

How To – Arrange and Conduct a Facilitated Discussion

The aim of the Fairness at Work Policy is to resolve issues as soon as possible. There are various tools and options available to facilitate resolution - one of which is a Facilitated Discussion.

A Facilitated Discussion enables employees involved in a Fairness at Work scenario to engage with each other supported by a third party (Facilitator). It is a less formal process than mediation and its use does not preclude further access to mediation should this still be required.

The Facilitator can be the employee's line manager or an independent manager, depending on the circumstances.

Arranging a Facilitated Discussion

- The Facilitator may initially wish to meet with both parties individually to get a better understanding of the issue however this step is not always necessary.
- Both parties should be provided with a briefing by the Facilitator about the process to allow them to agree to participate and be fully engaged. The briefing should cover:
 - Approximate duration of the meeting
 - Date and time
 - Structure of the meeting
 - Preparation work that they will be required to do before the meeting
- Both parties should be asked by the Facilitator to consider what they want the outcome of the meeting to be e.g. they want the issue to be resolved or how they want the relationship they have with the other person to change, and how this will be demonstrated. Both parties should come to the meeting prepared to explain their desired outcome and to discuss how this might be achieved.
- This is an informal meeting so there is no requirement to allow participants to be accompanied or for HR to be involved
- A quiet and confidential meeting room should be booked with an adequate time allocated.

Conducting a Facilitated Discussion

The discussion should be structured as follows:

- Introductions (if Facilitator is not line manager)
- Aims and expectations
 - Both parties will be given opportunity to give their side of the story
 - In cases of alleged bullying the Facilitator must clarify the employee's perception of wrongdoing at this point (unless this has been substantiated through investigation)
 - Employees need to work together in the future so need to focus on how this can best happen.
 - Looking for solutions to the problem.
 - If either party needs a short adjournment, please ask.
- Facilitator should set and agree the ground rules:
 - Behave professionally
 - One speak at a time – both parties will get their opportunity to speak
 - Listen to other person's point of view
 - Don't interrupt
 - Facilitator may ask questions of both parties
 - Confidential – not for discussion with others
- Supported discussion. This will be supported by the Facilitator asking each of the participants questions to help them explain their feelings
- Person who has made complaint – explains issue(s)
- Person being complained about – explains their actions/responds to complaint
 - Potential questions for either/both parties:
 - What happened?
 - How did it make you feel?
 - What do you think needs to happen to make things right?
 - What are the barriers to you having a positive working relationship with each other?
 - What could you do differently in the future?
- Facilitator summarises any agreements reached
- Facilitator advises both parties of next steps (if relevant)
- Consider if anyone else needs to be informed of outcome e.g. Head of Service. Clarify to both parties.