Research Paper

Evaluating and Developing Acas Workplace Projects

Ref: 01/13

inform   advise   train   work with you

Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

Evaluating and Developing Acas Workplace Projects

Research report

March 2013

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from a quantitative survey of Acas Workplace Projects users for projects conducted between October 2010 and December 2011. In total, 158 users of Acas Workplace Project services were included in the survey (105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee Representatives). These findings are supplemented with qualitative insights from four case studies of Workplace Projects and three workshops with human resources professionals.

This research was designed to provide robust evidence for the impact of Acas Workplace Projects and provide an insight into customer views, particularly regarding the future of the service and how it can be improved.

Customer satisfaction and the impact of Workplace Projects

Overall satisfaction with the service provided by Acas was found to be high, with 90% of management representatives and 87% of employee representatives reporting satisfaction with the project. This is unchanged from 2009 (within statistical confidence intervals).[1] Those representatives whose project involved training were slightly more likely to say they were satisfied than those whose project did not.

These overall satisfaction findings are mirrored by the proportion of respondents likely to recommend Acas to colleagues and professional contacts (92%), with over seven in ten "very likely" to do so.

In the collaborative business workshops, participants' spontaneous feedback about Acas was on the whole very positive. Acas was described as trustworthy, pragmatic, consistent and accurate in the information, advice and support it provides. The organisation's credibility with both management and employees was seen as a key strength, and something that should be protected.

Respondents in the quantitative survey were asked whether they experienced something that pleased them and whether there were any problems or issues during the project. A large majority of respondents experienced something that pleased them (81%), with management representatives slightly more likely to report positive experiences than employee representatives. Amongst management representatives, the most common pleasing aspect was the skill of the Acas advisor, whilst the greatest driver of satisfaction among employee representatives was for an outcome or solution to have been successful.

When respondents were asked about problems or issues during the project, 22% reported a few minor problems or issues and 9% a major complaint or problem. Respondents often described these problems as relating to the wider issue being dealt with through the project, and not necessarily to Acas' handling of the project itself.

---

[1] The survey interviews were from a sample of, rather than all, members of the eligible population, therefore confidence intervals apply to the survey estimates. The confidence intervals express the potential error in the survey estimates compared with the 'true' value had we interviewed all members of the eligible population. For example, a +/-3% confidence interval indicates that, if we were to repeat the survey with an infinite number of repetitions, in 95% of cases the survey estimates would lie within +/-3% of the actual survey finding. The confidence intervals are narrower (i.e. we have more confidence in the accuracy of the survey estimates) where the survey is taken from a smaller population; conversely, confidence intervals are wider (i.e. we have less confidence in the accuracy of the survey estimates) where the results are based on smaller numbers of respondents; confidence intervals are also wider where there is more variability in the survey findings (i.e. the closer the survey finding is to 50% the wider the confidence interval).

Acas advisers are very well regarded by both management and employee representatives. Overall, nine in ten rated them as good when it comes to impartiality, developing relationships, understanding the specific workplace's issues, and encouraging discussions. Ratings of advisers' specific technical skills, such as relevant experience, providing information in advance, and providing tailored advice, were also high (although these aspects were not relevant in all cases).

As found in 2009, management representatives were found to be more positive than employee representatives with regard to whether the main objective of the Workplace Project was achieved. Almost half of managers thought it had been fully achieved, and a further third thought it had been achieved to a large extent. The proportion of employee representatives who think the objective was fully achieved has not changed since 2009 (three in ten), but more now think it was largely met (from 25% to 40%). However problems with objectives being met were commonly linked to a failure of the organisation to implement the solution, rather than being an issue with Acas' running of the project.

Overall the survey findings suggest Acas is achieving its objective of improving employment relations, with one in five saying that their experience with the Workplace Project exceeded expectations, and another half thinking they were fully met. However, in line with previous surveys, employee representatives tend to be slightly less likely to say that their expectations of the project were met, with a fifth saying their expectations were only partially met or not at all.

Since 2009 there has been a slight fall in the proportion reporting that activities arising from the project have been sustained, with the figure now standing at half of users overall. Sustained activities are much more likely to be reported for projects where Acas training has been involved.

Generally speaking, users were more likely to ascribe soft impacts at least in some part to the project, such as improvements in internal relations, communications and working culture. As might be expected, they were less likely to think of hard impacts as applicable, including quality of outputs, productivity and meeting business objectives.

In total, as a result of the Workplace Project, 64% of management representatives and 75% of employee representatives say that policies, procedures or practices have been introduced, reviewed or revised.

Reasons for choosing an Acas Workplace Project

Most thought of their project as ultimately concerned with workplace relationships, with this view shared fairly equally between management and employee representatives. Employee representatives were over twice as likely to identify the project as having to do with solving a problem. A full breakdown of views as to the most fitting description of the project is presented in Fig 1.1, below.

Fig 1.1 Views on the nature of the Acas Workplace Project

Which of these best describes the Acas project?	Management rep.	Employee rep.
Improving workplace relationships between management and employees by helping them to work together better.	35%	28%
Improving workplace relationships between management and trade unions by helping them to work together better.	20%	17%
Improving workforce relationships (between employees) in the workplace by helping employees work together better.	18%	20%
Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.	12%	26%
Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.	6%	4%
A project to help update HR policies and procedures.	4%	0%
The Acas advisor wrote new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.	1%	2%
Other	3%	2%

These views are in line with views about which services Acas should offer. Workshop participants (users and non-users of Acas Workplace Projects) tended to think of Acas as specialists in workplace relations, but did not think they should extend their offering to types of support they felt covered by their internal HR expertise or that can be gained from free sources on the internet. This included developing and updating practices, policies or procedures. Although this may reflect the fact that participants were generally HR professionals working in medium or large businesses.

There was also concern that Acas' reputation for impartiality could be affected if they were seen to engage in activities that are usually performed by management, such as developing new policies or procedures. Participants felt there was a risk that employees would view Acas's involvement in such activities as a case of siding with management. Opinions were split on whether or not specific problem solving should be offered, with some thinking of sector specialists as more appropriate (such as health specialists for stress issues), whilst others viewed it as a natural extension of Acas' work. Workshop participants identified the provision of advice as another of Acas' key services, which in their experience was free, whereas they felt formalising Acas' involvement and conducting a project would mean they might be charged.

Why Acas

When asked specifically why they chose Acas, users cited reputation, independence from management, and previous experience of working with their organisation. Management representatives also cited Acas' relevant experience as a reason to engage them. Respondents whose project involved training were more likely to say they had an ongoing relationship with Acas, and they were more likely to cite past experiences as their reason for using them.

A majority of users thought the service they could get from a third party would not be as good quality. Among those who paid for their project, Acas were considered good value for money by 85% of managers and 61% of employee representatives. Among fee waived projects, most management representatives (72%) said they would definitely or probably have gone ahead with the project if there had been a charge towards the advice or support they received, although they were not asked what level of charge would be acceptable.

Implications for improving the service

One success emerging from the data is the positive effect of projects involving training. Representatives involved with workplace projects that involved training tend to be more satisfied (71% say they are very satisfied, compared to 50% of representatives when the project did not involve training), and almost all projects involving training are reported to have led to sustained activities (95% compared to 64% of non-training projects).

Another finding is the importance of relationship-building with organisations, with a third of managers turning to Acas because of good experiences in the past. In the business workshops, the difficulty of developing relations with Acas advisers was cited by some as an area to be improved. Difficulties were due in part to the perceived high workload of the advisers, along with the fact that users do not feel able to request the services of particular advisers on projects.

One further area to improve was the support provided to organisations in the lead-up to projects and following Acas' intervention. Only half thought advisers very good at providing the right information in advance, while a small minority rated them as poor. This was also highlighted in the qualitative research. Some participants reported that their organisation had failed to implement new procedures following the project, and that follow-ups from the adviser could help maintain an impetus, and this is a finding which has also been identified from past survey data on workplace projects.

HR professionals described the difficulty for Acas of marketing new services to them, since they felt bombarded by such materials from many organisations. Acas' emails were praised for their brevity, but service users did not think information in hard-copy would be likely to be read or read in detail. Most important for potential users was the ability to easily find information on the website as and when they needed it, and to be notified of relevant services briefly and at appropriate times.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background and objectives

Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) is an independent body funded by BIS (the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), which aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations. To this end, Acas provides a range of services which include advice, business solutions, training, and services for small businesses and international services.

Acas Workplace Projects (also known as 'Business Solutions' on the Acas website) are carried out in organisations throughout England, Wales and Scotland and are designed to make organisations more effective by addressing particular aspects of workplace relations identified by the employer. Their purpose is to improve employment relations within workplaces by involving employers and employee representatives in joint problem solving and joint working.

Projects are tailored to the needs of each organisation so vary in scope and size from one-day workshops to more involved engagements with organisations over several months. However, almost all projects involve management and employee representatives working jointly to improve relationships and organisational effectiveness, or to manage change. Where trade unions are recognised, union representatives will normally take part.

Issues typically covered in Workplace Projects include:

- absence management;
- collective bargaining arrangements;
- communication, consultation and employee involvement;
- improving working relations;
- implementation of new pay systems;
- improvements to organisational performance;
- job evaluation; and
- managing all aspects of change.

Advisers work jointly with managers and employee representatives, and all three parties engage in a range of roles over the project's duration. These focus on:

- diagnosing workplace problems;
- learning new behaviours and methods of working together jointly;
- reviewing and revising existing workplace policies, practices, or structures;
- developing new workplace policies, practices, or structures; and
- implementing new or revised workplace policies, practices or structures.

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of Acas Workplace Projects, which comprised a telephone survey of 158 respondents, 3 focus groups and 4 case studies. The focus groups were conducted with 4-7 HR professionals, including a mix of past users and non-users of Workplace Projects, whilst each case study included 4-5 in-depth

interviews with the Acas adviser, management representative and employee representative from recent projects, as well as other managers whose work was affected by the project. This research builds on three previous surveys and four research reports assessing the impact of Acas Workplace Projects. [2] These three surveys used almost identical questionnaires, with the most recent impact survey conducted in 2008-2009.

The 2012 survey has been developed to include additional questions on service development, communicating the service to organisations and further questions to quantify impacts of Workplace Projects. To this end, the project included a period of questionnaire development, including a series of cognitive testing interviews, and therefore uses a revised version of the questionnaire. This research was designed to provide robust evidence for the impact of Acas Workplace Projects and provide an insight into customer views, particularly regarding the future of the service and how it can be improved.

The specific objectives of this research included:

- To provide data on whether projects meet their objectives, customers' views on the service and how the service could be altered and improved in the future.
- To inform Acas staff and internal and external stakeholders of the longer-term impact and effectiveness of the service, including collecting data that can be used to measure the economic impact of the service.
- To explore the most effective ways to promote Workplace Projects.
- To provide comparable data to the previous waves.

2.2 Methodology

As with the previous three evaluations, this research aimed to combine the views of both the lead managers and employee representatives within organisations that had experience of an Acas Workplace Project. In light of this, Ipsos MORI adopted a mixed methodology approach, including a quantitative telephone survey, focus groups and case studies.

2.2.1 Telephone survey

The telephone survey aimed to conduct a census among all those who had experienced a Workplace Project ending between October 2010 and December 2011. The survey was conducted between 19 March and 18 May 2012. The aim was to interview one employee representative and one management representative in each of the organisations in which a project had taken place.

The sample for the telephone survey element of the evaluation came from the Acas Management Information database (EARS). This information included project completion dates, names and contact details of management representatives, and the identity of the regional Acas office that provided the service. In most instances, the database also

---

[2] The reports were: Evaluation of Acas Workplace Projects 2004-2006; Workplace Project Evaluation 2007; An integrated evaluation of Acas Workplace Projects 2008-2009. And the two most recent two reports, which were published on the Acas website: Broughton A., Pearmain D. and Cox A. (2010), An Integrated Evaluation of Acas Workplace Projects - based on survey and case study findings; and Cooper J. (2011), Looking Back to Move Forward: Assessing the Impacts of Acas Workplace Projects.

included the subject or title of the project, but rarely included the name of the employee representative.

In total, there were 268 cases supplied in the sample: 215 in the original sample, and a further 53 in a later supplement. Of these, 230 had unique project leads (management representatives) corresponding to projects from 219 organisations (i.e. some organisations were represented more than once in the sample, but by different potential interviewees). As such, we were able to pursue interviews with 230 management representatives. Where one individual was named in multiple projects, the most recent project was selected as the topic for interview.

Of the final, de-duplicated database of 230 cases with unique management representatives, 47 were unusable (with invalid telephone numbers), leaving a total of 183 cases to pursue. From these, 105 interviews were completed with management representatives, giving a response rate of 57%. If we also exclude those whom we were unable to contact, then we have a response rate of 64%.

Twenty-nine of the 268 cases supplied had named employee representatives. In some instances the same named contact was given for both the management representative and employee representative. In these instances a decision was made on whether the contact was a management or employee representative based on their job title.

After removing duplicates, as well as those who were to be treated as management representatives, there remained 16 usable named employee representative contacts. Where there was not a named employee representative on the sample, Ipsos MORI attempted to gather appropriate contacts through 'snowball sampling' from the management representatives. Via this method we were able to acquire working numbers for 199 of the cases, and achieved contact with 166 of the respective organisations. We were ultimately able to complete 53 interviews, at a response rate of 27% (or 32% of those we were able to contact).

As such, 158 interviews were achieved overall in the quantitative fieldwork from 382 contactable leads, giving a response rate of 41%. The overall response rate, excluding both invalid phone numbers and those we were unable to contact was 48%. (See figure 1, below.) In the previous wave of the survey in 2009 the response rate was stated as 55%.

All target respondents were sent letters on Acas headed paper approximately one week before first being contacted by the telephone interviewers. The main aim of this was to prime target respondents for the research and boost response rates, but respondents were also given the chance to contact Ipsos MORI if they had any queries or could suggest a more appropriate interviewee.

Figure 2.1: Outcomes for telephone survey sample, with response rates

	Management representatives	Employee representatives	TOTAL
Completed	105	53	158
Incomplete	0	2	2
Contact, but no outcome	6	22	28
Refused by contact	48	86	134
Refused by HR	4	3	7
No answer	20	33	53
Invalid phone number	47	31	78
TOTAL	230	230	460
Base	183	199	382
Total contacted	163	166	329
Response rate (excluding invalid numbers)	57.4%	26.6%	41.4%
Response rate (excluding invalid numbers and no answer)	64.4%	31.9%	48.0%

Among the 158 respondents who successfully completed the survey, around a third of these (56) represented matched cases, whereby an employee representative and management representative from a single Workplace Project had answered the survey independently. In some cases, where the matched sub-sample shows a difference from the overall sample or can provide further insights, reference to these findings is included in the report.

2.2.2 Collaborative workshops

In addition to the telephone survey, three collaborative business workshops were conducted with a mix of users (recruited from the Acas Management Information database) and non-users (recruited from a diverse Experian business sample within a specific radius of the city centre[3]). The objectives of these workshops were to explore:

- The appeal of the current Workplace Projects offer

- Where they would expect the service to have most impact

- How the service could be improved to increase appeal and effectiveness

- How the benefits of the current service should be communicated more widely among businesses

The workshops were held in Manchester on 21st June 2012 and in London on 19th July and 25th October 2012 and involved a total of sixteen participants. Findings from the workshops have been integrated into this report.

---

[3] Manchester workshop: within a 4 mile radius of M1 2PF; London workshops: within a 6 mile radius of WC2B 6AF.

2.2.3 Case studies

In order to explore the Workplace Projects in more detail, four case studies were conducted with organisations whose management representative had responded to the quantitative survey. In each case, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- the project's Acas adviser (in advance of the site visit);

- the management representative (the project lead);

- the project's lead employee representative (in some cases a TU rep)[4]; and

- at least one other manager whose work was affected by the issue leading to the project and/or by the project itself.

Interviews with the management and employee representatives lasted around one hour, with other interviews lasting around half an hour, and followed a single discussion guide that had been designed for use with all (see Appendix 2). Interviews took place between 25th July and 8th October 2012.

The organisations involved (named where permitted), along with their project type, were:

- a paper manufacturing company: recruiting, contracting and employing people;

- an NHS Trust: conflict/mediation/relationship issues;

- a nuclear decommissioning company (by telephone): equal pay; and

- an NHS Trust: stress management.

2.3 Presentation and interpretation of data

2.3.1 Quantitative element

The findings reported in this report are presented separately for management and employee representatives.

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population participated in the survey. As a consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are significant. A guide to sampling tolerances is appended (Appendix 4) but, as a rule of thumb, figures based on the total sample are accurate to within $\pm$6 percentage points.

Please note that, in the main, this report only comments on differences that are significant and statistically reliable. However, the report sometimes comments on results for groups with base sizes too low to be tested for statistical significance when the results indicate a trend across the data. When this is the case, it is noted in the text.

---

[4] In the case of one case study, the trade union representatives declined to discuss the project.

Where percentages do not add up to 100% this is due to multiple answers, to rounding of decimal points up or down, or to the exclusion of 'Don't know' or 'No response' categories. Data are not weighted.

We also emphasise that the survey deals with Acas users' perceptions at the time the survey was conducted rather than with facts. Their perceptions, therefore, may not accurately reflect the work and conduct of Acas and its staff. Indeed, one of the challenges of interpreting this research is to link these results with other evidence that may be available.

2.3.2 Qualitative element

Unlike quantitative surveys, qualitative research is not designed to provide statistically reliable data on what participants as a whole are thinking.

Qualitative research is intended to shed light on *why* people have particular views and *how* these views relate to the experiences of the participants concerned. One to one interviews and discussion groups enable respondents to participate in an informal and interactive discussion and to allow time for the complex issues to be addressed in some detail. It also enables researchers to test the strength of people's opinions. This approach, in other words, facilitates deeper insight into attitudes underlying the "top of the mind" responses to quantitative studies. It is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with *perceptions* rather than *facts*.

Verbatim comments from the interviews and discussion groups have been included within this report. These should not be interpreted as defining the views of all participants but have been selected to provide an insight into a particular issue or topic.

2.4 Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Jonathan Cooper and Emma Dibb at Acas for their help and assistance in the development of the project. We would also like to thank all 158 Acas users who responded to the telephone survey, and those who participated in the workshops and case studies.

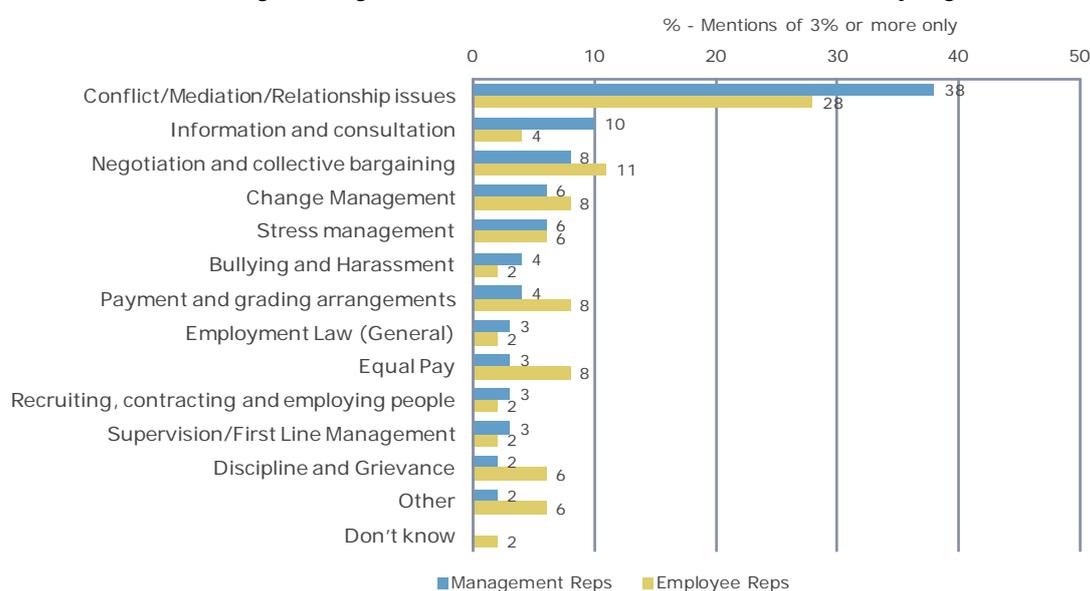| *©Ipsos MORI/11-059280-01*	
Checked & Approved:	*Gideon Skinner*
	Daniel Cameron
	Peter Cornick
	Chris Branson

3. REASONS FOR CHOOSING ACAS

3.1 Topic of project

Organisations included in the quantitative research have used Acas Workplace Projects to help them with a wide range of different issues.

The most common area is conflict/mediation/relationship issues (38% of management representatives and 28% of employee representatives say that this was the main focus of the project with which they were involved). Other trigger issues include information and consultation, negotiation and collective bargaining, stress management, change management and bullying and harassment.

The remaining responses covered a diverse range of issues, but were given by less than five per cent of respondents.[5]

Fig 3.1 What would you say was the main focus or area of the project?

% - Mentions of 3% or more only

	Management Reps	Employee Reps
Conflict/Mediation/Relationship issues	38	28
Information and consultation	10	4
Negotiation and collective bargaining	8	11
Change Management	6	8
Stress management	6	6
Bullying and Harassment	4	2
Payment and grading arrangements	4	8
Employment Law (General)	3	2
Equal Pay	3	8
Recruiting, contracting and employing people	3	2
Supervision/First Line Management	3	2
Discipline and Grievance	2	6
Other	2	6
Don't know		2

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

In cases where there was no fee charged, respondents are more likely to say that the main focus of their project was negotiation and collective bargaining (21% compared to four per cent of charged cases).

Acas Projects have a variety of purposes. Most commonly Acas Projects improve workplace relations between management and employees by helping them work better together (30% of management representatives and 26% of employee representatives say that this best describes the Acas Project). Around one in five management representatives and employee representatives say that the project aimed to improve workplace relationships between management and trade unions (20% and 21%

---

[5] Respondents were asked two questions about the purpose(s) of the Acas Project. The first question asked for key areas covered by the project. If more than one purpose was given, respondents were then asked a follow up question to identify the single main focus for the project. This chart describes the single main area highlighted by respondents based on their answers to both these questions.

respectively) and a similar proportion say that the project aimed to improve workforce relationships between employees (18% of management representatives and 19% of employee representatives).

While in general similar proportions of management and employee representatives identify what best describes the project, a quarter of employee representatives say that their project involved problem solving on specific issues such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations (25%); only one in nine management representatives said the same.

Fig 3.2 Which of these best describes the Acas project?
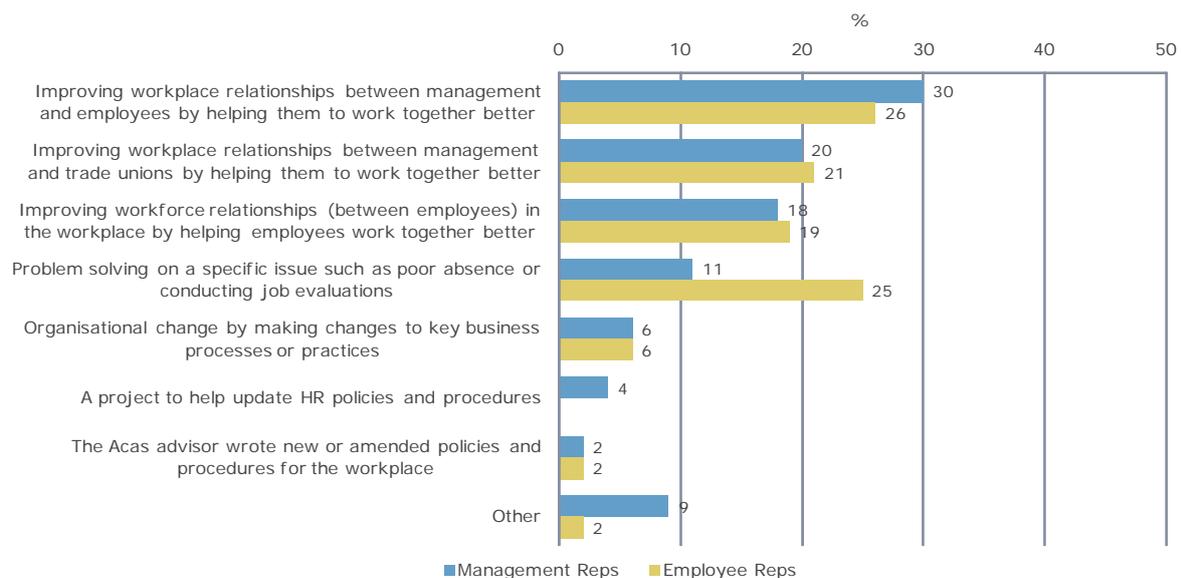
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those whose projects were fee-waived are significantly more likely than those whose projects were charged to say that their project is best described as improving workplace relationships between management and trade unions (38% compared to 14%). Those whose projects were charged are more likely to say that the project aimed to improve workforce relations between employees (23% compared to four per cent of those whose project was fee-waived). A full breakdown of the main purpose of a project, according to those whose project was fee-waived and those whose project was charged, is presented below, in Fig 3.3.

Fig 3.3 Views on the purpose of the project by payment type

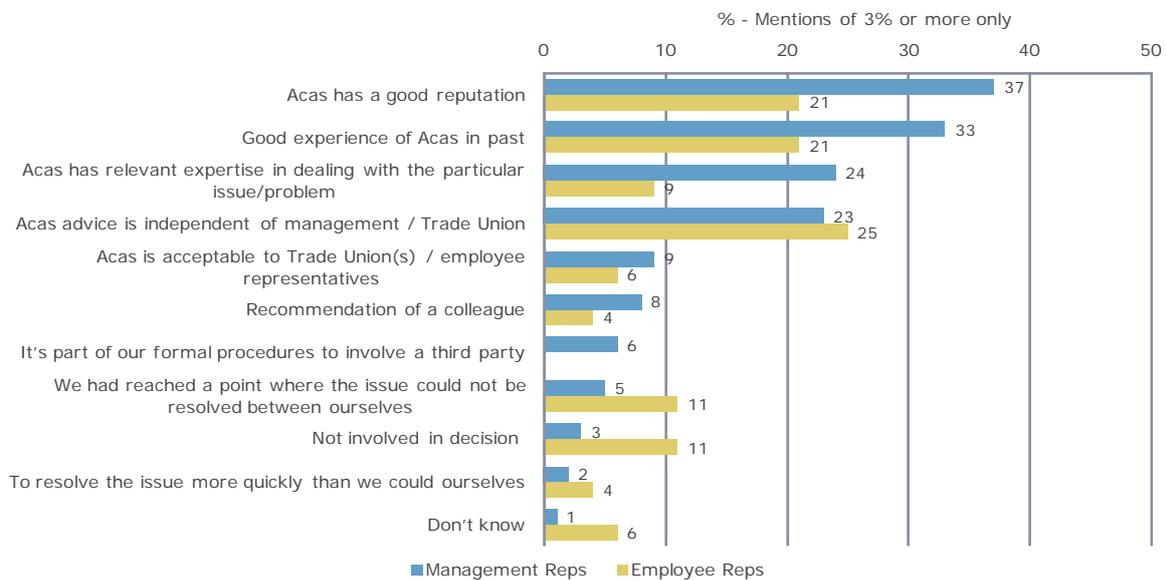| Which of these best describes the Acas project?	Fee waived	Charged	Total
Improving workplace relationships between management and employees by helping them to work together better.	29%	35%	33%
Improving workplace relationships between management and trade unions by helping them to work together better.	34%	14%	19%
Improving workforce relationships (between employees) in the workplace by helping employees work together better.	3%	24%	19%
Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.	21%	15%	17%
Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.	3%	5%	5%
A project to help update HR policies and procedures.	3%	3%	3%
The Acas advisor wrote new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.	3%	1%	1%
Other	5%	2%	3%

3.2 Reason for choosing Acas

There are some differences in the reasons that management and employee representatives give for using Acas' services. Management representatives are most likely to cite Acas' good reputation (37%) and good previous experience of Acas Projects (33%) as reasons for choosing Acas. Employee representatives also cite these as important factors in their decisions, with around one in five highlighting each (21%).

However, the most common reason given by employee representatives is that Acas is independent of management (25%), although this is also given as a reason by a similar proportion of management representatives (23%), but of lower relative importance.

Management representatives are significantly more likely than employee representatives to cite Acas' relevant experience in dealing with a particular issue or problem as a reason for deciding to use Acas (24% compared to nine per cent).

As would be expected, employee representatives are more likely to say that they were not involved with the decision (11% compared to three per cent of management representatives).

Fig 3.4 Thinking about when you were first considering ways of dealing with ....., why did you and others in your workplace/organisation decide to use Acas?

% - Mentions of 3% or more only

	Management Reps	Employee Reps
Acas has a good reputation	37	21
Good experience of Acas in past	33	21
Acas has relevant expertise in dealing with the particular issue/problem	24	9
Acas advice is independent of management / Trade Union	23	25
Acas is acceptable to Trade Union(s) / employee representatives	9	6
Recommendation of a colleague	8	4
It's part of our formal procedures to involve a third party	6	
We had reached a point where the issue could not be resolved between ourselves	5	11
Not involved in decision	3	11
To resolve the issue more quickly than we could ourselves	2	4
Don't know	1	6

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
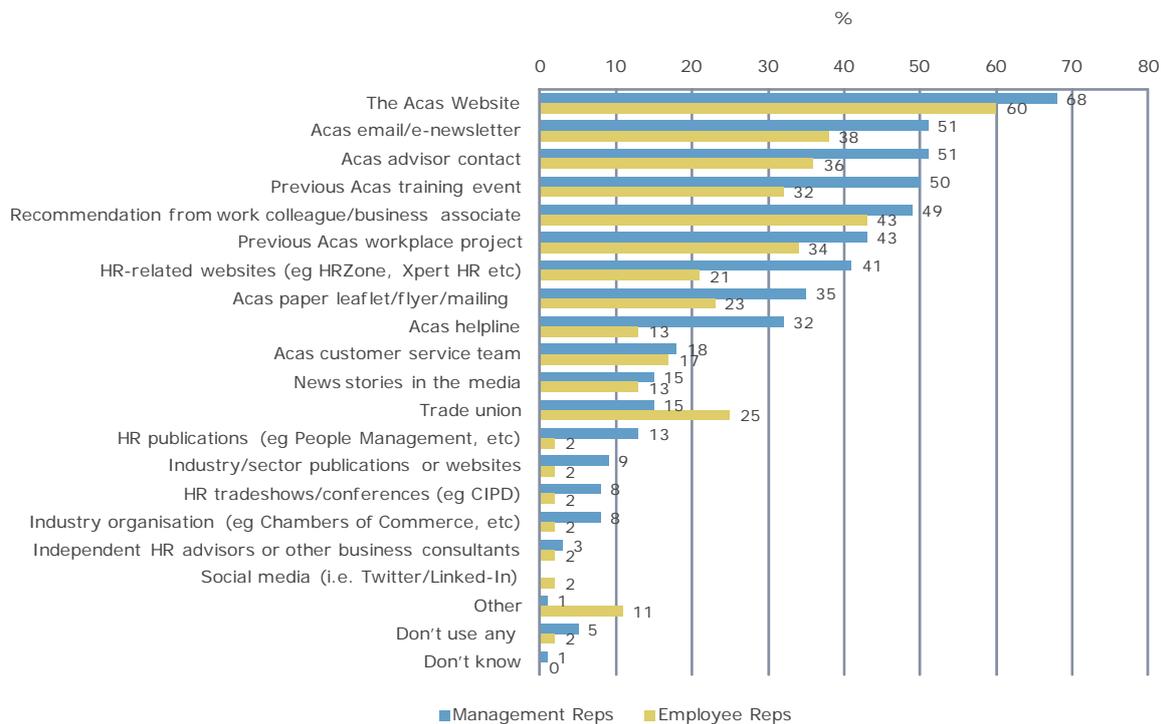
Source: Ipsos MORI

Those who undertook projects involving training are more likely to say they chose Acas because of a good previous experience (37% compared to 22% among those who carried out non-training projects). This suggests that representatives who already value Acas' work may be more likely to use Workplace Projects that include Acas' training services.

3.3 Information sources

Users of Acas' Workplace Projects service have heard about them from a number of different sources. The most common source of information is the Acas website, through which 68% of management representatives and 60% of employee representatives have heard about Acas Workplace Projects.

Generally, management representatives are more likely to have heard about Workplace Projects through different sources, which may reflect that the decision often comes from management representatives. Around half of management representatives have heard about Workplace Projects from Acas emails or newsletters, from Acas advisers or previous Acas events compared to around a third of employee representatives.

Fig 3.5 From which of these, if any, have you heard about the Acas Workplace Projects?

%

	Management Reps	Employee Reps
The Acas Website	68	60
Acas email/e-newsletter	51	38
Acas advisor contact	51	36
Previous Acas training event	50	32
Recommendation from work colleague/business associate	49	43
Previous Acas workplace project	43	34
HR-related websites (eg HRZone, Xpert HR etc)	41	21
Acas paper leaflet/flyer/mailing	35	23
Acas helpline	32	13
Acas customer service team	18	17
News stories in the media	15	13
Trade union	15	25
HR publications (eg People Management, etc)	13	2
Industry/sector publications or websites	9	2
HR tradeshows/conferences (eg CIPD)	8	2
Industry organisation (eg Chambers of Commerce, etc)	8	2
Independent HR advisors or other business consultants	3	2
Social media (i.e. Twitter/Linked-In)	1	2
Other	1	11
Don't use any	5	2
Don't know	1	0

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those who have undertaken projects involving training seem to have more of an ongoing relationship with Acas: 49% of representatives whose projects involved training knew of Acas from a previous Workplace Project, compared with 31% of those who conducted projects without training. Those whose projects involved training are also more likely to have heard about Acas Projects at a previous training event (62% compared with 27%), or through an Acas email or newsletter (56% compared with 38%).

3.4 Marketing strategies for the service

3.4.1 Qualitative research

The collaborative business workshops were attended by senior HR professionals, some of whom had previously used the Workplace Projects service, and some of whom had not. Participants were asked about the types of information that would encourage them to find out more about Acas services generally and Acas Workplace Projects specifically.

As might be expected with this type of audience, participants felt bombarded with general marketing material for different organisations and services. Another challenge was that many were unconvinced of the need to engage specific external support on the topics covered by Acas services (something that will be considered in more detail in the next chapter).

Overall, participants' preferences reflect the experiences reported in the telephone survey: they wanted to be able to seek out information when they needed it (e.g. from the website) or to rely on their existing relationship with Acas (through an adviser or

email updates). This also applied to participants who were "non-users" of Workplace Projects, since it transpired that all attendees reported at least some experience of using other Acas services, such as using the helpline to check guidelines. In particular, some specified the advantage of the website as being able to go into more detail as and when required, including the use of case studies.

As such, the challenges associated with marketing unfamiliar Acas services to this audience are considerable, with any communication materials needing to have considerable impact.

> *"There is so much noise out there [external communications], I just don't want any more approaches."*

> HR professional, business workshop

As a result participants were largely sceptical about the potential for mass-marketing to engage them with Acas services. Instead they highlighted the importance of receiving communications at the right time, when they are seeking information or advice about a relevant issue. However, they had few suggestions for how to achieve this in practice, other than ensuring that general advice pages on the Acas website point to details about more intensive support offered by Acas. One also mentioned the importance of using Acas training courses and conference speakers to highlight the expertise and wider support available through the organisation. This may be particularly useful to note, given that many participants stated that they needed to be shown that Acas has expertise in areas that they are not particularly known for, such as working on payment and grading arrangements or on bullying and harassment.

> *"The advisers are very good, helpful and knowledgeable. That experience comes across in the way they train. They were very accommodating in relation to dates and when they could run the courses. They worked around the needs of our business."*

> HR professional, business workshop

Other suggestions of how Acas could better market their services included the idea of selling their advisers' individual expertise more, much as a private company would, by detailing the background of the advisers, their experience and skills. Some participants stressed that they would need to learn of advisers' expertise before they would consider using Acas for a different type of project. Whilst they trusted Acas' abilities in mediation and relationship-building, they would want to see evidence of their experience before thinking about using Acas for working on employment policies and procedures, where they might expect the adviser to have legal experience, or for solving specific problems such as bullying or harassment, where they might expect the adviser to be ex-HR.

Participants were positive about Acas emails as they include a succinct synopsis of a relevant news story, along with links to further information. Social media was regarded as being a potential communication channel by some participants, with LinkedIn discussions considered a good way to communicate information. Opinions were divided on the use of Acas Twitter feeds for HR professionals, with some viewing this positively, whilst others said they preferred separate "social" and "professional" media. Some suggested, however, that it made sense for Acas to communicate with employees via Twitter. In general, there was a feeling that traditional media (e.g. brochures in hard copy) could get lost in the huge amount of material participants currently receive.

Participants at each workshop were shown the 'In-company business solutions' brochure which details the services available from Acas. Initially, feedback about the brochure

focused on the look and feel of the document. The overall impression was that – irrespective of the quality of the content – the length of the leaflet was a barrier to engagement. The amount of text meant that participants said they would be unlikely to read it unless they had actively sought this type of information.

"I receive a lot of communications and this is just too long for me to read."

HR professional, business workshop

 "I read about 5% of it. For example, the Vodafone case study. I read the introduction and thought 'OK, I have the gist of that' and moved on."

HR professional, business workshop

When they engaged with the content further, participants acknowledged that the information could be relevant to them in the right circumstances. They felt it helped them understand to some extent how it might be appropriate for Acas to become involved in supporting businesses in new and unfamiliar ways. In particular, the use of case studies was welcomed as a good way of communicating the benefits of any service to businesses. However, participants did not feel that under normal circumstances they would have engaged with the detailed information included in the brochure.

Some said that they would probably only skim read the brochure, and that it did not inform them briefly and succinctly enough *why* Acas was offering these services. One participant suggested a clearer message and structure would improve the brochure, informing the reader (i) that they might be surprised to learn that Acas works in these areas; (ii) that Acas has experts in these areas; (iii) that they have done successful work in these areas, presenting a case study; and (iv) that Acas can help if you have problems in these areas. Several participants were also very keen to know the cost of these services, and suggested that this should be presented in the leaflet.

4. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

4.1 Satisfaction

4.1.1 Telephone survey

The majority of users of Acas Workplace Projects are positive about the experience. Nine in ten management representatives and employee representatives (90% and 87% respectively), are satisfied with the Acas Project exercise. Indeed, two in three management representatives (64%) and half of employee representatives (53%) are very satisfied. Just seven per cent of management representatives and eight per cent of employee representatives are dissatisfied.

This pattern of very high satisfaction among both groups, with management representatives being slightly more likely to express strong feelings of satisfaction, repeats that of the previous wave in 2009. The findings on satisfaction were not significantly different between 2009 and 2012 (satisfaction went from 95% to 90% for management representatives and from 96% to 87% for employee representatives, but the small base sizes mean that this change cannot be considered statistically significant and overall satisfaction remains very high).

Fig 4.1 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Acas Project exercise?
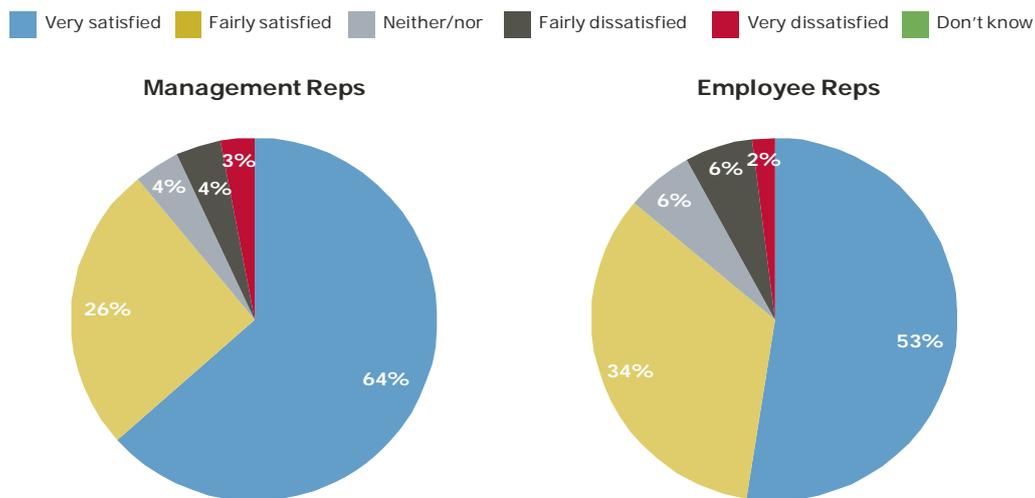
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Satisfaction with the Acas Workplace Project exercise does not appear to be influenced by the level of payment, with no significant difference in satisfaction levels between those involved in fee-waived projects and those whose project was charged: 91% of those involved in charged projects and 85% of those involved in fee-waived projects expressed satisfaction, but this difference is not statistically significant. The sub-sample of matched cases also shows a similar pattern to the overall sample in terms of satisfaction.

Representatives involved with training projects tend to be more satisfied (71% say they are very satisfied, compared to 50% of representatives when the project did not involve training).

Projects that aimed to address management and trade union relationships or solving specific problems resulted in slightly lower levels of satisfaction relative to other types of projects.

4.1.2 Qualitative research

In the collaborative business workshops, participants' spontaneous feedback about Acas was on the whole very positive. Acas was described as trustworthy, pragmatic, consistent and accurate in the information, advice and support it provides. The organisation's credibility with both management and employees was seen as a key strength, and something that should be protected. These findings are consistent with the high levels of satisfaction in the quantitative survey of Acas users.

Almost all workshop participants, including non-users of Workplace Projects, had drawn on Acas services in the past. Their engagement with Acas ranged from some who had simply used the website as a source of information to those that had recently carried out specific Workplace Projects to deal with an issue in their business.

Those who have an ongoing relationship with Acas said they often use the organisation as a 'sounding board' for their own ideas to make sure that policies and decision-making are on the right track. They appreciate the fact that Acas provides good advice, ultimately allowing them to decide on the best course of action for their organisation.

4.2 Recommending Acas

These very high levels of satisfaction are mirrored by a strong willingness to recommend Acas to colleagues and other professional contacts facing similar situations. The findings are similar among both management and employee representatives (93% and 91% respectively say they would be likely to recommend Acas). Indeed, more than seven in ten of both groups say they would be very likely to do so (74% of management representative and 72% of employee representatives).

Fig 4.2 How likely or unlikely would you be to recommend Acas Projects to a colleague or other professional contact?
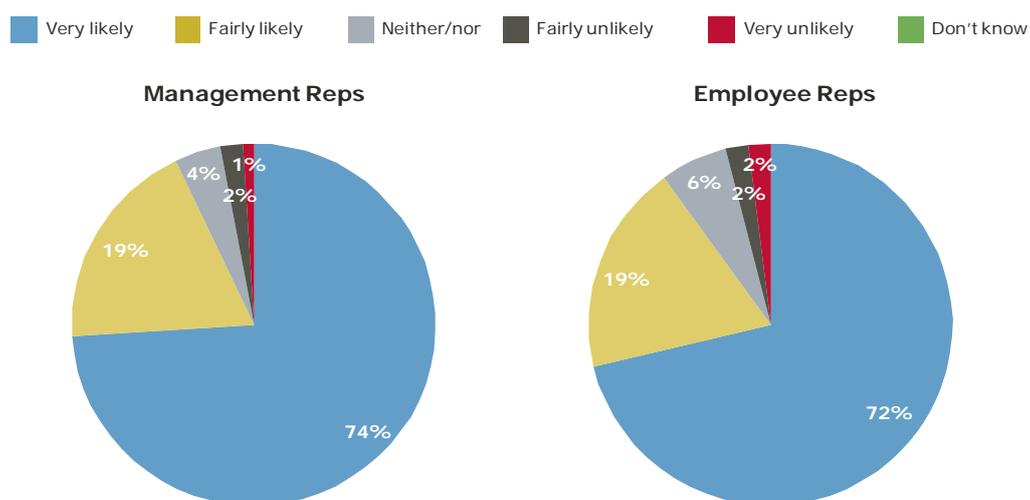
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
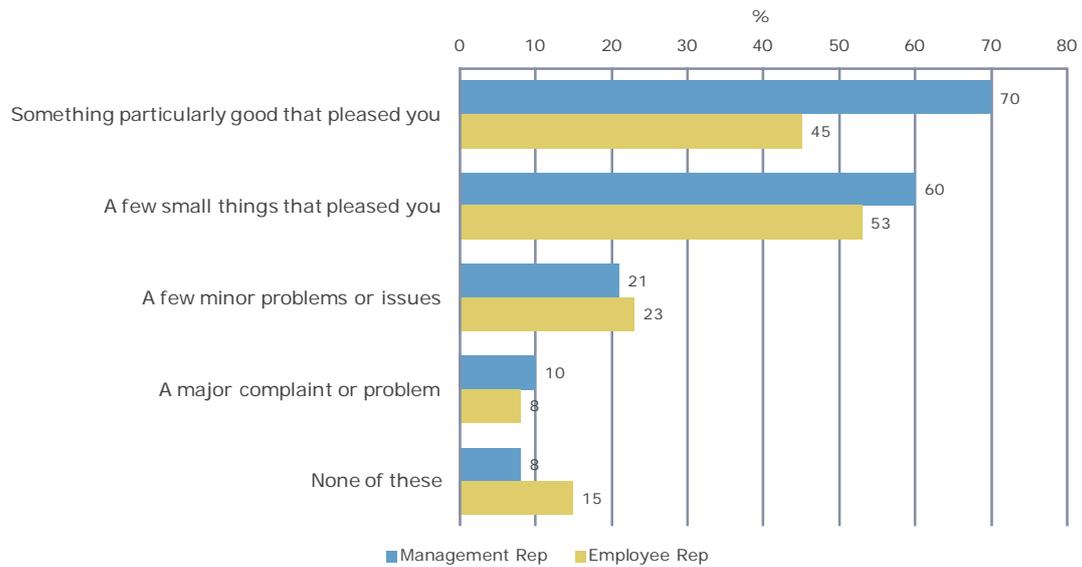
Source: Ipsos MORI

4.3 Experience

Again reflecting high levels of satisfaction, a large majority of both management representatives and employee representatives experienced something that pleased them during the exercise (85% and 74% respectively). Management representatives are slightly more positive about the experience than employee representatives with 70% saying they experienced something particularly good that pleased them and 60% a few small things that pleased them, compared to 45% and 53% for employee representatives.

However, despite a large number having a positive experience, a significant minority experienced problems with the project, which may be unsurprising given the nature of the issues that they are seeking help with. More than a quarter of both management representatives and employee representatives reported experiencing problems with the project. Indeed, one in ten management representatives (10%) and a similar proportion of employee representatives (eight per cent) say that they had a major complaint or problem.

Fig 4.3 Thinking about the Acas Project, did you experience any of the following?
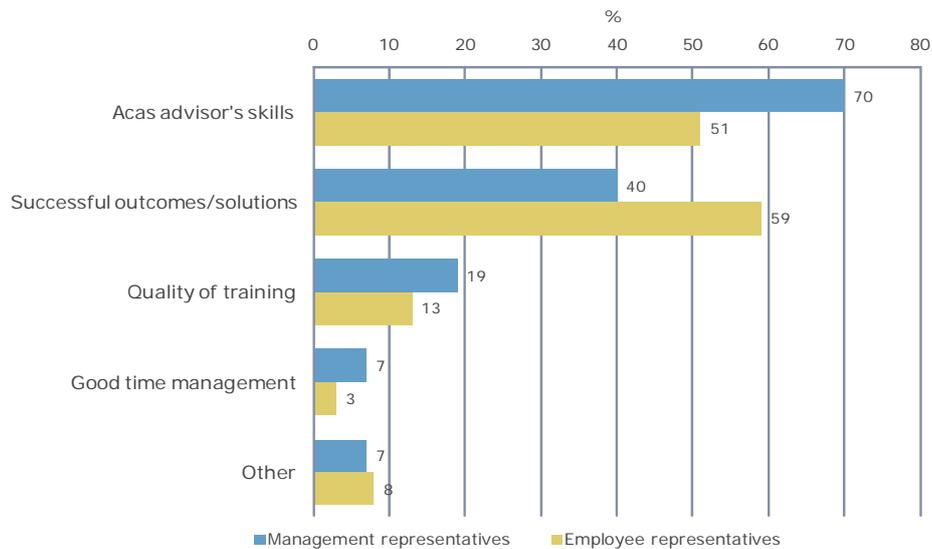

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those who experienced something which pleased them were asked to identify what it was. Respondents suggested a wide range of things which can be grouped into some clear themes.

These groupings show that one of the strongest influencers of satisfaction with Acas is the skill of advisers. Seven in ten management representatives (70%) and half of employee representatives (51%) spontaneously suggest that they were pleased by the Acas adviser's skills.

Fig 4.4 Thinking about what pleased you, can you tell us what happened?
(Open-ended responses, coded)

Base: All who experienced something that pleased them – 89 Management representatives and 39 Employee representatives; 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

These skills include being knowledgeable and understanding (24% of management representatives and 13% of employee representatives), professional and efficient (21% and 21%), impartial and fair (11% and 10%), and giving good practical advice (10% and 15%). Examples of such quotes include:

> *"It was to do with the Acas representative rather than Acas as a whole. He was very personable and supportive, very professional and very thorough. He gave everybody the opportunity to contribute but kept everything on track time-wise. He facilitated the meeting extremely well. On a slightly more personal level, because the adviser shared his business card with everyone on the panel I felt I could approach the representative on other issues outside the working party for signposting or advice. I felt that he was so personable and so professional I felt I could ring him and ask who I might go to in Acas for a particular bit of advice - and that is on a personal level as an employee."*

<div align="center">Employee representative</div>

The combination of expert knowledge and inclusivity is valued by many:

> *"The two advisers that held our hands through the process had an excellent knowledge base."*

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

> *"[The adviser's] ability to work with the trade union and the managers and help them reach equal goals. He was a good mediator. His knowledge, because when [the Trade Union] had requested formal recognition - most of the solicitors we contacted were a bit cagey about the process (because most companies in this day and age already recognise the union, and we have operated for about thirty years without the union) - the adviser was able to talk us through the process and explain what we needed to do. In the joint training that he ran for the*

managers and the trade union, the examples he used were really good and got everyone thinking."

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

In addition, it is appreciated when advisers make themselves available:

"When we requested them to come on site to the company to arbitrate they were happy to do that. The presentation and handouts they gave to the group were very good. The promptness. Being able to get in touch with them. A reasonable timescale for answering questions. They helped us to find common ground."

<div align="center">Employee representative</div>

The ability to manage the discussion whilst also maintaining buy-in was recognised:

"She had a good understanding of the problems we were trying to deal with. The structure of the mediation was positive. Everyone felt their voice was heard and she presented those issues particularly well. She was open in her discussion. Her impartiality and assertiveness, which was necessary in that setting, were excellent."

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

"I felt I was being given very good unbiased information based on real world situations, rather than a pure legal interpretation of the law. I felt that we were valued, that they had a genuine interest in what we were trying to do."

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

Also, work undertaken to deliver a truly tailored approach is seen to be important:

"A range of things: a level of professionalism; the pragmatic approach of the trainer which provided a relevant workplace solution; the expertise of the trainer. I was really impressed with the actual preparation that Acas undertook before embarking on the project. They actually took time to get to know the organisation. It was a more bespoke offer than we would have got from anywhere else."

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

4.3.1 Nature of problems with projects

Respondents who had experienced problems were also asked to explain what had happened. Although a small base size, a few key themes emerge from the verbatim responses. Firstly, when people suggest that they experienced a few problems in some instances they are referring to the project as a whole or an internal issue they experienced in their workplace, not specifically with Acas' handling of the project. For example:

"Most of the problems were internal and nothing to do with Acas - employee engagement, employee understanding, keeping the job evaluation team interested over a long process."

<div align="center">Management representative</div>

The second key theme to emerge is related to Acas not meeting expectations. In some cases these are relatively minor complaints around misunderstandings or difficulties in

co-ordinating diaries, but there is a recurrent theme that a minority are unhappy with the quality of the final report they receive, particularly in terms of expectations that the report would contain more concrete recommendations.

"The only issue of the delivery was the report we received. It wasn't constructed as a report to analyse anything, it was purely a report. The thoughts were just listed as headings, nothing extracted from the thoughts."

Management representative

"We had a problem with the report Acas produced afterwards. We resolved that by the Acas representative coming to speak to senior management and go over the content."

Employee representative

4.4 Acas adviser

Given the importance of the Acas adviser to satisfaction, it is useful to explore perceptions of the advisers in more detail. Overall, Acas advisers are very well regarded, by both management representatives and employee representatives. These findings are similar to 2009, when advisers' impartiality, technical skills, understanding of the subject matter, and people skills were all valued and viewed positively.[6]

Firstly, on their softer skills, respondents are very positive about advisers (as seen in the verbatim comments above). All employee representatives and 96% of management representatives say that their adviser was good at maintaining an impartial stance. Indeed, 83% of management representatives and 81% of employee representatives say that they are very good.. In the matched case sub-sample management representatives are slightly more positive about the impartiality of the adviser than the employee representatives (93% and 71% rate the adviser as very good on this aspect).

A similarly high proportion say that Acas advisers are good at developing a good relationship with participants involved in the project (93% of management representatives and 92% of employee representatives). The proportion of management representatives who say advisers are very good at developing relationships with participants did not show a significant statistical difference from the 2009 figure (the relatively small base size means that results, from 80% in 2009 to 70% in 2012, cannot be considered to be different with statistical confidence).

Management and employee representatives also continue to be very positive about advisers' understanding of the issues facing their workplace. Nine in ten management representatives and employee representatives rate advisers as good (92% and 94% respectively), with seven in ten rating them as very good. This is similar to 2009.

Nine in ten management representatives and employee representatives rate the adviser's skill in encouraging discussions between participants as good (88% and 91% respectively) with around three in four saying they are very good. Again, there has been no change since 2009.

The balance of opinion is similarly positive around whether the adviser followed through on anything they promised to do; 86% of management representatives and 79% of employee representatives rate this as good. Although this is slightly lower than other

---

[6] Broughton A., Pearmain D. and Cox A. (2010), An Integrated Evaluation of Acas Workplace Projects - based on survey and case study findings

measures, this is driven by a slightly higher proportion saying that it is not relevant to them (nine per cent of management representatives and 15% of employee representatives) rather than higher proportions rating the adviser as poor.

Fig 4.5 *Views of Acas adviser (1)*

Thinking about the way the Acas Project was conducted, how would you rate the Acas adviser in terms of the following?
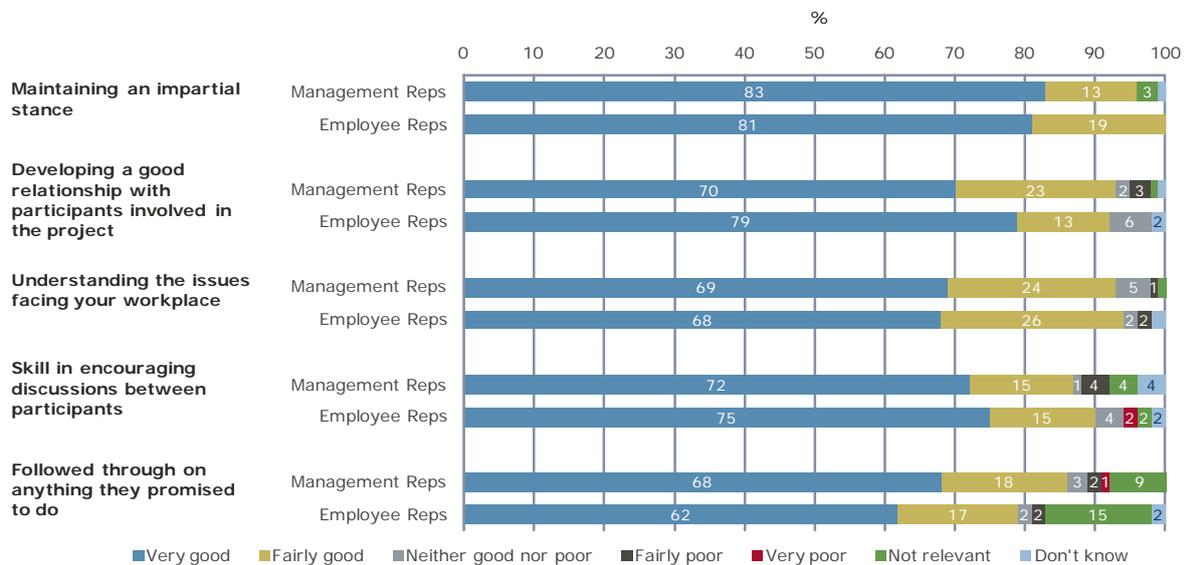
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Views are also positive when considering advisers' technical skills, although the proportions rating each aspect as very good is somewhat lower than for softer relationship skills. Firstly, respondents rate advisers' experience very highly: 94% of both management representatives and employee representatives rate this as good, with 84% and 77% respectively rating it as very good.

Overall, 78% of management representatives and 75% of employee representatives say that advisers are good at providing enough information in advance, but this falls to 54% and 42% respectively saying they are very good. A small minority – seven per cent of management representatives and six per cent of employee representatives – rate them as poor.

The figures are similar when it comes to helping participants consider others' point of view. Sixty-eight per cent of employee representatives say that the adviser helped them to understand the management's point of view and 77% of management representatives feel that the adviser helped them to understand the employee's point of view. Just two per cent of each group feel that the adviser was poor in this respect, with 23% of employee representatives and 17% of management representatives saying that this was not relevant to their case.

Three-quarters of management representatives (76%) and employee representatives (75%) rate their adviser as good at being up-to-date with the latest relevant techniques. No employee representatives and just three per cent of management representatives say that they are poor.

Just over two in three management representatives and employee representatives say that advisers are good at providing tailored advice or assistance relevant to their organisation or sector (both 68%); again only a minority of 4% rate this as poor, with around one in five saying it is not relevant to them.

Fig 4.6 *Views of Acas adviser (2)*

And how would you rate the Acas adviser in terms of the following areas of expertise?
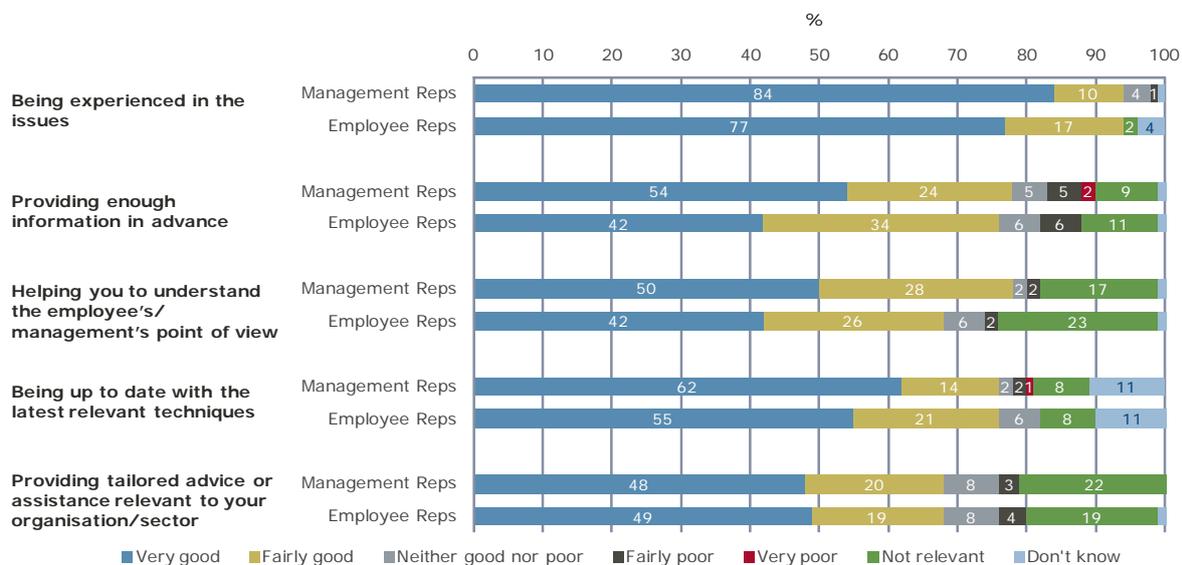
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
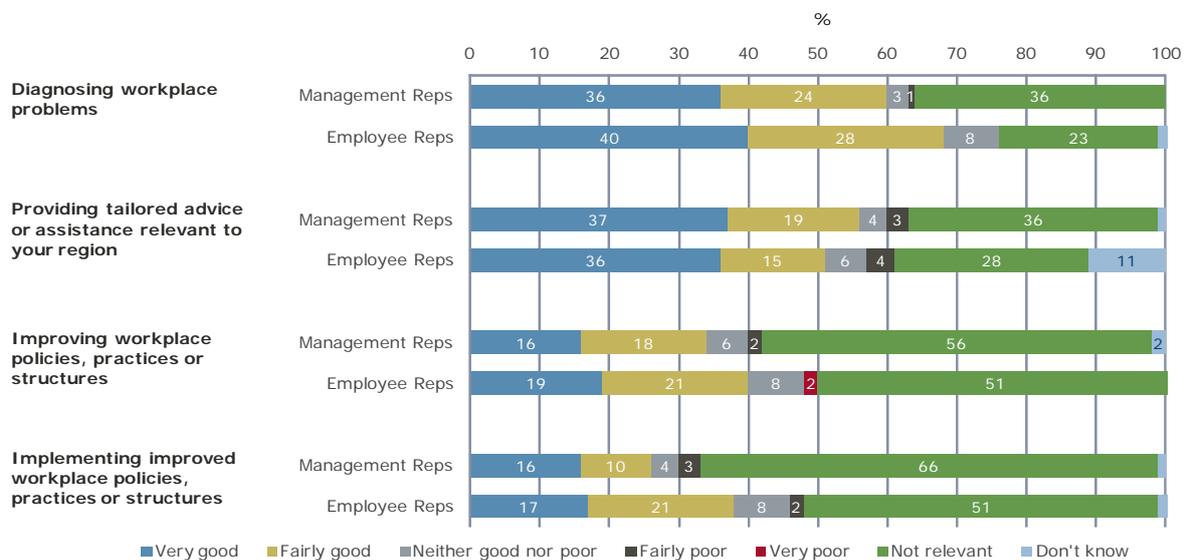
Source: Ipsos MORI

On other aspects of advisers' technical expertise, large proportions of respondents said that they were not relevant to their case.[7] However, among those who are able to give a rating, a clear majority of both management representatives and employee representatives rate their adviser's ability to diagnose workplace problems, provide tailored advice or assistance relevant to their region, improve workplace policies, practices or cultures and implementing improved workplace policies, practices or structures as either fairly good or very good.

---

[7] These additional aspects of the advisers' expertise comprised: 'Diagnosing workplace problems' (32% of all employee and management reps combined reported this as Not Relevant), 'Providing tailored advice or assistance relevant to your region' (34% Not Relevant), 'Improving workplace policies, practices and structures' (54% Not Relevant), and 'Implementing improved workplace policies, practices and structures' (61% Not Relevant).

Fig 4.7 *Views of Acas adviser (3)*

And how would you rate the Acas adviser in terms of the following areas of expertise?

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

4.5 Improving the effectiveness of services

4.5.1 Qualitative research

The large majority of workshop participants gave positive feedback about Acas and, with only two exceptions, were generally happy with their experiences of Acas services. The key quality that attendees recognised in Acas was impartiality, and Acas' core work was seen as helping to mediate internal conflicts and to facilitate resolution. This would usually be when participants would seek to involve Acas in more in-depth work, with some specifying that "you only go to Acas when things get really bad." Nevertheless, participants did identify some potential areas for improvement.

Participants' two main areas for improvement focused on being able to easily access Acas advisers' expertise, and ensuring sustained change following a project or other specific support. There were no concerns about the quality or independence of the support and advice offered during the course of a Workplace Project or other Acas involvement. As such, the issues participants raised highlighted the general priority they placed on receiving tailored, expert support that makes a real difference to employees and management over the long term.

> *"The support needs to be tailored – it needs to be what you need and not what the consultant thinks you need at the time. Circumstances change all the time and they need to be flexible."*

> HR professional, business workshop

Firstly, there was some concern that the case load of Acas advisers has become too demanding to allow them time to look at individual cases with the attention and the speed they require. One participant's Acas contact has more than 100 cases to deal with

at a time, raising worries that specific queries may not be resolved within timescales and with enough care and attention.

> *"As soon as I realised that he had that many cases I made sure I rang everyday so that I was top of the list. It was the only way I knew that my case would be dealt with."*

<div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

As a consequence of heavy workloads, there was also an impression Acas advisers are less well known to companies than they were in the past. This means developing an ongoing relationship with advisers – something participants said they value – is increasingly challenging. This was mirrored by a more general concern about customer care and responsiveness (although this is often something that emerges when workshop participants are probed on potential improvements to a service).

> *"I used to know my old representative; in fact I ended up going to his wedding. It is much more faceless now. I can understand that times need to change, but it is more difficult this way."*

<div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

Several specifically wanted to be able to develop ongoing working relationships with individuals they had previously worked successfully with. This was viewed to be difficult, partly because advisors were seen as difficult to get hold of, and partly because they felt unable to request specific advisors to work with. Also, it was pointed out that if Acas wish to offer services similar to those of lawyers and consultants, such as helping with procedures or solving specific problems, then the client would want their adviser to be available to speak to them much more readily.

Participants discussed the importance of good follow-up to ensure that the recommendations or changes made as a result of Workplace Projects continue to be implemented in practice. They said they would value the adviser getting in contact a few months after a project finishes as a way of reminding organisations of the outcomes of the project and acting as a further mechanism to keep them accountable for sustaining change within the workplace. This repeats with the finding of 'Looking Back to Move Forward,' the 2011 review of previous Acas survey data, which concluded that "advisers could routinely offer some form of supplementary follow-up service to help clients to overcome organisational barriers to implementing the changes identified in the Workplace Projects".[8]

4.6 The overall appeal of services

4.6.1 Qualitative research

During the collaborative business workshops participants were shown summaries of some of the key areas currently covered by Acas business solutions:

- Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices;

- Improving workplace relationships by helping employees work together better;

---

[8] Cooper J. (2011) *Looking back to look forward: Assessing the impacts of Acas workplace projects.* Acas Research and Evaluation section: p.54.
http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=3269&p=0

- Improving workplace relationships by helping management and employees/employee representatives (e.g. trade union reps) work together better;

- Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations;

- Helping the organisation to update HR policies and procedures; and

- Helping to formulate new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.

Awareness of many of these services was low, even among current Acas Workplace Project users, and several participants expressed surprise. Indeed, many had spontaneous reservations about Acas offering this breadth of services (they did not know that Acas already did offer all of these services), expressing concern that Acas could be extending its reach too far, potentially at a cost to its reputation. They also pointed out that several types of Workplace Projects (from organisational change to updating policies) would usually be dealt with in-house by the HR team, or by employment solicitors.

"We rely on in-house expertise, built up over years using advice from Acas and others."

HR professional, business workshop

In general, seeking specific external support was seen as confined to more serious legal or grievance issues.

"You wouldn't need to go external until it became a bit more serious – for example when you're looking at redundancies."

HR professional, business workshop

Overall participants emphasised the importance of Acas protecting its reputation as an independent organisation that is trusted by both employers and employees. Many worried that if employees get the impression that Acas is heavily involved in 'management' activities such as changing business processes (e.g. pay and grading policies) or developing staff surveys, their core reputation for impartiality could be damaged. Most viewed Acas offering all these services as a move too far towards areas already covered by private sector consultants or industry specialists. Some, however, assumed that the Business Solutions brand must refer to a separate and distinct arm of Acas, with a different type of adviser/consultant who has more expertise in technical areas than typical advisers have. One participant also pointed out that it is in Acas' nature to sit on the fence where an issue is in dispute, but that businesses would expect them to provide stronger advice about the right decision to make if, for example, they were engaged to help them define their policies.

There was a consensus that many of these services would be unnecessary for larger organisations, who would already have invested in specialist HR professionals and a legal team. As such, many thought that Acas would benefit by targeting smaller businesses, who might be seeking help in initially forming employment policies and procedures, and who might have smaller budgets for support, perhaps not wishing to invest in internal resources. Many of the workshop participants thought focussing on smaller organisations was an area where Acas could improve: some suggested that the use of Vodafone as a case study in the brochure would not necessarily be seen by smaller clients as proof that they would receive the same kind of service.

There was much interest in the cost of the service: some workshop participants speculated that it would need to be significantly cheaper than the day-rates for legal representation or private consultation for it to be attractive. In particular, many said that these were services that they would "shop around for," and would not simply commission them on the spot.

On the other hand, some of the types of support Acas offers were seen as consistent with the organisation's perceived expertise (particularly anything around directly improving workplace relationships), and were welcomed by participants even if they were not familiar with these before the discussion.

Participants also felt that Acas already offers free advice on many of the issues addressed by Business Solutions. There was a perception that if you seek advice then there will be no charge, but if you describe it as a project or an initiative then there will be a fee. They also pointed out that many of these types of support (detailed below) were covered by their internal HR expertise or could be gained from free sources on the internet.

Finally, there was concern about where the resources were coming from to develop these services and ensure Acas has the right level of expertise to conduct projects successfully. Participants felt that attention and resources should be prioritised on the core remit of Acas as a service focused on workplace relations.

Taking each of the types of project support in turn:

1. *Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices*. Most participants thought that this type of project should preferably be handled by internal HR teams and external services would not be useful unless significant time (and therefore cost) was spent by the provider in order to understand the challenges faced by the organisation. However, where participants thought that they might buy in such a service, they would want to have a detailed proposal and have a personal contact representing Acas (or another provider) so that they could be reassured about the quality of the service being offered.

    "To drill down to the specifics of an industry will by its nature be time-consuming and therefore expensive."

    HR professional, business workshop

    In the quantitative survey, 84% who described their Acas Project as involving organisational change reported overall satisfaction with how it had gone.

2. *Improving workplace relationships between employees by helping them to work together better*. Participants thought that they would use Acas for this type of support, particularly group mediation as this was seen as a key strength. Indeed some participants had already used Acas for such services in the past. Involving Acas in group mediation would be regarded as a positive step by employees, giving confidence that management were doing everything correctly. With Acas involvement, participants said they would expect any issues to be resolved much quicker than if they were not involved.

"When you've got conflict between employees, external mediation can be helpful."

<div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

In the quantitative survey, 91% who described their Acas Project as concerned with employee relationships reported overall satisfaction with the exercise.

3. *Improving workplace relationships between management and employees/employee representatives (e.g. trade union reps) by helping them work together.* This was seen as a key strength for Acas, and something participants would consider approaching Acas to help with. For example, one participant had used Acas to provide training for newly elected trade union representatives. Their organisation had given independent training to the new representatives so that employees could be reassured that they were being given unbiased information. The participant was positive about the support received.

    "That to me is what Acas services are for."

    <div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

    In the quantitative survey, 87% who described their Acas Project as concerned with the relationship between management and trade unions reported overall satisfaction with it. 90% of those whose project was concerned with the relationship between management and employees reported overall satisfaction.

    However, participants agreed that they would not consider Acas for advice on staff surveys, as this would compromise the independence of Acas in other situations they might get involved with. Participants also felt that there were other agencies with much more experience on this type of project. They also mentioned free services (e.g. Survey Monkey) which allowed companies to run these projects in-house.

    "I'm not convinced that [staff surveys] sits in this sort of package... I think you either do it in-house or you go to someone that it's their expertise... a generalist I wouldn't use."

    <div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

    Acas have recently launched a specific 'employee survey tool' as a service which can be used as part of Workplace Projects. This finding highlights the need to get the message across about the survey tool, particularly in terms of the unique value that Acas can offer.

4. *Helping the organisation to update HR policies and procedures;* and *Helping to formulate new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.* These two services were broadly regarded as being outside what participants would expect from Acas. In any case, participants said that large amounts of advice in these areas were already available elsewhere, either offered for free by Acas, via HR departments which should be up-to-date on new policies and procedures, or through information on the internet. They could not envisage buying in further services of this type.

    "If you go on to Linked-In then you can ask any question, and people are so keen to show off their work that they send you their policies for free."

    <div align="right">HR professional, business workshop</div>

<div align="center">31</div>

"It's my responsibility to update policies."

Some participants noted that the majority of policies would also need to be verified by their legal teams in any case, and having Acas support would not change that procedure.

In the quantitative survey, 92% who described their Acas Project as concerned with updating policies or procedures reported overall satisfaction with it, as did 93% of those whose project involved formulating new or amended policies or procedures.

5. *Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.* Opinions were split on whether this should form part of the core Workplace Project offering. One participant had previously called Acas in to provide support for stress management, and found that their services did help to reduce absenteeism. The support provided allowed the organisation to address stress in a new way which benefitted employees. However, other participants felt that these issues should already be covered by HR. Where the services needed to be sub-contracted out, they felt that occupational health specialists would be better to go to rather than Acas.

"I think generally you're outdoing yourself in your own HR role if you go to [external suppliers] for these."

HR professional, business workshop

In the quantitative survey, 87% of those who described their Acas Project as concerned with problem solving on a specific issue reported overall satisfaction at how the project had gone.

In addition, participants also discussed some of the specific examples used to stimulate the discussion. For example, on bullying and harassment, many felt that the role of Acas was to provide independent advice about related legal issues, rather than helping with the softer skills needed to deal with these problems. Therefore, they would seek advice about any disciplinary issues, but would not go to them to help solve a more general bullying culture. Given that the former is indeed what Acas offer as part of Business Solutions, this suggests that communication needs to be refined such that customers better understand the nature of the offer.

"What you would use Acas for is the legal and statutory implications of making a change or dealing with an issue."

HR professional, business workshop

Similarly, most participants felt it would be inappropriate for Acas to become involved in payment and grading arrangements as this would risk compromising their independence for employees. There was also a feeling that Acas advisers may not have the skills and experience to tackle these issues, some of which would usually be dealt with by employment solicitors or by other agencies able to provide information on modelling and international comparisons. Participants felt they would continue to rely on these organisations, rather than turn to Acas.

"When I saw 'payment and grading arrangements,' I thought to myself, "they're pitching themselves too high"."

HR professional, business workshop

Given that Acas already offers projects in these areas, it appears that Acas needs to communicate this to customers more effectively, showing precisely how the service offered by Acas differs from services offered by other organisations, such as solicitors or consultancies. In addition, Acas must demonstrate how and why it is qualified to offer support in these areas, and why this would be valuable to the organisation. Above all, the "joint working" approach should be emphasised, since this was not readily associated with these types of services during the business workshops.

4.7 Value for money

Acas was paid to carry out the project in 70% of cases reported by management representatives and 62% of cases reported by employee representatives (although 21% of employee representatives said that they did not know whether the organisation paid for Acas or not).

Among those who did pay Acas to carry out the project, satisfaction is high. Among management representatives 86% felt the project represented good value for money (41% felt it offered very good value for money) with just four per cent saying it offered poor value for money. Among employee representatives 60% felt the project offered good value for money (27% felt it offered very good value for money) and nine per cent felt it offered poor value for money.

Although fewer employee representatives cited value for money, 18% said they did not know, presumably because the management representatives were responsible for commissioning/ paying for the work. If we exclude 'don't know' responses, then 88% of management representatives and 74% of employee representatives say that the project offered good value for money.

Fig 4.8 *Thinking about value for money, would you say the Acas Project represented...?*
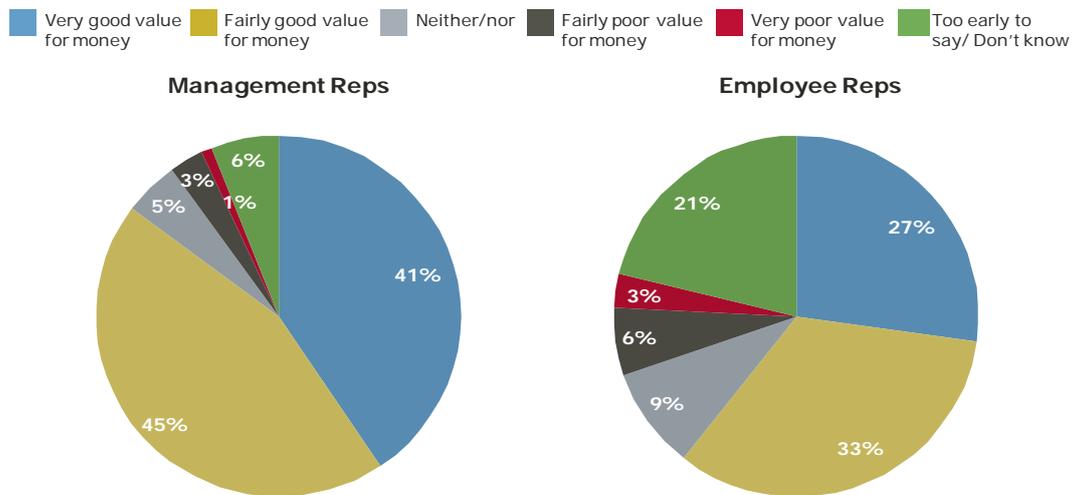
Base: All who were charged by Acas – 74 Management representatives and 33 Employee representatives; 19th March -18th May 2012
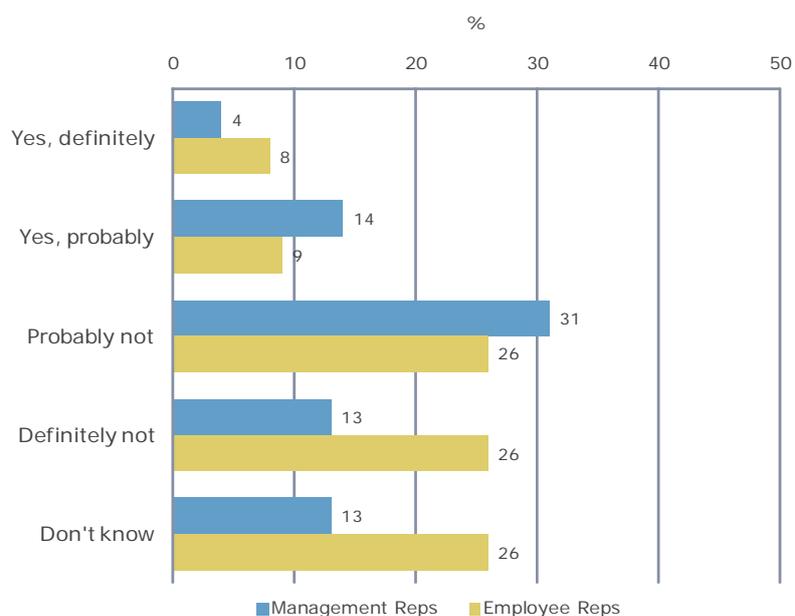
Source: Ipsos MORI

Among fee waived projects, 39% of management representatives say that they would have definitely gone ahead with the project if there had been a charge towards the advice or support they received and a further 33% said they probably would. Just one in eleven said that they would definitely not have gone ahead with the project had there been a charge (nine per cent).

4.8 Third party alternatives

Users of Acas Workplace Projects generally do not think that they could have obtained assistance of the same quality from a third party. Overall, 18% of management representatives and 17% of employee representatives think that they could obtain assistance of a similar quality, compared to 44% of management representatives and 56% of employee representatives who think that they could not.

Fig 4.9 Thinking about the support you received from Acas, do you think you could have obtained assistance of the same quality [and at a similar price/free of charge] from a third party?

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

As may be expected, those whose projects did not involve a fee are significantly more likely than those who are charged to say that they definitely could not have obtained assistance at the same quality from a third party that was also free of charge (49% compared to 29%).

However, among those who do think they could have obtained assistance of the same quality and price from a third party, most think that they would be able to do so at a price that they would be willing to pay (although small base sizes mean that this finding is indicative only).

5. IMPACT

5.1 Achieving objectives

As found in 2009, management representatives are more positive than employee representatives in their assessment of whether the main objective of the Workplace Project has been achieved.

Almost half of managers say that the main objective was fully achieved (46%) and a further third say that it was achieved to a large extent (33%). This compares to 28% of employee representatives saying that the objective has been fully achieved and 40% saying that it has been achieved to a large extent. Similar differences are also apparent in the sub-sample of matched cases (looking only at projects where both the management representative and the employee representative were interviewed).

The figures for management representatives remain very similar to 2009, but the findings indicate that there has been some improvement among employee representatives with the proportion saying that the main objective has been achieved to a large extent rising from 25% to 40% (although the proportion saying that the objective has been fully met remains stable).

Fig 5.1 *To what extent do you feel the main objective of the Acas Project was achieved?*
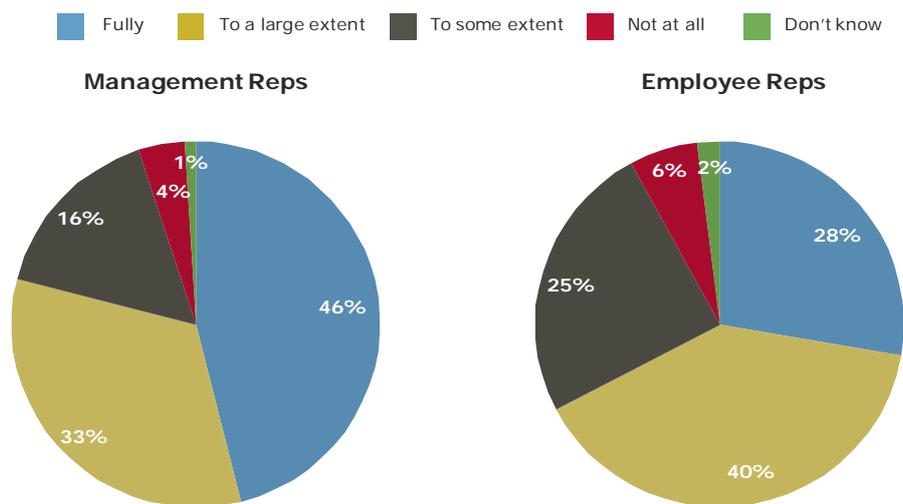
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Opinions are also more positive where the project was charged: the main objective was met for 81% of those involved in charged projects, compared to 61% of those involved in fee-waived projects.

A minority feel that their objectives have either not been met at all or only met to some extent (20% of management representatives and 31% of employee representatives). When asked why this objective has not been met this is most commonly ascribed to it being too early to say or employees not being interested in implementing the solutions, rather than being an issue with the way Acas ran the project.

5.2 Actions taken

A range of different actions have been taken as a result of Acas Projects. The most common area of impact concerns the introduction of new policies and the review or revision of existing schemes and policies. For example, 51% of management representatives and 60% of employee representatives say that they have reviewed or revised an area of practice in their workplace since the project, and 43% of management representatives and 49% of employee representatives say that they have reviewed or revised policies or procedures. In total, as a result of the Workplace Project, 64% of management representatives and 75% of employee representatives say that policies, procedures or practices have been introduced, reviewed or revised. For management representatives this represents a decrease from the 2009 findings, when 81% of management representatives reported at least one of these impacts. The change in the figure for employee representatives, from 83% in 2009, is not statistically significant.

Slightly less common is planning to make such changes, which may reflect that some of the projects have gone past the planning stage into implementation. Forty per cent of management representatives and 49% of employee representatives say that as a result of the Acas Project they have plans in place to review or revise policies and procedures. Thirty one per cent of management representatives and 45% of employee representatives say that they have plans in place to introduce policies or procedures. As would be expected, representatives are more likely to say they have introduced or updated policies and procedures when doing so was one of the aims of the project.

The least common actions resulting from Acas Projects are the introduction or development of new procedures. Thirty one per cent of managers and 43% of employee representatives have introduced policies and procedures; 13% of management representatives and 28% of employee representatives have developed a formal agreement for the operation of a consultative committee.

Fig 5.2 Which of the following actions, if any, have been taken as a result of the Acas Project?
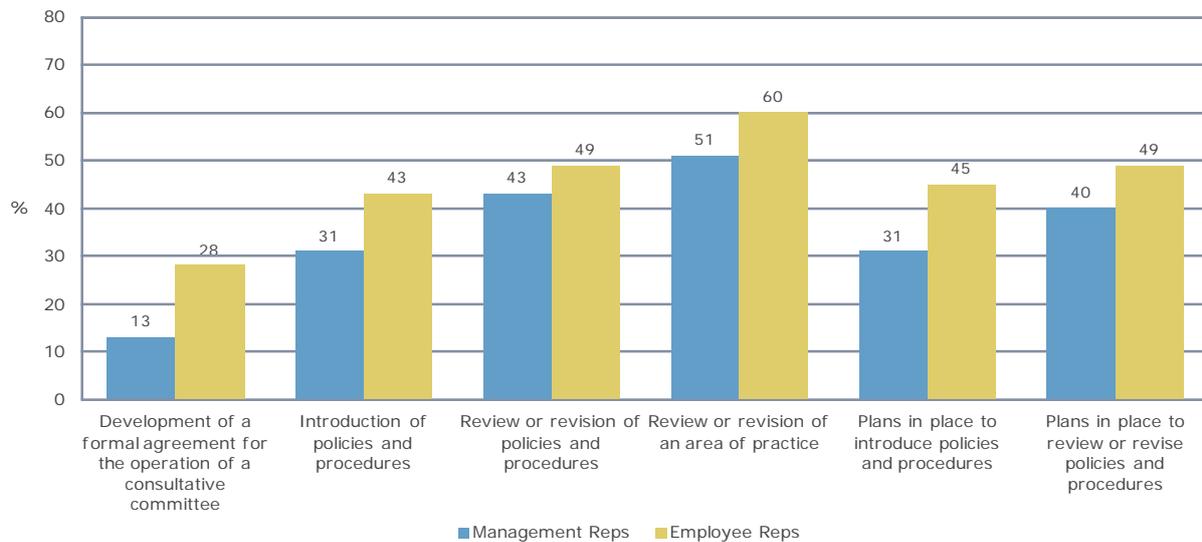
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

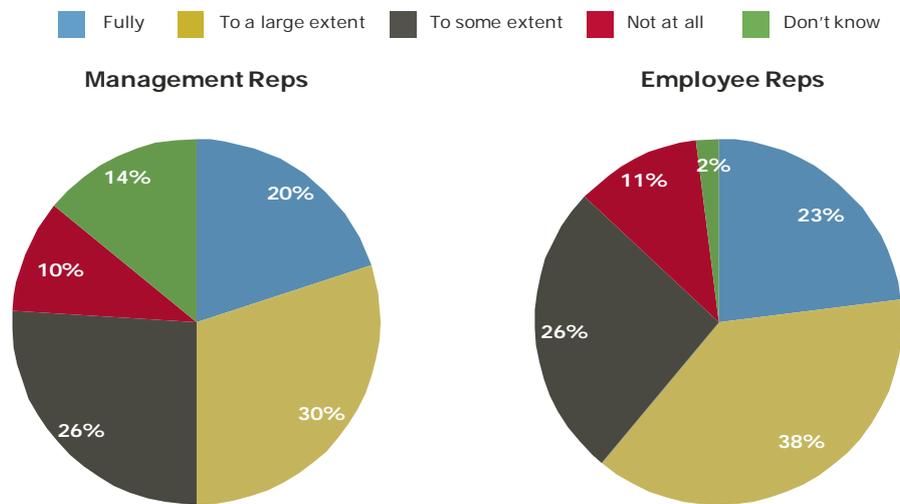*Source: Ipsos MORI*

5.3 Sustaining activities

On balance, both management representatives and employee representatives tend to give a positive assessment on the degree to which activities or initiatives arising from Workplace Projects have been sustained.

Two in five management representatives (20%) and almost a quarter of employee representatives (23%) feel that they have been able to sustain activities or initiatives fully. A further 30% of management representatives and 38% of employee representatives say that they have been able to sustain them to a large extent. This difference between the types of contact is eliminated, however, when we look only at the subset of matched cases (where both representatives were interviewed), where we find no statistically-significant difference between the opinions of management and employee representatives (54% and 57% respectively saying that activities were sustained at least to a large extent).

Among management representatives, this total of 50% stating that activities or initiatives in the workplace had been sustained either fully or to a large extent represents a fall from 2009, when two thirds felt this (67%).

One in ten management representatives (10%) and one in nine employee representatives (11%) say that they have not been able to sustain any changes at all.

Fig 5.3 To what extent have you or others in the workplace been able to sustain any activities or initiatives resulting from the Acas Project, in the period since Acas' involvement?

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Almost all projects involving training are reported to have led to at least some sustained activities (95% compared to 64% of non-training projects), which may merit further investigation.

Those involved in charged projects were more able to sustain activities resulting from the project, with 59% able to do so to at least a large extent, but only 42% of those involved in fee-waived projects observing this level of continued activity. A greater proportion of charged projects involved training than did fee-waived projects (53% and 40% respectively) hence the causality behind the more sustainable impacts remains unclear.

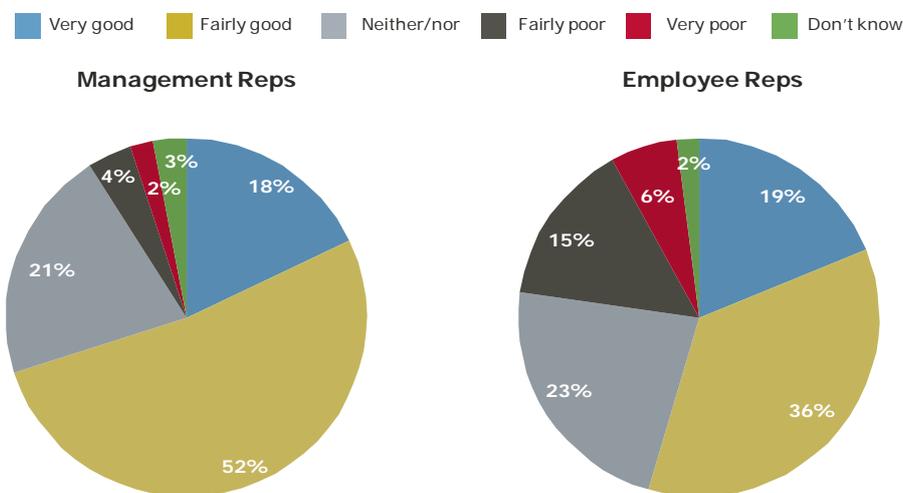## 5.4 Relations between managers and employees

Both management representatives and employee representatives are fairly positive about the current state of management-employee relations, although as found in 2009 management representatives tend to be more positive.

Half of management representatives say that the relationship between management and employees is fairly good (52%) and a further 18% say that relations are very good, meaning that overall 70% rate their relationship as good. This compares with 55% among employee representatives although, perhaps surprisingly, a similar proportion of employees rate their relations as very good (19%), but fewer think it is fairly good (36%).

As in 2009, employee representatives are more likely to be negative about the relationship with management, with 21% rating their relationship as poor, compared to six per cent of management representatives.

The views of management representatives are largely unchanged on 2009, the difference not being statistically significant.

Fig 5.4 How would you rate the current relationship between management and employees generally at this workplace?

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
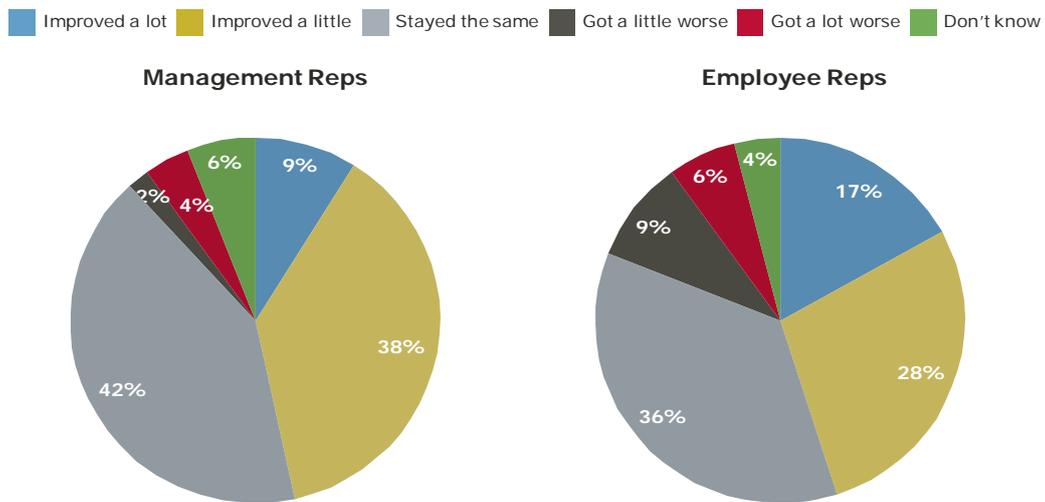
Source: Ipsos MORI

Almost half of management and employee representatives say that there have been improvements in relations between the two following the Acas Workplace Project (47% and 45% respectively), which is not significantly different from the 2009 figures (42% and 40% respectively). On balance, employees tend to be slightly more negative, with 15% saying their relationship has got worse since the Acas Project compared to six per cent of management representatives. The most common answer among both management and employee representatives is that relations have stayed the same (42% and 36% respectively).

Of those who feel that relations have improved since the Acas Project, most attribute this in part to the Acas Project, but not fully. Two per cent of management representatives attribute the improvement in relations fully to the Acas Project, but none of the employee representatives do. Half of employees attribute the improvement to Acas to a large extent (54%) compared to 31% of management representatives, while 63% of management representatives say that the improvement was down to Acas to some extent compared to a third of employee representatives (33%).

Thirteen per cent of employee representatives and four per cent of management representatives say that the improvement in relations between management and employees is not at all attributable to the Acas Project.
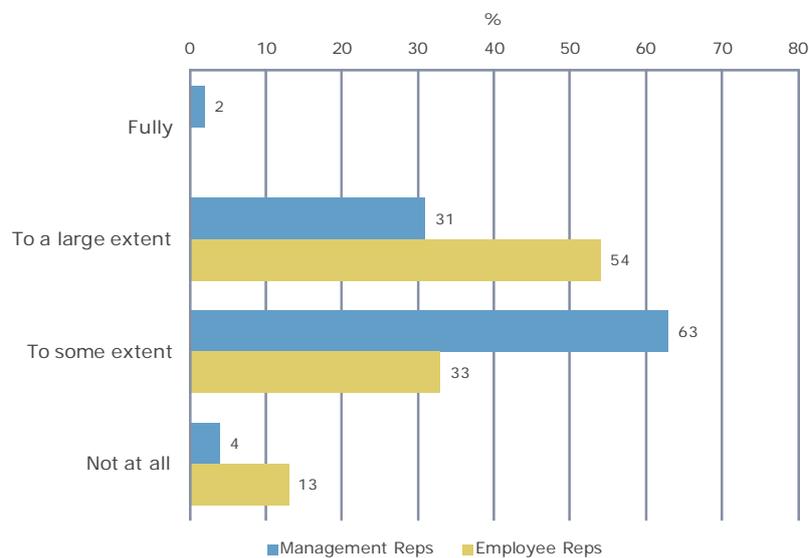
Fig 5.5 Has this relationship improved, stayed the same or worsened since the time before the Acas Project?

Improved a lot ■ Improved a little ■ Stayed the same ■ Got a little worse ■ Got a lot worse ■ Don't know ■

Management Reps

9%

38%

42%

2% 4% 6%

Employee Reps

17%

28%

36%

9% 6% 4%

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

Fig 5.6 To what extent, if any, can this improvement be attributed to the Acas Project?

%

Fully	Management: 2
To a large extent	Management: 31, Employee: 54
To some extent	Management: 63, Employee: 33
Not at all	Management: 4, Employee: 13

■ Management Reps ■ Employee Reps

Base: All those whose relationship between management and staff have improved: 49 Management representatives and 24 Employee representatives; 19 March – 18 May 2012
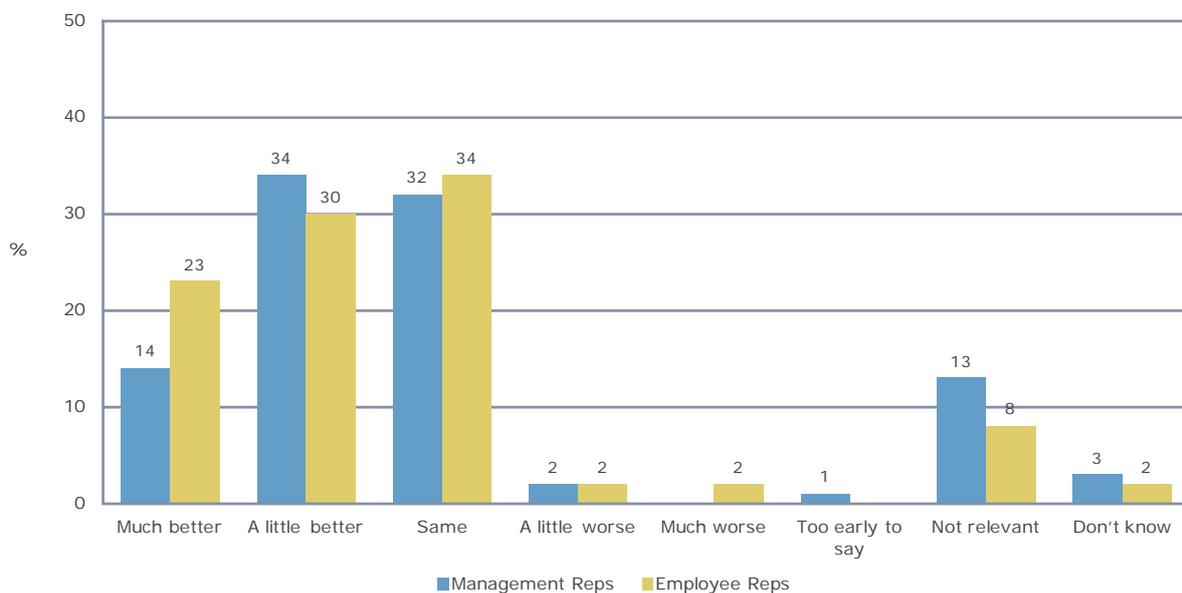
Source: Ipsos MORI

It is also worth exploring the impact of the Project on different aspects of management-employee relations.

41

5.4.1 Day to day working relationships

There is a degree of consistency between the views of management and employee representatives on the extent to which they believe day to day working relationships have improved as a result of the Acas Project. Around half of both management representatives (49%) and employee representatives (53%) say that day to day working relations have got better, with a third saying they have stayed the same. Only a small minority say they have got worse. These findings are in line with those of 2009.

Fig 5.7 Do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?

Day to day working relationships between management and employees

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
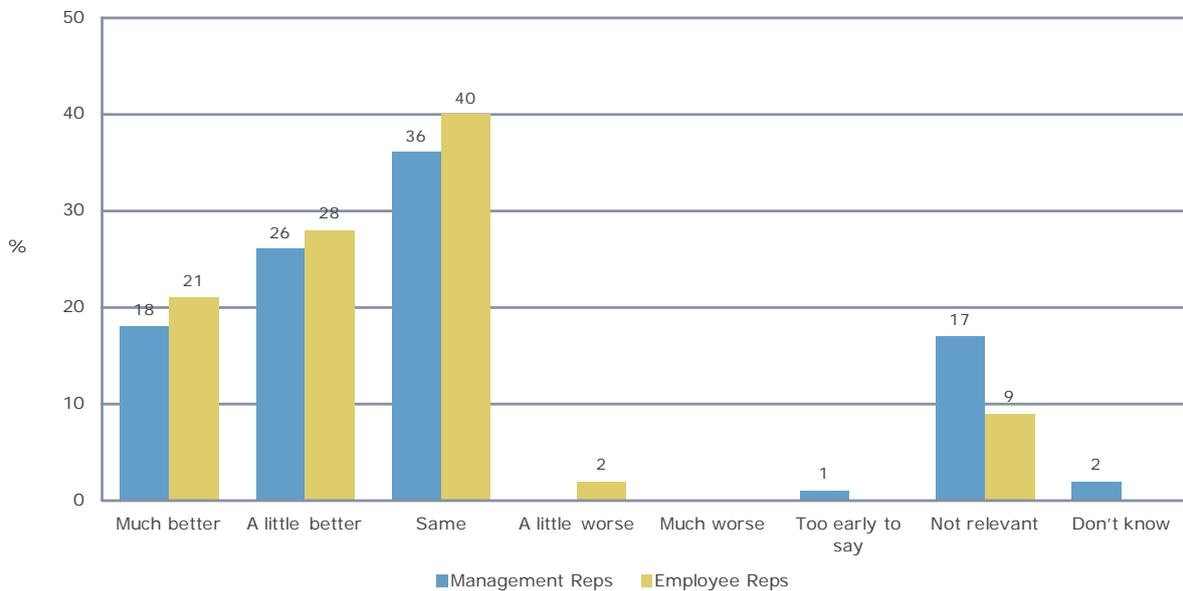
Source: Ipsos MORI

5.4.2 Fairness at work

There is also a similar pattern of responses between management and employee representatives around the impact on fairness in treatment of employees. In total, 44% of management representatives and 49% of employee representatives feel that fairness in treatment of employees improved as a result of the Acas Project, with just two per cent of employee representatives saying it got worse.

Around one in five in both groups report no change. Again, there is little change since 2009.

Fig 5.8 Do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?

Fairness in treatment of employees

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI
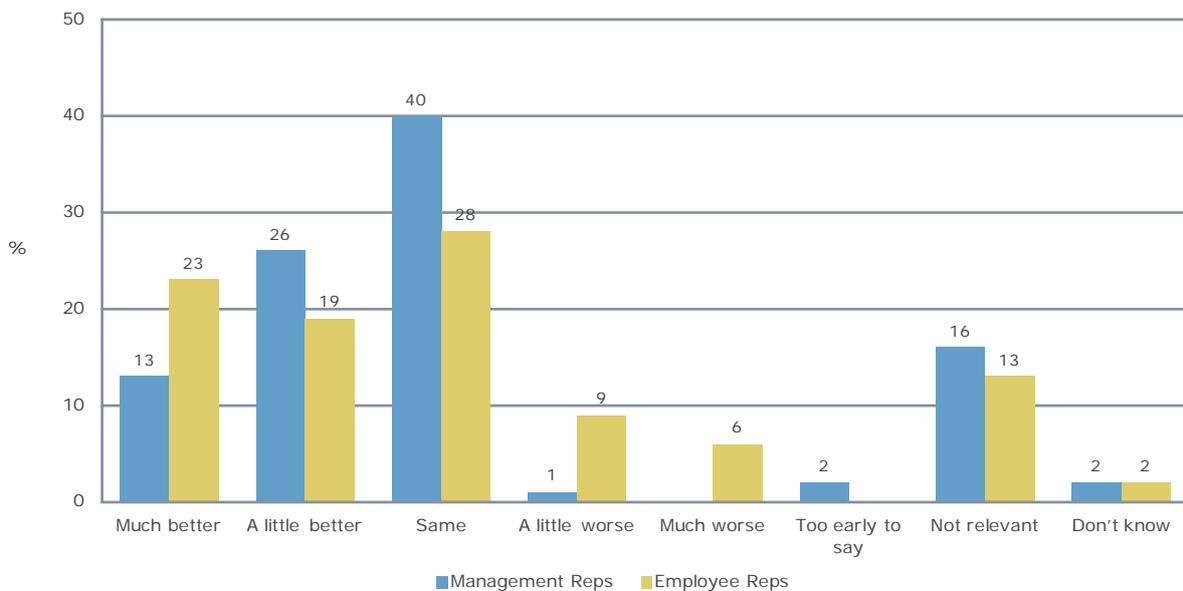
5.4.3 Employee morale

Views between management and employee representatives are also similar around the degree to which the Acas Project has raised morale. Two in five management representatives and employee representatives say that employee morale is better as a result of the Acas Project (39% and 42% respectively).

However, there has been a recent rise in the proportion of management representatives who say employee morale remains unchanged (from 21% in 2009 to 40% now), while the proportion of employee representatives remains similar.

Less encouragingly, 15% of employee representatives feel that employee morale has worsened, with six per cent saying it is much worse. This compares to one per cent of management representatives who say morale has deteriorated.

Fig 5.9 Do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?

Employee morale

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
Source: Ipsos MORI

5.4.4   Building trust

Two in five management representatives (41%) and employee representatives (43%) feel that the Acas Project has had a positive impact on trust between management and employees. This is a very similar finding to 2009.

A further two in five of both groups say that the level of trust has stayed the same and a very small percentage say that it has got worse.

Fig 5.10 Do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?

Trust between management and employees

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
Source: Ipsos MORI

5.4.5 Communication

More than half of management representatives and employee representatives think that communication has improved following the Workplace Project (54% and 55% respectively). Around a third of each group think that there has been no change. These figures largely mirror those of 2009, with no significant changes.

Fig 5.11 Do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?

Communication

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012
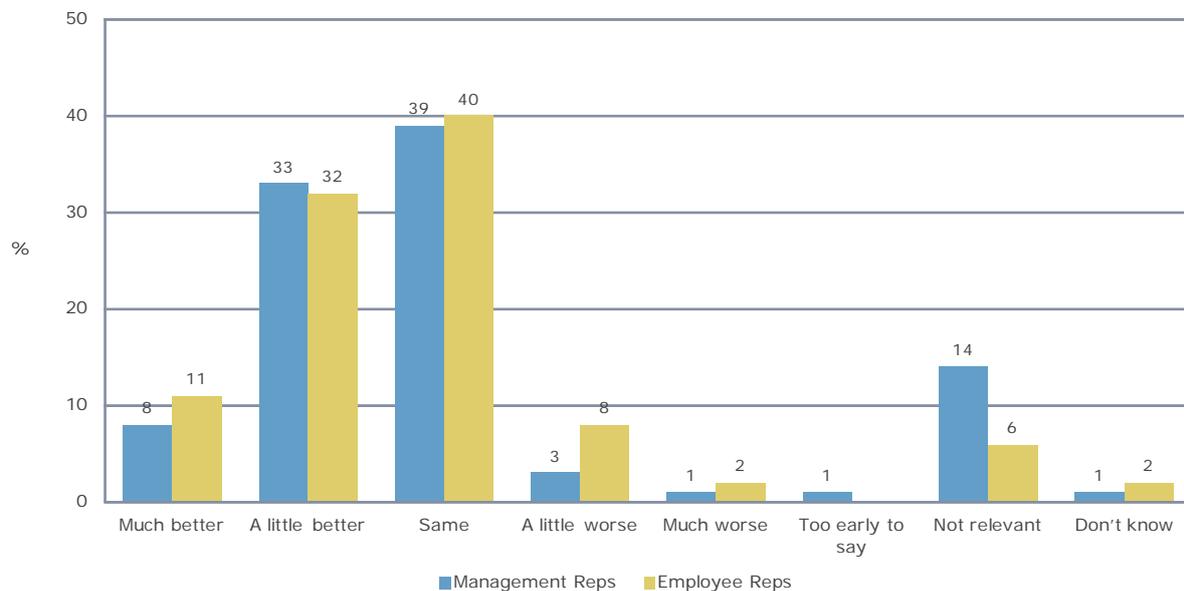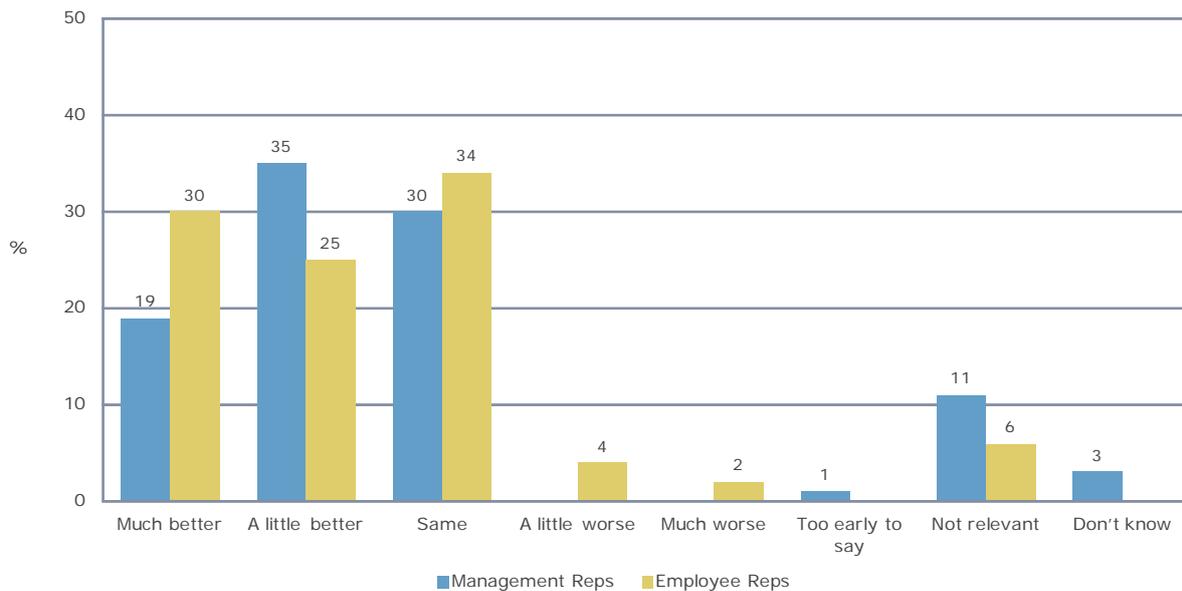
Source: Ipsos MORI

5.4.6 Overall improvement in management and employee relations

The overall improvement in management and employee relations following the Acas intervention is the key measure of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Acas and BIS. This stipulates a target of 70% of Workplace Projects reporting improvement. The SLA indicator is calculated as the proportion of employers reporting that they had seen at least one of the above-mentioned improvements in relations between managers and the wider workforce as a result of the Acas project:

- Communication;

- Day to day working relationships;

- Trust;

- Employee morale; and

- Fairness in treatment of employees.

In this wave, 72% of managers and employee representatives reported improvement in employment relations following the Acas intervention; 73% of management

representatives reported that at least one measure had improved, whilst 70% of employee representatives did so.

5.5 Quality of service and output

Improved workplace relations may ultimately lead to positive impacts in the performance of the organisation, with expected impacts depending on the nature of the project. However, whilst management and employee representatives are happy to attribute improvements in relations to the Acas project, they are understandably more circumspect when it comes to attributing changes to their overall output or quality of service. Where projects had had an impact on the overall performance of the business, this was usually seen to have been positive, with only very small proportions saying the Acas Project had a negative impact. However, in most cases there had been no change or it was not considered relevant to the project.

In total, three in ten employee representatives (30%) and one in five management representatives (18%) say that the quality of the service or output delivered by their organisation is better following the Acas Project. However, a considerable proportion of both groups – two in five – do not consider this to be a relevant outcome of the project. This closely replicates the pattern seen in 2009.

Fig 5.12 Do you feel the following are now better, the same or worse as a result of the Acas Project?

Quality of the service or output delivered by your organisation
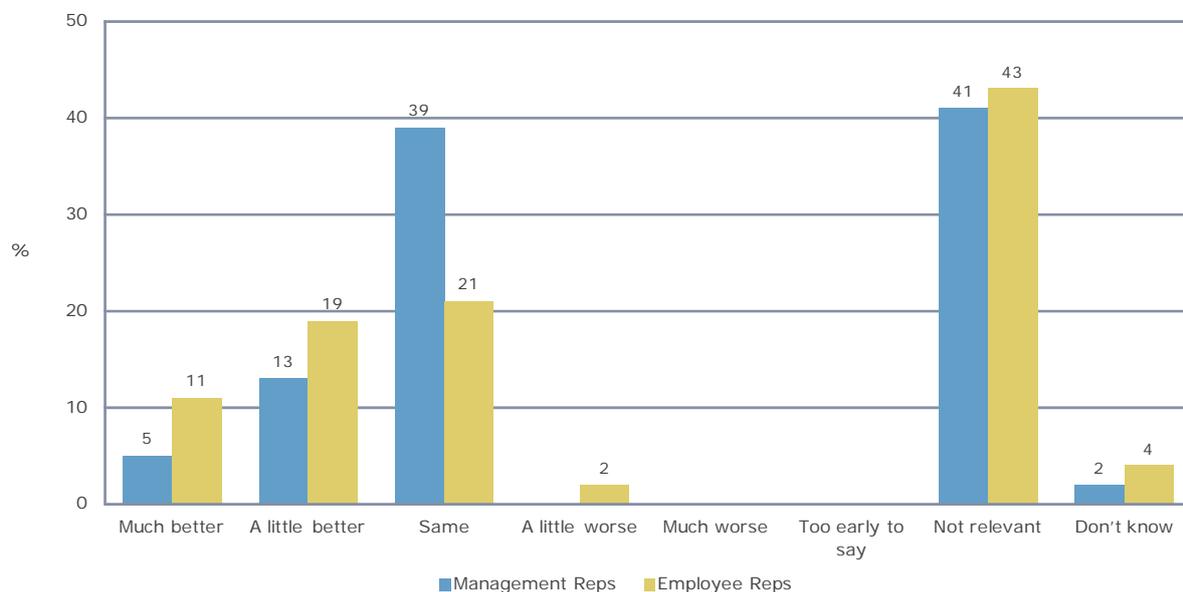
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

A similar pattern is seen when respondents consider the impact on productivity or efficiency. Around three in ten management representatives (29%) and employee representatives (32%) say that productivity or efficiency has improved, but a third say it is not relevant to their project and a similar proportion say there has been no change. Again, this is very similar to 2009.

Fig 5.13 Do you feel the following are now better, the same or worse as a result of the Acas Project?

Productivity or efficiency
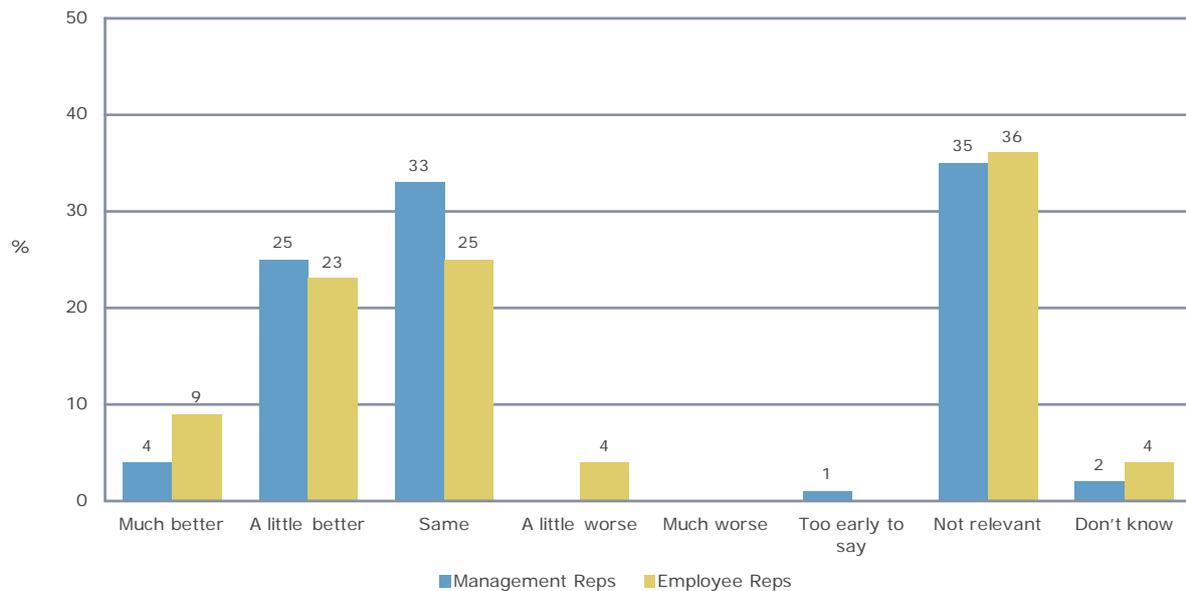
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

One in five management representatives (18%) and three in ten employee representatives (28%) report improvements in meeting targets or objectives since the Acas Project. Again, though, a majority say that there has either been no change or it is not relevant to their project.

Fig 5.14 Do you feel the following are now better, the same or worse as a result of the Acas Project?
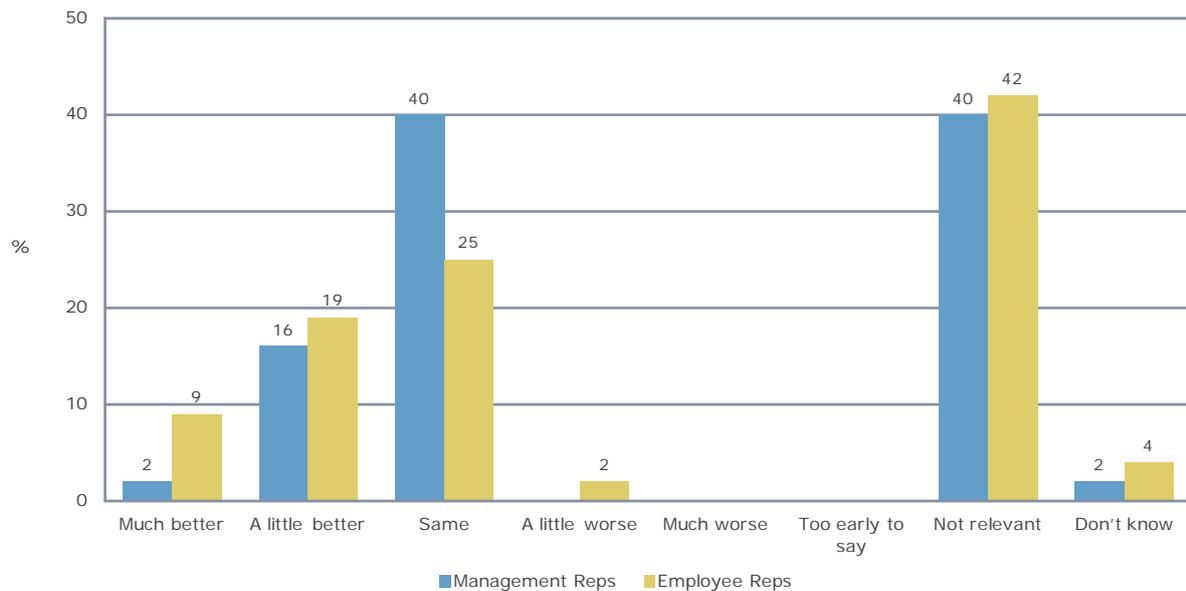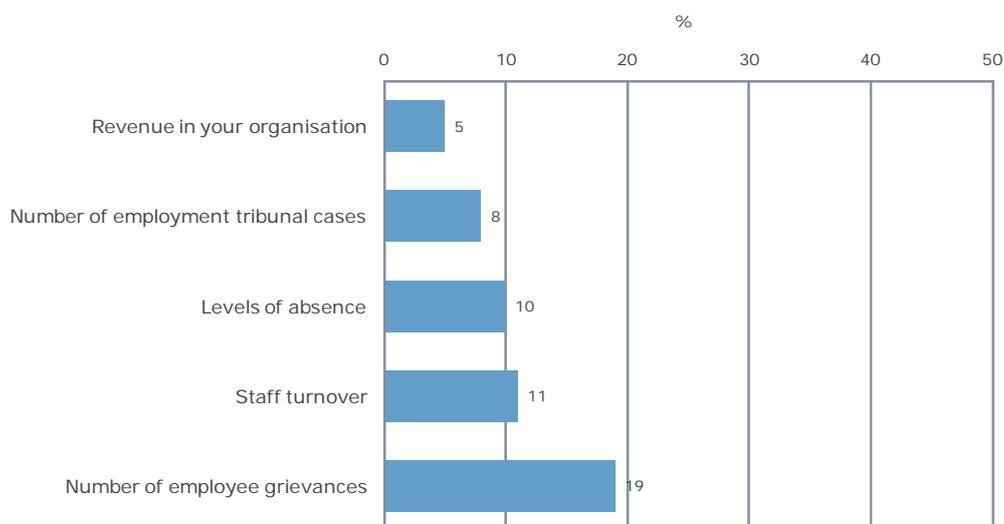
Meeting objectives or targets

Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

5.6 Measurable impacts

Management representatives were asked about the impact of the Acas Project on a number of quantifiable measures. Of these, the most common area in which Acas Projects have an impact is on the number of employee grievances, with 19% citing this. One in nine say that their project had an impact on staff turnover (11%) and one in ten say that it has had an impact on levels of absence (10%). Fewer say that the project has an impact on the number of tribunal cases (eight per cent) or revenue in their organisation (five per cent).

Fig 5.15 Has the Acas project had any impact on the following...?

Base: 105 Management Representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

All who said that the Acas Project had an impact on each of these areas were asked whether they had increased or decreased and whether that increase or decrease was attributable to Acas. Given the small bases involved, findings should be treated as indicative.

However, some broad trends do emerge. Among those who say that the project had an impact on the level of absence, employee tribunal cases and employee grievances, virtually all said that they had decreased. Most consider that these decreases can be attributed to Acas to at least some extent, although few say that it can be fully ascribed to Acas.

There is some variation in opinion when it comes to staff turnover, with management representatives split on whether it has increased or decreased as a result of the project (of the twelve respondents who said that the Acas Project has an impact on staff turnover, five said it had increased and five said it had decreased). Among both groups it is generally agreed that this increase or decrease is attributable to Acas to some extent.

5.7 Employment

A third of management representatives expect employment to increase over the next 12 months (32%). However, among these management representatives very few think that this increase is a result of the Acas Project. A large majority say that the increase has nothing to do with the Acas Project (88%), with nine per cent saying the projected increase is a result of the Acas Project to some extent. No management representatives say that the change is fully or to a large extent the result of the Acas Project.

Similarly, among those who say that they expect employment to decrease over the next 12 months, most say that this has nothing to do with changes made to the workplace as a result of the Acas Project (77%).

Future Employment

Fig 5.16 Do you expect employment to increase over the next 12 months?
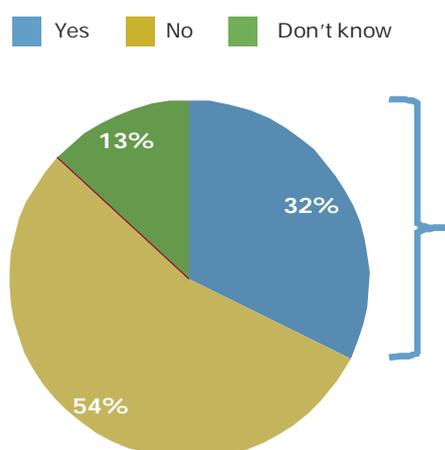
Fig 5.17 To what extent, if any, would you say that this increase is due to the changes made in your workplace as a result of the Acas project?
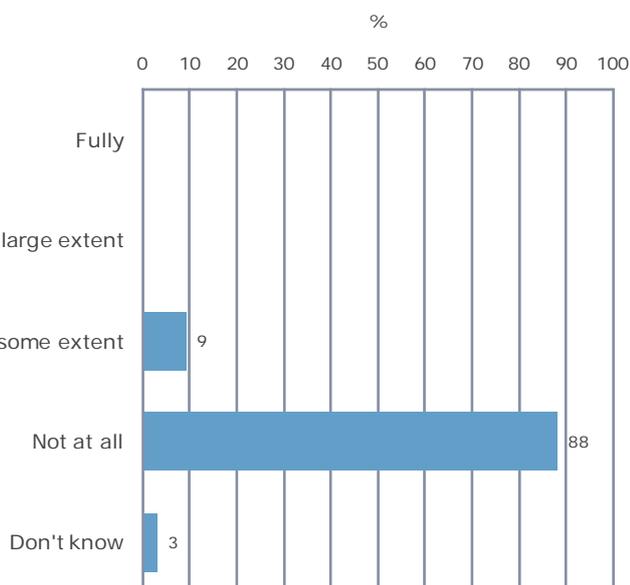
Base: 105 Management Representatives / All whose employment is expected to increase – 34 Management Representatives; 19th March -18th May 2012 *Source: Ipsos MORI*

5.8 Further impacts

Beyond these impacts, 43% of management representatives say the Acas Project has further positive impacts on the way the organisation works. The most common of these is an improved relationship between management and trade unions, which in total was suggested by 36% of managers.

Other additional impacts include addressing employee concerns (17%), making managers more confident, with a better understanding of what is expected of them (15%), and generally improved communication (11%).

Fig 5.18 *Additional impacts*

Apart from those already discussed, did the project have any other positive impacts on the way [organisation] works? *(Open question, coded)*
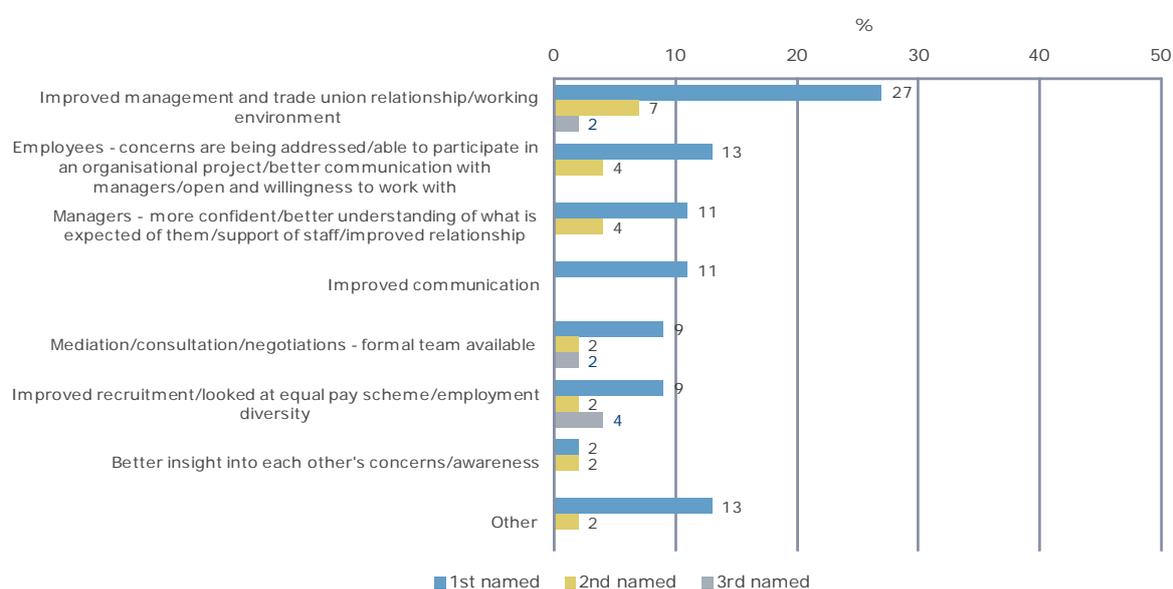
Base: All who say their project had positive impacts on the way their organisation works – 45 Management Representatives; 19th March-18th May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

5.9 Meeting expectations

Overall, management and employee representatives are very positive about Acas Workplace Projects. The vast majority felt their objectives were largely met, and most were able to sustain their activities and initiatives to a large extent. In particular, a significant minority thought workplace relations had improved, which they generally attributed to the Acas project. Many also saw improvements in fairness, morale, trust and communication in the workplace following the project. As would be expected, few attribute changes in productivity, employment levels or quality of output directly to Acas, but Acas is achieving its objective of improving employment relations which do feed into a variety of positive impacts for workplaces. Acas Projects are meeting expectations and leaving users satisfied.

One in five management representatives and employee representatives say that their experience of the Acas Project exceeded their expectations (18% and 19% respectively), with a further 55% of management representatives and 40% of employee representatives saying that their expectations were fully met. This means that across both groups, 68% say their expectations were at least fully met.

However, the results suggest that employee representatives tend to be slightly less satisfied with the project than managers, with 19% saying that their expectations were only partially met or not met at all, compared to 12% of management representatives. So while satisfaction is high and most think Acas is meeting their expectations, there remains some room for improvement.

Figure 5.19 Overall, how did your experience of the Acas project compare with your expectations? Would you say your expectations were…
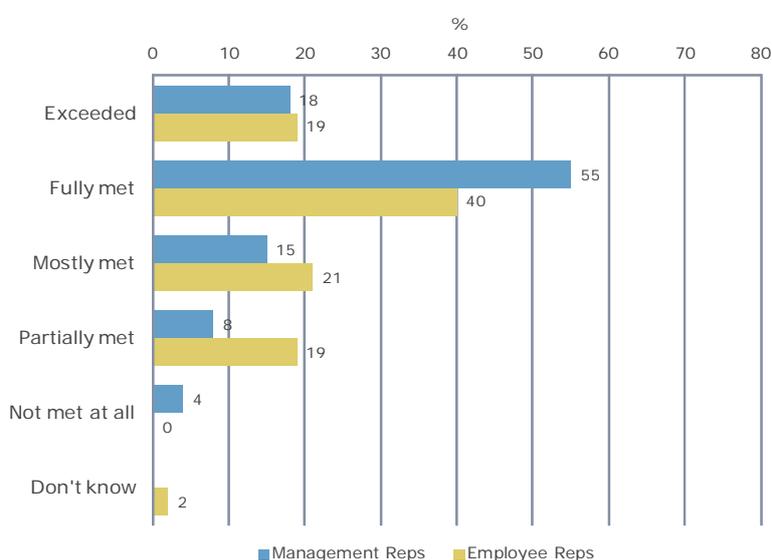
Base: 105 Management Representatives and 53 Employee representatives: 19 March – 18 May 2012

Source: Ipsos MORI

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall findings

Overall, the research demonstrates that Acas continues to deliver Workplace Projects which satisfy a large majority of both management and employee representatives (90% and 87% satisfaction respectively). These projects in turn seem to impact positively on workplace relations.

Acas is maintaining a positive reputation among users of Workplace Projects as trustworthy, pragmatic, consistent and independent. The Acas advisers are likewise well regarded, especially for their impartiality, their ability to understand the unique issues of each workplace, and for their skill at encouraging discussions and developing relationships. Whilst among management representatives the most frequently pleasing thing about a project is the Acas advisers' skill, employee representatives most typically cite the achievement of a successful outcome as most pleasing.

Management representatives are also more likely to state that the main objective of the project had been achieved, with almost half thinking it wholly achieved (46%), compared to three in ten employee representatives (28%). This is likely to be linked to different expectations at the outset of projects.

Nevertheless, the proportion of employee representatives who think the project's objectives had been at least largely met is two thirds (68%), which is an increase of 12 percentage points from the 2009 figure. Failure to meet an objective, however, is generally linked to a failure of the organisation to implement the solution, rather than being ascribed to the Acas project itself.

The quantitative survey shows that only half think advisers are *very* good at providing the right information in advance (50%), while a small minority rate them as poor (6%).

Among those who paid for their project, Acas is considered good value for money by 85% of managers and 61% of employee representatives, and most think the service they could get from a third party would not be as good.

Acas is perceived by users as achieving its objective of improving employment relations. For example, one in five say that their experience with the Workplace Project exceeded their expectations (18%), and a further half think that their expectations were fully met (50%). As with many measures, employee representatives tend to be slightly less positive about the project meeting or exceeding their expectations than managers. Having said that, employee representatives are still very positive overall.

Sustaining activities

Slightly fewer projects than in 2009 are perceived to be achieving sustained activities to at least a large extent, with the figure now standing at just over half overall (54%). Participants in the qualitative workshops suggested that improved support in the build-up to the project and afterwards could help increase the impact of Acas' work. Follow-up work, such as periodical contact from the adviser or agreed milestones was seen as a particular priority. Some reported that their organisation had failed to implement new procedures following the project, and that follow-ups from the adviser could help maintain an impetus.

Training

One key area the research suggests would warrant further investigation is the role of training in shaping user perceptions. Sustained activities are much more likely to be reported for projects involving training (95%, compared with 64% when training was not involved). Those whose project involved training are slightly more likely to be satisfied with the project (71% compared with 50%) and also more likely to cite good past experiences as a reason for using Acas. It may be that projects involving training help to encourage an ongoing relationship with Acas and vice versa, such that Acas may wish to consider whether it can make more of these services.

Relationship building

Three in ten managers choose Acas because of good experiences with them in the past (29%). In the qualitative workshops participants said that a strong working relationship with an Acas adviser was very attractive to them, but stressed the difficulty of achieving this. Two particular reasons were cited: firstly, the fact that advisers have demanding caseloads, and hence are not regularly available, and secondly, the fact that they felt unable to request the services of particular individuals at Acas.

Participants acknowledged that having a preference for specific advisers could be perceived negatively by employees, thus potentially damaging Acas' neutral image. However, they also emphasised how useful a regular contact would be for them. In any case, having an individual who understands their business is something they appreciate and expect when using other service providers, and which would appeal to them when working with Acas.

Communicating wider services

HR professionals in the qualitative workshops explained that it is difficult for Acas to market new services to them, since they feel inundated by sales materials. Acas' marketing emails were praised for their brevity, but service users did not think information in hard-copy would be likely to be read.

Most of those surveyed thought of their project as concerned with workplace relationships. The qualitative research confirmed that the dominant view of users is that Acas' expertise is strongly associated with this type of work. Users of Acas are much less aware of other aspects of Acas' services: in the workshops, many HR professionals did not know about several services offered by Acas, such as help with payment and grading arrangements. On being informed about these other services there was often some misunderstanding about the precise nature of the Acas offer and how it differed from that offered by consultants or legal professionals. As such, there is a need for clearer communications, with emphasis on explaining how precisely Acas can help in different situations.

One issue mentioned in particular is the question of whether Acas has expertise in different areas such as the drafting of policies or the solution of specific problems like bullying and harassment. In the quantitative survey, management representatives in particular cite Acas' relevant experience as a reason to engage with them. In the qualitative workshops, HR professionals suggested that before considering Acas in these new areas they would want to know more about the skills and experience of the Acas advisers, perhaps through personal profiles on the website, where a short CV could demonstrate their credentials for leading specialist projects. Training sessions and conference speaking were also cited as effective ways for Acas to demonstrate its expertise and highlight the wider support available through the organisation.

The wider service offer

Participants were unsure about Acas extending its offer to include services such as the development and updating of practices, policies and procedures. They felt these would usually be covered by internal HR teams, employment solicitors, or even via free information on the internet. Opinions were more divided on whether or not specific problem solving should be offered, with some thinking of specialist consultants as more appropriate (such as health specialists for stress issues), and others viewing it as a natural extension of Acas' work.

Most significantly, however, many felt it might not be appropriate for Acas to offer help in areas of work that would usually be conducted by management alone. There was concern that this could impact negatively on Acas' reputation for impartiality, and could especially risk losing trust in the eyes of employees. The significance of these opinions is underlined by the quantitative survey finding that, when asked specifically why they chose Acas many users cite the organisation's reputation (32%) and their independence from management (23%). As such, Acas should consider how Business Solutions can be marketed in a way that does not undermine the considerable strengths users already associate with Acas.

Annex 1: Case Study summaries

Case study 1

Background

The business is a paper manufacturing company founded in the 19th century. It currently employs approximately 500 people and annual turnover in 2011/2012 was about £80 million. There is a recognised trade union, of which about 80% of employees are members. The employees are also covered by a national pay agreement for the paper industry.

For many years certain internal promotions processes were weighted towards length of service, but this changed in December 2003 when the new promotions process (for production employees) was agreed. This was the result of a joint effort between management, trade unions and Acas. This system scored candidates against a matrix of competencies, and involved a local union representative sense-checking the scores and decisions. Over time, the number of disputes concerning promotion decisions grew, with managers feeling increasingly undermined, and trade union representatives losing trust in the ability of management to administer the process correctly and fairly.

By 2011 a broad disagreement had arisen between management and the trade union over the trade union's role in the promotions process and about the criteria for assessing promotion candidates. Eventually it was decided external help was needed to help resolve the disagreement.

Acas was the natural choice because of their previous work with management. The trade union representatives were also comfortable with working with Acas, as they felt the organisation would bring expertise and experience and would be impartial.

The Acas project

All parties believed that the promotions process could be reformed, rather than completely redesigned. The objective of the Acas Workplace Project was therefore to review the promotions process with a view to ensuring management could offer and make appointments to meet business needs and that trade union representatives could be reassured that the process was fair and transparent.

A set-up meeting was organised with all the key stakeholders to make introductions, begin to build relationships, determine the critical issues, and establish the principle of working together to resolve the dispute. One manager described Acas' involvement as providing a "fresh start" to discussions. A second meeting involving the same individuals looked specifically at the concerns raised by both parties and how to address them. All parties were satisfied that the "right people were in the room," and that this was a step forward because previous meetings had been with a much smaller group.

Participants thought the Acas adviser facilitated the discussion and mediated between parties in a way that maintained his impartiality. Management and trade union representatives alike were impressed by how well-prepared the Acas adviser was, and praised his "genuine interest" and "ability to understand" the process, as well as his "readiness to do things in advance". They appreciated the extent to which he listened to both sides and ensured everyone had an opportunity to express their views. The Acas adviser was also able to provide guidance on employment legislation and share how other organisations manage promotions, which the parties found useful. There were

challenges because of the differing perceptions at the outset of the dispute, but the overall feedback about the process and the adviser was positive.

A third meeting was planned for December 2011/January 2012 but the project had to be put on hold due to the need to prioritise dealing with the difficult economic situation the company found itself in at that time. This meant that not all agreed actions were able to be fully implemented.

Events since the Acas project

The company entered a very difficult economic period in early 2012 that resulted in redundancies and a process of restructuring. Management were also aware that the lack of progress on the promotions issue was an ongoing problem. Agreement was ultimately achieved following the intervention of the regional union representative, who helped persuade local union representatives that they should be more realistic about what their level of involvement should be, and helped ensure that the threat of compulsory redundancies was removed.

The new promotions process that was thus agreed involved an HR representative and the line manager jointly interviewing and ranking candidates (whereas before the line manager had done this alone), with the trade union representative reviewing the outcome (but without viewing the scores) and, if necessary, presenting their objections. The HR manager, who has no earlier involvement in the process, then has the final decision, with further complaint being made only via formal grievance procedures.

Overall perceptions of the Acas project and Acas

Opinions differed about the extent to which the Workplace Project's objectives were achieved. None felt that a satisfactory outcome had been reached by the end of the second meeting, but perceptions of how much the process had helped towards the eventual resolution varied. One manager acknowledged that some progress had been made and that the parties had been able to agree on some issues, but described Acas' role as the first step in a four-step process, and as "sowing the seeds" of an agreement that was reached six months later without Acas' involvement. This individual would have liked the adviser to have made it clearer from the off that the work would need to continued beyond the initial meeting, and to have helped the participants to create a plan for doing this.

Although the final outcome fell short of their expectations, managers identified several productive aspects of the Acas project. First, Acas involvement in the meetings lent credibility and formality to the process. Second, Acas helped get the right people around the table and facilitated a debate, although views varied about how constructive the debate was. Managers commented that the same individuals had not all met at the same time since then.

There was also recognition of how difficult the situation was to resolve, due to the big gap between the management and trade union stances on the promotions issue, but also frustration that the Acas adviser had not been able to resolve it.

Ultimately, managers retain a very positive view of Acas. The company has used Acas' services since the promotions project to train managers on how to assess employees for redundancy. Managers also said they would recommend Acas' services to others.

Case study 2

Background

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (the Trust) is one of the biggest NHS Trusts in the country, employing approximately 13,000-15,000 staff across five main sites. The Trust treats over one million patients each year and has an annual budget of close to £1 billion.

There are numerous recognised staff organisations which have a combined membership of around 6,000-7,000 staff. These organisations come together on a monthly basis as the Staff Council in order to agree a position on matters of common interest, such as those affecting all staff.

The Acas project

The Trust was under pressure to make savings, and was therefore exploring a number of changes to policies at a local Trust level, including altering some staff terms and conditions that were no longer considered appropriate. Suggested changes to the pay protection policy, redundancy scheme and long-service leave policy were particularly controversial.

Acas was approached to help resolve a dispute that arose between management and staff-side during a consultation on the changes. In the context of this dispute, it became clear that partnership working between staff-side and management was not working very well. Acas was therefore asked to help the parties improve their partnership working.

A planning meeting was held between the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Staff Council and management representatives in order to set out an agenda for a half-day workshop facilitated by an Acas adviser.

About 30-40 representatives from staff-side attended the workshop, alongside senior management representatives. The workshop aimed to improve working relationships between staff-side and management by:

- exploring what an effective partnership would look like and why it was needed;
- discussing the behaviours required for effective partnership working; and,
- identifying the barriers to working well together and how they could be overcome.

It was agreed that another half-day workshop would be beneficial once the Trust had been given some time to take forward work on the priority areas identified in the first meeting. The role of the Acas adviser in both meetings was to help formulate the agenda, to facilitate, and help the parties find common ground.

Outcomes of the Acas project

Better relationship between management and staff

The workshops were well-received by most participants, and although many issues remained unresolved, there was a positive feeling of making progress on the relationship between staff-side and management.

Priority areas identified

Certain priority areas to work on were identified during the project:

1. Behaviours: overall ground rules for interactions between management and staff organisations
2. Capability development: giving staff organisation representatives enough time to fulfil their duties
3. Processes: Trust Consultation and Negotiating Committee (TCNC) constitution, times of meetings and timescales, early sharing of information
4. Communications

Processes improved

As some staff organisations experienced difficulties in meeting deadlines for sharing information with management, it was decided TCNC meeting dates should be reviewed postponing them until after branch meetings in order to allow staff organisations to consult with their members beforehand.

It was agreed that a tracking tool should be put in place to monitor progress on actions agreed between management and staff-side. This is intended to help all parties understand what they have committed to do and when.

Benefits of the Acas project

Management's expectations of what could be achieved in the workshops were "quite low", because working relationships with staff-side had been difficult for many years. There was an awareness that the issues were unlikely to be resolved quickly. However, they were very pleased with Acas' involvement and would recommend Acas to other organisations facing similar circumstances.

> *"[The adviser was] experienced and knowledgeable in these matters. As a representative of Acas, her independence couldn't really be legitimately questioned. So actually, when [the adviser] was to take a view… it then becomes quite difficult for either party to question that, despite the fact that it might be contrary to their personal views and belief system."*
> (Management representative)

The Acas adviser was perceived to be an expert in the field who was experienced, professional and had "demonstrable knowledge of the subject" (management representative).

Some of the specific benefits of Acas' involvement were:
- the adviser inspired confidence because of their realism about how difficult the discussions might be;
- the adviser brought experience of good practice from other organisations;
- the adviser ensured that everyone understood what was outside the scope of the discussion; for example, by making it clear that the cost-saving imperative of the Trust was a reality, rather than a subject to be debated;

- the adviser made the environment "friendly, non-threatening" (staff-side representative) and got the attention of people and ensured the participation of everyone; and

- the adviser was able to present information in such a way that resulted in changes in the positions of both sides; for example, taking a step-by-step, logical approach to arguments, which meant that conclusions flowed from earlier discussions.

"We were very pleased with the level of skills, knowledge, expertise and the contribution Acas brought."
(Management representative)

"I came to it initially thinking, well I'm trade union person so that's the stance I should be taking, but actually, you have to negotiate, you can't just say, well this is what I want and that's it, you know, there has to be some negotiation, so it is negotiating with management, the Board, but also, you know, getting what you want out of it as well."
(Staff-side representative)

Case study 3[9]

Background

Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) is the site licence company responsible for the clean-up and demolition of Britain's former centre of fast reactor research and development. The company employs approximately 800 people, with another 1,000-1,500 staff employed through contractors.

When the Dounreay workforce was transferred from working for the UK Atomic Energy Authority to working for DSRL in 2008, the new company inherited the existing terms and conditions of employment, which included agreed job evaluation processes and pay protection arrangements for anyone whose job was downgraded.

In 2009, a dispute arose over the grading of a particular job, which would involve the downgrading of a number of employees, and the associated pay protection arrangements. Following a 'failure to agree' the Trade Unions and DSRL management made a joint request to Acas to conduct a conciliation exercise. As part of the conciliation exercise Acas carried out a review of the job evaluation methodology used by DSRL and the pay protection arrangements. This concluded that the job evaluation methodology had been applied appropriately but recommended some improvements in the process. Acas also identified that there were risks associated with the existing pay protection arrangements as these effectively provided indefinite protection.

Although there is no case law on this issue, the Equality and Human Rights Commission warns that indefinite pay protection arrangements may become discriminatory over time.[10]

Management proposed some reforms of pay protection in 2010. In parallel, management was considering reviewing all of its terms and conditions of employment, and therefore decided to include the changes to pay protection within these wider changes which included new pay and grading structures. The new package was agreed subject to carrying out a gender equality review of the new arrangements. DSRL management and the Trade Unions jointly agreed that Acas should be invited to carry out this review.

The Acas project

The project involved examining each of the 20 elements of pay under the current payments system and the risks posed by them from a gender equality perspective; examining the changes the proposed payment system would introduce and the extent to which these would mitigate any risks identified, if at all; and finally summarising the residual risk, if any, following the introduction of the proposed payments system.

Outcomes of the Acas project

Changes to pay protection

---

[9] Please note that no trade union representatives consented to participate in interviews, and therefore this case study reflects the management view only.

[10] For a more detailed discussion of pay protection and sex discrimination, see http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/tools-equal-pay/equality-impact-assessments/step-4-reviewing-pay-policies/.

There was broad agreement that the project achieved what it set out to achieve.

> *"All the way along certainly we found that all the advice and the comments from Acas has been very structured in the way that it's come forward and been managed in a way that's actually helped us to develop proposals that the business could live with, but also manage the process."*
> (Management representative)

The main output was a report of the findings, which found that under the existing arrangements there were a number of areas of risk from the gender equality perspective and that the proposed changes significantly reduced these risks. As a result, indefinite pay protection was replaced by a new agreement which restricts pay protection to a maximum period of three years. Both management and staff representatives feel confident that the proposals conform to gender equality legislation.

The new payment arrangements have been successfully embedded. There has been one employment tribunal case since the Acas project, which argued that there was gender discrimination in the payment system, and this was not upheld by the tribunal. As a result of this, management now say they "know objectively" that the new payment system is non-discriminatory.

Improvements to other policies

Making changes to conform with legislation gave them a reason to review all their terms and conditions and the flexibility to make other necessary changes.

Although the interviewees agreed that there had been benefits to the business as a result of the Acas project, none of them felt they could quantify these benefits. However, one stated that the company has gained efficiencies in the human resources function as a result of reducing the complexities in pay.

Better relationship between management and staff

Initially, there was resistance to the proposed changes from the trade unions who, whilst recognising the need to ensure that terms and conditions were not discriminatory, were reluctant to agree to changes which might involve any perceived detriment to their members. According to management, relationships with the unions are, if anything, better than prior to the project because the parties have been on a journey together. Management feels it shows maturity on both sides that they worked together to get to where they are today.

Summary of benefits of the Acas project

Acas was seen as an independent external organisation that could provide advice about the legal requirements for pay protection agreements. This knowledge of employment law was fundamental, as the trade unions were challenging management on this.

> *"From our point of view, and I believe also from the unions' point of view, Acas was seen as an external, independent body, who are recognised that they are fully au fait with the requirements of the legal position… so that it was almost seen as the ultimate authority on dealing with employment law issues in this context."*
> (Management representative)

The very direct style of the Acas advisers was seen to be helpful in dealing with joint discussions. They had the ability to drill down to key issues, and avoid going off on tangents. The advisers were also good at putting issues into perspective, and bringing experience from similar cases. They were solutions-focussed, and took a pragmatic approach, understanding the business constraints. The advice they gave was very structured.

The continuity of involvement of the advisers, who had been involved with Dounreay over the years, was also seen to be beneficial. The Acas advisers also knew the full-time union officials from other settings, and that was also seen to be helpful.

Overall, management did not feel that any part of the process could have been improved. They would describe Acas as facilitating a "very effective and concise process". Everything was clear and simple, with no "unnecessary clutter".

> *"I find that the approach that they adopt is very helpful… I would be hard pushed to say I would've like to have done something differently."*
> (Management representative)

Case study 4

Background

At the time of the Acas workplace project, Scarborough & North East Yorkshire NHS Trust was formed of two NHS hospitals. Together the hospitals provided primary acute services to 250,000 people across the region, employing around 2,200 staff across 62 different professions.

Prior to the involvement of Acas, a number of factors appeared to have contributed to incidences of workplace stress and low staff morale. These included negative press coverage due to financial difficulties within the Trust, an unsettled management team, and a failure to fully implement procedures to guard against workplace stress. In 2009 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issued an improvement notice requiring the Trust to conduct an assessment of workplace stress and of the management of workplace stress across the organisation and within individual departments.

In January 2010 a stress working group was established and carried out a staff survey, with mixed findings: while many staff reported feeling positive about working for the Trust, others reported a wide range of concerns in regard to workplace stress, citing unmanageable workloads, limited resources and poor communication.

Involving Acas

The survey helped identify the underlying factors that were leading to high levels of workplace stress, but a more in-depth investigation was needed in order to develop measures that would enable the Trust to better manage this issue. The Health and Safety Manager felt that Acas' reputation for impartiality and independence could help the Trust overcome scepticism amongst certain staff about whether the Trust was serious about dealing with workplace stress.

> *"As part of having the HSE improvement notice lifted, we needed to find out what staff felt about working in the Trust and share that information across the organisation. Because Acas are known for their independence it was felt the findings would be given more credence by management and staff than if done by someone internal."*
> (Health and Safety Manager)

Since a project of this type might involve potentially sensitive issues, management felt that a project led by Acas could result in high engagement among staff because of assurances Acas could provide around confidentiality. It was also felt that these assurances could help to encourage staff to be open and candid in their views.

The Acas project

In agreement with the Trust, the Acas adviser immediately gathered evidence on the problems with workplace stress, holding meetings with the Health and Safety Manager, the Health and Safety committee, the Workplace Stress steering group and the HSE inspector. This initial stage was important for achieving buy-in, but also ensured that the workplace initiative would ultimately satisfy the HSE requirement as regulator.

Taking a lead from the HSE, the Acas adviser designed a Workplace Project plan that would allow the organisation to adhere to HSE standards for stress management. The

first stage was to identify the determinants of stress in the workplace, and to this end the Acas adviser held nine focus groups so that staff could share their thoughts and concerns. Each two-hour focus group involved staff from a single department and involved open and candid discussion around some of the issues highlighted in the staff survey, enabling a detailed investigation of issues within each department.

The next stage of the project involved building the Trust's internal capacity to conduct workplace risk assessments. Eight individuals from different departments were recruited from the focus groups and participated in a day-long training session with the Acas adviser on the assessment and management of workplace stress.

The final element of the Workplace Project was the dissemination of findings among management and other stakeholders. Due to the variety of staff concerns reported during the focus groups, the Health and Safety steering group decided that this dissemination should be conducted by the Acas adviser, since the adviser's expertise would assist them in understanding and presenting a range of issues in depth. They also felt that that the independence of the Acas adviser would boost the credibility of the findings amongst staff.

The feedback session was held in mid-December 2010, when the Acas adviser presented findings to members of the management, the Health and Safety committee, the working group, Trade Unions and the HSE inspector. The half-day session enabled the Acas adviser to present collated staff views of the Trust before then unpacking the causes of stress, which were synthesised by the issue type, for example resource or workload.

The Acas adviser ensured that the session struck a balance between setting out the causes of stress and providing practical solutions that had succeeded in addressing workplace stress in other organisations. The Acas adviser assured the Trust that it would receive assistance in implementing these solutions and that the next step would be to develop action plans to ensure that causes of workplace stress could be managed in the long term.

Expectations and outcomes of the Acas project

As a direct result of the Acas project the improvement notice was revoked by the HSE inspector. By training staff in conducting workplace risk assessments of stress, the Acas adviser ensured that a member of staff from each department of the organisation had the knowledge and ability to monitor workplace stress and develop control strategies, which was a key criterion of the HSE improvement notice.

Findings from the focus groups were said to be invaluable in helping the Trust gain an understanding of staff views about the work environment, and to raise concerns about areas such as recruitment, workload, communication and training. The adviser suggested solutions for many of the problems: for example, in order to improve the fall in morale related to negative reports about the Trust, it was suggested that the press be given a tour of the hospital. In addition to this feedback, the adviser also outlined how Acas could support the Trust through the next stages of the process.

> *"The Acas adviser was very good. I guess we might have been able to do some of those things [collect the views of staff] ourselves but it would have been harder to demonstrate impartiality."*
> (Management representative)

The expectation was that these findings would be used to design workplace solutions that would address the causes of workplace stress within the Trust. However, a major

organisational restructure ultimately diverted attention away from the task of fully embedding risk assessments of workplace stress within the organisation. In order to increase financial sustainability, the Department of Health announced the acquisition of the Scarborough and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust by a neighbouring Trust. Some managers had concerns about the nature and potential upheaval of the restructure and this in turn meant that the momentum required to develop and implement workplace stress action plans was not sustained.

Overall perceptions of Acas and the Acas project

Staff involved in the project praised the work of the Acas adviser. In particular, they valued the time spent by the adviser in developing an understanding of the problems faced by the organisation, which convinced them that their views were being taken seriously by management within the process. Staff also welcomed the independence and impartiality of Acas as this gave them the opportunity to share concerns about their day-to-day working conditions in a secure and constructive environment.

> *"The Acas adviser brought people together and made them feel comfortable so that they talked freely about some sensitive issues."*
> (Management representative)

The Trust's Health and Safety steering group believed that the professionalism and reputation of Acas ensured that the presentation of findings was well-attended by senior management.

> *"The findings were well received by management. They really listened because of the adviser's impartiality."*
> (Management representative)

There was disappointment, however, that the training in how to conduct a risk assessment of workplace stress did not become fully embedded. Acas made repeated offers to assist the Trust in formulating action plans to implement these lessons, but as a result of the organisational restructure the management's attention became focussed on other matters.

> *"I'd recommend Acas to any organisations. The training was very thorough and worthwhile. I was trained in how to spot stress so I benefited personally. It equipped me to go in to any department and carry out a stress review. Acas delivered their part. Once we walked out the door, we hit a brick wall we weren't given the green light by management to implement what we'd been trained to do."*
> (Trade Union representative)

Appendix 1: Telephone questionnaire

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                     │
│           INTRODUCTION              │
│                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

IF NAMED CONTACT

Q1a. Please could I speak to [EMPLOYER FORENAME EMPLOYER SURNAME / EMPLOYEE REP FORNAME EMPLOYEE REP SURNAME]**?**

Good morning/afternoon. I'm… from Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation, calling on behalf of Acas.

We are carrying out a research project on behalf of Acas as a follow up to a project on [INSERT DATA FROM DATABASE: 'TOPIC'] **carried out by an Acas Adviser, conducted for your organisation between 6 and 18 months ago, to find out how useful it has been.**

You should have received a letter explaining the survey and inviting you to take part. The survey will take about 15 to 20 minutes.

I would like to assure you that all the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence, and used for research purposes only. It will not be possible to identify any particular individual in the results.

Continue	1	GO TO Q4 IF REFERRAL
Respondent no longer works there	2	GO TO Q2 if management rep or Q3 if employee rep
Respondent not based at site (e.g. full time trade union rep)	3	ASK FOR HR DEPT TO CHECK CONTACT DETAILS of full-time officer or rep or manager who may be based elsewhere in the organisation
Named contact still there but not lead management / employee contact for this project	4	GO TO Q2 if management rep or Q3 if employee rep
Make appointment	5	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Refusal – company policy	6	THANK AND CLOSE
Refusal – already been interviewed for Acas survey	7	
Refusal – no time	8	
Refusal – other (please record reason for refusal, to report to Acas)	9	
Not available in fieldwork period	10	

Good morning/afternoon. I'm... from Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation calling on behalf of Acas.

We are carrying out a research project on behalf of Acas as a follow up to a project on [INSERT DATA FROM DATABASE: 'TOPIC'] **carried out by an Acas Adviser, conducted for your organisation between 6 and 18 months ago, to find out how useful it has been.**

Q1b. Please could I speak to the main representative of employees at this site?

Continue	1	
Respondent no longer works there	2	GO TO Q2 if management rep or Q3 if employee rep
Respondent not based at site (e.g. full time trade union rep)	3	ASK FOR HR DEPT TO CHECK CONTACT DETAILS of full-time officer or rep or manager who may be based elsewhere in the organisation
No named contact given	4	THANK AND CLOSE
Make appointment	5	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Refusal – company policy	6	THANK AND CLOSE
Refusal – already been interviewed for Acas survey	7	
Refusal – no time	8	
Refusal – other (please record reason for refusal, to report to Acas)	9	
Not available in fieldwork period	10	

Q2. Please could I speak to the person who has replaced [MANAGEMENT REP]?

I would like to speak to someone who was involved in an Acas Workplace Project about [INSERT ' Topic'] **which took place about 6 to 18 months ago, or has been involved in work following on from this. It is likely to be a member of senior management or a senior member of the HR department.**

Continue	1	GO TO Q4
Respondent not based at site	2	ASK FOR HR DEPT TO CHECK CONTACT DETAILS of management rep
Make appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Refusal – company policy	4	THANK AND CLOSE
Refusal – already been interviewed for Acas survey	5	
Refusal – no time	6	
Refusal – other (please record reason for refusal, to report to Acas)	7	
Not available in fieldwork period	8	

IF EMPLOYEE REP NO LONGER WORKS THERE (Q1=2)

Q3. Please could I speak to the person who has replaced [EMPLOYEE REP FORNAME EMPLOYEE REP SURNAME**] as the main representative of employees at this site?**

IF NAMED EMPLOYEE CONTACT NOT LEAD CONTACT FOR THIS PROJECT (Q1=4)

I would like to speak to someone who was involved in an Acas Workplace Project about [INSERT ' TOPIC'] **which took place about 6 to 18 months ago, or has been involved in work following on from this. It is likely to be a representative of either a Trade Union, or of some other employee committee or group at the site**

INTERVIEWER: IF UNSURE WHO THIS IS, ASK TO SPEAK TO THE HR MANAGER, OR LEAD MANAGEMENT REP TO ASK WHO WOULD BE THE MOST APPROPRIATE INTERVIEWEE

Continue	1	GO TO Q4
Respondent not based at site (e.g. full time trade union rep)	2	ASK FOR HR DEPT TO CHECK CONTACT DETAILS of full-time officer or rep, or get contact details from Acas adviser in advance
Make appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Refusal – company policy	4	THANK AND CLOSE
Refusal – already been interviewed for Acas survey	5	
Refusal – no time	6	
Refusal – other (please record reason for refusal, to report to Acas)	7	
Not available in fieldwork period	8	

IF NEEDED

Q4. Good morning / good afternoon, my name is… from Ipsos MORI, the research organisation. We are carrying out research for Acas as a follow up to a project on [INSERT DATA FROM DATABASE: 'TOPIC'**] carried out by an Acas Adviser, conducted for [INSERT 'your organisation' about 6 to 18 months ago about to find out how useful it has been.**

FOR NAMED RESPONDENTS OR THOSE WHERE DETAILS PROVIDED BY ACAS
INCORRECT (Q1=1 OR Q1=4)

I understand you were the main management / employee contact

FOR REPLACEMENT RESPONDENTS (Q1=2)

I understand that [EMPLOYER FORNAME EMPLOYER SURNAME/ EMPLOYEE REP FORNAME EMPLOYEE REP SURNAME] **was the main** [MANAGEMENT / EMPLPOYEE] **representative for the project, but you have been suggested as someone who could answer some questions on the project instead.**

The survey focuses on the longer term effect of Acas' involvement [INSERT TEXT: 'in your organisation'] **this project. Were you involved at the beginning or close to the beginning of this project and do you feel you are in a position to answer questions around what the project achieved?**

OK to continue	1	GO TO Q5 IF EMPLOYEE REP. MANAGEMENT REPS GO TO Q6
(REPLACEMENTS ONLY): Another person would be better able to answer	2	SHOW TEXT IF CODE 2: 'ASK FOR DETAILS (name, tel number, job title) OF WHO WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO ANSWER, THENTRANSFER AND REINTRODUCE'. interviewer: SEND INTERVIEWER BACK TO START OF Q4
Named contact still there but not main management / employee contact for this project	3	GO BACK TO Q2 IF MANAGEMENT REP OR Q3 IF EMPLOYEE REP (ROUTE AS FOR Q1=4)
Make appointment	4	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Refusal – company policy	6	THANK AND CLOSE
Refusal – already been interviewed for Acas survey	7	
Refusal – no time	8	
Refusal – have not been involved in project from the beginning	9	
Refusal – other (please record reason for refusal, to report to Acas)	10	

ASK IF EMPLOYEE REP

Q5. Just to clarify, are you...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE ONLY

A trade union representative (eg shop steward or convenor)
A non-union employee representative
A full-time officer of a trade union (ie paid by the union to carry out duties on a full-time basis)
Other (Please specify)

ASK ALL

Q6. Are you based at the same workplace as that in which this project took place?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK ALL

Throughout this survey I will refer to the work carried out in your workplace by Acas as 'the Acas Project'. Please answer the questions about your specific workplace, rather than your organisation as a whole.

Q7. According to Acas' records, the Project they conducted for [INSERT TEXT: **your workplace**] / IF FTO (Q5=3) [INSERT 'OrganisationName'] **finished on** [INSERT 'WP END DATE'].

Is this roughly correct?

Yes (Go to Q12)
No (Go to Q8)
Don't know (Go to Q12)

ASK IF NOT CORRECT (Q7=2)

Q8. In which month did the project finish?

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

Q9. And in which year did it finish?

2010
2011
2012

ASK IF ENDED DECEMBER 2011 OR LATER

Q10. We would like to speak to those involved in the Acas Project at least three months after the project closed. Thank you very much for your time.

Close

ASK IF MANAGEMENT & IF EMPLOYEE CONTACT BLANK FROM SAMPLE

Q11. Before we continue, can I ask who the main employee contact was for this project?

ADD IF NECESSARY: **As part of the research we are interviewing employee representatives as well as management representatives. We can arrange a time that is convenient with the employee rep and does not interfere with their work duties.**

Yes
No

IF YES:

Record name	
Record telephone number	
Record best time to contact	

IF NO, WHY?

There was no main contact
No-one there can answer
Person has left
Other (specify)
Don't know
Refused

ASK ALL UNLESS SAMPLE COLUMN D (TOPIC) OTHER

Q12. I understand an Acas adviser came in to help [INSERT TEXT: your organisation] / IF FTO (Q5=3) [INSERT 'OrganisationName'] **and the main focus or area of the project was** [INSERT TOPIC (COLUMN D IN SAMPLE)]. **Is this correct?**
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF NO OR DON'T KNOW AT Q12. ASK IF SAMPLE HAS OTHER OR BLANK SPACE IN COLUMN D
Q13. What would you say was the main focus or area of the project?
DO NOT READ OUT – MULTI CODE ONLY

FILTER FOR ALL SELECTED IF MORE THAN ONE ANSWER AT Q13

Q14. And of these, which would you say was the main focus of the project?
SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Attendance/Absence Management
Bullying and Harassment
Change Management
Conflict/Mediation/Relationship Issues
Consultation and Negotiation
Discipline and Grievance
Employment Law (General)
Equal Pay
Equality and Diversity (General)
Flexible Working, Hours and Holidays
Information and Consultation
Negotiation and Collective Bargaining
Payment and Grading Arrangements
Performance Management
Recruiting, Contracting and Employing People
Redundancy
Stress Management
Supervision/First Line Management
TU Recognition - Decision to recognise (WPP)
TU Recognition - Implementation of recognition agreement (WPP)
Other (please specify)
Don't know

ASK ALL
Q15. Which, if any, of the following could be used to describe the Acas project? Please say yes to any that apply.

MULTICODE. READ OUT. RANDOMISE ORDER

Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, changes to working practices, individual and process productivity, technology adoption, job design.)
Improving workplace relationships between management and trade unions by helping them to work together better.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, facilitating joint working, win-win bargaining.)
Improving workplace relationships between management and employees by helping them to work together better.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, facilitating joint working, win-win bargaining)
Improving workforce relationships (between employees) in the workplace by helping employees work together better.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, a staff survey, a diagonal slice, a group mediation.)
Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, the way forward on an HR issue was identified.)
A project to help update HR policies and procedures.
(INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NEEDED: For example, updating a staff handbook or training managers/reps in the use of the procedures.)
The Acas advisor wrote new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.

Other (specify)
Don't know

FILTER FOR ALL ANSWERS GIVEN AT Q15. ONLY ASK IF CODE MORE THAN 1 AT Q15.
Q16. And which one of these best describes the Acas project? Please choose one only.

SINGLE CODE. READ OUT. RANDOMISE ORDER

Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.
Improving workplace relationships between management and trade unions by helping them to work together better.
Improving workplace relationships between management and employees by helping them to work together better.
Improving workforce relationships (between employees) in the workplace by helping employees work together better.
Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.
A project to help update HR policies and procedures.
The Acas advisor wrote new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.
Don't know

ASK ALL
Q17. Did the project involve Acas providing training to you or others in the organisation?

Yes
No
Don't know

Q18. Thinking about when you were first considering ways of dealing with [INSERT MAIN SUBJECT FROM Q12/13/14]**, why did you and others** [INSERT TEXT: in your workplace] / IF FTO (Q5=3) ['at [INSERT 'OrganisationName']'] **decide to use Acas?**

DO NOT READ OUT – CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Acas advice is independent of management / Trade Union
Acas is acceptable to Trade Union(s) / employee representatives
Acas has relevant expertise in dealing with the particular issue/problem
Acas has a good reputation
Good experience of Acas in past
Did not know who else to use
Recommendation of a colleague
Not involved in decision
We had reached a point where the issue could not be resolved between ourselves
It's part of our formal procedures to involve a third party
To avoid (further) industrial action
To resolve the issue more quickly than we could ourselves
The other side wanted a third party involved
To demonstrate we were taking the issue seriously
To learn from others experience

Other (specify)
Don't Know

Q19. From which of these, if any, have you heard about Acas Workplace Projects (also known as Business Solutions)?
INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ANSWER THAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN ABOUT ACAS, PLEASE ASK ABOUT HOW THEY FIRST HEARD OF ACAS.

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

READ OUT THE FIRST TEN AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY. RANDOMISE ORDER

Acas email/e-newsletter
Acas paper leaflet/flyer/mailing
The Acas Website
Recommendation from work colleague/business associate
HR-related websites (eg HRZone, Xpert HR etc)
Previous Acas Workplace Project
Previous Acas training event
Acas helpline
Acas advisor contact
Acas customer service team
Other (SPECIFY or use list below)

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING CODES FOR THE INTERVIEWER TO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE IF OTHER IS USED

HR publications (eg People Management, etc)
Industry/sector publications or websites
News stories in the media
Trade union
Independent HR advisors or other business consultants
HR tradeshows/conferences (eg CIPD)
Social media (i.e. Twitter/Linked-In)
 Industry organisation (eg Chambers of Commerce, etc)
Other
Don't use any
Don't know

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

ASK ALL

Q20. Thinking about the Acas Project, did you experience any of the following? Please say yes to all that apply

CODE ALL THAT APPLY. REVERSE ORDER

Something particularly good that pleased you
A few small things that pleased you
A few minor problems or issues
A major complaint or problem
None of these
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

ASK IF Q20 CODES 1-2

Q21a. Thinking about what pleased you, can you tell us what happened?

OPEN-ENDED
Don't know
Refused

ASK IF Q20 CODES 3-4

Q21b. Thinking about the problems and issues you encountered, can you tell us what happened?

OPEN-ENDED
Don't know
Refused

ASK ALL
Now thinking about the Acas advisor's skills…

Q22. Thinking about the way the Acas Project was conducted, how would you rate the Acas adviser in terms of the following?

SINGLE CODE ONLY FOR EACH STATEMENT. RANDOMISE LIST AND REVERSE SCALE

Understanding the issues facing your workplace
Developing a good relationship with participants involved in the project
Maintaining an impartial stance
Skill in encouraging discussions between participants
Followed through on anything they promised to do

Very good
Fairly good
Neither good nor poor
Fairly poor
Very poor
Not relevant
Don't know

Q23. And how would you rate the Acas adviser in terms of the following areas of expertise?
SINGLE CODE ONLY FOR EACH STATEMENT. RANDOMISE LIST AND REVERSE SCALE

Being up-to-date with the latest relevant techniques
Providing tailored advice or assistance /relevant to your organisation/sector
Providing tailored advice or assistance /relevant to your region
Being experienced in these issues
Providing enough information in advance
ASK ONLY TO EMPLOYEE REPS Helping you to understand the management's point of view
ASK ONLY TO EMPLOYER REPS Helping you to understand the employee's point of view
Diagnosing workplace problems
Improving workplace policies, practices or structures
Implementing improved workplace policies, practices or structures

Very good
Fairly good
Neither good nor poor
Fairly poor
Very poor
Not relevant
Don't know

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px; text-align:center">

IMPACT

</div>

Q24. To what extent do you feel the main objective of the Acas Project was achieved?

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY HAVE MORE THAN ONE OBJECTIVE ASK THEM TO PICK ONE MAIN OVERALL OBJECTIVE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OR ANSWER ON BEHALF OF ALL MAIN OBJECTIVES.

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all
Don't know

ASK IF OBJECTIVE NOT ACHIEVED (Q24 Code 3-5)

Q25. Why has this objective [not been achieved / only partly been achieved]?

DO NOT READ OUT – CODE ALL MENTIONED

It is too early to say/ongoing process
Issues too difficult/complex to be resolved in way identified by the Acas project
Acas didn't get to the heart of the problem
Change in operation or circumstances of the workplace
Lack of commitment from management
Lack of commitment from employee/trade union representatives
Lack of co-operation between management and employee representatives
Employees not interested in implementing solutions arising from Acas project
Other (specify)
Don't know

ASK ALL

Q26. Which of the following actions, if any, have been taken as a result of the Acas Project?

SINGLE CODE ONLY FOR EACH STATEMENT. RANDOMISE LIST AND REVERSE SCALE

Development of a formal agreement for the operation of a consultative committee
Introduction of policies and procedures
Review or revision of policies and procedures
Review or revision of an area of practice
Plans in place to introduce policies and procedures
Plans in place to review or revise policies and procedures

Yes
No
Not applicable
Don't know

Q27. To what extent have you or others in the workplace been able to sustain any activities or initiatives resulting from the Acas Project, in the period since Acas' involvement?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER. IF NOT RELEVANT CODE DK

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all
Has since left the organisation or changed role (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK ALL
Q28. And do you feel the following aspects of relations between managers and employees are now better, the same, or worse, as a result of the Acas Project?
Please say if these are not relevant to the Acas Project.

SINGLE CODE ONLY FOR EACH STATEMENT. RANDOMISE LIST AND REVERSE SCALE

Day to day working relationships between management and employees
Fairness in treatment of employees
Employee morale
Trust between management and employees
Communication

Much better
A little better
Same
A little worse
Much worse
Too early to say
Not relevant
Don't know

Q29. How would you rate the current relationship between management and employees generally [INSERT TEXT: **at this workplace**] / IF FTO (Q5=3) ['at [INSERT 'OrganisationName']']**?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Very good
Fairly good
Neither good nor poor
Fairly poor
Very poor
Don't know

Q30. Has this relationship improved, stayed the same or worsened since the time before the Acas Project?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Improved a lot
Improved a little
Stayed the same
Got a little worse
Got a lot worse
Don't know

ASK IF IMPROVED A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q30= 1 or 2)

Q31. To what extent, if any, can this improvement be attributed to the Acas Project?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER.

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all
Don't know

ASK ALL

Q32. Do you feel the following are now better, the same or worse, as a result of the Acas project? Please say if these are not relevant to the Acas project.

SINGLE CODE ONLY FOR EACH STATEMENT. RAMDOMISE OPTIONS AND REVERSE SCALE.

Quality of the service or output delivered by your organisation
Productivity or efficiency
Meeting objectives or targets

Much better
A little better
Same
A little worse
Much worse
Too early to say
Not relevant
Don't know

ASK IF CODE 1, 2, 4 OR 5 AT Q32 OPTION 2

Q33. To what extent, if any, was this [INCREASE/DECREASE] in productivity/efficiency due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the Acas project?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK OF MANAGEMENT REPS ONLY

Q34. Has the Acas project had any impact on the following…

1 Staff turnover
2 Levels of absence
3 Number of employment tribunal cases
4 Number of employee grievances
5 Revenue in your organisation (interviewer to say financial turnover of this is unclear)

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF CODE YES AT Q34 CODE 1
Q35. To what extent has the Staff turnover **increased or decreased since the Acas Project started in [insert date from earlier in the question]?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Decreased to a large extent
Decreased to some extent
Increased to some extent
Increased to a large extent
Stayed the same (DON'T READ OUT)
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

Q35b)

IF codes 'Increased to some extent' or 'Increased to a large extent', then ask:

Can I just check, you are saying that 'staff turnover' got worse as a result of the project?

Yes
No

IF 'no', please go back and correct above question.

ASK IF INCREASED OR DECREASED (Q35 CODE 1,2, 4 OR 5)

Q36. To what extent, if any, was this [INCREASE/DECREASE] in Staff turnover **due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the Acas project?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK IF CODE YES AT Q34 CODE 2
Q37. To what extent have the levels of absence **increased or decreased since the Acas Project started in [insert date from earlier in the question]?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Decreased to a large extent
Decreased to some extent
Increased to some extent
Increased to a large extent
Stayed the same (DON'T READ OUT)
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

Q37b)

IF codes 'Increased to some extent' or 'Increased to a large extent', then ask:

Can I just check, you are saying that 'levels of absence' got worse as a result of the project?

Yes
No

IF 'no', please go back and correct the above (part a) question.

ASK IF INCREASED OR DECREASED (Q37 CODE 1,2, 4 OR 5)

Q38. To what extent, if any, was this [INCREASE/DECREASE] in levels of absence **due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the Acas project?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK IF CODE YES AT Q34 CODE 3
Q39. To what extent have the number of employment tribunal cases **increased or decreased since the Acas Project started in [insert date from earlier in the question]?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Decreased to a large extent
Decreased to some extent
Increased to some extent
Increased to a large extent
Stayed the same (DON'T READ OUT)
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

Q39b)

IF codes 'Increased to some extent' or 'Increased to a large extent', then ask:

Can I just check, you are saying that 'number of employment tribunal cases' **actually increased** as a result of the project?

Yes
No

IF 'no', please go back and correct the above (part a) question.

ASK IF INCREASED OR DECREASED (Q39 CODE 1,2, 4 OR 5)

Q40. To what extent, if any, was this [INCREASE/DECREASE] in the number of employment tribunal cases **due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the project?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK IF CODE YES AT Q34 CODE 4
Q41. To what extent have the number of employee grievances **increased or decreased since the Acas Project started in [insert date from earlier in the question]?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Decreased to a large extent
Decreased to some extent
Increased to some extent
Increased to a large extent
Stayed the same (DON'T READ OUT)
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

Q41b)

IF codes 'Increased to some extent' or 'Increased to a large extent', then ask:

Can I just check, you are saying that 'number of employee grievances' **actually increased** as a result of the project?

Yes
No

IF 'no', please go back and correct the above (part a) question.

ASK IF INCREASED OR DECREASED (Q41 CODE 1, 2, 4 OR 5)

Q42. To what extent, if any, was this [INCREASE/DECREASE] in the number of employee grievances **due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the project?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all (DO NOT READ OUT)
Don't know

ASK MANAGEMENT REPS ONLY

Q43. Apart from those already discussed, did the project have any other positive impacts on the way [organisation] **works?**
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes
No
Don't know

IF YES (Q43=1)

Q44. Briefly, what were these impacts?

Impact one (specify)
Impact two (specify)
Impact three (specify)

Q45. What was the revenue (excluding VAT) of your participating workplace/workplaces for the last full financial year, (turnover for private sector)?
INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ASKED, LAST FULL FINANCIAL YEAR REFERS TO 2010-2011
WRITE IN (£)

ASK MANAGEMENT REPS ONLY
Q46. Do you expect your employment to increase over the next 12 months?

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF YES OR NO
Q47. To what extent, if any, would you say this [INCREASE/DECREASE] is due to the changes made to your workplace as a result of the Acas project?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE SCALE

Fully
To a large extent
To some extent
Not at all
Don't know

ASK FOR FEE-WAIVED PROJECTS ONLY

Q48. If a charge had been made towards the cost of the advice or support you received from Acas, would you still have gone ahead with it?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Yes, definitely
Yes, probably
Probably not
Definitely not
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

ASK ALL

**Q49. Still thinking about the support you received from Acas, do you think you could
have obtained assistance of the same quality and [INSERT 'at a similar price' if respondent has been charged or 'free of charge' if respondent is fee waived] from a third party?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Yes, definitely
Yes, probably
Probably not
Definitely not
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

IF CODES 1 OR 2 AT Q49
Q50. And do you think you or your workplace could have obtained this assistance from a third party for a price that you would have been willing to pay?
SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Yes, definitely
Yes, probably
Probably not
Definitely not
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

ASK ALL
Q51. Overall, how did your experience of the Acas project compare with your expectations? Would you say that your expectations were...?
SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Exceeded
Fully Met
Mostly met
Partially met
Not met at all
Don't know (DON'T READ OUT)

SATISFACTION

ASK ALL
Q52. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Acas Project exercise?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Q53. Was Acas paid by your organisation to carry out this project work?
SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF CHARGED (Q53 CODE 1)

Q54. Thinking about value for money, would you say the Acas Project represented
SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Very good value for money
Fairly good value for money
Neither good nor poor value for money
Fairly poor value for money
Very poor value for money
Too early to say
Don't know

ASK ALL

Q55. If a relevant situation arose how likely or unlikely would you be to recommend Acas Projects to a colleague or other professional contact?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. REVERSE ORDER

Very likely
Fairly likely
Neither likely nor unlikely
Fairly unlikely
Very unlikely
Don't Know

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

CLOSE

</div>

Q56. Is there anything else about the project that you would like to comment on?

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF NONE, CODE NULL

Q57. And finally, would you be willing to assist in further research into the issues that we have been speaking about that ACAS may wish to conduct at a later date?

Yes
No

Acas will be publishing a report based on this research later this year. To thank you for taking part in this survey Acas would like to offer you a copy of the report. Would you be interested in receiving this report?

Yes
No

IF YES
Please can I take you email address?
WRITE IN.

THANK AND CLOSE - Record respondent details for quality control

INTERVIEWER: **Did you interview someone other than the named contact?**

Yes
No

IF YES

INTERVIEWER:
**Please record reason for interviewing someone other than named
        contact.**

Named contact no longer worked for organisation
Named contact said they were not the lead management / employee
representative for this project
Other reason (specify)

Appendix 2: Case study discussion guide

Acas Workplace Projects Service
Case Study Visits
General Discussion Guide FINALv4 – 5th October 2012

1. **Research objectives:**

The case studies research is designed to explore the impact of Acas Workplace Projects in a small number of organisations. In each case, the case studies will examine a number of points, from the perspective of different individuals within the organisation:

- The factors leading to the engagement of Acas in the business

- Perspectives of the Acas process, of how it worked and to what extent the objectives were met

- Perspectives of the impact and value of the Acas project, including its long-term impact and effectiveness

- Economic impacts of the project

- Ways in which the project might have been improved

2. **Participants:**

Each case study will be drawn from a workplace visit involving a series of interviews and a discussion group:

Interviews:

- The Acas advisor who worked with the organisation (conducted prior to the visit)

- Senior management representative who acted as project lead

- The lead employee representative on the project (could be a TU rep)

- A manager whose work was in some way related to or affected by the project

- A finance director

Group:

- 2-3 non-managerial employees

This guide has been designed to serve all of the interviews and groups, except for the interview with the financial director: which questions should be directed to which individuals has been clearly labelled.

93

Nb. The interview with the finance director will focus only on whether any financial outcomes of the project can or should be discerned – it may not be possible at all companies to find a finance director who knows the project well enough to feel they can comment.

3. <u>Structure of the discussion</u>

Notes	Guide Sections	Guide Timings
1. Introductions and background	Sets the scene, reassures participants about the interview, confidentiality. Discuss the participants role in the company and their general thoughts about working there.	5 mins
2. Background and lead up to the Acas Project	In this section we want to understand what led to Acas being engaged and how this was done	10 mins
3. The Workplace Project	In this section we work through how the Acas project was conducted and what the participant thought about it	20 mins
4. Outcomes of the Project	Here, we seek an understanding of the immediate impact of the Acas project, and the longer-term outcomes, as well as thoughts on how things could be done differently.	20 mins
5. Marketing and communications	Here we would like to understand how Acas can best market its Business Solutions offering.	*Only include if there is time*
6. Conclusion, final thoughts and thanks	Here participants have a chance for some final reflections on the discussion.	5 mins
	Total	60 mins

Timings refer to the guide **in full**; some interviews/groups are likely to be shorter, since not all questions will be relevant.

1. Introductions and background

- Thank participant for taking part
- Introduce self, Ipsos MORI
- Emphasise that we will be talking about their experience and perception of the Acas Workplace Project.
- Explain outline of the research
- Role of Ipsos MORI – independent research organisation (i.e. independent of Acas), gather all opinions: all opinions valid.
- Remind that there are no right or wrong answers. Commissioned by Acas to understand in more detail the impact of their project.
- Explain that Acas may publish a concise version of the case study on their website. The organisation will be named in the case study, although individuals will not and you will have a chance to approve the content of the case study write up and omit certain details as appropriate.
- Get permission to digitally record – transcribe for quotes, no detailed attribution

MANAGEMENT REP ONLY

Company characteristics

Before we begin the interview proper, could you just help me gather some information that will help provide context for the study…

- Nature of company/organisation's business
    o Type of activity

- Ownership of company
    o Structure
    o History

- Company workforce characteristics
    o Size
    o Occupational groups
    o Job type
    o Age/gender/ethnicity
    o Union recognition? Union membership rates?

- Company structure
    o Geographical location
    o Managerial structure
    o HR structure

- Acas involvement besides the project being discussed (if any)

- How much is known about your use of Acas, outside of the actual project team?

ASK ALL COMPANY MEMBERS (i.e. NOT THE ACAS ADVISOR)

Professional role and thoughts about the organisation

Could you tell me about your role at [NAME OF BUSINESS]?
- Official title and responsibilities
- Any other professional duties outside of job description (e.g. employee/peer representative)?

How long have you worked at [THE COMPANY]?
- Length of time in different roles, including current one

And how do you find working here?
- Workplace atmosphere
- Satisfaction with role
- Satisfaction with the company

How would you describe employment relations here?
- Have they changed over time? How?

2. Background and lead up to the Acas Project

I'd now like to discuss the Acas Project on [TOPIC] that took place here between [DATES OF PROJECT].

ASK ALL COMPANY MEMBERS

Why was the project needed?
- What, in your opinion, were the underlying factors that led to it?
- Do others have different opinions?

Had there been a significant change in the workplace that led to the use of Acas, or was the issue longstanding?
- What prompted the decision?

ASK MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Can you briefly describe how [TOPIC OF ACAS PROJECT] was dealt with/organised *before* the intervention by Acas?

ASK/PROBE AS APPROPRIATE

Were any internal methods tried/considered in order to deal with the issue?
- What strategies were employed/discussed
- What were the outcomes/why were they rejected
    o Employee reaction
    o Management reaction

Were any other external options considered before Acas were engaged?
- How did they compare with Acas?

Were there any risks to consider in engaging a third party?

Why did the organisation want to use Acas' services?

What specifically led you to identifying Acas?
- Awareness of Acas' function/reputation/use by other companies
- Previous use of Acas? Did this lead you to identify Workplace Projects in particular, or just Acas in general?
- Recommendation – from whom?

ASK ALL COMPANY MEMBERS

What was the response to the news that Acas had been engaged?
- From employees / employee reps
- From management / management reps
- From the parent company (if applicable)

ASK ACAS ADVISOR AND MANAGEMENT REP

How was the initial contact made?
- By whom?

What was the nature of the contact?
- Which problem(s)/issue(s) were defined and presented?
- What were the aspirations/expectations of Acas' involvement

ASK ALL, PROBE AS APPROPRIATE

Can you describe how the project was set up?
- Who was involved, what their involvement comprised
- Objectives that were set: short- and long-term
- Perceptions of the advisor's role, how it was defined
- How was joint working communicated/prepared for (e.g. briefings)
- Practical issues (e.g. time off for employees; enough time?)
- Forming an action plan
- Initial resistance/obstacles and how they were overcome
- Management concerns/perspectives (towards Acas/employee involvement)

ASK MANAGEMENT REP IF NECESSARY

Was the approximate number of days of Acas advisor's time agreed up front? How many?

3. The Workplace Project

I'd now like to talk to you about the Acas project itself.

ASK ALL

How long was the project?
- Did it have different stages? Was this done formally?

And what did the project entail?
- What methods were used?
  o How were these decided?
  o Did they receive support?

How did the workshops/meetings function?
- Regularity, attendance, identifying/recording issues

Who was involved?
- In which stage(s)?
- How was their participation decided upon?
- Did participant need to be encouraged? How?
- Turnover of participants during the project (and the effect of this)

In the joint working, how were the different parties involved:
1) **The Acas advisor**
2) **The management representative**
3) **The employee representative**

PROBE ON:
- Fostering understanding (Acas advisor)
- Commitment to/engagement in the process
- Contribution to building consensus
- Contribution to problem solving
- Use of wider experience

And what were the relationships between the parties like?
- Trust, appreciation, rapport
- How safe/comfortable was process (e.g. ability to express views)
- If advisor worked with management and employee representatives separately, why? Did it help/hinder the process?

Focusing on the advisor, what skills did he/she have/display?
- E.g. particular expertise at employment relations? Relevant experience(s)?
- How important were these attributes?

What specifically did the advisor do?
- What were the different aspects of their role?
- What did they do well/less well?

And what kind of advice did the advisor give?
- How was it taken?
- Was it useful?

- Did the advisor succeed in being impartial?

What solutions were identified in the project and how did you reach them?
- How were they identified? By whom?
- Were there disagreements?
- What changes of mind/compromises had to be made?
- What contributed to these changes towards agreement? (e.g. pressures/attitudes)
- How was agreement reached?
- What was the Acas advisor's role in this?

Were the initial project objectives achieved? If not, why not?
- How did the different roles contribute to this?
- Was momentum maintained? How?

And how were the results disseminated to the wider workforce?
- By whom? Fully/edited?
- Feedback received?

Overall, do you think there were any particular benefits of having Acas as the provider of this service?

---

4. Outcomes of the Project

Can you tell me about the outcomes of the project?
- Were the objectives achieved?
- Actions taken
- Immediate impact
- Medium-/long-term objectives
- Unintended outcomes

What influenced these outcomes? (internal/external factors)
- Barriers? How dealt with
- Resistance? How dealt with
- Breakdown? How overcome

Was an evaluation included in the process?
- What kind? Outcome of it

What were the most productive aspects of the process?

And what were the most difficult aspects?

How could the process have been improved?
PROBE WITH REFERENCE TO ALL STAGES OF THE PROCESS:
- Engagement, planning, joint working, decision-making, implementation,

evaluation

Were the objectives revisited at a later stage?
- What was the outcome of this?

ASK IF STRUCTURES/PROCEDURES WERE REVISED AS A RESULT OF THE PROCESS

What revised structures/processes were the result of the process?
- How were they modified?

ASK IF NEW STRUCTURES/PROCEDURES WERE DESIGNED IN THE PROCESS

What new structures/processes came out of the process?
- How were they designed? (Off the peg/made to measure) Did Acas contribute?
- What was the process and reasoning behind it?
- Are they temporary/permanent? Why?
- How are the different players represented in the structures?

ASK ALL

How were the changes implemented?
- Flexibility/willingness to change/adapt
- How was continuity maintained?

Have the outcomes been sustained?
- How? Are there review mechanisms?
- Commitment, training

And how are relations between management and employees?
Have they changed since the Acas intervention? And was this due to the project?
- Day to day relationships
- Fairness in treatment of employees
- Attitude/morale; Differences between grades?
- Trust between management and employees

How, if at all, were the differences measured?

And can you attribute any of these differences to specific things that the Acas advisor did?

What has been the financial impact of the project?
- Why do you ascribe this to the project?
- How, if at all, do you think Acas should advertise the financial effects of its projects?

ASK ALL

Have there been any other measureable effects of the project?
1) Staff turnover
2) Levels of absence

3) Number/manner of employment grievances
4) Number/manner of employment tribunal cases

Again, are any of these attributable to specific things that the Acas advisor did?

ASK MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Do you/someone in your workplace measure these (1-4 ABOVE)?
- If so, has how regularly your workplace measure these changed? Why?
- If not, why does your workplace not measure these?

If Acas had asked you to record these (1-4 above), pre and post the project, would you have been a) able and b) willing to do this?

And what about more general aspects of the quality of your business? Have these changed as a result of the project?
- Quality of the service/output provided by the company
- Productivity/efficiency
  Meeting objectives/targets

Thinking about the changes/improvements we've discussed, to what extent could they have been done/achieved without the help of Acas?
PROBE ON THE DIFFERENT IMPACTS

ASK MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Has there been a post hoc evaluation of the Acas process?
- How was it undertaken?
- What was the result?

Have you have any further contact or involvement with Acas?

ASK ALL

Thinking about the process as a whole, was it a success?
- Why? Specific factors?

IF FEE WAIVED:
- Does the fact it was free make a difference to how you view the service?

IF CHARGED FOR:
- Did you think the price was cheap, expensive or neither?
- Would a higher/lower price have changed your perception of the workplace project service?

What would you do same/differently/better in the future?

How can Acas improve this workplace project service?

How did using Acas compare with other third-parties you've used to help your company?
- What does Acas offer that other organisations don't?

How would you describe Acas' services to someone doing a similar job in another company?

Would you recommend Acas to others?
- Why/why not?
- What sort of businesses would they help?
- Where would they be less useful?

What do you think of Acas, overall?

Did the project lead to you using Acas for further assistance?
- which services?

6. Conclusion, final thoughts and thanks

Thinking about everything we've discussed today, what would you say were the most helpful things that Acas did for your company?

And what would you say are the most important things for Acas to learn from this project?

Is there anything you were hoping to discuss that we've not yet covered?

Thank participants; explain the next steps (further interviews/observations, what our outputs will be, how Acas will use them). THANK AND CLOSE.

Appendix 3: Workshops discussion guide and stimulus materials

**Acas Workplace Projects Service
Collaborative Business Workshops
Discussion Guide FINAL – 31st May 2012**

<u>**Research objectives:**</u>

The research is designed to explore the perspectives of previous and potential Acas workplace projects users on:

- The appeal of the current workplace projects offer

- Where they would expect the service to have most impact

- How the service could be improved to increase appeal and effectiveness

- How the benefits of the current service should be communicated more widely among businesses

---

8.30–8.40 1. Introductions and pre-task discussion

Welcome and introduce moderators and role of Ipsos MORI

- Explain purpose of the discussion – to help Acas improve the services it provides to businesses like theirs
- No right and wrong answers, confidentiality
- Seek permission to audio record the sessions

Introductions: Name, role, brief description of organisation

To begin with, I want to discuss the task we asked you to do before coming along this morning. You were asked to do slightly different things depending on whether you have used Acas services in the past.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVEN'T USED THE SERVICE:

What did you think of the service synopsis we asked you to read through?

- What did you know about Acas before agreeing to take part today?
- Were you aware that Acas Business Solutions involve joint working between management and employees? (Rather than being purely management driven.)
- Did you know anything about these services offered by Acas?
- What questions did the synopsis raise for you?

Is this service something your organisation would be interested in?

- Why/why not?
- How appealing is the prospect of joint involvement of management and employees?

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE USED THE SERVICE:

What support did you receive from Acas?

- Why did you approach them?
- Did you explore any similar services? Which ones?
- Overall, how useful was the support you received?
- What difference, if any, did it make in your organisation?

AS A GROUP: **Under what circumstances might you think about using Acas Business Solutions?** PROBE: Why in these circumstances?

8.40–8.55 2. Sources of support to deal with workplace issues

SHOW STIMULUS 1: LIST OF SOME OF THE AREAS COVERED BY ACAS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

- Conflict, mediation and change management
- Information and consultation
- Collective bargaining and trade union issues
- Payment and grading arrangements
- Absence and stress management
- Bullying and harassment

Thinking about the types of issues covered here:

What types of external support or services do you currently use to help deal with these issues?

- What prompts you to look externally? Where would you look?
- What does 'good' external support look like in your experience? And 'bad' external support?
- If you would usually deal with these issues internally, why is this?

Have you ever thought about approaching Acas for support in these specific areas? Why/why not?

Do you think Acas *should* be offering these services?

- E.g. Payment and grading issues? (Risk of compromising their independence in the eyes of employees?)
- Stress management? Bullying and harassment? (Better suited to professionals?)

> ▪ Would you expect Acas staff to have sufficient expertise in all of these areas?

8.55–9.15 3. Exploring the service in more detail

GIVE OUT STIMULUS 2: SUMMARIES OF TYPES OF WORK UNDER EACH HEADING

I want you to work in 3 groups (of pairs/trios) to each explore two to three types of project support offered by Acas in more detail – we'll then discuss them briefly as a group.

PAIRS TO DISCUSS TWO FROM THIS LIST (ROTATED SO THAT ALL ARE COVERED):

- ▪ Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.

- ▪ Improving workplace relationships by helping employees work together better

- ▪ Improving workplace relationships by helping management and employees/employee representatives (e.g. trade union reps) work together better.

- ▪ Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.

- ▪ Helping the organisation to update HR policies and procedures.

- ▪ Helping to formulate new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.

Nb. Policies/procedures could be concerned with: Discipline and grievance; Absence or attendance management; Bullying and harassment; Contracts and written statements; Equality or diversity; Information and consultation; Recruitment and selection; Redundancy handling; Working parents

FOR EACH TYPE:

What did you think about this specific service provided by Acas?

- ▪ Would you be interested in this, or not? IF INTERESTED: Under what circumstances?
- ▪ Anything appeal more or less?

What else would you want to know before using the service?

What would you expect from Acas if you took up this offer?

- What would success look like for this service? How would you know whether the service had been successful?

Where/when do you think this would have most impact in your organisation?

AFTER 10 MINUTES ASK EACH PAIR TO FEED BACK TO THE GROUP, AND ASK OTHERS TO COMMENT

9.15–9.35 4. Improving the service

SPLIT INTO THOSE WHO HAVE AND HAVEN'T USED ACAS SERVICES

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE USED THE SERVICE:

GIVE OUT STIMULUS 3: SHEETS SHOWING DIFFERENT ADVISOR METHODS TO PROMPT THE DISCUSSION:

- diagnosing workplace problems
- facilitating workshops, focus groups or working groups
- developing new ways of working together
- conducting employee feedback surveys for your organisation and helping to interpret the results of the survey
- implementing, reviewing or revising existing workplace policies, practices or structures.

We'd like you to think about the Acas services each of you here received, including the different methods used by the advisor. Work through them in turn, and identify:

- The good and bad aspects of the service you received
- How the service could be improved at each stage
- How the service could achieve more impact in your organisation

FOR THOSE WHO HAVEN'T USED THE SERVICE, USE SERVICE TYPES RELEVANT TO THEIR BUSINESSES (SEE STIMULUS 2 FOR SERVICE TYPES):

We'd like you to think about how Acas could help your organisation through a Business Solutions project. Projects can vary in length and scope from a one day relationship-building workshop attended by management and employee representatives, to joint working groups that meet over a period of months to oversee the design and implementation of organisational changes.. Thinking about the types of service Acas offers, work through two or three and identify:

- What your ideal service would be like
- What success would look like for a project of this type

- How the service could maximise its impact in your organisation

AS A GROUP: **Overall, what are the key things Acas needs to get right to help organisations like yours?**

PROMPTS: Is that the case for all of you? Does anyone else have different needs? Why is that? (Probing for differences by size of business, number of employees, sector, etc.

9.35—9.55 5. Communicating the service

Acas is interested in how it should communicate with people like you about the services it offers.

What sorts of information would encourage you to find out more about Acas services in general?

And what sort of information would encourage you use Acas Business Solutions in particular? What would the most important three factors be?

What types of evidence on the service's benefits would you find most valuable, and why? (*If not mentioned*:) Would you find case studies of previous work useful?

Where would you expect to find information about this type of service?

- How would you normally go about finding out information about an Acas service? Website? Existing relationship with Acas? Emails?

Which communication methods would be most helpful to you for learning about Acas services?

- Social media? Which ones? To what end?

What is the key message you think employers need to hear from Acas on this service?

- Is "joint working" a key message?
- Is the feature of "joint working" clearly communicated by Acas at present?

What materials or information could Acas provide to help you communicate the value of a Business Solutions project within your organisation?

FOR PREVIOUS USERS: Where did you find out?

HAND OUT COPIES OF ACAS' NEW BROCHURE

Here is a new leaflet introducing Acas Business Solutions. What do you think of it?

- *If too long, what is the strength of feeling about this?*
- Does it provide the type of information you desire?
- Is anything missing?
- Would it persuade you to use the service or get in touch? Why/Why not?
- How might it be improved?

9.55–10.00 6. Summary and wrap up

What's the key message you would like us to feed back to Acas about their services?

- Anything else you would like to say about Acas?
- Or about the type of external support your business needs?

Thank participants

Administer incentives

Close

Pre-task slides

Acas Breakfast Workshop – Preparatory task	acas
	1

Please take five minutes to read this information ahead of the workshop.

Many thanks!

Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute
© Ipsos MORI   Version 1 | Public (DELETE CLASSIFICATION)   Version 1 | Internal Use Only   Version 1 | Confidential   Version 1 | Strictly Confidential

Acas Business Solutions	acas
	1

- Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations.
- Acas offers in-company business solutions to organisations who would like assistance in any of the areas of Acas' expertise:

- **Managing change**
- **Improving workplace relationships**
- **Redundancy handling**
- **Stress management**
- **Creating employee consultative groups and forums**
- **Performance management**
- **Pay and reward – job evaluation**
- **Mediation skills**
- **Recruitment and retention**
- **Contractual arrangements**
- **Equality and diversity**

Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute
© Ipsos MORI   Version 1 | Public (DELETE CLASSIFICATION)   Version 1 | Internal Use Only   Version 1 | Confidential   Version 1 | Strictly Confidential

Acas Business Solutions

acas

3

- The Acas specialist advisor typically visits the organisation and carries out work jointly with the organisation's management and employee representatives, tailored to the needs of the organisation:
    - Where trade unions are recognised, union representatives usually take part.
    - Similarly, members of staff associations or consultative bodies will usually participate where relevant.
- Acas's role can focus on:

    - **diagnosing workplace problems**
    - **facilitating workshops, focus groups or working groups**
    - **developing new ways of working together**
    - **conducting employee feedback surveys for your organisation and helping to interpret the results of the survey**
    - **implementing, reviewing or revising existing workplace policies, practices or structures.**

Acas Business Solutions

acas

4

- Workplace projects vary in scope and length from one-day relationship-building workshops attended by management and employee representatives, to joint working groups which meet over a period of months to oversee the design and implementation of any number of organisational change initiatives.
- The average amount of Acas adviser time on delivering each project was four days in the most recent survey available in 2008.

*This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research,
ISO 20252:2006.*

Stimulus 1

ACAS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Example areas:

- Conflict, mediation and change management

- Information and consultation

- Collective bargaining and trade union issues

- Payment and grading arrangements

- Absence and stress management

- Bullying and harassment

Stimulus 2

TYPES OF PROJECT SUPPORT

1. Organisational change by making changes to key business processes or practices.

   - *For example: changes to working practices, individual and process productivity, technology adoption, job design*

2. Improving workplace relationships between employees by helping them to work together better.

   - *For example: a staff survey, a diagonal slice, a group mediation*

3. Improving workplace relationships between management and employees/employee representatives (e.g. trade union reps) by helping them to work better together.

   - *For example: facilitating joint working, win-win bargaining*

TYPES OF PROJECT SUPPORT

4.   Helping the organisation to update HR policies and procedures.

- ▪ *For example: updating a staff handbook or training managers/reps in the use of the procedures*

5.   Problem solving on a specific issue such as poor absence or conducting job evaluations.

- ▪ *For example: identifying the way forward on an HR issue*

6.   Helping to formulate new or amended policies and procedures for the workplace.

- ▪ *For example: concerning discipline and grievance, absence or attendance management, equality or diversity, etc.*

Stimulus 3

ACAS ADVISOR METHODS

- diagnosing workplace problems

- facilitating workshops, focus groups or working groups

- developing new ways of working together

- conducting employee feedback surveys for your organisation and helping to interpret the results of the survey

- implementing, reviewing or revising existing workplace policies, practices or structures

Stimulus 4: Acas Business Solutions leaflet

(Not to scale)

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research,
ISO 20252:2006.

© 2013 Ipsos MORI.

Appendix 4: Guide to sampling tolerances

Statistical reliability

The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the total population, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the true values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the true values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different percentage results for the current survey's sample sizes at the 95% confidence interval.

Sample type (sample size/population)	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	$\pm$	$\pm$	$\pm$
All surveyed (158/460)	4	6	6
Man reps (105/230)	4	7	7
Emp reps (53/230)	7	11	12

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, with our overall sample of 158 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus 6 percentage points from the sample result.

Strictly speaking, however the tolerances shown here apply only to random samples.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - i.e. if it is "statistically significant", we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95% confidence interval", the differences between results for management representatives and employee representatives must be greater than the values given in the table overleaf:

Sample types being compared	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
Man rep and Emp rep	8	13	14
Source: Ipsos MORI			