



University  
of Exeter

## Early Resolution

### How it works

The process map below provides an overview of the procedure. It explains how Early Resolution works. It provides useful guidance on its application. It also explains the various roles and the terms used in the flowchart below.

# The Resolution Framework™

**Local Resolution:** attempts made to resolve issues as early and constructively as possible. Support and training is provided to encourage managers, union reps and colleagues to resolve issues as early as possible.

**Request for Resolution (RFR) submitted to Resolution Centre.**

Resolution champion allocated. Route to resolution identified using agreed triage process (Resolution Index™)

**Triage assessment using the Resolution Index™ to identify the appropriate route to resolution.**

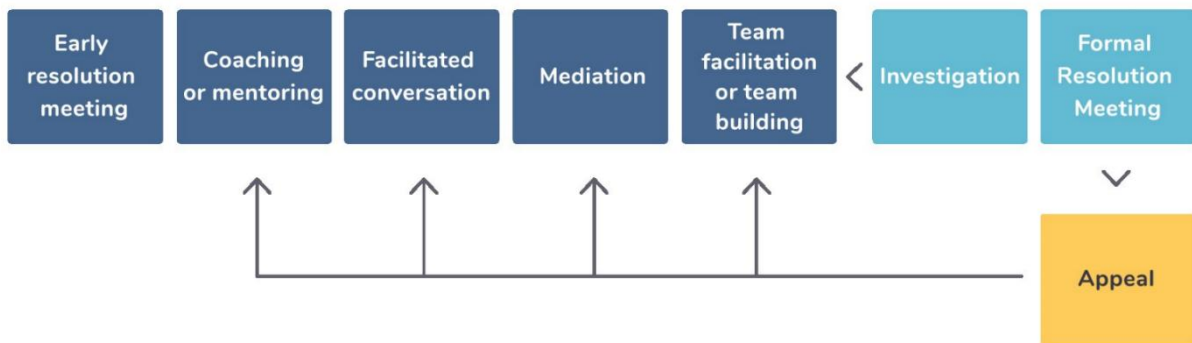


## Early Resolution

Early resolution is an opportunity for all parties to secure an outcome to a concern or a complaint through open and constructive dialogue. This may be direct between the parties or the dialogue may be supported by a third party. The Resolution Centre will support, monitor and evaluate the outcomes from early resolution.

## Formal Resolution

Formal resolution is available for use in more serious cases or where previous attempts at early resolution have been unsuccessful.



# Definitions of terms used within Early Resolution

## Local Resolution

We believe that the first and most important step in resolving a concern, a complaint or a conflict at work is to have a prompt, informal conversation to try to find an outcome that is acceptable to both parties. Where you are unable to resolve concerns in this way, discuss this with your manager for advice or with your senior manager where appropriate.

You may need help in preparing for conversations and a Speak Out Guardian or trade union representative can provide advice.

The outcomes from local resolution may include:

- A verbal resolution/agreement.
- An agreed plan between the parties which sets out the nature of the agreement and the agreed timescales.

By focusing on local resolution, we aim to foster a culture and workplace where all parties engage with one another constructively. This will enable most issues to be resolved locally and without the need for further elements of the pathway.

## Request for Resolution (RfR)

In the event that local resolution is not successful, a Request for Resolution (RfR) should be submitted to through the [Support and Report](#) tool, this will then be triaged and one of the following courses of action will then be recommended:

- An early resolution meeting, which means attempting local resolution again (i.e. engaging in direct dialogue without the need for a third party).
- A facilitated conversation chaired by a trained facilitator.
- Mediation delivered by a fully trained and accredited mediator.
- Coaching.
- Team facilitation, team building or team mediation.
- A formal resolution/grievance meeting to allow all the issues to be aired and to offer determination of the case in the event the above steps are unsuitable or unsuccessful.
- Right to appeal following formal resolution/grievance meeting outcome.

## Triage

On receipt of the Request for Resolution, a member of the HR Casework team will triage the case and identify the most appropriate route of resolution. The triage processes use a scoring system to assess each of the six areas listed below. These are as follows:

1. Duration/frequency of the concerns being raised.
2. Severity of the concerns being raised.

3. Previous attempts to resolve the concerns raised.
4. Impact of the concerns raised.
5. The needs of the parties.
6. Potential risk the situation presents to the organization and the employee(s).

During the triage process, the HR Casework team may contact the parties involved to gain additional information to assist them to identify the most suitable route to resolution. Following the triage assessment, a member of the HR Casework team will contact all parties and suggest the most appropriate route to resolution. Emphasis will be placed on informal resolution which could be early resolution, facilitation, mediation, or coaching.

Whilst facilitation and mediation remain voluntary, they are proven to be highly effective. We expect all employees to give these processes serious consideration and not to rule them out without good reason.

The HR Casework team will recommend a route to resolution based on the triage assessment. The framework offers both **early resolution** and **formal resolution** options. These are outlined in the sections below.

### Formal Resolution/Grievance

In serious cases, a formal resolution process will be set up to resolve the situation. Further details can be found in the [Grievance Procedure](#).

## How does Early Resolution work?

Early Resolution offers a range of early resolution options. These routes to resolution have one thing in common: they prioritize resolution through dialogue. These include:

- Early Resolution Meetings
- Facilitated Conversations
- Mediation
- Coaching
- Team facilitation (and/or team building)

### Early Resolution Meeting

Many workplace issues can be resolved at the early resolution meeting stage. It provides an opportunity for managers and employees to discuss issues in a supportive and constructive forum. If you have not already tried to informally resolve your issue at the local level, you may be encouraged to have a direct conversation with the other party to try to secure a resolution to the situation. If the involvement of a third party is required, this would necessitate one of the other stages below.

## Facilitated Conversation

The Facilitated Conversation is a confidential discussion between all parties which draws on the same principles as mediation. However, it is shorter and less structured than mediation and brings parties together at an earlier stage of the dispute. It provides a safe, confidential, environment for you to discuss your concerns in a supportive, constructive way. It will be led by one of the members of the Resolution Centre or a senior manager who are trained facilitators.

The facilitator – usually just one, but there may be two – will create the opportunity for dialogue between yourself and the party you have an issue with, in order to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. The facilitation process may include:

- A separate private meeting with the facilitator(s).
- A facilitated face to face meeting.
- Reaching agreement and closing the meeting.

Most facilitated conversations are completed in half a day. The facilitation process is confidential, and the facilitators are trained to a high standard. They will remain neutral and non-judgmental throughout the process.

## Mediation

Mediation is a more in-depth resolution process which is proven to be highly effective at resolving workplace disputes, disagreements, complaints, or concerns. If all parties agree to take part in mediation, your issue will be referred to one of our external, accredited mediators. The mediator will contact both parties by phone and explain the principles and processes of mediation. The mediation process includes:

- A phone call with the mediator(s).
- Two separate private meetings with the mediators(s).
- A facilitated face to face meeting.
- Reaching agreement and closing the meeting.

Most mediations are completed in one full day, it may take longer if more than two people are involved. Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process.

The mediator will help the parties have an open and honest dialogue with the aim of identifying a mutually acceptable outcome. If this is the case, the mediator will encourage parties to draw up an agreement.

After mediation has finished you may agree that, if appropriate, others can receive a copy of this final written agreement. However, we will not receive any other feedback from the mediator about issues raised and discussed or any other factors raised during the mediation process.

## Coaching

A qualified coach will work on a 1:1 basis with you, to support you through challenges. This form of intervention puts the person at the heart of the issue, and creates a psychologically safe, impartial and non-judgemental space in which you can explore what's going on and look at ways in which you may be able to respond, communicate needs and develop a more valuable approaches to conflict resolution.

### Team Facilitation

A trained facilitator will work with a group of people to unpick an issue, concern or conflict and develop ways of working more effectively together. Creating a safe environment and guiding discussions allows teams to build trust, and recognize common purpose, and achieve their shared objectives.

## How does formal resolution work?

A formal resolution process is available where it has not been possible to resolve matters informally, either due to the serious nature of the complaint, or there may be occasional issues where formal resolution is the only viable option. Formal resolution options are available when the case scores highly on the triage assessment using the Resolution Index.

Further details can be found in the [Grievance Procedure](#).

### Case and Record Management

Records will be kept detailing the nature of issues raised, managers' responses, the action taken and reason for the action. Records will be kept confidentially and in accordance with the policy on retention of records and data protection legislation. The HR Casework team will undertake routine assessment of cases to ensure that the framework is being applied fairly and correctly and to draw out any key learning points that will assist with the development of a positive workplace culture.

### Requesting Formal Resolution/Grievance

In the case where you feel that your issue can not be resolved via local or early resolution, despite all efforts to do so, you should complete the Request for Resolution form which can be found on the Support and Report tool for staff. You will need to provide the following details:

- Confirmation that the formal stage/grievance procedure is being invoked.
- What informal steps have been taken to resolve the issue.
- A full statement of the reasons for the complaint, including any relevant facts, dates, names of individuals involved and the documentation to be referred to.
- What outcome is sought.