

Acas business plan 2022 to 2023

26 August 2022

Executive summary

Organisational overview

Acas is a non-departmental public body of the [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\)](#) providing impartial services for businesses and employees for nearly 50 years, and with statutory powers enshrined in the Employment Protection Act 1975. Our public funding is provided by BEIS and we generate additional income from fee-earned services.

We are governed by an independent Council of experts and influencers in employment relations. The Council has employer, trade union and independent members appointed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. They shape our strategic direction, policies and priorities and oversee how we work to meet our objectives and targets.

Organisational facts

Head office: Windsor House, Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL

Locations: Serving employers and employees from 11 sites across Great Britain

Chair: Clare Chapman

CEO: Susan Clews

Our purpose

At the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), we exist to make working life better for everyone in Britain.

Healthy working relationships are critical not just to the success of workplaces and the economy but also because they allow people to flourish and find meaning and purpose at work.

Where there are problems in working life, relationships suffer and there is a cost. In part, this is financial, paid for by businesses, workers, and the wider economy. But there are emotional costs too, for everyone involved.

At Acas, we help people resolve these problems. We do so by thinking first about the people involved, helping them to have the open, honest conversations that are so often the solution. Whenever we can, we prevent disputes before they happen, through training and advice.

But where they cannot be avoided, we do all we can to resolve them, fulfilling our legal responsibility.

Employers often come to us in their most difficult moments and employees at their lowest ebb. Both are looking for someone they can trust. To be worthy of that trust, we are:

Expert

We have been providing advice and conciliation to Britain's workplaces for over a century. While work has changed beyond recognition, our insight and experience ensure we give the most up-to-date advice. We tackle new issues with authority.

Impartial

We work with all sides to help resolve conflict, treating each side equally. We can always be relied upon to give confidential advice and to be frank and honest.

Independent

We are publicly funded and have been independent since 1974. We act only to promote a better future at work.

Fair

A good workplace is a fair one. At Acas, inclusion is central to all we do – we respect and value difference and aim to follow the highest standards. What we ask of others, we ask of ourselves too.

At Acas, we lead the way in promoting good work and reducing disputes. Our success relies on our people working in partnership with employees and employers, academics and policymakers, trade union and business leaders.

Together, we make working life better for everyone in Britain.

Chief Executive foreword

Acas is Britain's trusted, independent and impartial workplace expert. Our purpose is to make working life better for everyone in Great Britain by preventing and resolving workplace conflict, through practical services and authoritative insight.

Looking back over the past year, we have helped millions of people and businesses deal with problems at work as we've all adapted to new ways of working after the pandemic. In this dynamic labour market, we have provided practical, up to date advice and information. We have worked with individuals and businesses to resolve disputes so that businesses can grow, and individuals thrive at work. We have supported customers to make effective decisions, translating our expertise into everyday action on real issues.

We know that Acas is needed more than ever in times of uncertainty. The year ahead brings challenges with labour shortages, energy price increases and the cost of living crisis. These pressures will bring tensions on workplace relationships, with a potential cost to the economy, to businesses and to individuals.

The Acas report on estimating the cost of conflict highlights that conflict will be more likely as organisations adapt to a new normal following the coronavirus pandemic. As problems suppressed during the crisis start to rise to the surface, organisations need to be able to respond effectively. Acas will do all it can to bring stakeholders together to forge consensus on addressing these challenges and we will support workplaces to resolve disputes early and build relationships for the long term.

I am pleased to launch our 2022 to 2023 business plan which sets out the vital role Acas plays and our goals for the year ahead. It is built on the commitment and strong expertise of the Acas team.

The cornerstone of our work in 2022 to 2023 will be our strong focus on our customers. We want to understand our customers better, improve access to our services, develop the channels our customers need most, and increase our effectiveness and efficiency.

We will enhance our individual dispute resolution service so that we can further reduce the cost and stress of conflict and make a significant contribution to reducing the pressure of claims in the Employment Tribunal Service (ETS). We will work with employers and trade unions to resolve collective disputes, supporting negotiations and problem solving, to secure the best possible outcomes for all.

We will work with partners to go further and faster and extend our expert training and advice into more workplaces and raise workplace standards. By strengthening and developing new partnerships across Britain, we will increase our reach to support small businesses, increasing compliance and bringing gains in productivity.

Working in partnership with other agencies, we will be steadfast in addressing workplace inequality, we will champion cultural change and support organisations to create inclusive workplaces with wellbeing central.

The world of work is changing, and we will change with it, shaping our organisation to be even more responsive to the needs our of customers. Our skilled staff are dedicated to giving great service to everyone, stepping up to support when our help is needed. I am proud of the positive difference we make to working lives across Britain.

That is our commitment and this plan outlines how we will do that in 2022 to 2023.



Susan Clews
Chief Executive

Our priorities

Our strategic ambitions

As workplace experts, our work is delivered through 4 strategic ambitions, which set our direction to 2025. These are:

- Growing our reach and access
- Resolving disputes more quickly and effectively
- Forging consensus on the biggest challenges facing work and working life
- Advancing fairness and inclusion

To ensure we are in the best shape to deliver on our strategic ambitions by 2025, we are changing the way that Acas is structured. In the year ahead we will introduce a new operating model, including new executive board roles. This will give us the structure we need to support our business priorities.

Our business priorities for 2022 to 2023

This business plan outlines what we plan to achieve in 2022 to 2023, which is the second year of our current strategy. It includes the key performance indicators (KPIs) for our services, which show what we will report on and how we will measure success.

The section below explains how we plan to deliver on our priorities.

Growing our reach and access

Our focus in 2022 to 2023 is to reach more businesses and individuals so that they can access the advice, guidance and training which they need, to build productive workplaces and avoid disputes at work.

We will improve focus on small and medium sized businesses, increasing delivery through digital channels. We will carry out research so that we have a better understanding of who our customers are and how we can help them, developing our products and services to better meet their needs.

Our reach and access priorities for 2022 to 2023 are:

- helping more small and medium businesses with expert workplace advice through a programme of webinars and digital training
- mapping our customer journeys so that we can design our services to deliver more effectively and more efficiently
- to grow our network of partners so that together we can help more businesses and individuals more quickly

Alongside this programme of work, we will continue the development of our information, advice and training for individuals and businesses, including a new webinar campaign on managing sickness absence, and expected changes in guidance to flexible working and mental health in the workplace.

Resolving disputes more quickly and effectively

Acas's collective conciliation service responds quickly and sensitively to help resolve workplace disputes. Levels of industrial unrest have the potential to rise in 2022 to 2023 and our specialist team will be focused on responding to the employment relations environment. We will intensify efforts to identify disputes quickly so that we resolve even more disputes at an early stage.

During 2022 to 2023 we will continue our programme of investment in individual dispute resolution. We will make changes to the early conciliation notification process so that customers have clearer information about how to resolve their issues. We will adopt new technology which will improve case management processes so that more expert time can be spent on resolving disputes. We will put additional resource into the service so that we can settle more employment tribunal cases, reduce back logs, and reduce the impact and cost of conflict for more individuals and more businesses.

We will conduct research into different aspects of workplace conflict to develop and inform our understanding.

Our dispute resolution priorities for 2022 to 2023 are to:

- continue the design and implementation of new approaches to individual dispute service delivery
- intensify engagement with employers and trade unions to support early resolution of collective disputes
- work with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service to support them in reducing the backlog of employment tribunal cases
- improve conciliation skills to deliver a stronger customer experience and increase likelihood of resolution
- explore with our partners new approaches to early resolution and handling of workplace conflict

Forging consensus on the biggest challenges facing work and working life

In 2022 to 2023, we will focus on the biggest employment issues. We will create a trusted space to explore and develop creative solutions to workplace challenges and to raise standards for better and more productive workplaces.

We will use our convening expertise to begin to draw together views and forge consensus on the social aspects of the environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda. We will also collaborate with partners to develop new thinking on early conflict resolution and on what makes good work.

Acas helps millions of individuals and businesses each year, giving us unique insight into the world of work. We want to use that data and insight more effectively, so that we develop services to help more customers. In 2022 to 2023 we will implement the first phase of our data strategy and invest in our data infrastructure. By making the most of the data we have, we will improve our ability to advise on good practice, resolve disputes and influence policy and debate.

Our priorities for 2022 to 2023 are to:

- raise the profile of employment issues that are key to raising standards at work and improving productivity
- establish a coalition that forges consensus on the social aspects of the ESG agenda in workplaces
- inform government policy agendas so that they take account of Acas's real world insight and expertise
- build our data capability so we can adapt our services based on evidence

Advancing fairness and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of good work and good workplaces, and Acas plays a leading role in advancing fairness and inclusion in workplaces in Great Britain.

We know that employers care about treating their employees fairly because they talk to us about it. One of the questions which is asked most frequently on our helpline is about disability and workplace reasonable adjustments, and so this will be a focus for us in 2022 to 2023, along with tackling race and sex discrimination. Fairness and inclusion matter inside Acas too. We will continue to work on increasing the diversity of our workforce, and we will continue to build an organisation where diversity is valued and celebrated.

Our priorities for 2022 to 2023 are to:

- influence the state of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, focusing this year on disability, sex and race
- provide services that are accessible and effective for those who need to use them, irrespective of place, sector and individual circumstances
- increase the diversity of Acas as we aim to be an organisation that fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve

Delivering our plans

Key performance indicators for 2022 to 2023

These tables show our performance targets for the financial year April 2022 to March 2023.

Conciliation in collective disputes	
Promotion of a settlement or progress towards a settlement in disputes in which Acas is involved.	
Individual disputes referred for conciliation	
Percentage of early conciliation notifications which result in a conciliated settlement between parties or another positive outcome.	
Percentage of employment tribunal cases which are positively resolved following Acas conciliation.	
Acas training services	
Percentage of workplace training customers reporting the course met its intended objective.	
Percentage of open access customers reporting that the training met their learning need.	
Telephone helpline advice on workplace problems	2022 to 2023
The percentage of users who were able to take clear action following their call to the Acas helpline.	85%

Digital advice on workplace problems

Percentage of positive engagement of users from the website (where an individual stays longer than 10 seconds on an advice page) – this ref excludes corporate information.

Service volumes for 2022 to 2023

Advice and training services	Volumes 2022 to 2023	Income 2022 to 2023
Web visits (user sessions)	14.5m	n/a
Digital advice visits (user sessions)	9.6m	n/a
Helpline calls and related advice	700,000	n/a
In-depth advice	4,050	n/a
E-learning sessions	42,000	n/a
Webinars	20	n/a
Webinar delegates	11,500	n/a
Webinar recording views (new measure)	2,000	n/a
Workplace projects (delivery days)	180	£150,00
Workplace training events	1,675	£1.5m

Advice and training services	Volumes 2022 to 2023	Income 2022 to 2023
Open access training events	1,100	£2.5m
Open access training delegates	11,180	n/a
Conference and talks	30	£75,000
Collective conciliation and arbitration	Volumes 2022 to 2023	Income 2022 to 2023
Collective conciliation requests	520	n/a
Arbitration and mediation requests	18	n/a
Joint working projects (delivery days)	190	n/a
Individual dispute resolution	Volumes 2022 to 2023	Income 2022 to 2023
Early conciliation notifications	100,000	n/a
Conciliation in employment tribunal cases	30,000	n/a
Mediations in individual disputes	257	£275,000
Shaping and informing employment relations	Volumes 2022 to 2023	
Written papers (for example research reports, published articles, commentary, blogs)	35	
Speaking engagements hosted by Acas and stakeholders	40	
Round tables, stakeholder forums, breakfast briefings	30	

Total income £4.5m

Sustainability plan for 2022 to 2023

Acas's Sustainability Strategy sets out our ambition to improve sustainability in order to support the Greening Government Commitments (GGC) targets.

Objectives

We have set 6 objectives to drive our sustainability work across the organisation over the next 5 years. These objectives are:

People

To embed sustainability in decision making and our ways of working, have clear communication on our ambition and progress, and increase engagement with staff in a way that is accessible and inclusive for all. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- embed sustainability in the way we work

Emissions

To reduce our greenhouse gas emissions from the 2017 to 2018 base line, in line with government targets. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- increase the number of staff using sustainable modes of transport for business travel
- reduce our overall greenhouse gas emissions
- have effective energy management across our sites

Resources

To increase the efficiency of resources and reduce waste volumes in all areas of general waste, ICT and paper. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- reduce paper consumption
- reduce water consumption
- reduce waste generation and increase recycling
- have effective environmental management across our sites

Procurement

To drive sustainability through our supply chains. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- assess the sustainability impact from our supply chain
- implement a sustainable procurement policy

Nature

To get creative in thinking up ideas for introducing biodiversity to our city-based estate or working collaboratively across the BEIS family to assist them in improving the biodiversity value of their estates. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- increase biodiversity across our estate (or the wider BEIS family estate)

Beyond Acas

To be an active member in the environmental. During 2022 to 2023 we will:

- support our staff to make a difference

Corporate governance

In mobilising our strategy in 2021 to 2022, we have reviewed our governance effectiveness and significantly improved our risk and change management capability. This work will support the changes we will make to the way Acas is structured to build on the transparency and accountability within our processes. Establishing of our new operating model and new executive board structure to direct and lead us to live our values and deliver on our key priorities.

Financials

Financial allocation for 2022 to 2023

Table showing the amount of money allocated to Acas by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for the financial year April 2022 to March 2023. This is provisional and includes the impact of adopting IFRS 16 (leases).

2022 to 2023 funding allocation	Amount
Capital	£2,900,000
Total capital	£2,900,000
Programme (non-ringfenced)	£42,341,000
Programme (ringfenced)	£6,050,000
Depreciation (ringfenced)	£3,900,000
Total programme resource	£52,291,000
Administration (non-ringfenced)	£7,020,000
Administration (ringfenced)	£1,600,000
Total administration resource	£8,620,000
Annual managed expenditure (AME)	£507,000
Total AME	£507,000