

Conflict at work linked to mental health issues



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Workplace conflict may be behind a rise in mental ill health among employees, research has suggested

Conflict management and mediation provider Consensio surveyed 57 individuals who attended workplace mediation to establish the impact workplace conflict had on their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

It found a significant link between unresolved workplace conflict and the worrying growth in mental health issues among employees.

More than eight in 10 (84%) reported that workplace conflict had affected their overall health. Specifically, 75% said it had affected **their mental health**, 65% their physical wellbeing, and 25% had to take time off work because of the negative impact it had on them.

Director and co-founder of Consensio Anna Shields said: "For the past 12 years we have seen the detrimental impact of workplace conflict on employee wellbeing. Our research suggests the significant and growing impact of unresolved workplace conflict on our overall health and wellbeing."

Speaking to *HR* magazine, she explained that conflict can have a far-reaching effect. "Anecdotally, we'd increasingly been hearing about the effects of conflict on people's mental health, and the physical, emotional, and behavioural effects. **Conflict can affect everyone deeply**, even people who witness it but aren't directly involved – we'd spoken to HR professionals who had been in tears dealing with situations where there's conflict," she said.

“Work and home life should be separate, but if people are experiencing tension in the workplace they can bring those issues home with them so it can affect partners and families too. We become cocooned.”

Addressing the problem early, rather than waiting for problems to escalate into mental health issues, is key Shields added: “We dealt with all kinds of conflict, from harassment and **bullying** to other more subtle grievances. No matter what kind of conflict people are experiencing our key message is to nip it in the bud. Don’t wait until it develops into a mental health problem, try and address the problem as soon as you can.

“Everyone has a responsibility here. HR has a really important role to play in dealing with these issues, but employees also need to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and emotional health.”

These findings coincide with Consensio launching **a free guide** for employers and employees, which aims to help people make the healthiest choices in the face of conflict, minimise any damage and better protect themselves.