

Collective conciliation

1 . What collective conciliation is

Collective conciliation is one of the dispute resolution services that Acas offers.

When there's a disagreement between an employer and a group of workers represented by a trade union, collective conciliation can help both sides come to an agreement.

When to use

Collective conciliation can be used to settle disputes about:

- annual pay reviews
- other pay issues – for example sick pay, pensions, holiday pay
employment contract terms – for example working hours
- changes in working practices – for example homeworking, break times, artificial intelligence
- discipline and dismissal of groups of employees
- discipline and dismissal of an employee trade union representative
- redundancy consultation and redundancy selection
- trade union recognition

If the dispute is not between an employer and a group of workers represented by a union or employee representative, Acas offers other help.

[Find out more about other types of dispute resolution](#)

Why use collective conciliation

In most cases using collective conciliation helps:

- improve industrial relations
- prevent industrial action
- resolve trade union recognition and access request disputes

Collective conciliation is:

- free
- voluntary
- confidential

Request collective conciliation

To request or ask about collective conciliation, [contact the Acas Training and Customer Services team](#).

2. How conciliation works

Collective conciliation involves Acas working directly with employers and groups of workers or their representatives to settle a dispute. It gives both parties the chance to come to an agreement without taking legal or industrial action.

Our collective conciliators set up talks between:

- employers
- official union representatives
- employee representatives – working on behalf of a group of employees

Acas is impartial which means we:

- do not take sides
- help both parties find a solution that everyone agrees to

Initial meetings

A conciliator will usually meet separately with the parties involved. This can be in a video call or in person.

In the meeting, we will:

- explain the collective conciliation process
- talk through the issues with both sides
- help the parties to consider different options

Joint meeting

After the initial meetings, the conciliator will then bring everyone together in a meeting. These are often in person.

In the meeting:

- both parties have the chance to fully explain their position
- a conciliator goes between the parties with offers, to help them reach an agreement

Reaching an agreement

The conciliator will make sure that everyone understands what has been agreed. They can also help write up an agreement.

Meet the team



Joanna Nunn

Head of Collective Dispute Resolution and Chief Conciliator



Aaron Kennedy

Collective Dispute Resolutions Manager (North) and Assistant Chief Conciliator



Matt Penfold

Collective Dispute Resolutions Manager (South) and Assistant Chief Conciliator

Local collective conciliators

Our conciliators are based in England, Scotland and Wales.

- **East Midlands** – Graeme Young, Robert Crosby
- **East of England** – Louise Ramsey
- **London** – Faye Law, Sarah Podro, Tian Zhu
- **North East** – Malcolm Phillips
- **North West** – Gareth Howard, Mel McRae
- **Scotland** – Jane Fleming, Marie Young
- **South East** – Phil Osborne
- **South West** – Matt Knight, Michael Gardner
- **Yorkshire and The Humber** – Alison Frosdick
- **Wales** – James Forse
- **West Midlands** – Jane Wilson, Karen Nahal

3. Improving industrial relations

As Acas has a statutory (legal) duty to promote good industrial relations, we offer organisations and trade unions our free collective conciliation service.

We work with organisations and trade unions to:

- help mend relationships with employers and workers after a dispute – for example, how to better work together
- improve working relationships – for example, how to negotiate pay
- review a trade union recognition agreement
- resolve issues parties disagree on before a dispute happens
- help prevent disputes occurring in the future

We also raise awareness of our collective conciliation service by giving talks at conferences and networking events.

To find out more about our collective conciliation services, [contact the Acas Training and Customer Services team](#).

4. Getting voluntary trade union recognition

When there's a dispute, a collective conciliator works with an employer and an official trade union representative to resolve it.

If a group of workers want to be formally represented by a trade union, the union must ask the employer for union recognition.

Acas collective conciliators can help a trade union and an employer:

- agree voluntary recognition
- identify the bargaining unit – this is the group of workers represented by a trade union
- carry out membership checks to find out the number of union members within a bargaining unit
- conduct a ballot to find out how many employees within the bargaining unit agree to trade union recognition

If a trade union does not get voluntary recognition, they can apply to the [Central Arbitration Committee \(CAC\) on GOV.UK](#) for statutory recognition.

Recognition agreements

When an employer and a trade union agree to voluntary recognition, a collective conciliator can help the parties to write a recognition agreement.

A recognition agreement can include for example, the:

- bargaining unit – the group of workers covered
- scope of the negotiations – pay, hours, annual leave
- facility time – time off for union duties
- dispute resolution procedure

Find out more about:

- voluntary trade union recognition – [contact the Training and Customer Services Team](#)
- [applying for statutory trade union recognition on GOV.UK](#)