous experience were significantly more likely to report that provision of a clear structure was a key factor (16%), as were those who took the course online (14%). This could be evidence that this element of the course (pertaining to the structure of mediations) is more effectively taught online.



Figure 4.3 Listening to all views and being objective was perceived to be the main factor to facilitating a successful mediation.

What are the main factors that help you to facilitate a successful mediation outcome?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. D10. Base: All respondents (N=125)

Some interviewees agreed that by using the skills they gained from going on the course they were able to have successful mediation outcomes. These skills including active listening, considering different perspectives as well as creating a safe space for employees to raise their concerns. Interviewees also mentioned that these skills were transferable to other aspects of their work, including dealing with other people in their organisation and becoming solution-focused in their meetings.

Interviewees also discussed how having multiple mediators in an organisation was an important factor. This facilitated mediations for two reasons: capacity to offer mediation and providing support to mediators. Having multiple people in an organisation who are trained to undertake mediation encouraged the use of mediation. This reduces capacity constraints and enables organisations to offer mediation at an early stage. In small organisations, having multiple trained mediators was beneficial as time constraints on individuals was a greater barrier. In another small organisation, the



delegate emphasised that due to their small size disputes were more common because they worked so closely with one another.

'I think maybe when you don't have as many people who can do it and who can be called upon it's used only in exceptional circumstances, whereas I think actually it could be used at a very early stage sometimes and be probably not too time consuming to avoid ongoing problems.'

Delegate (HR Business Partner, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Social Enterprise, 150 employees)

One delegate reported that they provided HR advice to a local school and had undertaken a successful mediation with employees there since they received the training; they wondered if not being a known colleague to the parties involved had helped facilitate the mediation as it created more anonymity and impartiality. A senior leader at a different, larger organisation also discussed the importance of the mediator not being '*too friendly*' with either of the people in the dispute as it creates a conflict of interest. Within this organisation they had a number of trained mediators to avoid this situation. This suggests that having multiple trained mediators, especially in smaller organisations, may help facilitate more successful mediations as it enables the organisation to offer mediation with someone not known to the parties.

Where multiple mediators existed in an organisation, they were also able to debrief following a mediation (within the constraints of confidentiality) and encourage one another, whilst also learning from their experiences. Interviewees highlighted the importance of reassuring other mediators, especially if a mediation does not lead to a resolution or is especially emotionally draining

The 2014 evaluation also recognised that the skills gained from the course such as listening, communicating and being objective were the main factors in helping to facilitate successful mediations. One factor discussed in the previous evaluation which was not identified to such a great extent presently was being able to follow a structured process; mentioned by 19% in 2014 but only 9% in the present evaluation.

Of the 45% of respondents who said mediation was used too little, more than a third of them (38%) said wider awareness of mediation would be the most effective action to take (see Figure 4.4). Interviewees agreed that more could be done to raise awareness about mediation, with a specific focus on what mediation is used for and how it works. One interviewee hoped that by setting up bitesize sessions and promoting it more on the intranet, they would be able to continue to educate employees about mediation and its purposes. This may also help to achieve greater understanding of mediation among senior staff and HR, and lead to its inclusion in policies which were the next two most common factors that respondents thought would help increase the use of mediation.

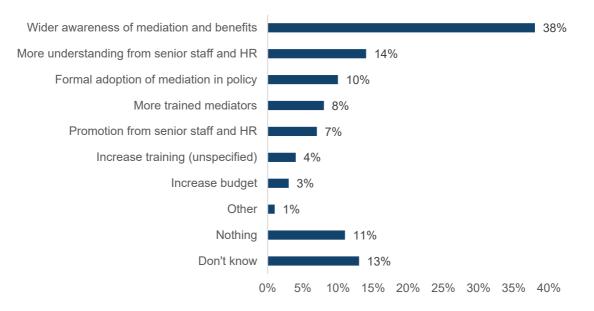
Improved understanding of mediation was also emphasised by another interviewee who reported that there were two polar views of mediation in their organisation: some believed mediation was a replacement for line management (absolving line managers of the need to be involved in disputes), while others shied away from it as they saw it as a last resort. Another senior leader highlighted the need for wider understanding of mediation in the organisation so that it is used more effectively:

"It shouldn't be used instead of being an effective manager, but also, it is sometimes used as a last resort in a bitter dispute. If they'd considered mediation earlier, we could prevent some problems from getting worse over time. So, it's a great tool, but there is work for us to do in getting the wider organisation to understand it better. So, my challenge now is to get them to move the mediation up the hierarchy."

Senior leader (HR Director, Medway Community Healthcare, Social Enterprise, 250+ employees)

Figure 4.4 Raising awareness of mediation and its benefits could increase the use of mediation.

What steps do you think could be taken to increase the use of mediation in your organisation?



Source: Evaluation of the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation Training 2023. F10. Base: All respondents who said mediation is used too little (N=56)

Table 4.2 Raising awareness of mediation and its benefits could increase the use of mediation

Steps that could be taken to increase use of mediation	Percentage of delegates
Wider awareness of mediation and benefits	38%
More understanding from senior staff and HR	14%
Formal adoption of mediation in policy	10%
More trained mediators	8%
Promotion from senior staff and HR	7%
Increase training (unspecified)	4%
Increase budget	3%
Other	1%
Nothing	11%
Don't know	13%



5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This evaluation aimed to deliver reliable evidence on the impact of Acas's CIWM training on delegates and their organisations, exploring what delegates learned and whether this enabled them to resolve workplace conflict more quickly and effectively. It found, overall, that the training is effective insofar that it equips employees with skills necessary to undertake workplace mediations and, in turn, supports organisations to resolve workplace conflicts more quickly and effectively.

The evaluation comprised a survey of 125 delegates who took part in the training and organisational case studies involving four organisations. The evaluation found evidence for the following short and long-term outcomes outlined in the logic model (see full details of the logic model in Appendix 1: Methodology and participants):

- Short-term outcomes:
 - Practical skills and knowledge including mediation skills, understanding costs and effects of workplace conflict, and the process of mediation.
 - Soft skills including improved empathy, communication skills, and ability to identify when internal workplace is appropriate.
 - Training accreditation qualifications awarded.
- Long-term outcomes:
 - Confirmation of skills and enhanced reputation as a mediator.
 - Trainee conducts mediations and uses skills in wider role.
 - Workplace conflicts resolved more quickly and effectively.
 - Development of robust mediation processes as part of conflict resolution strategy.
 - Greater support for mediation by senior management and awareness of availability mediation.
 - Peer support for mediators.

The impacts of the training outlined in the logic model were not intended to be established through this evaluation. However, senior leaders who were interviewed discussed some expected and desired positive longer-term impacts based on the short-term effects they had already observed since staff attended the training. These included: positive working relationships, greater employee engagement, improved employee productivity, and reduced staff absence and turnover.

The evaluation also sought to establish perceptions of the training activities, tutors and delivery mode. It was evident from delegates' reflections on the training itself that the high standards of the course delivery, reported in the previous 2014 evaluation, had been upheld. Delegates were very satisfied with the training in terms of the tutor, materials, and activities. Most delegates took part in the online training which had been offered since the Covid pandemic. Although there were some benefits for accessibility of the online course it was clear that delegates felt face-to-face training offered additional value such as better engagement and collaboration.

Improved practical and soft skills

The main short-term outcomes specified in the logic model are that delegates would have improved practical and soft mediation skills following the training. The findings suggest delegates felt they were prepared with the necessary tools to carry out mediations following the training. Delegates reported high levels of understanding of the mediation model and the stages to follow, ability to maintain impartiality, and use of questioning and listening techniques. Interviewees highlighted practical ways that they used the framework to guide mediations and changes to their approach to dispute resolution as a result of better impartiality and conflict management skills.

In terms of improving soft skills, the evaluation also showed that delegates felt confident approaching mediations since the training and had enhanced communication skills. Delegates reported that they had good understanding of when internal workplace mediation was appropriate and some reported being more selective about which disputes to mediate. However, there was evidence to suggest that delegates may be using mediation for topics which should be dealt with via grievance processes (e.g., pay and conditions, physical working conditions, and discrimination). This suggests that delegates require a clearer understanding of what type of disputes are appropriate for mediation.

Accreditation gained and provides confirmation of skills and reputation as a mediator

Awarding of training accreditation qualifications is a short-term outcome in the logic model and the model proposes that long-term outcomes of skills confirmation and enhanced reputation follow from accreditation. The accreditation that Acas offers was an important aspect of the training for many delegates and organisations as it provided delegates with confidence carrying out mediations. The majority of respondents who had submitted their work had gained accreditation. Accredited mediators reported feeling their skills had been validated through receiving the qualification, and it provided them with greater credibility to discuss mediation and approach the mediation process. This was especially helpful when mediations were carried out with more senior or highly qualified individuals.

However, most delegates found the process of gaining accreditation more work than they had expected, and many found it difficult due to the time taken and the standard required. Compared to the 2014 evaluation, where the accreditation process entailed completing a portfolio of work, the current accreditation approach was perceived as more difficult. This may explain why fewer people had begun working on their post-course work compared to those who had worked on the portfolio work in 2014.

The feedback provided on the post-course QA was good, showing an improvement in perception of feedback since the 2014 evaluation. Delegates reported that additional support from Acas tutors would have been beneficial, in particular in terms of clarity around the necessary standard of work and help identifying sources of evidence, as well as generally having more time to complete the work. Greater employer support especially in terms of providing the time to complete the post-course QA may also help facilitate accreditation.

Trainee conducts mediations and uses skills in wider role

A long-term outcome of the training is that delegates trained will carry out mediations in their organisation. The proportion of delegates who undertook mediations since the training almost doubled compared to before the training. The mediations undertaken since the training were slightly less likely to be resolved than those conducted prior to the training, however a higher proportion were withdrawn or ongoing. Most delegates waited to be accredited until they carried out mediations, and

of mediations carried out by accredited mediators the majority had been resolved. Resolved mediations by accredited mediators were reported to a similar extent in the 2014 evaluation.

The long-term outcomes identified in the logic model also showed that it was expected that delegates would use the skills acquired in their wider role. Findings suggested that as well as using mediation skills within mediations, it was clear that delegates valued the skills they had developed in their wider role and could see many places where they were utilising these skills. In particular, skills which helped them in summarising, questioning, and reframing enabled them to successfully work through day-to-day informal activities as well as more formal processes especially having difficult conversations.

Workplace conflicts resolved more quickly and effectively

The logic model presents workplace conflicts being resolved more quickly and effectively as a longterm outcome of the training. There was some evidence to suggest improvements in resolving conflicts compared to before delegates attended the training. Without trained mediators, organisations tended to use other informal processes such as counselling, coaching, and advising, and facilitating discussions. In some cases, delegates were called upon to conduct mediations without formal training because of the perceived homogeneity between skills they already possessed, and skills required for mediations. Formal disciplinary or grievance procedures were more common and the process for resolving conflicts was more time-consuming and resource heavy.

The findings of this evaluation demonstrated how having in-house trained mediators can minimise grievances and lead to wider impacts on individuals and their organisation. There was some evidence that organisations were more likely to use mediation since the training and interviewees reported that mediation could be offered earlier and in less serious cases which meant reaching a resolution was less time-consuming. Interviewees also recognised that having a structured mediation approach meant that the process was less emotionally draining for individuals involved compared to the previous processes for resolving disputes.

Greater support and awareness of mediation

The logic model states that in the long-term, having individuals who are CIWM trained will lead to changes to policies and processes, increased senior leader support for mediation, and greater awareness of mediation. There was some evidence that organisations felt more confident using mediation. Delegates attending the training had acted as a catalyst within organisations which led to mediation being encouraged more and greater awareness among senior leaders and managers that mediation was a tool that could be utilised. Time pressures for conducting mediation was a common barrier due to the preparation required and open-ended nature of mediation. Where there was good senior leader support for mediation as a tool, this helped facilitate mediation.

Mediation was increasingly being included in policies and practices, however delegates emphasised that more work needed to be done to raise awareness and understanding of mediation among staff. This would help to reduce employee concerns and fears about the mediation process and improve the engagement from parties involved which was a key barrier to successful mediation.

Peer support for mediators

Peer support for mediators is a long-term outcome in the logic model that was not measured by the evaluation but was a consistent theme mainly in the qualitative findings. Having several mediators, especially in larger organisations, helped limit the impact of time constraints on undertaking



mediations because there were more mediators available to support with mediation. Having more support to carry out mediation meant it could be undertaken more widely (e.g., earlier and in less serious cases) which was seen as beneficial for resolving disputes.

Multiple mediators also enabled more support for mediators themselves through debriefs and developing mediator networks. In larger organisations, this support may come from other colleagues trained in mediation, but there was also evidence of delegates gaining peer support from external groups of mediators. This support helped individuals share learning and practices and provide emotional reassurances following mediations.

Expected impacts on relationships, engagement, and turnover

Delegates reported attending the training because of an organisational need to be able to undertake mediations in their workplace with a view to improving relations and engagement, reducing formal disputes, and improving staff absence and turnover. The findings suggest that since the training, delegates and senior leaders expected to see these impacts unfold.

Due to a more structured and less time-intensive dispute resolution process, a reduction in formal grievances was expected leading to a more harmonious workplace as employees would be involved in fewer disputes and, where they were involved, they would be more willing to engage in mediation. Engagement and productivity were expected to improve based on having better management of the mediation process and therefore a reduction in staff time spent away from the workplace or disengaged from their work as a result of conflict. Ultimately, some organisations expected a reduction in turnover as they believed more available and efficient resolution would mean they could resolve conflicts prior to employees deciding to leave the organisation.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of the evaluation, IFF recommend focusing on the following areas for training delivery and support (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Key findings and associated IFF recommendations for	or training delivery
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Finding	IFF Recommendation
 Delegates valued gaining understanding of tutors' and peers' experiences of mediation. Delegates valued gaining greater understanding of different mediation experiences and outcomes from their tutors and peers as they found it supportive to hear about the challenges others had faced. Delegates benefited from having reassurances about what to do when mediation does not lead to a successful resolution and how to process the impact it has on them personally. 	 Increased focus could be given to sharing tutors' own experiences of mediation and encourage delegates to share their own experiences as a tool to prompt discussion of the various circumstances and challenges that could be faced. To facilitate this more, IFF recommend tutors should emphasise that any experiences discussed during the training will be treated in confidence (i.e., not shared with the delegate's organisation). More time could be provided by tutors to reflect on the range of possible outcomes that could occur with a particular focus on unsuccessful outcomes, the impact that might have on a mediator, and what they should do next to process the outcome. This would be especially beneficial for those without previous mediation experience.
Some elements of the training were less well received, and some skills taught were not as useful for undertaking mediations. Delegates reported hesitation about the role play activities and indicated that better use of role plays was among the skills that the fewest respondents thought would help them to achieve successful mediations.	 Respondents valued the role play activities even though some initially found them uncomfortable to engage with, however it may be beneficial to place greater focus on building skills in using role play and demonstrating how to use role play within mediation. Greater emphasis could be put on building rapport and empathy skills during the training and ensuring it is clear to delegates how these skills will be beneficial within mediations and their wider role. Some delegates may have strong pre-existing skills in these areas, especially those working in HR or other relations roles.

Finding	IFF Recommendation
Respondents reported that building rapport and showing empathy were the least useful in terms of skills acquired that would help them in their wider role.	Acas may consider ways of informally assessing existing skills to focus on the level of skill development required.
Delegates demonstrated a lack of understanding of the type of disputes suitable for mediation. Among the most common topics of dispute that respondents reported mediating were pay and conditions, physical working conditions, and discrimination. However, grievance processes should be used to deal with subjects such as these as individual mediation is not a suitable course of action.	 Provide delegates with a clearer understanding of the types of disputes and subject matter that are appropriate for mediation, and which should be resolved through grievance processes. Focus may be placed on identifying the characteristics of disputes that make them suitable for mediation, especially where issues are complex or multi-faceted. Discussions should also be had about how to make and deliver the decision whether to mediate.
Online and face-to-face delivery have different benefits. Delegates benefited from the offer of online delivery of the training as it was more convenient and accessible, especially during the Covid pandemic. There may be some variation of activities in the online course as tutors were seen as more knowledgeable.	 IFF believe that Acas should continue to provide training via both the online and face-to-face routes as there are benefits to each type of the training especially in terms of accessibility. However, further investigation of differences in the activities between modes may be warranted to ensure both are equally as engaging.
However, face-to-face delivery was preferable for most delegates, especially for workplace courses, as the opportunity for discussion and collaboration was better, it was easier to engage with and offered the chance to network.	 Acas may want to consider reviewing the structure and activities of the course to ensure it translates effectively to the online environment and ensure they are utilising various collaboration tools available.
Workplace and open access courses are appealing to different groups.	 IFF recommend considering ways to increase the diversity of delegates who attend the course, in particular broadening out from those who work in HR. Messaging about who the course is



Finding

The characteristics of delegates who attended the training showed that the majority were female, of white ethnicity, aged 40 years or over, and worked either in HR or as a manager. However, there is a benefit to having broader range of employees trained as mediators (i.e., line managers).

The findings suggest that the workplace course type may attract a wider range of people as staff are more likely to attend out of interest. It is understandable that a course offered within your organisation, especially if it is delivered face-to-face, may be more accessible and emphasise the promotion of mediation by senior leaders.

Although, the open access course may be more suitable for smaller organisations and demonstrated some benefits in terms of building confidence and learning from delegates from other organisations.

IFF Recommendation

relevant to should highlight the broad applicability of mediation skills and emphasise the benefit of having people in a range of roles trained. In particular, the role line managers can play in mediation and how the skills taught would benefit them in the wider role as a manager.

- Where people who attended the course were not in an HR or managerial role, delegates may be more concerned about undertaking mediations if they are not in a role of authority. Acas could consider reviewing the course materials and activities to build confidence undertaking mediations, get buy-in from parties, and reflect the circumstances in which they may use mediation skills. For example, an employee mediating between more senior staff members. This would benefit delegates who expressed an unconscious bias towards management.
- Acas should continue to offer training through the open access and workplace routes as they attract a different profile of organisations and delegates which helps to support Acas's reach into organisations. As delegates from small organisations are more likely to attend an open access course, Acas may consider how to encourage a more diverse representation from small organisations to attend.
- For various reasons, the online course is more accessible so may attract a more diverse group of delegates. Acas may want to consider how the face-to-face course could be made more accessible, for example amending the timing, duration, or location of the courses.

Finding	IFF Recommendation
Delegates require more time and support to complete the post-course QA. Delegates showed that they knew more about what to expect in terms of the amount of work needed to gain accreditation compared to the 2014 evaluation, however the post-course QA was reportedly more difficult compared to the previous portfolio approach. Delegates required specific support to help them complete the work as well as more time from both Acas and their employer.	 If Acas are considering making changes to the approach for gaining accreditation, they should ensure delegates have a clear understanding beforehand of the expectations of the work and how much time is required. It is also important that employers are aware of the time required to gain accreditation and should be encouraged to allow this work to be completed during working hours following the course to facilitate more delegates to gain accreditation. When registering for the course (typically done by senior leaders on behalf of delegates), the time and work expectations of the post-course QA should be flagged clearly to senior leaders so that they can ensure internal measures are in place for delegates to successfully gain accreditation. Two areas where delegates needed support was identifying evidence sources and being clear about the detail required. Acas should focus on providing more clarity on these to support delegates in the accreditation process.
 Having multiple mediators is beneficial for organisations to increase efficiency and impartiality. Having several employees trained as mediators within an organisation increases the capacity with which mediation can be offered. It also reduces occurrences where there is a conflict of interest for the mediator, and it is more likely that a mediator who is not known (or not as well known) to the parties can facilitate. Employees main concerns about mediation related to impartiality and confidentiality of the process. Having more mediators may help to qualm 	 Acas could consider ways it can promote and support organisations to train multiple mediators within their organisation. This would be especially useful for smaller organisations who may not have the resource or need to warrant undertaking a workplace course. For example, offering SME's a deal for booking multiple places on an open access course. Considerations of the implications of undertaking a mediation when the parties are known or close to the mediator could be included in the training to support delegates who are the only

IFF Research

Finding	IFF Recommendation
some of these apprehensions as the likelihood of the mediator undertaking the mediation being known or related to the dispute is reduced.	mediator or part of a small team of mediators. This content may be targeted at delegates in these contexts.
Delegates need to refresh skills to prepare for mediation and this requires time and materials. Many delegates identified the need to prepare for mediation, often reviewing the materials from the course, especially if the need for mediation was less common so there was a long time between mediations. This led to reduced confidence in their skills and a need to refresh themselves regarding the process.	 Acas may want to provide digitalised course materials to support delegates in their preparation for mediation, especially if they are working remotely. Delegates would also benefit from templates being supplied by Acas such as for feedback forms. Acas could consider methods to keep delegates skills fresh such as offering refresher training, bitesize courses, or online materials (e.g., webinars). This could also include a summary of practical scenarios that might require mediation and would support delegates in preparing for their mediations and increase their confidence in the approaches they use.
Senior leader buy-in and awareness of mediation facilitates its use within the organisation. A key barrier to using mediation in the workplace was gaining senior leader buy-in and raising awareness of mediation within the organisation.	 Acas could consider leading a campaign promoting the use of workplace mediation among employers, emphasising the benefits and associated costs of workplace disputes. However, this holds a cost for Acas to deliver. Instead, Acas could ensure a focus is put on workplace mediation within the communications and campaigns they already deliver, highlighting how mediation is linked with other workplace practices and issues such as employee health and staff turnover. Alternatively, delegates could be equipped with suggested approaches and materials to engage with senior leaders in their organisation and raise awareness of mediation themselves. For

Finding	IFF Recommendation			
	example, sharing materials which relate mediation with other workplace activities such as anti-bullying week.			
Ongoing support from other mediators is valued. The evidence suggests that mediators value having ongoing support from other mediators, either within their organisation or external networks, as it helps them feel reassured in their approach and debrief following a mediation.	 Acas may consider ways to connect delegates who go through the training in ways that enable them to support each other (within the confines of confidentiality). These networks could also be used to share resources and updates to Acas guidance. This may be particularly useful for smaller organisations where mediators are more likely to be the only mediator in their organisation or part of a small team. Relatedly, Acas may consider focusing some of the training time on outlining to delegates the elements of mediation they can share with a colleague or manager and what support they could offer a mediator. 			



6 Technical Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology and participants

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach (comprising three stages) to explore the impact of the CIWM training on trainees and their organisations. Firstly, a logic model was developed with Acas to outline the key activities and the short- and long-term training outcomes, and the model derived was used as the basis to guide the further research activities. A quantitative survey of trainees was used to understand individuals' perceptions of the training and its effectiveness at developing mediation skills, as well as impact of the training on individuals and organisations. Qualitative organisational case studies were then undertaken to provide in-depth understanding of mediation within specific organisational contexts, the motivation for training, and how the training impacted the organisation.

Research method

Logic model development

A logic model was developed, in collaboration with Acas, to be used as a roadmap for the rest of the evaluation (see Figure 6.1). The aim of the model was to identify key metrics that would demonstrate that the training was being delivered as intended as well as its effects on delegates and the organisations they worked for.

The model is organised into context and assumptions, inputs, activities, outputs and short-term outcomes, long-term outcomes, and impacts. By organising the model in this way, the design of the training and expected impacts are clearly defined and the scope of the evaluation can be closely followed.

The logic model made the assumptions that: Acas trainers have the required knowledge and skills to teach the course, and mediations are carried out at sufficient time intervals to ensure the skills and knowledge gained from the course are retained.

The context of the logic model specified:

- Acas provide training to employers and employees on workplace rights, rules and best practice such as the Certificate in Workplace Mediation Training (CIWM) which helps organisation's resolve disputes.
- Disputes over small issues can escalate rapidly and result in damaging conflict which can impact employee engagement and productivity as well as costly employment tribunal claims.
- Mediation is a method of resolving disagreements through the use of a neutral person (a 'mediator') who is impartial. The mediator's role is to help everyone involved find a solution they can all agree to.
- Mediation is quick (compared to formal, legal routes), less formal, flexible, voluntary, confidential and usually not legally binding.

Inputs included: setup investment (NCFE course accreditation, assessor screening, trainee information pack, and policy guidance for trainers), and per course investment (2-3 tutors, 8-12 trainees, funding from individual or employer, online or physical space, 5 days of trainer and trainee time). Perceptions of tutors, space, and funding were measured in the survey evaluation.

Activities included:

- Five units of training: understanding conflict and mediation in the workplace, introducing the parties to mediation, moving through the mediation process, skills and strategies for managing the mediation process, and practicing mediation skills.
- Training activities including tutorials, discussions, role play, and group exercises
- Assessor feedback provided both orally and in writing.
- Peer networking with other trainees.
- Telephone/email support from tutor throughout and following training.
- Post-course Questions and Answers assessment

Evaluation of the five units of training and post-course questions and answers assessment were included in the survey evaluation.

Short-term outcomes included and measured in the survey evaluation:

- Individuals trained (not measured in the survey evaluation) and training accreditation qualifications awarded.
- Practical skills: mediation skills, understanding of costs and effects of workplace conflict, and the mediation process.
- Soft skills: improved empathy and rapport building, able to identify when internal workplace mediation is appropriate, enhanced communication skills.

Long-term outcomes were grouped by:

- Trainee outcomes measured in the survey evaluation: trainees had undertaken mediations and applied skills to their wider role, and peer support for mediators.
- Organisational outcomes measured in the survey evaluation: workplace conflicts resolved more quickly and effectively, development of a robust mediation process as part of conflict resolution strategy, greater support for mediation by senior management, and greater awareness of mediation.
- Trainer outcomes: Trainer CPD (not measured in the evaluation).
- Also, following from gaining accreditation: confirmation of trainee skills, and enhanced reputation as a mediator were measured in the survey evaluation.

The impacts included (but not specifically measured in the evaluation):



- Reduced pressures on Acas resources and reduction in employment tribunal claim costs.
- Positive working relationships between managers and employees, and managers and trade unions.
- Greater employee engagement, improved employee productivity, and reduced staff turnover.
- Greater productivity contributions to UK economy, reduced sickness absence, and fewer grievances becoming a formal complaint.

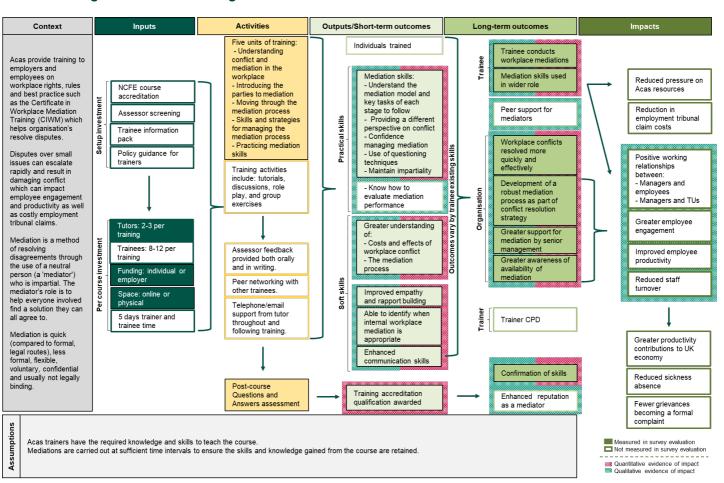


Figure 6.1 Evaluation logic model

Survey of delegates

An online quantitative survey (with telephone chasing) of delegates who attended the training between July 2021 to June 2022 was undertaken. As the number of individuals in-scope was small (N=339 sample provided by Acas), an attempted census approach was taken which means there was an attempt to contact everyone to encourage them to participate in the survey. To maximise responses, a pre-notification email was sent out from Acas, giving participants advance notice about the evaluation. Online invites were then sent out by IFF Research, followed by two targeted email reminders and computer-assisted telephone interview chasing (CATI) to those who had not completed the survey. A target response rate of 38% was set and 125 responses were received (37%) following six weeks of fieldwork.

The quantitative survey covered a range of topics including exploring the experience of mediation participants had before the course, the perceptions of the course, their experience completing the post-course questions and answers, their experience of mediation since the course and the impact of the course on their organisation (see example questions in Table 6.1).

Research aim and Logic Model element	Example survey questions	Example case study questions
Understand experiences of training inputs - Mode of delivery	Did you complete the courseface to face / online / hybrid? Going forward, how would you rather participate in Acas training sessions? Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions face-to- face/online/hybrid/	Now thinking about the course itself, you told us in the survey that you were satisfied/dissatisfied with the course, can you say a bit more about why you said that? Probe for: tutor, course materials, course content, course delivery, activities, mode of delivery (online/F2F).
Understand experiences and motivations prior to training - Trainee and organisation inputs - Acas inputs	Prior to completing the Certificate in internal Workplace Mediation course, had you participated in any workplace disputes or disagreements as a mediator? Why did you go on the CIWM course?	What was your perception of mediation within your organisation before taking part in the course? What did you expect to gain from the course?
Understand experiences of course activities - Perceptions of training activities	 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The course materials were up to date The course tutor was knowledgeable The course tutor allowed enough time for discussion/exercises during the CIWM course Overall, how satisfied were you with the Acas CIWM course, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 very satisfied? 	What do you think could be changed to improve the course?
Understand the effectiveness of the training in equipping delegates with mediation skills - Practical mediation skills - Soft mediation skills	 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the course has enabled you to? Understand the causes and effects of workplace conflict Gain confidence in your mediation skills Be able to manage the mediation process To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following skills developed by completing the course have helped you / will help you to 	In what ways, if any, has the training helped you to resolve them? Probe for: improved listening / questioning skills; greater objectivity / impartiality; greater confidence, etc.

Table 6.1 Research aims and associated example survey and case study questions



	achieve successful mediation outcomes? - Improved listening skills - Improved questionings skills - Greater objectivity/impartiality	
Understand delegates experiences of gaining accreditation - Training accreditation awarded	 How many of the post-course questions and answers have you been able to complete during normal working hours? How do you feel about the amount of work that you've had to do to put your post-course questions and answers together – was it about the same, more or less than you expected? 	Not covered in case studies.
Understand the impacts of the training on the trainee - Trainee impacts	Overall, what is the most significant impact that the course has had on you? How useful have each of the following skills from the course been to you in your wider role in the organisation? Please rate each on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful? - Building rapport - Showing empathy - Impartiality	What experience of mediation have you had since attending the course?Probe for: number of disputes, nature of disputes, how much time spent mediating?Has the CIWM course been helpful in other aspects of your role, other than for mediating?
Understand the impacts of the training on the organisation - Short-term organisation impacts - Long-term organisation impacts	 As a result of attending the CIWM course have you, or anyone working with you at the same organisation? Introduced one or more new policies or practices Reviewed one or more policies or practices Revised one or more policies or practices Formalised plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices Formalised plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices Made general/informal plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices Made general/informal plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices 	You told us in the survey that going on the course had a positive/negative impact on your organisation. Why do you think that? In what ways has it had an impact? What is the perception of the use of mediation in the organisation since attending the course? Probe for: is it used appropriately, is the process understood, is it effective, for who or in what circumstances?

Organisation case studies

To gain more insight into the impact of the CIWM training on delegates and organisations, as well as contribute to the narrative throughout the report, case studies were conducted. The aim was for each case study to include an interview with a delegate who had been on the course as well as a senior manager in their organisation who might be able to provide a more strategic overview of the value of having trained mediators in the workplace.

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Case studies were recruited through the survey by asking delegates to opt-in if they were interested in being considered as a case study. The selection of the case studies was undertaken with input from Acas and based on answers that had been given during the survey to ensure a varied selection of case study organisations. Selections were made based on whether the delegate had previous experience of mediation, the mode of training delivery, whether the delegate had achieved accreditation, the type and size of the organisation, the delegate's satisfaction levels, whether they would recommend the course, and whether it had a positive or negative impact on their organisation.

Interviews were semi-structured and encouraged the delegate and the senior manager to discuss their views and experiences of mediation prior to and following the training, motivations, and perceptions of the training as well as the impact of the training on the wider organisation (see example questions in Table 6.1). Interviewees were each offered a £40 incentive as a thank you for taking part.

Participants

Survey respondents

Survey respondents (N=125) were majority female (77%) and of white ethnicity (94%). Most respondents were aged 40+ (68%) and did not live with a health condition that impacted their day-to-day life (82%; see Table 6.2)

Characteristic	Ν	%
Age		
18-39	29	23%
40-49	35	28%
50-59	42	34%
60+	7	6%
Sex		
Female	97	77%
Male	24	19%
Ethnicity		
White	118	94%
Asian / Asian British	2	2%
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	1	1%
Health condition impact on daily life?		
Yes	15	11%
No	103	82%

Table 6.2 Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

As shown by Table 6.3, most of the respondents worked in large organisations (83%), in the public (47%) or private sector (41%) and had a HR department within their organisation (98%). The most common job role of respondents was a HR or a personnel specialist (67%) and over half of respondents had been in their role for more than 5 years (67%).

Characteristic	N	0/
Characteristic	N	%
Sector		
Public sector	59	47%
Private sector	51	41%
Charity or voluntary sector	12	10%
Social enterprise	2	2%
Organisation size		
Large business	105	83%
SME	17	14%
Organisation		
Human health activities	29	23%
Public administration and defence	20	16%
Financial services	1	9%
Education	10	8%
Retail trade	5	4%
Land transport	4	3%
Role		
HR or personnel specialist	80	67%
Manager	28	20%
Employee	8	6%
Trade union officer	2	2%
Other	7	4%
HR department at workplace		
Yes	123	98%
No	1	1%
Tenure		
Less than 6 months	1	1%
Between 6 months and a year	1	1%
More than a year but less than 5 years	6	5%
More than 2 years but less than 5	33	26%
More than 5 years	84	67%
Training event type		
Open access	88	75%
Workplace	37	25%
		_0,0

Table 6.3 Employment characteristics of survey respondents

Assessment of the achieved sample characteristics compared to the characteristics of the overall population of delegates shows the survey sample was broadly representative. Male respondents represented 19% of the survey sample and 17% of the population. In terms of age, 40% of the achieved sampled was 50 years or older as was true of the overall population. Approximately 5%

more survey respondents were aged 18-39 (23%) and 5% fewer were aged 40-49 (28%), compared to the population (27% and 33%, respectively).

The survey data was weighted based on the course type, so the proportion of survey respondents taking part in workplace and open access courses matched the proportions in the population (25% and 75%, respectively). Sixty percent of survey respondents completed the training online or through a hybrid route, which is higher than the proportion of the overall population (although delivery mode data was unavailable for 7% of the population).

Characteristic	%
Age	
18-39	27%
40-49	33%
50+	40%
Gender	
Female	80%
Male	17%
Prefer not to say	3%
Course Type	
Workplace	25%
Open Access	75%
Delivery Mode	
Online/Hybrid	54%
Face-to-Face	39%
Unavailable	7%

Table 6.4 Demographic characteristics of delegate population (N=339)

The sample of delegates in the 2014 evaluation was reported as:

- 74% female and 26% male;
- 13% 18-34 years, 51% 35-49, 36% 50-64;
- 74% worked in organisations of 250+ employees, 21% in organisation with up to 249 employees;
- 52% worked in HR Manager/Business Partner/Director/Other HR role, 21% Other Manager role, 3% Other Director role, 2% Learning and Development facilitator or Advisor, and 23% in Other roles.

Case study organisations

Four organisational case study interviews were carried out (see Table 6.5). Two case studies included interviews with a delegate who had attended the training and a senior leader in their organisation, one case study included an interview with the delegate and a less senior colleague (who

had also attended the training), and one case study included just a delegate interview. In case study 1, the senior leader had attended the training years previously. There was a mix of organisation type between social enterprise, private and public sector. There were also two SMEs and two large organisations. Most of the delegates completed the course online and received accreditation.

	Case study 1: Peaks and Plains Housing Trust	Case study 2	se study 2 Medway Community Healthcare CIC		
Organisation type	Social enterprise	Private	Social enterprise	Public sector	
Organisation size	50-249	50-249	250+	250+	
Trainee role	HR Business Partner	H R Manager	Learning and organisational development lead	Organisational development lead	
Senior leader role	HR and Organisational Development Manager	Assistant HR Manager	HR Director	N/A	
Mode of training	Face to face	Online	Online	Online	
Accreditation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	

Table 6.5 Case study participant characteristics

Appendix 2: Research materials

Section A. Experience of mediation before the course

Ask all. Single code.

A1. Firstly, could I just ask what your role is in your organisation?

Owner / manager	1	
A supervisor / line manager	2	
A human resource or personnel specialist	3	
An employee	4	

An employee representative	5	
A full-time trade union officer	6	
A trade union lay representative	7	
A lawyer / solicitor	8	
Other (Please specify)	9	
Prefer not to say	10	

A2. Prior to completing the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation course, had you participated in any workplace disputes or disagreements as a mediator?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

If previously a mediator (A2=1). Single code.

A3. <u>In the year prior to completing the course</u>, approximately how many workplace disputes or disagreements had you participated in as a mediator which were...?

	None	1	2	3	4	5+ (Specify)
Fully resolved i.e. all issues were resolved	0	1	2	3	4	5
Partially resolved	0	1	2	3	4	5
Withdrawn (no agreement reached between parties	0	1	2	3	4	5
Proceeded to formal complaint	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are ongoing	0	1	2	3	4	5

Ask if 5+ chosen for any types (A3_x=5) filter based on A3 responses. Write in.

A4. Please specify approximately how many cases were...

Fully resolved i.e., all issues were resolved	WRITE IN



Partially resolved	WRITE IN
Withdrawn (no agreement reached between parties)	WRITE IN
Proceeded to formal complaint	WRITE IN
Are ongoing	WRITE IN

Ask if previously a mediator (A2=1). Write in.

A5. In the year prior to completing the course, approximately what proportion of your working time would you estimate has been spent in a mediating role, either undertaking mediation itself or carrying out work directly related to mediating?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Don't know	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

Ask all. Multi-code.

A6 <u>In the year prior to completing the course</u>, what other roles or activities in dispute resolution and conflict management did you personally play in your organisation?

Counselling / Coaching/ Advising	1	
Facilitating individual/group discussions	2	
Disciplinary or grievance procedures	3	
Conflict resolution	4	
Anything else (Please specify)	5	
None	6	
Don't know	7	

Section B. Perceptions of the course

Ask all. Single code.

B1. We would now like to ask you about the Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation (or CIWM) course.



Firstly, how was your course paid for?

Organisation paid in full	1	
Paid for it entirely myself	2	
Part sponsored (i.e., paid by organisation), part self- funded	3	

Ask all. Single code.

B2. To what extent do you agree that the course provided value for money?

Strongly disagree	1	
Disagree	2	
Neither agree nor disagree	3	
Agree	4	
Strongly agree	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Single code.

B3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
The course materials were up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6
The course materials covered relevant topics and areas	1	2	3	4	5	6
The course tutor was knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6
The course tutor provided useful examples	1	2	3	4	5	6
The course tutor allowed enough time for discussion/exercises during the CIWM course	1	2	3	4	5	6
The course tutor provided support and feedback	1	2	3	4	5	6

Ask all. Single code.

B4. Did you complete the course...



Face to face	1	
Online	2	
Hybrid / Mix of face-to-face and online	3	
Don't know	4	

B5. Going forward, how would you rather participate in Acas training sessions?

Face to face	1	
Online	2	
Hybrid / Mix of face-to-face and online	3	
Don't know	4	
Prefer not to say	5	

Ask if prefer face to face (B5=1). Multi-code.

B6. Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions face-to-face?

Better collaboration and discussion with others	1	
Opportunity for networking and building connections	2	
Easier to engage with and focus on the course	3	
Easier to ask questions	4	
Feel more motivated to attend	5	
Reduces any potential technical issues	6	
It was difficult to learn the skills online but needing to apply the skills in practice face-to-face	7	
Value for money	8	
Get more from the session	9	
Other (Please specify)	10	
Don't know	11	
None of these	12	



Ask if prefer online (B5=2). Multi-code.

B7. Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions online?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Ask if prefer hybrid (B5=3). Multi-code.

B8. Why would you prefer to participate in training sessions in a hybrid way?

Better collaboration and discussion with others	1	
Opportunity for networking and building connections	2	
Easier to engage with and focus on the course	3	
Easier to ask questions	4	
Feel more motivated to attend	5	
Reduces any potential technical issues	6	
Value for money	7	
Get more from the session	8	
Reduced travel requirement to attend the course	10	



Easy to access and convenient	11	
Able to better fit in the course around prior commitments	12	
Availability of resources during the course	13	
Able to attend with colleagues based in different locations	15	
Don't have to wait for a local event to take place	16	
Other (Please specify)	17	
Don't know	18	
None of these	19	

B9. All else being equal, how much would you expect to pay for a course delivered online compared to face-to-face?

Less	1	
Same amount	2	
More	3	
Don't know	4	

Ask all. Multi-code.

B10. Why did you go on the CIWM course?

It is relevant to your current job role	1	
To enable you to extend your role or move into another role	2	
There was a need for mediation in your workplace	3	
As an alternative solution to deal with conflicts informally	4	
Personal development to enhance your skills	5	
It is something you were interested in	6	
To further develop mediation skills that you already possessed	7	
You were asked/nominated to attend	8	



To raise the profile of mediation in your workplace	9	
To obtain a qualification	10	
You perceived it as a useful skill to have	11	
To be able to train others in mediation	12	
Another reason (Please specify)	13	
Don't know	14	

Section C. Completing the post-course questions and answers

Ask all. Single code.

C1. Since you completed the course, have you worked on your post-course questions and answers at all?

Yes	1	
No	2	

Ask those who worked on post-course questions and answers (C1=1). Single code.

C2. Have you submitted your post-course questions and answers?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Ask those who worked on post-course questions and answers (C1=1). Single code.

C3. How many of the post-course questions and answers have you been able to complete during normal working hours?

None of your post-course questions and answers (will be) completed in working hours	1	
Some of your post-course questions and answers (will be) completed in working hours	2	
Most of your post-course questions and answers (will be) completed in working hours	3	
All of your post-course questions and answers (will be) completed in working hours	4	



Ask those who worked on post-course questions and answers (C1=1). Single code.

C4. How do you feel about the amount of work that you've had to do to put your post-course questions and answers together – was it about the same, more or less than you expected?

Much less than you expected	1	
Slightly less than you expected	2	
About the same as you expected	3	
Slightly more than you expected	4	
Much more work than you expected	5	
Didn't know what to expect	6	

Ask those who worked on post-course questions and answers (C1=1). Single code.

C5. How would you rate the process of putting together the post-course questions and answers in terms of difficulty on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very difficult and 5 is very easy?

Very difficult	1	
Fairly difficult	2	
Neither easy nor difficult	3	
Fairly easy	4	
Very easy	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask those who found process difficult (C5=1 or 2). Multi-code.

C6. What in particular did you find difficult about the process of completing the post-course questions and answers?

Being clear on what was required	1	
Identifying sources of evidence	2	
Reviewing the research evidence	3	
The number of questions were too many	4	
Completing the post-course questions and answers to the necessary detail	5	



The amount of time needed to complete it	6	
Writing up the post-course questions and answers	7	
The timescales for submitting the post-course questions and answers	8	
Something else (Please specify)	9	
Don't know	10	

Ask those who did not work on OR submit a post-course questions and answers (C1=2 or C2=2). Multi-code.

C7. Why have you not [Text insert where C1=2: worked on] [Text insert where C2=2: submitted] your post-course questions and answers?

I haven't had time to complete it	1	
The timescale to complete the post-course questions and answers was too short	2	
Too much work required to complete it	3	
I am unclear what is required	4	
Standard required is too high	5	
No longer relevant to my job role	6	
Personal circumstances have prevented completion	7	
Need more support/guidance from the tutor	8	
Do not need/want to gain the accreditation	9	
Another reason (Please specify)	10	
Don't know	11	

Ask those who have submitted post-course questions and answers (C2=1). Single code.

C8. Have you now gained CIWM accreditation?

Yes	1	
No	2	

Ask those who did not gain CIWM Accreditation (C8=2). Multi-code.

C9. May we ask why you have not yet gained accreditation?

Have not had time to complete the work required to the	1	
required standard	I	



Standard required was too high	2	
Personal circumstances have prevented completion of the work to the required standard	3	
Need more guidance in completing the work to the required standard	4	
Another reason (Please specify)	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask if gained accreditation (C8=1). Single code.

C10. Did you wait to be accredited before undertaking mediations within your organisation?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Ask if submitted post-course QA (C2=1). Single code.

C11. Did you receive feedback from the Acas course tutor on your post-course questions and answers?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Ask if submitted post-course QA (C2=1). Single code.

C12. Approximately how long between sending your post-course questions and answers to the tutor [C11=1: did you wait] [IF C11=2: have you been waiting] for feedback?

Up to a week	1	
More than a week, but less than a month	2	
1-2 months	3	
3-6 months	4	
More than 6 months	5	
Don't know	6	



Ask those who have submitted post-course questions and answers and received feedback (C2=1 AND C11=1). Single code.

C13. How would you rate the quality of the feedback that you received from your tutor?

Very poor	1	
Fairly poor	2	
Neither poor nor good	3	
Fairly good	4	
Very good	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask where feedback received was poor (C13=1 or 2). Multi-code.

C14. May we ask why you said the quality of the feedback you received was poor?

The time taken to receive the feedback was too long	1	
The content of the feedback was not helpful	2	
The feedback was not relevant to my work	3	
The guidance in the feedback was not clear about what to do next	4	
Another reason (Please specify)	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Single code.

C15. How supportive do you feel your organisation has been in enabling you to work towards this accreditation?

Not at all supportive	1	
Not very supportive	2	
Fairly supportive	3	
Very supportive	4	
Don't know	5	
Organisation not aware of accreditation	6	

Ask if organisation supportive/not supportive (C15=1-4). Write in.

C16. In what ways has your organisation (if C15=3/4: supported; if C15=1/2: not supported) you to work towards accreditation?

WRITE IN		
Don't know	1	
Refused	2	

Section D. Experience of mediation since the course

Ask all. Single code.

D1. I'd now like to move on to ask you about any mediation you have personally undertaken since completing the course.

<u>Since completing the course</u>, how many workplace disputes or disagreements have you participated as a mediator which were...?

	None	1	2	3	4	5+ (Specify)
Fully resolved i.e., all issues were resolved	0	1	2	3	4	5
Partially resolved	0	1	2	3	4	5
Withdrawn (no agreement reached between parties	0	1	2	3	4	5
Proceeded to formal complaint	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are ongoing	0	1	2	3	4	5

Ask if 5+ chosen for any types (D1_X=5) filter based on D1 responses. Write in.

D2. Please specify approximately how many cases were...

Fully resolved i.e., all issues were resolved	
Partially resolved	
Withdrawn (no agreement reached between parties)	
Proceeded to formal complaint	



Are ongoing	

Ask if mediated any since course (D1_1-5 not equal 0). Write in.

D3. <u>Since completing the course</u>, approximately what proportion of your working time has been spent in a mediating role, either undertaking mediation itself or carrying out work directly related to mediating?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Don't know	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

Ask if not gained accreditation and no mediations since completion [C8=2 AND D1_1-5= all 0]. Single code.

D4. Are you waiting until you receive accreditation before you undertake any mediations within your organisation?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Ask all. Multi-code.

D5. <u>Since completing the course</u>, which other roles or activities in dispute resolution and conflict management do you personally play in your organisation?

Counselling / Coaching/ Advising	1	
Facilitating individual/group discussions	2	
Disciplinary or grievance procedures	3	
Conflict resolution	4	
Anything else (Please specify)	5	
None	6	
Don't know	7	



Ask where mediated any cases (D1_1-5 not equal 0). Single code.

D6. How many of the workplace disputes or disagreements that you have mediated were mainly focused on...?

	None	1	2	3	4	5+ (Specify)
Pay and conditions	0	1	2	3	4	5
Promotion, career development or internal transfers	0	1	2	3	4	5
Physical working conditions or health and safety	0	1	2	3	4	5
Work practices, work allocation or pace of work	0	1	2	3	4	5
Working time i.e., change to working hours, annual leave or time off work	0	1	2	3	4	5
Performance appraisal	0	1	2	3	4	5
Discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sexual harassment	0	1	2	3	4	5
Racial harassment	0	1	2	3	4	5
Relations with supervisors or line managers e.g., regarding unfair treatment or victimisation	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bullying at work	0	1	2	3	4	5
Selection for redundancy		1	2	3	4	5
Use of disciplinary sanctions		1	2	3	4	5
Something else (Please specify)	0	1	2	3	4	5

Ask if Something else (D6_14=1-5). Write in.

D7. What else have the disputes or disagreement that you have mediated been focused on?

WRITE IN

Ask if 5+ chosen for any types (D6_x=5) filter based on D6 responses. Write in.

D8. Please specify how many disputes of disagreements have been focused mainly on...

Pay and conditions	
Promotion, career development or internal transfers	



Physical working conditions or health and safety	
Work practices, work allocation or pace of work	
Working time i.e., change to working hours, annual leave or time off work	
Performance appraisal	
Discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief	
Sexual harassment	
Racial harassment	
Relations with supervisors or line managers e.g., regarding unfair treatment or victimisation	
Bullying at work	
Selection for redundancy	
Use of disciplinary sanctions	
[insert D7 response]	

Ask if any fully or partially resolved mediation cases ($D1_{1}=1-5$ or $D1_{2}=1-5$). Single code.

D9. Thinking about your most recent mediation that was partially or fully resolved, to what extent was mediation a factor in the resolution of that particular dispute?

Not a factor at all	1	
A minor factor	2	
A major factor	3	
Don't know/too difficult to say	4	

Ask all. Write in.

D10. In your experience, what are the main factors that help you to facilitate a successful mediation outcome?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Nothing	2	
Don't know	3	



Prefer not to say	4	
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Ask all. Write in.

D11. In your experience, what are the main barriers which prevent you from facilitating a successful mediation outcome?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Nothing	2	
Don't know	3	
Prefer not to say	4	

Section E. Mediation skills

Ask all. Single code.

E1. Thank you very much again for your valuable insights so far. We've now completed half of the survey.

I'd now like to ask you about what you feel you have personally gained from the CIWM course. This is so that Acas can evaluate how well the course is preparing people to be mediators.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the course has enabled you to ...?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Understand the causes and effects of workplace conflict	1	2	3	4	5	6
Identify when internal workplace mediation is appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand the mediation process	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gain confidence in your mediation skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Be able to manage the mediation process	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enhance your communication skills, such as listening, questioning, persuading and negotiating	1	2	3	4	5	6

Ask all. Single code.

E2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following skills developed by completing the course (if D1_1=1-5 OR D1_2=1-5: have helped you; if D1_1=0 AND D1_2=0 will help you) to achieve successful mediation outcomes?



	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Improved listening skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Improved questioning skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Greater objectivity/impartiality	1	2	3	4	5	6
Greater confidence in managing mediation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Altered the way you talk to people	1	2	3	4	5	6
Better use of role plays	1	2	3	4	5	6
Better understanding of the process	1	2	3	4	5	6
A clear framework or structure to work with	1	2	3	4	5	6
An accreditation/qualification	1	2	3	4	5	6
More confidence in general	1	2	3	4	5	6

E3. How useful have each of the following skills from the course been to you in your wider role in the organisation? Please rate each on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful?

	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Neutral	Quite useful	Very useful	Don't know
Building rapport	1	2	3	4	5	6
Showing empathy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Impartiality	1	2	3	4	5	6
Questioning techniques	1	2	3	4	5	6
Listening skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Acknowledging differences	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reframing	1	2	3	4	5	6
Summarising	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Neutral	Quite useful	Very useful	Don't know
Reflecting	1	2	3	4	5	6

Section F. Impact of the course on your organisation

Ask all. Single code.

F1. It would be helpful for Acas to find out a little more about the use of mediation in your organisation.

What impact has the course had on your organisation?

Significant negative impact	1	
Some / minor negative impact	2	
No impact	3	
Some / minor positive impact	4	
Significant positive impact	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all except those who don't know impact of CIWM course on organisation (F1=1-5). Write in.

F2. Please give reasons why the course has had [F1=1: significant negative impact] [F1=2: some or minor negative impact] [F1=3: no impact] [F1=4: some or minor positive impact] [F1=5: significant positive impact] on your organisation?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Don't know	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

Ask all. Single code.

F3. As a result of attending the CIWM course have you, or anyone working with you at the same organisation...?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Introduced one or more new policies or practices	1	2	3



	Yes	No	Don't know
Reviewed one or more policies or practices	1	2	3
Revised one or more policies or practices	1	2	3
Formalised plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices	1	2	3
Made general / informal plans to introduce one or more new policies or practices	1	2	3

F4. Since completing the course, to what extent is mediation encouraged in your organisation now?

Much less	1	
Less	2	
About the same	3	
More	4	
Much more	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Single code.

F5. How aware are staff of mediation as a form of dispute resolution in your organisation?

Not at all aware	1	
Not very aware	2	
Neither aware nor unaware	3	
Fairly aware	4	
Very aware	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Single code.

F6. If an employee has a grievance, is a mediator asked to be involved...?

Never	1	
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Rarely	2	
Sometimes	3	
Usually	4	
Always	5	
Don't know	6	

F7. If there is a disciplinary action short of a dismissal, is a mediator asked to be involved...?

Never	1	
Rarely	2	
Sometimes	3	
Usually	4	
Always	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Multi-code.

F8. What, if anything, has encouraged the use of mediation in your organisation?

Desire or need to reduce the incidence of formal resolution of cases	1	
Legislative changes	2	
Internal promotion of or support for mediation from senior management	3	
The introduction of a formal mediation scheme/procedures	4	
Employees attending mediation training	5	
Other (Please specify)	6	
Don't know	8	

Ask all. Single code.

F9. Within your organisation, in your opinion, would you say mediation is used ...?



Too much	1	
Too little	2	
Whenever necessary	3	
Don't know	4	

Ask if said mediation is used too little (F9=2). Write in.

F10. What steps do you think could be taken to increase the use of mediation in your organisation?

WRITE IN		
Nothing	1	
Don't know	2	
Refused	3	

Section G. Overall satisfaction and improvements

Ask all. Single code.

G1. Before completing the course, how important was it to you that the course provided accreditation?

Not at all important	1	
Not very important	2	
Quite important	3	
Very important	4	
Don't know	5	

Ask all. Single code.

G2. How likely would you be to recommend the CIWM course to a colleague?

Very unlikely	1	
Quite unlikely	2	
Quite likely	3	



Very likely	4	
Don't know	5	

G3. Overall, how satisfied were you with the CIWM course, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 very satisfied...?

Very dissatisfied	1	
Quite dissatisfied	2	
Neutral	3	
Quite satisfied	4	
Very satisfied	5	
Don't know	6	

Ask all. Write in.

G4. Overall, what is the most significant impact that the course has had on you?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
N a the in a		
Nothing	1	
Don't know	2	

Ask all. Write in.

G5. Do you have any suggestions for how the CIWM course might be improved?

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
No, nothing	1	
Don't know	2	
Refused	3	



Section H. About your organisation and you

Ask all. Write in.

H1. We are nearly at the end now – thank you very much again for your insights so far. Finally, I'd like to ask you a few questions about the organisation you work for so that we can classify your answers.

Firstly, how would you describe the main business activity at your organisation? (For example, 'care home', 'bank', 'construction company', 'supermarket')

WRITE IN VERBATIM		
Don't know	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

Ask all. Single code.

H2. Would you classify your organisation as...

Mainly seeking to make a profit	1	
A public sector organisation	2	
A social enterprise	3	
A charity or voluntary sector organisation	4	
Don't know	5	
Prefer not to say	6	

Ask all. Single code.

H3. How many employees does your organisation currently employ across all UK sites excluding owners and partners?

Please include all full time and part time staff, and temporary or casual staff but not including agency, self-employed, owners or partners.

Sole trader (i.e., 0 employees)	1
1-9	2
10-49	3
50-249	4



250+ employees	5
Don't know	6
Prefer not to say	6

Ask all except sole traders (H2 not equal to 1). Single code.

H4. Does your workplace have a personnel or human resources specialist / department?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Ask all. Single code.

H5. How long have you worked in your current organisation?

Less than 6 months	1	
Between 6 months and a year	2	
More than a year but less than 2 years	3	
More than 2 years but less than 5	4	
More than 5 years	5	
Don't know	6	
Prefer not to say	7	

Ask all. Write in.

H6. And finally, a few questions about you so that we can see if people from different backgrounds have different perceptions of the course.

The following questions tell us more about you and will help Acas ensure that its services are meeting the needs of all sections of the population.

We recognise that you might consider some of these questions to be personal or sensitive, in which case you are free not to answer them.

The information you provide will be used for the sole purpose of understanding the views of different groups of people.

What is your age?

IFF Research

WRITE IN NUMBER		
Prefer not to say	1	

H7. What is your sex?

Male	1	
Female	2	
Prefer not to say	4	

Ask all. Single code.

H8. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Yes	1	
No (Please specify)	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

Ask all. Single code.

H9. What is your ethnic group?

White		
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	1	
Irish	2	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	
Any other white background (Please specify)	4	
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups		
White and Black Caribbean	5	
White and Black African	6	
White and Asian	7	
Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background (Please specify)	8	
Asian / Asian British		
Indian	9	
Pakistani	10	
Bangladeshi	11	



Chinese	12	
Any other Asian background (Please specify)	13	
Black / Black British		
African	14	
Caribbean	15	
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (Please specify)	16	
Ethnic groups not listed		
Arab	17	
Any other ethnic group not listed (Please specify)	19	
Prefer not to say	20	

Ask all. Single code.

H10. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	3	
Prefer not to say	4	

Ask if has a long-term health condition (H10=1). Single code.

H11. Does your condition or illness/do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carryout day-to-day activities??

Yes, a lot	1	
Yes, a little	2	
No, not at all	3	
Don't know	4	
Prefer not to say	5	

Appendix 3: Organisational case studies

Case study 1: Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, 50-249 employees

Background

Peaks and Plains Housing Trust is a housing trust in Macclesfield employing approximately 150-160 staff. They provide affordable housing throughout Cheshire East housing through right-to-buy part ownership and buying outright.



The delegate had worked at the organisation for four years as a HR business partner. They worked in a team of five including the Assistant Director, HR manager, HR business partner, and learning and development business partner. Their main responsibilities included a mix of case work with employees dealing with employer relations and working on projects that come from the HR People Plan strategy.

The HR and OD manager had worked in the organisation for 17 years. Their role involved managing the HR team in both an operational capacity, dealing with all elements of employee relations, and also working on organisational development.

Prior to employees attending the Acas training the approach to dispute resolution was more informal and less structured. The HR and OD manager believed that many of the principles of mediation were automatically used by HR staff to resolve disputes, but they were not necessarily used in a structured way.

'I went on the Acas mediation course 6 or 7 years ago and then recently colleagues have been on the recent one. Before that I tended to do the mediation following the model I got trained on and then [colleagues] have probably done a more informal part of that with meeting with staff separately and a less structured approach. But having all three of us trained now on the mediation course we follow the principles of that now which I do think is more effective we can share the benefits side of it with employees of possible successful outcomes and give them more information.'

Senior leader

Three staff were trained in conducting mediations prior to the delegate attending the course and so if mediation was required then there were people in the organisation who had already attended the Acas training and received the qualification. Other colleagues who were not qualified would facilitate conversations but would not undertake mediations.

Those who were trained included the HR and OD manager who had attended the Acas training 6-7 years ago. They would do mediations following the model they were taught which they did not think had changed over time. They identified that emphasis was put on the importance of them taking their 'HR hat' off and focusing on mediating rather than problem solving which would be the usual response for HR staff.

'What the training course taught me was that you do have to take your HR hat off when you're doing mediation, and I think that's vital when you do mediation...in the HR world we tend to problem solve all the time and we like to problem solve but when you're in mediation it's up to the individuals to come up with the solutions. I think the benefits are learning what your role is, whereas in the informal part you could quite easily go back to having your HR hat on, whereas when your officially in your mediation side of things that training has taught me that you have to adapt into a different role.'

Senior leader

Mediation was not used 'a huge amount' in the organisation, and the HR and OD manager estimated there had been seven instances in the past 18 months. However, it was increasingly written into policies and processes such as the bullying and harassment and grievance procedures. Policies are reviewed every three years by the HR manager and then they are updated and signed off by the Trust executives.

'I don't think it's been used a huge amount, but I'd say now and again...in the last couple of years policies and processes have been reviewed and it's been written in...we've not long since had a

bullying and harassment policy and it's in there, it's in our grievance policy, it's in any areas where conflict resolution applies'

Delegate

Before the training

The delegates involvement with mediation before the training was because of their role in case work and aiming to avoid grievances, or resolving grievances that were raised. Mediation would also be used to improve difficult relationships.

'Where I've got involved with this [mediation] has been around case work where I've either tried to avoid grievances, or a grievance has been raised, or where we can see that there are relationship difficulties'

Delegate

The delegate had not carried out mediations prior to attending the training because they were not qualified. However, they were involved in facilitating discussions which tended to be shorter and simpler than mediations. These facilitated discussions took place within other HR processes and the trainee used some guidance published by Acas to support their role in this.

'I've never done full mediations because I wasn't qualified, the nearest I came to that was facilitated discussions [in a previous organisation], I've done a few of those which are obviously very different and I know there is some Acas guidance around facilitated discussions but it's a much simpler, shorter method.'

Delegate

'Other than that [facilitated discussions] it has been formal processes that I've been involved in...it has been in my capacity as an HR contact person in formal processes so it's always been supporting managers, advise and guide them through formal processes, or where individuals have raised formal grievances and have come to me directly'

Delegate

The HR and OD manager reported that the view of mediation in the organisation was positive, and it was encouraged by the senior Trust executives. There were no barriers for conducting mediation because the executives supported it regardless of the significant cost associated with carrying out mediations because they could see the value it added.

'It was encouraged, there was never any barriers because there is obviously a significant cost linked to it, but I do think they [senior leadership team] can see the value that it adds and the training is always supported.'

Senior leader

The delegate felt that employees perceived mediation as a '*full-on, heavy handed, or scary*' process and so some people were concerned when it was suggested. Sometimes this was based on previous experiences of mediation in other organisations or because, due to confidentiality, the process of mediation is unknown. The delegate described having to spend some time explaining mediation to individuals prior to them agreeing to it. On the other hand, the HR and OD Manager noted that no employee had rejected mediation so felt that this showed mediation to be an effective and accepted tool. 'I think some people when it has been suggested have been not very open to it, I think quite concerned about it, feeling it is a very full-on, heavy handed. Their impression of it is that it seems quite scary prospect to the individuals, and then it takes a little bit of time put aside to tell people more about it...so they understand what it really is, I think the initial perception of it is that it is quite a scary prospect.'

Delegate

'Some of them come with previous experiences of where they've worked before, they know it's been happening in the background, not necessarily with them involved, and they've thought that looks like quite a big thing going on and we're not quite sure what was going on or what was involved but it felt like a big issue at the time, I think it is fear of the unknown as well.'

Delegate

The delegate attended the Acas training in part for their own personal development and also to support colleagues in carrying out mediations. The delegate explained that because the organisation is small, people worked closely with one another and so relationship issues came up fairly often and it was useful for the organisation to have a pool of people who could offer mediation.

The HR and OD manager recognised that having individuals trained in mediation made mediation more effective, meant that the mediators had a better understanding of the process, and the accreditation gave them credibility. They also believed that the more confidence that parties had in the mediator's knowledge, then the greater buy in they had in the process which supported the mediation process.

'It's more to explain to individuals that you have had the training and that we're going to do it in a certain way as a result of the training, and this is what it looks like, and getting more buy-in from individuals...I had so much more knowledge of how to resolve especially tricky disputes, I felt more confident and I could give individuals more information which got better buy in from them that it was going to be successful... I definitely had more knowledge and structure.'

Senior leader

The HR and OD Manager expected that having more trained staff would help them to resolve conflict speedily and with more successful outcomes. They also wanted to increase the accessibility to mediation by having more staff trained to undertake it. Ultimately, they expected that having trained mediators would have a positive impact on the organisation and relationships between employees. It was also hoped that offering mediation earlier on would reduce sickness absence.

'The motivation is to successfully resolve conflicts speedily with successful outcomes...because we are only a small team it was for staff to have that access to a trained mediator so we needed the other two as well'

Senior leader

'To try and reduce sickness absence down for example, and I think it does I think if we nip it in the bud at an early stage...reducing that sickness down and getting people back into work if it is the case when it has got that far and they're off I think it is a remedy to improve those relationships'

Senior leader

The training

The Acas training was selected because the HR and OD Manager had heard good things about the training and read about it online, and they were confident in Acas's reputation for mediation guidance. They are also a member of a HR social networking group who had recommended the training. Members of the organisation had also attended other training delivered by Acas, such as mental health training for managers, and been satisfied with the courses.

'That it is a recognised training course by Acas I think it just adds a bit more weight to it.'

Senior leader

The delegate completed the course on a 5-day residential, face-to-face with tutors and people from other organisations. The delegate hoped the training would provide them with a bigger framework to use, increase their confidence, and enable them to be better equipped to carry out mediations. The course met the delegate's expectation as they learnt new skills and developed an understanding of the framework. Although the role-play could be uncomfortable at first, they really valued it as an exercise as they were able to practice what they had learnt, and it felt like a safe space.

The delegate reported that the tutors were excellent, and while they were knowledgeable and professional, they also came across as informal which helped facilitate the sessions. The handouts that were provided were particularly useful and they still used them to help them prepare before carrying out a mediation. They said they would recommend the training to anyone who plays a role in dispute resolution, including HR, but it would also be useful to union representatives, and '*well-placed*' managers.

The HR and OD manager had also attended the training and agreed that it was good. The feedback they had received from other staff who had attended was that they '*loved it*' and as they have used the skills in mediation and secured successful outcomes, the manager was satisfied that the expectations of the training was met.

In terms of improvements to the course, the delegate explained that they undertook their first mediation six months after the training and they had to look back through the materials to remind themselves and feel confident carrying out the mediation. They found that the most challenging part of the process was moving from discussing and agreeing the agenda with individuals to action planning, as this stage involved lots of multi-skilling. The delegate reflected that it would have been useful to spend more time practicing that transition as part of the course.

'One of the challenges for me was when I had the first one to do, and obviously I did have to do a lot of prep because there was a bit of a gap between doing the course and then actually having a mediation...the bit that I found more challenging was what I would describe as the middle bit of the process where you are moving from getting the individuals to agree an agenda and then into action planning and it's a lot of multi-skilling...on the course it would have been good to get more practice of that part.'

Delegate

The delegate also identified that they had not been able to find feedback forms for people to fill in following the mediation to provide feedback to the other party. They would find it useful to have a template provided by Acas to use for this stage of the process.



After the training

The delegate had completed two mediations since taking part in the training. The first was not resolved through mediation but they did feel that going through the process did help the situation and it was resolved in another way. Following this, the delegate reflected on what they could have done differently, why the process had not led to the dispute being resolved, and they described how the outcome did impact them personally as they were invested in it.

'I did a lot of reflection and a bit of soul searching around could I have done anything differently, what were the reasons why they hadn't managed to agree... I think it does effect you personally because you're obviously invested in it. What helped was I looked at the framework and thought I'm there as a facilitator and it's not for me to take it on too personally so I had to sort of step away from that and think it's not about me, but that did sit with me a bit afterwards.'

Delegate

The second mediation the delegate undertook was fully resolved and they found it rewarding to use the framework and see it work successfully. The delegate commented that as part of their role they provide HR advice to a primary school in the area and the second mediation was between staff at the school so they were not known to them. The delegate considered if this supported the process.

'Putting that framework into play can really work and can really pay off because at one point the parties were having a full-on argument and by the end of it they were getting on really well'

Delegate

The training provided the delegate with a clear framework to use and a structure for going through the process. They also felt that the experience of the training and having a qualification also gave them confidence. Skills that they had found particularly useful included being objective, actively listening, note-taking, summarising, and questioning.

'What gives me confidence in it is the framework, so I'm working through that structure and there is quite a lot on that course about reminding you of the skills that you need and I do a little refresh every time'

Delegate

'Staying impartial... making sure they stick to the ground rules, multiskilling like active listening, trying to take down the important notes, summarising, asking the right questions in the right way, it's quite hard it's fairly challenging and I imagine the more you do the better you become.'

Delegate

The mediator's handbook provided by Acas was also a useful tool and helped them refresh their skills prior to each mediation. An important part of the process was preparing parties for mediation and spending time explaining the process, and the training enabled them to have the knowledge to do this.

'Getting the people prepared for mediation, when people go into mediation they go in with preconceived ideas about what it's going to give them and I spend quite a bit of time explaining what it is and what it isn't and I got that from the course, that was really helpful.'

Delegate



The delegate identified that the training had a positive impact on the organisation because the organisation had another trained mediator who had the skills to undertake mediation. This meant that mediation could be used more often and not only in exceptional circumstances.

'I think maybe when you don't have as many people who can do it and who can be called upon it's used only in exceptional circumstances, whereas I think actually it could be used at a very early stage sometimes and be probably not too time consuming to avoid ongoing problems.'

Delegate

The HR and OD manager reported that their expectations of how the training would impact the organisation had been met. Trained mediators had been able to apply what they had learnt in practice and had successful mediation outcomes. The mediators could provide immediate intervention, use the tools of mediation quickly and introduce action quickly. Employees had praised the process and reflected that they were relieved not to have to progress down a formal complaint process. The manager reported that in terms of relationships between employees and their managers, when a dispute involved their manager, employees appreciated having a safe space to discuss issues. The HR and OD Manager believed there had been less contact with unions since the mediation training as they seemed happy with mediation being used as an approach to resolve issues.

'Relationships have very quickly turned themselves around with immediate intervention, it's a tool that can be used very quickly, problems can be resolved very quickly i.e., on the day, and the actions from that can be introduced very quickly.'

Senior leader

'There has been less contact through the unions...before the mediation it was the case that the unions were contacted straight away but since we've had mediation the unions seem to have taken a step back and they've allowed the mediation process to run without any interaction by them and they've been happy with the outcomes.'

Senior leader

Since the training, the delegate felt that the organisation takes concerns seriously and employees were encouraged not to just 'suffer in silence'. However, they were still unsure how many people in the organisation properly understand mediation and identified that there was more work that could be done to improve that by talking to people about mediation. The HR and OD Manager explained that it is difficult to gauge how people feel about mediation outside of those individuals who are involved in mediation because the nature of the confidential process means experiences are not discussed. Efforts to promote mediation within the organisation included having it as part of the organisation's intranet and within existing policies. Additionally, when there are awareness events, for example wellbeing day or anti-bullying week, the availability of mediation and its purpose is referenced in communications.

'I would say that people know that we take concerns seriously and hopefully they can see that there is a culture there that people don't have to suffer in silence and if they are unhappy, they can raise issues, I'm not sure how many people out there understand what mediation is...we could probably do more to educate people on what that is'

Delegate

Success factors for mediation

The delegate recognised that the employer providing them with the time to carry out mediations and being understanding of the time taken to prepare for them was a factor in ensuring successful mediations. They described that mediations are also an open-ended commitment as they cannot tell how long a mediation might take but their employer supports them dedicating time to it.

'They always give me the time and understanding that you are going to need preparation time and because mediation is open-ended you don't know how long it is going to take on the day and if that's going to need to be followed up, there is always a recognised investment of time for it.'

Delegate

The delegates' manager was also interested in understanding how mediations went, and within the confines of confidentiality they were able to discuss how the process went and how it made them feel, which allowed them to reflect on the experience. The delegate emphasised that to support mediation, mediators need to be able to talk about their experience (without revealing details) and provide reassurance to other colleagues who undertake mediations that there is no guarantee it will be successful. The HR and OD manager reported that they have a debrief within the HR team following any mediation so they can learn from each other, and it helps people have an open mind about mediation.

'My managers always interested to know how it went, she's also qualified so understands that you can't delve into the detail of it but is interested to know how's that gone, was it successful, how are you feeling'

Delegate

Another successful factor mentioned by the HR and OD manager was the positive buy-in from the parties involved in mediation. They described a recent instance where the dispute was not fully resolved because they felt that one side was just '*going along*' with mediation rather than being invested and committed to the process.

Barriers to successful mediation

The delegate felt that the greatest barrier to carrying out successful mediation was time pressures, often a result of conflicting workloads or projects. As of yet, they have not yet experienced being unable to undertake a mediation because of this barrier but would like to think that the organisation would find a way to prioritise the mediation.

'There could be a time barrier if they're going through a busy period...I'd like to think we'd prioritise that though'

Delegate

The delegate also reported that employee perceptions of mediation were also a barrier if they lacked understanding or had unrealistic expectations of mediation. Having one-to-one time with individuals prior to the mediation helps to minimise this barrier. The delegate used a factsheet published by [organisation] which they had edited to include just the key information and used this as a resource to support the early stages of the mediation process.

'Another barrier is people's perception of it and what people think it is...as part of the actual framework you always spend one-to-one time with each party talking to them about what their issues

are but I think there is a stage before that which is you need to know it is a voluntary process, you've both got to want to do it, but you need to know what it is'

Delegate

The HR and OD manager emphasised the need for parties to be fully engaged in the process because when it is one-sided the process is less successful. Furthermore, they thought it was important to provide feedback on both sides to consider how it could have worked differently.

The future

In the long term, the delegate expected that mediation will be thought about as a tool for resolutions more often and it will be used more regularly within the organisation. They foresaw a point where it is commonly suggested and discussed with individuals.

'It will be more of a 'let's try this approach' than it ever was before...I'd like to think it will be more of a 'have we considered this' before we just let things run through the formal'

Delegate

The HR and OD manager thought that in the long-term, mediation would lead to people being kept in the workplace longer and reduce long-term sickness, although they noted it is currently too early to measure if this has happened yet. They also think that there will be greater knowledge across the organisation that there is a process and support in place.

Case study 2: Private sector, 50-249 employees

Background

The organisation is a retail company, that imports natural stone and porcelain floor covering and distributes floor and wall tiles. They have approximately 230 employees working across 14 showrooms and the Head Office, with the largest part of their workforce being their operational workforce.

Both interviewees in this case study attended the course. The HR Manager had been in her role for 6 years. Their role involved looking after the HR needs of the business as well as line managing 3 employees. The Assistant HR Manager had been in her role for 4 years. In this role, she helped the HR manager with the running of the HR department and was also involved with Learning and Development and line managing 2 employees.

Prior to attending the course, the organisation had a grievance policy in place which employees could follow if they wanted a formal option. If employees wished to raise an issue informally, they were encouraged to speak to their line manager. The Assistant HR Manager noted that although this informal process existed, line managers in some cases were not confident or did not have the necessary skills to deal with matters raised so it would often be left to HR to deal with the disciplinaries or investigations. Overall, however, mediation was not used very much as part of this grievance policy. Additionally, the organisation had never used external mediators, although the option was available if needed.

'We use a company called [organisation] who underwrite us for all of our employment law leads. We do have options from there, I think it's called their face-to-face theme, that if needed we could outsource it and have somebody come in and be an external mediator should we feel that neither myself or my line manager are the appropriate people.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager



Before the training

Before the training, the HR Manager did not have a great deal of experience with mediation, apart from low level conflicts which they might get involved in resolving with the line manager. In total, the HR Manager estimated that they spent less than 10% of their working time mediating. Other aspects of dispute resolution, such as coaching, group discussion and working through disciplinary and grievance procedures took more time as this was probably around 25% to 30% of their role.

For the Assistant HR Manager, they estimated that they spent around 30% of their time mediating, although it was difficult to be exact due to the nature of their role as they often would use mediation skills in their day-to-day conversations. Both delegates were supported by their organisation who paid for them to obtain qualifications such as Level 5 CIPD, as well as to attend other Acas courses.

Before taking part in the course, the HR Manager felt like they had a lack of knowledge about mediation as it was not something that was really used in the organisation. Prior to their role, there had also been no HR team in their organisation, so she felt as though this contributed to the lack of knowledge and that this was the case across the organisation. As such, she did not feel like mediation was being used effectively to resolve disputes or disagreements within the organisation. The Assistant HR Manager agreed with this viewpoint and felt that mediation was not being used correctly because they did not have the right tools and knowledge to use it to its full potential.

'I perceived it to be a way of getting people in a room, getting their thoughts, and feelings...all out in the open and hoping that the right outcome would be reached whereas now having done the course, I know that there is so much more to it than just hoping that the right outcome's going to be reach.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

Both delegates referenced examples of failed mediation attempts as motivating factors to go on the course. In these instances, they had either not spent enough time thinking about whether mediation was the right course of action or had been unable to effectively lead the mediation process. Both the HR Manager and the Assistant HR Manager felt that it was important to go on the course to learn how to do it properly and what could be done as mediators. Positive experiences with Acas courses previously also encouraged them to take this specific course.

'I think we just had quite a few encounters as mediators where it didn't quite go the way that we had planned it and we wanted to understand what we could do, and I think we were going into it putting a lot of pressure on the employees to be the ones to find the answer.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

'I've done quite a lot of Acas training over the years. I've always found it really good, and I was aware of that qualification for a number of years and then when we had it go wrong, I felt that was the right time to press ahead and do it.'

Delegate, HR Manager

The Assistant HR Manager noted that the company growth over the last few years had resulted in more employees and thus, more conflicts. By going on the course, they hoped that it would help deal with these incidents. Within this context, the company had also started investing quite heavily in their management workforce and their managers now attend trainings two or three times a year and, in these sessions, they give some HR training as well. They do a lot of on-the-job training, alongside group sessions, coaching and other grievance or disciplinary procedures.

'The company has grown significantly over the last 4 years, especially since Covid. We are employing a lot more people and what comes with employing a lot more people is employing people with different opinions, different beliefs, different temperaments. So, I think we were finding that conflicts probably were increasing.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

The training

The HR Manager expected to gain basic knowledge on how to use mediation, and how to effectively resolve conflicts by using what they learned from the course. The Assistant HR Manager was unsure as to what she expected from the course, but both agreed that following the course, it met their expectations.

'I think it met exactly what I thought it would, I left with the knowledge that I thought I would have, and I felt satisfied it provided what I hoped it would.'

Delegate, HR Manager

Both delegates commented that the course tutors were very knowledgeable, and the course content covered during the course was seen as relevant. The use of good examples and a framework to follow helped to further their understanding. The use of role play was particularly effective as it encouraged them to apply their learning in a practical manner.

'I think the role play, although some people found it embarrassing or difficult, was one of the best parts because it made you put into practise the things that you were learning. So, I thought it was a really good balance of the theory group work and practically applying your knowledge.'

Delegate, HR Manager

'That's why I found it really good. Because when we were doing the role play and there were lots of different characters, there were lots of different angles and I think that that's what I would probably recommend. It is because you were able to see a lot of different perspective and think about that when you're then tackling mediation yourself.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

In terms of improvements to the course, both delegates did not feel like there were any improvements needed. They would both recommend the course as they felt it covered all the different aspects to mediation, covering all the different stages in good detail.

'I thought for my level, it was pitched at a really good level. It wasn't too over complicated. It wasn't too basic, I thought. The length of the course allowed them to go into quite a bit of depth in areas that were needed so to be honest, there weren't really negatives for me.'

Delegate, HR Manager

'I think that was that was a big learning for me with how important each of those stages in the processes [are].'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

Both delegates completed the course online due to Covid and although the HR Manager felt that inperson interactions with the group would have made it a different experience, it still met expectations. The Assistant HR Manager agreed that the online format worked well, noting that the structure of the course and the use of breakout rooms were used effectively.

'I wasn't looking forward to it being online because I'd obviously attended a lot of course in person and online in the past. But actually the way it was set out, the way it was laid out, the breakout rooms, the group activity, it didn't bother me once I was on it.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

After the training

Since attending the course, the HR Manager had undertaken two mediations, with both achieving successful outcomes. Each mediation took approximately 20 minutes and the HR Manager reported feeling increasingly more confident. One aspect that had been particularly useful was following the structure from the course.

'I think it gives me more confidence on how to approach it and therefore I have opted to go down that route more than I would have done because of my confidence.'

Delegate, HR Manager

Whilst the Assistant HR Manager had not carried out any formal mediation since the course, she had found herself using the skills she had learnt in the course in conversations when conflict has arisen, e.g., appraisal meetings as well as day-to-day conversations. In meetings where emotions could be heightened, she was objective and impartial, which in turn had enabled her to become more confident in knowing when to intervene and stop a meeting that is no longer productive. The HR Manager also agreed that being impartial and taking the emotions out of the situation had been very important in mediation since the course, with listening skills being the key to achieving this.

'With mediation, it's about listening and then sort of not give your own opinion but trying to help the other understand what's being communicated. So definitely with listening and then the ability to summarise another person's conversation accurately.'

Delegate, HR Manager

'One thing that I did take from the training, which I think I'm definitely using a lot more of now, is being that impartial body. I think whether I meant to or not, I think that I've have a tendency to lean towards the person that I perhaps agree with the most and felt that I had a bit of an allegiance to the manager in those meetings, whereas now I am growing in confidence...to keep my opinions to myself to try and allow two-sided conversations between those parties.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

Both the HR Manager and the Assistant Manager agreed that since the course, they both felt that they were able to resolve disputes more quickly and effectively. Also, that it had given the organisation another tool which they could use when needed and they were able to encourage other managers to utilise it.

'There's been a lot of things going on in this particular showroom but rather than just leaving it, which sometimes we perhaps have done in the past with the company, we're definitely using our mediation skills to intervene sooner.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager



Following the course, the organisation had introduced a harassment policy and amended their appraisal process so that it included an opportunity for employees to have their say. The Assistant HR Manager felt that these changes have potentially happened because of the course.

'The appraisal process used to be very much about performance, whereas we've now introduced sections about do they feel supported in their role and how that's going to change for them over the last year and we're just trying to really encourage more 2-sided dialogue between our managers and our employees.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

Success factors for mediation

For this organisation, the key success factor for mediation had been having two trained people in the company who were able to offer mediation and use it when necessary. The HR Manager felt that having this tool at their disposal meant that they used mediation in scenarios that they would not have previously used it in. Having more knowledgeable mediators had also meant that they were intervening more in situations which avoided situations from escalating into formal grievances.

'We've got people with the right skills to address those situations, and in doing so should prevent things going down a formal route or a more time-consuming formal process.'

Delegate, HR Manager

Barriers to successful mediation

The HR Manager and Assistant HR Manager both recognised that within the wider organisation, there was a lack of understanding of what mediation is, which could act as a barrier to successful mediation. There was suggestion from the HR Manager that awareness training for line managers could increase the use of mediation.

'I don't think we're quite there in terms of the wider organisation fully understanding its purpose and I think we've probably still got a bit more work to do for them to fully understand how beneficial it is.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

'I think they think it's a fluffy HR tool probably, that's used to get them talking again.'

Delegate, HR Manager

The Assistant HR Manager also noted that the organisation can be slow to accept change, which could have a negative effect. The HR department had been working on this by 'drip-feeding' changes to the company, through in-house training such as the 'difficult conversations training' they offered to managers. It was hoped that they will be able to expand on this interactive in-house training over the next 18 months and continue to stress the importance of this to the wider organisation.

'What I have learned from working in the business is that things aren't always necessarily accepted straight away because we are not necessarily a business that accepts change very quickly. So we have to sort of like drip feed it in and then just keep on drip feeding it for it to become a part of practice.'

Delegate, Assistant HR Manager

The future

In the longer term, the HR Manager would like to see that conflicts are being resolved quickly and effectively. Similarly, the Assistant HR Manager would like to see that the wider organisation is able to implement the learnings that have been taken from the course and handle situations that arise appropriately.

'To increase the effective management of conflict resolution, to come to a timely outcome, which means people get working again together quicker, which ultimately means we've got a more harmonious workforce.'

Delegate, HR Manager

Case study 3: Medway Community Healthcare CIC, 250+ employees

Background

Medway Community Healthcare is an award-winning social enterprise and Community Interest Company established in 2011. They work with partners to support and improve local communities, providing a variety of community health services across Kent. These include health visitors and community nurses, speech and language therapists and out of hours urgent care. The majority of the services they provide are NHS, but as a social enterprise, they also provide additional services such as physiotherapist-led Pilates classes, podiatry sessions and training courses for schools. They are one of the largest employers in the area with over 1,300 staff.

The delegate interviewed had worked for the NHS for 34 years. She started in admin, but then transitioned to the Learning and Organisational Development Lead – a role she held since October 2020. This role loosely sat within HR but she was also involved with training and upskilling staff more broadly.

The senior leader was the Director of HR. She had overall responsibility for communications, recruitment, HR, payroll, employee engagement and learning and development.

The delegate explained that the organisation's processes for resolving disputes prior to the delegate attending the course were inefficient and stressful. There was no official mediation process and no trained mediators. Other informal processes (often run by the delegate) involved facilitated sessions between parties. The delegate acknowledged that these were too long and drawn out, and involved too many meetings, over too long a period of time.

'My facilitated conversations would be two or three individual meetings with this person, two or three individual meetings with the other person, then bring them together and then we'd have another couple of meetings. It was hours and hours of time.'

Delegate

The other process for resolving disputes prior to training was to instigate a formal investigation. These were run by another employee, Head of Employee Relations. This employee also attended the Acas CIWM course at the same time as the delegate but had since left the organisation. This involved both parties writing everything down, then an external investigator would come in and review everything.

Both the delegate and the senior leader noted a tendency that cut across organizations, for both formal and informal processes to be used as a way for line managers to avoid having difficult conversations with employees, and to fail to address problematic workplace situations that then grow

into disputes. This is particularly true where line managers had not received formal training in how to be a line manager. The delegate felt that this sort of training should also be mandatory, as effective management could reduce the need for coaching and mediation.

'What's at the root is that people haven't dealt with things when they are much smaller. So they've been allowed to fester and grow. And so therefore, sometimes we ended up in a mediation situation just because all the initial previous steps that should have been taken weren't taken.'

Delegate

'Once things get to a formal grievance, there were lots of opportunities where we could have resolved this issue between two people. But it's an easy thing for a manager to avoid the issue and just say, write it down, I'll get an investigator. It kind of takes the pressure off the manager to push it into a formal who's right, who's wrong grievance'

Senior leader

The senior leader acknowledged that a lot of these issues arose from the Covid period, when healthcare staff were stretched and all non-essential training was cut, including management training.

Before the training

The delegate's role included coaching, facilitating conversations in a dispute, and team bonding days. She was typically called on to run coaching or facilitated sessions when the HR team needed an impartial perspective. Prior to attending the course, she had had no formal training in mediation, but was being increasingly called on to serve as a facilitator due to her coaching experience. The senior leader confirmed that this was because more and more workplace disputes were happening, and that line managers were not dealing with these quickly or effectively.

The delegate explained that this lack of experience, and wanting to ensure that she was undertaking mediation correctly, were her primary reasons for attending the course:

'I'm a trained coach and there are some overlaps with the skills between the coach and a mediator. But [before the course] I was being increasingly called on to do mediation and I would have to say to people that what I can do is I can facilitate a conversation, but I'm not a mediator. I wanted to do the course because I felt that I wasn't 100% confident that what I was doing was appropriate and correct'

Delegate

The organisation was supportive of the delegate undertaking the training. She flagged to them that while she was happy to act as a facilitator, she felt that she needed formal training because it was important to her to be competent and confident in what she was doing. She and a colleague attended the course together.

The senior leader, having noticed an increase in the number of disputes, also felt that mediation training would be a good set of skills to have within the organisation. She was keen to reduce the time, effort and stress involved in the current dispute processes, and also to resolve matters before they escalated as far as a formal grievance. Happier employees and better staff retention were also motivators.

'I wanted to reduce the formal escalations into grievances because it takes forever to get an investigator to come in. Then they have to do everything formally and then all the team take sides. It's so disruptive to a team. With mediation, we're actually bringing two people into the room and having a



conversation about what they need to do get on. How do we work together? What rules are we going put in place? So we're trying to reduce time, reduce effort and try to resolve things before they escalate'

Senior leader

'In healthcare, we need every single person and the last thing we need is nurses or clinicians leaving because they can't get on with a colleague. So the fundamentals of this is for retention and harmonious team working, which helps everybody'

Senior leader

The senior leader was particularly concerned about the type of person who should be trained as a mediator.

'Sometimes the people who put their hands up and want to be a mediator are exactly the sort of people who shouldn't. People who like drama, maybe causing trouble, or who want the power to decide who is right and who is wrong. Or people who have conflicts of interest, maybe they're mates with someone in a dispute and want to mediate for them. That isn't what mediation should be and in my experience, that type of person makes a situation worse'

Senior leader

The senior leader agreed to let the trainee and her colleague attend the CIWM course as they were the right kind of people – impartial, warm, empathetic, non-judgmental, and willing to listen with open minds. They additionally both had degrees and were well-versed in employment law.

'[Trainee] is the loveliest person in the world. She warm and welcoming and she will make you feel part of the team. She'll build rapport really well. Both of them are always thinking about the bigger picture. They understand how it [the organisation] works and what their aims are here. Rather than giving personal opinions'

Senior leader

The senior leader decided that the Acas CIWM course was the right course for her employees. She had a number of reasons for this choice. She saw Acas as brand leaders, recognised and recommended throughout the UK, and at a reasonable price-point. This was important because Acas's reputation provided reassurances that the course would be of high quality. Her experience ten years previously when unaccredited local mediators had come in to run staff training had made her realise that *'bad mediation is worse than no mediation'*. In addition, she wanted the reassurance that if a case went to tribunal, the organisation could show they had acted in good faith by attempting mediation with Acas-accredited mediators, who had tried to help resolve the dispute and been unable to do so.

'By having that Acas brand, we are saying we're going do things properly this time. Do it by the book'.

Senior leader

The training

The delegate's main expectation of the course was to gain experience of how to mediate well, including pitfalls to avoid, and what happens if mediation doesn't work. The course was better than she had expected. Even though she had asked to go on it, she did not realise how much there was to learn, and how valuable it would be to her.



'I didn't know what I didn't know. I've walked away with so much. There's been so many takeaways. It's excellent.'

Delegate

She noted that the course facilitators were excellent because they were supportive and created an environment where it was easy to learn.

'There was a little bit of fun in there. They were able to give you room, they helped you to grow but didn't sound derogatory. They just created this wonderful learning environment. They were very upfront, very generous in sharing about their own previous experiences when things had not gone well. That was invaluable because you thought to yourself well, blimey, if that can happen to you, it can happen to anyone'.

Delegate

She attended the course online as it was during the Covid pandemic, but would have preferred a face-to-face environment, particularly for a course on mediation. In a mediation session, people's body language and facial expressions can be important, so she would have preferred that environment for a course.

After the training

After the course, the delegate and her colleague put together a mediation policy for their organisation, which they had not previously had. Part of this included using HR as 'a *filter*', so that HR could, in the first instance, decide whether mediation was appropriate, or whether managers and colleagues should try to resolve disputes in another way.

The delegate had also put together a leadership and management development program for line managers to give them the skills they need to identify workplace issues before they grow, and strategies to overcome these.

Since attending the course, the way the delegate approaches mediation had changed. What she learned on the course had helped her to be more confident in her own competence, in terms of what she should and should not do, which had made her more efficient in delivering mediation.

'I look back now, and it was so draining for me before. An emotional toil. My style wasn't as good as it could have been. I look back now [to mediations prior to training] and I think of how I could have done them better'

Delegate

This had also had a knock-on impact on the people the delegate mediates for, as they are taken out of the workplace for fewer hours, and the process is less emotionally draining for all parties. This means less impact on the wider team and patient care.

The senior leader agreed with this perspective and noted similar benefits, including better staff retention.

'I think it really helps being independent from the situation rather than the manager or a colleague. She [the trainee] can start to look things with the kind of fresh eyes. So I think it's been good. It's definitely saved us time. It's saved us investigations and formal grievances and also as well we don't want anybody to leave.'

Senior leader

The CIWM course had also given the trainee other skills that she has put to use in other aspects of her role. She notes that there can be some 'difficult people' to work with in her organisation and feels that the course has made her more confident and assertive when working with them. She offers an example of how she no longer allows meetings she chairs to focus solely on issues, challenges and 'griping', without insisting that colleagues also discuss potential solutions – to the point where she will 'not let them leave the room' until they start discussing some positive ways where challenges could be overcome.

The senior leader had noted similar advantages for the trainee in that it has helped to raise the HR profile outside of the direct HR team, and has helped raise her profile within the wider organisation.

The senior leader had been working to promote the new mediation offering within the organisation via a variety of written communications including multiple mentions in the weekly newsletter and a booklet being made available to staff. She also promoted the service by word of mouth when talking to other senior leaders in the organisation

Both the trainee and the senior leader agreed that there was more work to be done in their organisation in terms of getting people to really understand mediation (what it is for and how it works). They felt that while some people see it as an alternative to good line management, others saw it as a last resort to an expensive tribunal, and were not particularly interested in how it can and should work.

'Mediation always occurs when all other avenues have broken down, but actually you could do it much sooner and hopefully when there's a lot less heat.'

Delegate

'It shouldn't be used instead of being an effective manager, but also, it is sometimes used as a last resort in a bitter dispute. If they'd considered mediation earlier, we could prevent some problems from getting worse over time. So it's a great tool, but there is work for us to do in getting the wider organisation to understand it better. So my challenge now is to get them to move the mediation up the hierarchy.'

Senior leader

Success factors for mediation

The key success factors for successful mediation for both the delegate and senior leader were implementing the process sufficiently early in a dispute, before things had broken down between the parties involved. The trainee noted that this is a particular problem in the NHS as a whole, because staff are exhausted, burnt out, and feeling under-appreciated, which can exacerbate existing issues as they do not have the emotional bandwidth and resilience that they had ten years ago. This can make disputes in the workplace more likely, as people do not feel listened to.

However, if mediation can be implemented before the relationship had irreparably been damaged, the delegate felt that sessions gave people a chance to be fully heard. They thought that simply being in

the presence of a sympathetic person who is there to listen, can be a powerful factor in the success of the process.

'I think the process of mediation, it works because usually what's at the bottom of a problem is somebody hasn't felt heard. Mediation gives that person a platform and you just listen. Then you listen to other person, and then you bring them together. The fact that they have been able to offload, you can see that person lightening. And so the process of mediation is as good as it's going to get'

Delegate

Barriers to successful mediation

A key barrier to successful mediation for the delegate was when disputes have been allowed to progress too far, so there is too much bitterness on both sides. Rather than both parties wanting a resolution, some disputes become so bitter that both parties *'just want to be proved right, to be validated'*. This was one of her key points about why line managers need to manage workplace issues better (i.e., before they become serious disputes), but where mediation would benefit all parties if it was considered as a solution earlier in the process.

The senior leader agreed with this and identified additional barriers. Employees not fully understanding mediation and electing to resign rather than go through any dispute-resolution process is sometimes still a barrier, and she and the delegate are talking about how to address this. The senior leader wanted to start by better understanding the issue and capturing more data on it.

'Some people still say actually no. I'm just gonna leave. I don't wanna deal with mediation. So we need to capture some data on it. We need to capture who turns down mediation as well as which cases are turned down, so that we can find out whether there is a PR image issue about mediation, or do people understand what it is? The business managers understand, but the clinical staff, I don't know.'

Senior leader

As part of a wider organisational change, the senior leader had started to introduce a 'Just And Learning' culture. This involves creating work environment whereby, when something goes wrong, employees can speak up without fearing blame, and all parties share learning. The senior leader hoped that this will help encourage employees to utilise mediation more often to resolve disputes, particularly when there is a power differential (e.g., an employee's dispute with a line manager). Replacing a blame culture with a learning culture could help make employees feel safer in speaking up.

Another barrier to mediation is when a dispute is too serious for mediation to be appropriate, e.g., physical assault among employees.

Finally, if a mediator is too friendly with one of the people in a dispute, this would cause a conflict of interest. The solution here would be to train more people as mediators.

The future

Longer term, the delegate would like to create a 'Kent and Medway mediation patch' consisting of a network of peers who are experienced mediators, who can share learnings and offer support.

She was also hoping that her organisation might employ another person trained in mediation, as the colleague she attended the course with had since left, and she is the only accredited person. This



would be particularly useful for situations where she might be friends with someone in a dispute and it would be helpful for the mediator to be completely impartial.

Case study 4: Public sector, 250+ employees

Background

This organisation is a mental health and learning disabilities trust. The delegate had worked in Organisational Development Lead role for 5 years. In this role, they guided, coached and collaborated with teams to think about issues and changes they might be dealing with. They worked with individuals as well as teams with the wider aim being to achieve the organisation's strategic goals.

Unfortunately, a senior leader at the organisation was unavailable for an interview.

Before the training

Prior to taking part in the course the delegate had not done any mediating, but they did facilitate conversations between colleagues, with some of these being group facilitations. In these facilitations, the delegate used some of the same techniques and methods that would be used in mediation. As a manager, they felt that dispute resolution was something that they dealt with regularly and estimated that they spent around 60% of their time doing facilitations. Before the course, they were supported by their organisation as there was unofficial supervision of what they were doing by their line manager who sense checked that they were doing the right thing.

'I would have done a lot of group facilitation when there was some conflict in the team and probably using very similar principles to what we use on the ACAS Certificate in Workplace Mediation'

Delegate

'It's normally within the management role because I suppose that dispute resolution, it's something as a manager you need to do all the time.'

Delegate

In total, the trust had 39 mediators, with some being trained on the Acas course and others through [organisation]. Across the organisation, the delegate felt that mediation was not a well-accepted tool as it was not widely advertised in the organisation, and they wanted to see it more embedded. The delegate also believed that mediation was viewed with suspicion in the organisation, with concerns about who would find out mediation had taken place and where the information was going being the common ones voiced. The trainee mentioned having to offer reassurances that this was a confidential process.

'[Mediation] is not hugely used and I think...what we've discussed in the supervision sessions is we don't think it's widely advertised in the trust.'

Delegate

'When I meet up with the 1 to 1 basis to do the initial meeting with the individual parties, there's always a lot of 'who's going to find out about this and where are you going to store this' and I'm



constantly having to confirm that this is basically a confidential process and I won't be saving anything.'

Delegate

The main motivating reason for the delegate to go on the course was because they were not able to do mediation without going on it and as mediation sits within their portfolio, it was important they were able to do them. Although the organisation had 39 trained mediators, it could be difficult getting some of them to mediate so by going on the course, the delegate would be fulfilling an organisational need for trained mediators who would be willing to mediate. The delegate also mentioned that they personally wanted the qualification as mediation involved dealing with people's emotions and confidence and so wanted to make sure that this was done sensitively.

'I'm saying there's 39 [mediators], getting some of them to do mediation is a different story. So, I think a lot of them have done the training but they're not active mediators the way we are in the Organisation Development team.'

Delegate

The training

The delegate *'thoroughly enjoyed'* the course and felt like it gave them all the tools, techniques and understanding of processes that they were expecting to gain from the course. The delegate completed the course virtually due to Covid and mentioned that this was preferred as it saved travelling long distances.

'I just think it gave us everything, it gives us all the tools and the techniques, you know, ranging from effective listening skills, positioning, you know, the actual process on how to go through an actual mediation.'

Delegate

'We did it on Teams because we were in the throes of Covid at the time, so we couldn't travel. And to be fair, I like that because I live in [region] and the trainer was in [region], so you're probably looking at an extra 3 and a half hours on my day to do that.'

Delegate

The materials that were used as part of the course were posted to their address and felt that they were *'really high quality'*. The delegate also thought that the tutors delivering the course were very knowledgeable and experienced. They felt that the design of the course was a key highlight as it combined small group work with reflection time as well as effective role play. Accessing the course through the open access also meant that they were able to engage with people who work in different companies, which helped offer different perspectives.

'I was on the training with people from you know all over the UK but in very different backgrounds. They were in HR and Organisation Development but they're actually working in like sandwich factories. And it was because some of the issues that they had, I'm thinking wow that's tricky because they had like a Polish workforce, so included in that they have an interpreter as well.'

Delegate

I was very satisfied with it...and I think just to clarify that it's the way it was designed...there was group work in small groups but then there was self-reflection as well and my learning style was very much catered for.



Delegate

The delegate was also happy with the post-course accreditation work that they had to do. They mentioned that they were able to ask questions to the tutor before they submitted it for marking, which they found very helpful.

'There was an assignment that we did at the end...we were able to actually ask questions before we submitted it for marking. So, I think basically everything that they did was actually covered.'

Delegate

The delegate didn't think there was much to improve on with the course but did mention that it would have been helpful to have more of the handouts emailed to them in a digital version as they work mobile.

'I would have liked more of it digital if I'm honest. Yes, that would have been my preference and then I can print as much as I want then.'

Delegate

The delegate would recommend this course to all new staff joining the Organisational Development team. Some of the organisation's existing staff had been trained through the [organisation] but this would not be done again as some of the staff who had left that programme did not have the confidence to mediate whereas those who undertook the Acas course felt like they could.

'We previously for some reason deviated to the [organisation] and I would never use them again because they're not any cheaper than Acas. It's the same cost but some of the staff that left that programme had a belief they couldn't mediate, whereas we didn't when we left the Acas programme.'

Delegate

After the training

Since going on the course, the delegate has undertaken four mediations, of which two were successful, one had a party that didn't take on board the principles or spirit of mediation and the other one was affected by the organisation's culture, although they are taking steps to work on this.

'I think one of the parties didn't actually take on board the principles of mediation and the spirit that we were doing it in. So, they did end up coming back to me and saying, can I have the notes?' I said, 'we don't keep notes. There is no record that I've done that. The only record is your initials'. And so I do think the other party hadn't taken the spirit of mediation and they were still harbouring things from previous.'

Delegate

This month, the delegate has had two requests for mediation which is unusual as it is *'not hugely used'* in the organisation. They normally set aside one day and a half every six months to work on mediations.

The delegate had been able to use their listening skills that they worked on during the course to help with the mediations and build relationships with their colleagues. Also, the delegate reported that they put further consideration into how they pose the questions to those in the mediation to make it more successful.

IFF Research

'That's all part of the effective listening skills and about asking those open questions and about basically giving other people the time to chat and to talk...that's come directly from the programme as well.'

Delegate

The delegate uses the Acas model on how to run the mediation and has created a crib sheet that supports this. The crib sheet is especially helpful as it goes through all the different stages of mediation from introductions through to the agreement stage of the mediation. This has also been shared with other mediators to try and make them more comfortable with mediations.

'I mean it is definitely a crib sheet. So welcome, introduce yourself, talk about your qualification, that you were trained accredited mediator...it basically goes through everything they do on the Acas model.'

Delegate

The delegate now felt like they go into mediations with more confidence and that the course had validated the work they do, which is helpful when working with colleagues who had advanced qualifications, such as Doctorates or PhDs. Since undertaking the course, the delegate also felt that they were able to work more effectively when resolving mediations.

'It gave me the kudos, the fact that I'm a qualified mediator with qualifications. And I think that goes a long way because some of the staff I work with, they've got PhDs and Doctorates. They need to know that they've not just plucked me off the street to do a bit of talking and a bit of chatting. They know that I understand what I'm doing with it.'

Delegate

The delegate reported that there had been a positive impact on the organisation, with mediations being resolved more effectively, which could then lead to efficiencies in the organisation. Mediation was also being promoted in the organisation as a way to resolve conflict within teams and between individuals. This was done as part of a review of the conflict and resolution policy. The delegate did want to promote mediations more and was thinking of updating the intranet page as well as doing monthly campaigns around mediation. This is in combination with the mediation supervision networking session where the delegate brings Acas in to facilitate sessions. As mediation is still viewed with suspicion in the organisation after the course, the delegate was hopeful that these promotional efforts would alleviate these concerns.

'What I've done very recently, in fact last month, I've introduced like a mediation and supervision networking session. So we all come together and bring Acas in to facilitate that session for me.'

Delegate

'I'm also going to do what we call our bitesize sessions. I'm going to do it like a bitesize session on how to promote resolving conflict, so we'll be using that.'

Delegate

Whilst the delegate believed that there had been a positive impact, they would like to capture more data on what this looks like so that it is more tangible. The delegate considered whether it would be helpful to include more detail when reporting whether a mediation was successful or unsuccessful.



'We have a field on a spreadsheet that says successful or unsuccessful and what I'm wanting to do is just expand on that a little bit, not loads...was it unsuccessful because both parties were just reluctant to change?... Our union reps are assuming these types of questions and obviously they're really keen on it.'

Delegate

Success factors for mediation

The delegate felt that the organisation gave them enough time to follow the mediation process that they were trained to do. It was also evidence-based which was helpful. The delegate mentioned using other techniques such as talking about differences and perception to try and make mediation successful.

'So thinking about perception, that was part of the programme. So we could use that. I've used that many times and just use like the old lady, the young lady picture, you know, just talking about how we all see different views of the mountain.'

Delegate

Barriers to successful mediation

The delegate noted that they were very busy and over-capacity so they were hopeful that the mediators that had been trained in the organisation would pick up additional mediation tasks. The mediation network sessions that had been set up would hopefully build their confidence and there would also be opportunities for them to shadow some mediations.

'The mediators that we have trained, it would be really good for them all to pick up additional pieces of mediation. So, this is where we're bringing in the networking events and I'm inviting them all ...at one point I said I you can't shadow mediators because it's all private and confidential but when I spoke to Ian [tutor's name], he said 'Oh, we do that at Acas'. So, I'm going to offer them that as a sweetener as well to say come along.'

Delegate

The future

In the long term, the delegate believed that they would be able to resolve conflict sooner which would allow teams to focus on their main job which is delivering high quality care.

'My work in OD, what I find is that you're going into teams and instead of being staff on patients, it's staff against staff and we don't want that. We want them there to actually deliver high quality good care.'

Delegate



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IFF Research illuminates the world for organisations businesses and individuals helping them to make better-informed decisions."

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Whether employer or employee, client or collaborator, we are all humans first and foremost. Recognising this essential humanity is central to how we conduct our business, and how we lead our lives. We respect and accommodate each individual's way of thinking, working and communicating, mindful of the fact that each has their own story and means of telling it.

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