

Dispute resolution service – Neutral diagnostics

Neutral diagnostics is an informal and impartial assessment process designed to help those involved in a disability related dispute and those with responsibility to resolve/end such a dispute, i.e. line managers, HR departments.

This approach can be used with most types of workplace conflict.

The aim of neutral diagnostics

Neutral diagnostics aims to take a holistic approach to help an organisation resolve a disability related dispute. This can range from situations where processes for implementing workplace adjustments have not worked effectively, to a breakdown in working relationships.

All relevant (and willing) parties can be involved, the practitioner will liaise with individuals and where necessary groups of staff to gather information and provide recommendations aimed at resolving the dispute, implementing best practice and informing organisational learning

The role of BDF's practitioners

The underlying principle for neutral diagnostics is that it is an impartial process aimed purely at helping individuals/organisations move forward constructively. As such, our practitioners are impartial and will not form judgements or apportion blame.

BDF will use a range of skills such as mediation and appreciative inquiry techniques, we will also apply our extensive knowledge and expertise of disability related matters in order to produce recommendations.

Business benefits

There are a number of clear business benefits that can be gained by investing in a neutral diagnostic approach, such as;

- A quick way to resolve a dispute, avoiding the time and cost implications of formal processes or litigation.
- An opportunity to improve/refine existing processes or practice.
- Provides an organisation with a method to explore trends highlighted by existing management information (MI) such as employee engagement surveys, attendance management MI or complaints/grievances MI.
- Builds disability know how and confidence within an organisation.
- Avoids the sometimes irreparable damage that can be caused to working relationships following formal complaints/grievances.
- Reduces the risk of reputational damage or negativity publicity
- Pin points areas for improvement.

How it works

A typical neutral diagnostic will be split into 3 phases;

Phase 1: Information gathering – interpersonal factors

During this phase the practitioner will meet with all relevant parties with a view to understanding the situation from each individual's perspective. These meetings will spend time focusing on the root of the difficulties/conflict as well as exploring possible ways forward.

Phase 2: Information gathering – organisational structural/cultural factors

Whilst the individuals involved in the dispute are the most important factor, our practitioners will also use resources available within the organisation to help complete a thorough diagnostic. For example exploring system constraints and environmental considerations which differ in every organisation helps to build a complete picture, this may include the assessing or reviewing of:

- Existing policies/processes.
- Organisation staff survey results.
- Attempts already taken by the organisation to resolve the dispute.
- Organisational structures, cultures where possible, to see whether these are contributing factors.

Phase 3: Assessment and recommendations

On completion of the information gathering exercise, the practitioner will produce a report detailing their findings and outlining appropriate recommendations. The report will be written neutrally with no blame apportioned to any party.

Recommendations will include options to resolve the dispute and suggestions to address any systemic issues that may have been identified.

Timescales

Timescales will vary depending on the number of people involved in a dispute and the complexity of the issues involved. Typically a neutral diagnostic involving less than five people would take two working days.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to a successful neutral diagnostic. Our practitioners treat all information supplied to them as confidential, and any discussions that take place are legally privileged, meaning that in the event of legal proceedings a practitioner cannot be called to give evidence.

The final report and recommendations will contain information raised by all parties involved in the process, in most circumstances all individuals interviewed and all individuals who will be involved in any ongoing dispute resolution process will have sight of the report.

All parties involved in the neutral diagnostic are expected to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Further interventions

In some cases we may recommend alternative products currently offered by Business Disability Forum. In these circumstances there is no obligation to pursue these options and we will only recommend products where there is a clear benefit to the individuals/organisation.

Mediation service

Where working relationships have broken down or been damaged and individuals are expected to continue working with each other we may recommend utilising our mediation service.

The mediation service can also be useful for staff returning to the workplace after an absence where initial interaction is likely to be difficult.

Learning and development products

A range of learning and development products are currently available and where appropriate may be recommended.

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