

Some key services:

Facilitating Enterprise Bargaining

In many cases, parties will negotiate their agreements without any call on outside resources. However, there may be circumstances where it makes sense to draw in, by consent, the services of an independent facilitator. Facilitated bargaining may help where one or more of the following factors are in play –

- the issues are complex or the stakes high;
- a third-party presence promises to make the negotiating process more constructive and efficient;
- the parties are consciously adopting a new model of negotiations and want to give it its best shot;
- a process combining negotiation, mediation, problem-solving and facilitation may prove helpful;
- past conflict has damaged the trust relationship between the negotiators; or
- negotiations are at an impasse and a fresh perspective may deliver a break-through.

The facilitator may help in the general preparation for bargaining, including training (see our separate info sheet in this regard), information-sharing and fact-finding. During the bargaining exchange itself, the facilitator may act as mediator, reality-tester, option-provider and neutral recorder, amongst other things. Public communications may also be handled through this office. Mostly, though, the facilitator acts simply as a helpful resource to the parties' own bargaining process, and therefore adopts a light-touch approach.

Our objective is to encourage the parties to search out and promote shared interests and therefore mutual gains. We recognise, though, that there will regularly be moments of hard bargaining in any negotiating situation. Some interests simply compete, most notoriously when the wage-profit cake needs to be cut. Here our job is to help the parties manage the conflict as intelligently as possible – to arrive at realistic outcomes without first having to go over the brink.

As in mediations, the facilitator does not make decisions on substance, cannot bind the parties in any way and should not influence the parties towards a particular outcome. It remains for the parties to make the own deal.

