

Only around a third of employees feel the conflict they experienced at work has been fully resolved

2 years ago



Eight in 10 (81%) employers feel they are doing enough to prevent and manage bullying and harassment at work, but only just over a third of employees (36%) who experienced conflict in the past year feel it has been fully resolved.

A new report from the [CIPD](#), which is based on the experiences of more than 2,000 employers and 5,000 employees, finds a clear gap between employers' trust in their policies and procedures and positive outcomes for employees.

The findings highlight the need for employers to have a comprehensive conflict resolution framework that emphasises the importance of early action.

Complaints going unresolved

Seven in 10 (70%) employers say their organisation has effective procedures for resolving interpersonal conflict. However, this confidence did not come through in the employee survey findings.

Of the employees who experienced conflict in the last 12 months, only 36% say it has been fully resolved. For this reason, organisations need to assess the effectiveness of their conflict management procedures and develop a greater awareness of employees' experiences of unfair treatment like bullying and harassment.

Disciplinary action (43%) and grievance procedures (41%) are the most common methods that employers say their organisations have used to deal with workplace conflict over the past year. However, the report notes that procedures like these are often drawn out, adding to employees' stress and increasing cost to the organisation. The CIPD urges organisations to consider using more informal and early routes to resolution, where appropriate, to nip conflict in the bud.

Rachel Suff, Senior Employee Relations Adviser at the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, says:

“Employers must ensure that conflict, including allegations of bullying and harassment, is investigated promptly and fairly.

“Having an anti-bullying and harassment policy that outlines a robust approach to inappropriate behaviour can help to prevent conflict and enable people to speak up. This will help to create a culture where every individual feels able to challenge unfair treatment.”

People managers can be the cause or cure

Around three-quarters of employers say line managers would resolve conflict effectively (75%) and at an early stage (78%), but this view is undermined by the finding that nearly half (49%) admit managers can cause conflict in their teams, rising to 61% in public sector organisations.

Employees are generally positive about line managers, with more than three-quarters agreeing their manager is supportive if they have a problem (77%), treats them fairly (78%), and respects them as a person (79%).

However, of those who state they experience barriers to managing conflict, employers identified line management confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviour (38%), in addition to lack of role-modelling by senior leaders (38%), as the most common. This reinforces the need for more organisations to invest in people management skills, considering three in 10 organisations (30%) do not currently provide it.

Suff continues: “Managers at all levels should be trained to manage people effectively and role model the right behaviours. People managers, senior leaders and HR professionals must work together to drive cultural change.”