

Leading through Conflict – Theory, Skills and the Mediation Process

This programme develops understanding of conflict dynamics and interpersonal communication skills, enabling participants to explore personal experience of conflict and expand their strategies and toolkits for handling conflict constructively. Additionally, the course is designed to train mediators to handle conflict constructively and creatively in a variety of arenas, including the workplace, community, and educational settings. The main body of the course will engage participants in the full mediation process, while case studies, references, and group discussion will be determined by the choice of context. It enables the participants to understand the concepts, principles, and values of mediation and demonstrate this by applying these to practice.

The course is highly experiential, ensuring that participants have extensive opportunity to explore their own relationship with conflict and to practise the skills and techniques to manage a full mediation process from beginning to end.

Overall Objectives:

By the end of the course, participants will :

- Understand conflict – its sources, attitudes, effects, how it plays out in different settings
- Understand themselves in conflict
- Explore and develop skills in strategies and tools for handling conflict
- Develop Active Listening Skills, including questioning and summarising
- Understand the relationship between positions, interests and human needs
- Understand the emotional content of conflict and the role of empathy in supporting people in dispute
- Apply mediation skills and conflict resolution principles when managing conflict
- Understand and apply the full mediation process
- Co-mediate effectively, understanding the benefits and pitfalls
- Better manage adverse behaviours in individuals more confidently using structured mediation style interventions
- Can work effectively with strong emotion
- Can identify and manage discriminatory behaviours and attitudes that impact on the process
- Identify cultures and current factors within their own environments that contribute to the escalation of conflict or help resolve it
- Evaluate their practice and learning having used the skills in a specific situation
- Work more assertively, impartially and effectively when directly involved in difficult working relationships with staff members

In the **workplace** context, the course is designed for those who are actively involved in handling difficult situations and conversations. The programme is likely to be of most interest to managers with staff responsibilities, and leaders (Chief Executives, Directors, Senior Civil Servants, Senior Management Teams, Senior HR Officers, team leaders etc).

The programme offers participants knowledge and and conflict management skills in order to improve working relationships between conflicting parties, and to consider how conflict management and resolution strategies can support employment policy.

During the course, we will explore the application of these skills in conflict situations and processes arising in the workplace including Investigations, grievance and complaint procedures, accusations of bullying, harassment and performance issues. Participants will develop a greater range of techniques and models for managing conflict at a localised level, and be able to demonstrate skills necessary for operational managers to prevent difficult working relationships polarising into issues of poor performance, accusations of unfair treatment and allegations of bullying and harassment.

In the **community** context, the course is for those who are actively involved in handling difficult situations and conversations, and want to mediate a variety of disputes. The participants will include: tenants/ residents groups, housing and community safety officers, wardens, social services staff, and the police force. During the course we explore application of these skills in community settings – including neighbour issues, tenant/landlord disputes, and anti-social behaviour. We will only touch on this on the workplace.

In the **educational** context, the course will appeal to those interested in an alternative approach for dealing with discipline and anti social behaviour in primary and secondary schools and the wider community. The course will identify and explore other restorative processes. (we will not address these on the workplace course).

Detailed Learning Objectives:

Throughout the mediation:

Show an understanding of the structure of the mediation process and an ability to put this into practice

Apply listening skills to achieve constructive communication

To communicate well at both the rational and emotional level throughout the mediation process

Building rapport through active and reflective listening

Show empathy

Show a clear understanding of positions, interests, and needs

Give and collect information clearly and accurately

Choose appropriate communication methods

Work constructively with a co-mediator

In single party meetings:

Manage the structure, content, and timekeeping of client meetings

Establish a safe environment that encourages openness

Explain the mediation process clearly and thoroughly

Identify client positions, interests and needs

Enable the clients to determine whether mediation is appropriate for them

Effectively handles resistance to mediation

In joint sessions:

Manage the structure and flow of joint party mediation sessions

Work collaboratively with co-mediator

Act impartially, non-judgementally, and maintain professional objectivity

Empower the parties to resolve their conflict

Encourage and support mutual understanding and recognition

Handle power imbalances effectively

Manage conflict and tension and high emotion

Demonstrate an ability to manage prejudicial and discriminatory views effectively

Understand the components of a mediation agreement and can write it up