

Acas launches new strategy as polling shows over 2 in 5 workers say workplace conflict is rising

6 months ago



Acas has launched a transformative 5-year strategy to modernise how disputes at work are handled across Britain.

The new Acas strategy will help to support economic stability by reducing the cost of conflict – estimated to be £28.5 billion – through increased prevention, improved management, and earlier resolution of disputes.

This builds on strong results from our previous strategy, which saw record levels of disputes resolved without the need for a tribunal.

This comes as Acas experiences increased demand for our services and ahead of major new employment law reforms.

- New Acas-commissioned YouGov polling of over 1,000 employees in Great Britain finds that 44% of workers who knew of conflict in their organisation over the last 3 years said it has increased, compared to just 13% who say it has decreased.
- The same survey reveals that pay, working patterns, and capability and performance are now among the top causes of workplace conflict.
- Latest figures show we handled 117,000 individual disputes in 2024-25, the highest number since the covid-19 pandemic.

The Employment Rights Bill will introduce significant changes to employment law as part of the government's plan to Make Work Pay.

The new Acas strategy will:

- prevent more disputes before they arise by targeting industries and groups where conflict is most likely
- support employers to manage conflict well with clear guidance, tools and training offers
- equip workers and employers with the skills and confidence to resolve problems earlier, including doubling the number of SMEs Acas is equipping to manage conflict well
- harness technology and data more effectively to focus Acas's efforts where they can have the greatest impact
- drive innovation in dispute resolution, maintaining Acas's record settlement rates (70% for individual disputes and 90% for collective disputes) while exploring the use of AI and new digital services to make support faster and more accessible

Clare Chapman, Acas Chair, said: "The world of work is changing, and this is an ambitious strategy for a landmark period in Britain's labour market history. Over our last Strategy period of 2021-25 Acas successfully changed the ways in which we work. This strategy sets out how Acas will contribute even further to improve British workplace relations.

"We will do more to help prevent conflict arising. If conflict can't be prevented, Acas will be there to help workplaces manage it by disagreeing well. And if conflict continues, Acas will help parties resolve disputes quickly and fairly. Working together, we can deliver lasting improvements to working life and contribute to Britain's future economic growth."

Niall Mackenzie, Acas Chief Executive, said: "Britain is a great place to work and grow a business; but we can do even better to 'disagree agreeably' in the workplace. Our strategy for the next five years will give employers and workers the skills and knowledge they need for the healthy employment relations that prevent conflict.

"By supporting employers and workers to build stronger relationships we will protect productivity, safeguard jobs, and strengthen the foundations for sustainable economic growth."

Employment Rights Minister, Justin Madders MP said: "Strong workplace relationships are fundamental to the productive, stable employment that drives higher living standards.

"Acas's new strategy will help prevent workplace disputes before they escalate and provide the skills and tools to resolve conflicts early. This comes as the Government is ensuring employment rights are fit for a modern economy and contributing to economic growth as part of the Plan for Change."

Rain Newton-Smith, CBI Chief Executive, said: "Acas has an important role to play in supporting the economic growth that is needed to drive up living standards and fund public services. Rising employment costs are already colliding with flatlining productivity, forcing firms to make tough trade-offs about jobs, pay and working conditions, putting a strain on the relationships between employers and workers. At the same time, the unintended consequences of the Employment Rights Bill will mean an increase in

workplace disputes that need to be resolved.

“Acas has rightly identified that its impartial support and early intervention will be more critical than ever in helping employers and employees navigate these threats and unlock the potential of the UK workforce.”

Paul Nowak, TUC General Secretary, said: “With the Employment Rights Bill set to modernise industrial relations, this Acas strategy is welcome and timely – recognising the importance of good working relationships between unions and employers.”